

S F COMMENTARY 30

OCTOBER 1972

40 PAGES

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Dedicated to:

Syncon Committee
Eastercon
Committee
AI75 Committee
Maureen and
Rick Brewster
Elizabeth and
John Foyster
Valma Brown and
Leigh Edmonds
John Bangsund
Carla and
Lee Harding

and to
LESLEIGH LUTTRELL
of course



EXTRA CREDITS AND EXPLANATIONS

Thanks very much to NOEL KERR, for arranging the printing of the offset sheets in this issue; GARY HOFF's excellent photographs throughout the magazine; front-cover photo by CAPRICORN GRAPHIC ARTS; back-cover photo by GEOFF MAUGER. By the way, the front cover shows (l to r) LEE HARDING, LESLEIGH LUTTRELL, and BRUCE GILLESPIE. Back cover of BRUCE GILLESPIE (photo taken a year ago). Page 3: LESLEIGH LUTTRELL and JOHN BANGSUND.

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A SENSE OF WONDER

THEME AND VARIATIONS

A SENSE OF WONDER is the theme of my Syncon. The official theme was MAN... UP AND OUT? OR DOWN AND OUT? Syncon 2, the 11th Australian S F Convention, was held at the Squire Inn, Bondi Junction, Sydney, on August 11, 12, and 13 1972. I think that my theme sums up the convention as most people experienced it. Anyway, for better or for worse, here is my Syncon.

SENSE OF WONDER 1: I flew to Sydney on the 10.30 am flight on Friday, August 11. Not many other people were travelling, so for the first time in three jet flights, I gained a window seat. There wasn't much to see from the air. It had been bitterly cold in Melbourne when I had left, and cloud cover continued most of the way until Sydney. However, as the jet flew through the lowest layer of cloud, the vapour rose in mountains around the plane, and the sun stretched along the ridges of cloud which spread like an horizon around us. For a few moments I could see a huge balloon of cloud which billowed above, looking just like the "mushroom clouds" of the last scene of DR STRANGELOVE. This was going to be quite a convention - I was already in a science fiction film! The moment passed, the jet went far above any of the cloud banks, and I settled back in my seat to wait for Sydney.

SENSE OF WONDER 2: As the plane approached Sydney, the clouds disappeared, and for the first time I could see from the air that monster of a city. As the plane came towards the city, it went lower and lower, until I could see roads spread out below. Little specks of tinsel lay on the ground: either it had been raining recently, or they were thousands of little dams, one for each farm. The specks looked as if they would float up from the earth if a brisk breeze lifted them. Dark dots wandered along the roads: they were the cars and trucks. No sign of people. The earth showed little evidence of human habitation until we came very close to its surface. The Canadian Film Board made a cartoon on this subject: the visiting Martians thought that the real dominant species of Earth was the automobile, but the visitors acknowledged that the cars were quite decent to put up with the little parasites which crawled around inside them. A sense of wonder, or sadness that only cars rival nature from the viewpoint of the aerial traveller? Or simply a sense of wonder that I could become so detached from that earth that I could view it from this new perspective?

SENSE OF WONDER 3: Nothing is very remarkable about the Interstate Terminal of the Sydney Airport. Even during an off-peak period, it looks most like a railway station, and when I was returning to Melbourne on Sunday, it looked exactly like Spencer Street station at its busiest. I had sent a telegram to

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Shayne McCormack on the day before, and had hoped that somebody from Sydney might have been at the airport to meet me. As I found out later, nobody picked up Shayne's mail, containing that telegram, until about the time when I was arriving. It was warm in Sydney - about 15 degrees (Fahrenheit) warmer than it had been when I left Melbourne. I picked up my case and trudged out to find a taxi. The taxi-driver even knew where the Squire Inn was, but he took the strangest route to find it: strange to me, that is. There must be few main roads that lead directly from Sydney Airport to Bondi, so we spent most of the time dodging down back streets, along bumpy roads, and into what seemed at first to me like blind alleys, until I was sure that the driver was trying to charge me about twice as much as the real fare. Sydney traffic at midday was almost as thick as Melbourne traffic at peak-hour, so the driver was concentrating so hard that he had little to say. Sense of Wonder 3: I reached the Squire Inn, venue of Syncon, without any real hitches, and only 1½ hours since I had boarded the plane 600 miles away in Melbourne.

SENSE OF WONDER 4: People! Real people! Science fiction fans! As soon as I stepped out of the taxi, John Bangsund, Bert Chandler, and (I think) Bill Wright walked out of the door of the Squire Inn. "We're going to a pub just up the corner," said John. "Drop your things and then come up as well." I muttered something and shook hands with John Bangsund for the first time in four or five months, and with Bert Chandler for the first time in years.

Perhaps I should have been warned about the hotel from the start. "Most members of the convention have paid before they have booked in," said the receptionist. I took the hint, and paid the rest of my hotel bill. I found the room, was staggered by its size and opulence, and left again to find the gentlemen who had been heading for a pub "somewhere up the street". I could not find the pub, but I surveyed the geography of the area. The Squire Inn was on a side street that approached at right angles the main road of Bondi Junction. (I never did find out what was the name of that main road.) Most of the shops were spread along the main road. Huge double-decker buses roared up it, sometimes three or four one after the other. Endless lines of traffic followed the buses. I decided that it was all a bit too much, and wandered back to the hotel, hoping to find that a few other people had arrived at the convention. As I approached the hotel, I met Elizabeth Foyster and Jillian. "Are you sick today, too?" she said. Like most of the people at the convention, we had taken "sickies" to attend on the Friday.

People! Real people! Science fiction fans! Not just a few people, but forty or fifty of them! At midday? Can such things be? My face came as close as it does to lighting up with pleasure, and I didn't know which long-lost face to greet first. There was Alan Sandercock and Paul Anderson from Adelaide, with Jeff Harris, Joy Window, and another bloke whose name I never quite caught. Eric Lindsay and Blair Ramage were there already. So was Shayne McCormack, doing her best to organise the flurry of fans. Bob Smith was being interviewed by one of the twits who turned up from the television channels on the first morning of the convention, and who didn't appear thereafter. Bob introduced me to one of the interviewers, who wrote down some fannish terms, asked some not-completely-idiotic questions, and who didn't tell me where she was from. (Somebody told me weeks later that Kevin Arnett gave a very good report about the convention on radio station 3LO about a week after it had finished; so maybe that was based on the information given by Bob and I.) As soon as I stepped into the door of the convention, I met most of the Melbourne fans whom I had seen the week before at the Degraives. I remember Margaret Oliver who said, with hands clasped almost in adoration, "So you're Bruce Gillespie!" That has never happened before. I recall that I managed to

talk to Ron Graham for quite awhile, although I had been able to speak to him for only a few minutes during the Easter Convention. Ron told me some quite interesting things about himself, and gave me some valuable advice. And, of course, almost before I had stepped inside the door, I was introduced to the Guest of Honour...

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SENSE OF WONDER Nos 5-10: Leigh Edmonds had shown me a photo of Lesleigh Luttrell a few weeks before the convention. I had said, "Not bad", and thought that Leigh and Lesleigh would get on rather well, whether Valma was standing in the background or not. When I shook hands with Lesleigh at the beginning of the convention, I thought to myself, "Well, at least the photo wasn't lying." Lesleigh was busily being introduced to lots of people, some of whose names she knew, and looking bewildered and a bit detached from the whole scene. I can still remember my first convention - the 1968 Easter Convention - where I talked briefly to Lee and Johns Bangsund and Foyster - and sat in the background feeling much the same way. After I had been talking for about an hour, and after Lesleigh had been interviewed by several varieties of tv people or newspapermen, I noticed that nobody much was talking to Lesleigh at all. The traditional Australian virtue of casualness is all right in its place, but this was carrying things a bit too far. Shayne and Bob were heli-lishly busy, and everybody else was getting into the swing of the joviality, or had gone out to lunch. I sat down next to Lesleigh and attempted to strike up a conversation. (I should explain that I find it difficult to strike up a conversation with anybody at the best of times, and with ladies at all. But I'd been reading the Luttrells' fanzines for three years, and although I did not realise it at the time, Lesleigh had boned up on SFC during her trip from USA to Australia.) I started to ask Lesleigh about some of the s f authors whom she had met. "What's Robert Silverberg like?" I said. "Rich," said Lesleigh. "Have you met Philip Dick?" I said. "Yes," said Lesleigh. "Hank and I met him at a world convention, but we were too scared of him to speak to him for long." And so it went. I mention these things because... well, nobody else at that whole convention (Leigh and Valma had not made an appearance yet) shared my own sense of awe that we had as a Guest of Honour someone who had actually met all these people, and been to places we had never been to, etc, etc. One of the best things ever to happen in international fandom had just taken place, and I and a few other people seemed to be the only ones who were aware of the importance of the event.

But that piece of sermonising (even though I will do some more sermonising later) is not what I want to talk about. After I had been talking to Lesleigh for about half an hour, as well as manning the registration table when nobody else was around and fending off other people who wanted to sit next to Lesleigh she seemed to be getting restless. "Well, I suppose you will want to talk to some other people now," I said, since it is inevitable that people who talk to me for half an hour usually do want to talk to somebody else by that time. "No," said Lesleigh. "I want to talk to you."

Now that, more than anything else, stirred my sense of wonder. It also left me speechless. That was the first time that any girl had ever said that she actually wanted to talk to me.

More was to come. Lesleigh and I talked a lot about producing fanzines; how the Luttrells have a vast Roneo machine while I have a 1939 Gestetner hand-turned duplicator; how Lesleigh has an electric typewriter while I have an Adler Gabriele portable; how STARLING is produced by hordes of Columbia fans while S F COMMENTARY is typed, run off, collated, and posted by yours truly

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(as I say on the colophon of every issue of the magazine). Lesleigh asked me whether I would be printing an issue of SFC while she was in Melbourne. Since at that time I had all the stencils typed up for the next issue I said, "Yes, but I still have to correct them." Lesleigh said, "I'm a real good proof-reader." My mind boggled; my sense of wonder stretched to the limit. Imagine - a lady who could proofread stencils, edit APA-45, co-edit STARLING, run Columbia fandom, who had met all those people, and attended Worldcons... and who wanted to talk to me!

....Chronology faddists may trip me up here - but I'm sure that by this time the program was officially set to start, that I had been at the convention for about an hour, and nobody had yet bought Lesleigh any food or offered to get her some. So Lesleigh and I and a few other people whose names I've forgotten (I think that they included Robin Johnson) went to buy fish and chips. Lesleigh did not quite go green as a result of eating fish and chips, but we felt that we had to introduce her to some of Australia's more barbaric eating customs as soon as possible. Lesleigh insisted that "chips" were really "french fries".

When we arrived back at the Convention, quite a fracas (called the Business Session) was in progress. As we found out later, the fights had been even better before we arrived, but those that we saw were quite interesting. The members of the Convention had to vote for the site of the 1973 Australian Convention. On behalf of the Canberra S F Society, John Bangsund presented a proposal for a fairly serious convention to be held in conjunction with Australian National University. The total cost: \$100. John Bangsund had quite a fight on his hands. At that time the Canberra group planned to go ahead with the convention anyway, but also they wanted the title of Aussiecon. Paul Stevens presented the bid for Melbourne. John Alderson presented a bid that was humorous (I hope) for Faulconbridge - i.e. a convention to be held at or near Eric Lindsay's vast mansion in the Blue Mountains near Sydney. Alan Sandercock presented the bid for Adelaide. Since Adelaide had done such a good job of their New Year's Convention, they had a lot of sympathy for their bid. However, it was Melbourne's "turn", we felt, under a scheme that had been worked out two years earlier - Sydney, 1972; Melbourne, 1973; Sydney 1974, and Melbourne for the World Convention in 1975. After each bidder had put his case, it appeared that there would be a three- or four-way split that would make everybody unhappy. Then John Foyster rose to his feet.

"Watch this," I said to Lesleigh. "This is what Australian fan politics is really about." John Foyster began one of the shortest, finest speeches of his fan career. He said that the proposed convention in Canberra was simply too expensive for most of the people who were attending the 1972 Australian convention. A convention such as the Canberra group proposed would have had five per cent of its membership fans, and ninety-five per cent academics or other people who were interested in science fiction in a non-fannish way. John suggested that this idea had many merits, but it would be unfair to most Australian fans to make that kind of convention, a type which has never been held before in Australia, the official Australian convention for 1973. John said that Adelaide would make the best compromise candidate - especially as the Adelaide committee has never before held an Australian convention, and because the Adelaide committee already has one success to its credit. John sat down. The business meeting, the largest that I've ever attended, voted for Adelaide.

Man proposeth; John Foyster disposeth. Perhaps not sersawonder stuff, but enlightening, all the same.

NOT-TOO-SENSAWONDERISH! INTERLUDE 1: The program had now officially started. Shayne McCormack had begun to get worried, since the events that preceded our entry had been so acrimonious. Would the convention develop into a ding-dong fight? Well, it didn't. However, the rest of Friday was a bit strange. Most people had not yet realised that they could miss most or all of the program and still have a great convention. Attendances at program items were good, discussion was lively, and Bob Smith had obviously succeeded with his plan to run three panels simultaneously at any one time. However, many people were tired. Sometime during the events that I have just described, Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown made their appearance, and even the effervescent Valma looked as if she'd lost a fight with a steamroller. Leigh and Val had travelled with David Grigg, in David Grigg's car, all the way from Melbourne. I don't think that they recovered from the experience during the entire three days of the convention, and from all accounts, the return trip was also a nightmare. I saw Leigh saying hello to Lesleigh, whom I don't think he saw during most of the rest of the convention, and I seem to remember that Leigh was too tired to do anything more than mutter whenever I tried to hold a conversation with him. Even though I had travelled to the convention by jet, I was also tired during Friday. Shayne, Bob, and other members of the committee had been working for most of the night before, and I think they were nearly worn out. During Friday I had the feeling that this would turn out to be a great convention, but the spark had not quite been lit. I knew it would be different from any other convention I had been to, because even John Bangsund and Lee Harding, those two arch-entertainers of Adventon, were swallowed by the crowd. If I don't have any good Bangsund stories to tell here, then it's because I saw the man very little during the three days. When I did see him, he seemed to be a much mellowed, less joky person than when I had met him last. What are they doing to him in Canberra?

So: I can summarise the rest of Friday's events fairly briefly. Paul Anderson and I were on a panel about REVIEWING SCIENCE FICTION. John Foyster began proceedings by saying, "At the first Sydney convention I conducted a boring panel on this subject. Now I have found the two most boring speakers to take part in yet another panel on this boring subject." Good old John Foyster; no wonder we like him so much. Thanks to some of the people in the audience, the panel wasn't too boring. It may please the readers of SFC to know that Paul Anderson and I have entirely opposite views about reviewing, and that John Foyster's views are different again from ours. It was just the first of a series of panels about which I can remember little, and never will be able to remember much, because of the complete absence of tape-recorders during the convention. However, the crust was broken; already people were talking to each other; I enjoyed being a Boring Speaker, an occupation which suits me very well. :: Later, John Bangsund led a panel about WHY FANZINES? For the first time I saw some glimpse of the eventual direction of the whole convention. As I've mentioned, the theme of the convention was MAN.. UP AND OUT? OR DOWN AND OUT? This is about the most important theme that anybody can discuss these days, and it was certainly appropriate for an s f convention. The problem was that very few people really wanted to discuss it. Firstly and mainly, and especially because Lesleigh was in the country, we wanted to talk about Australia In 75, a topic which presumes that the world will last at least until the end of the third week in August, 1975. We wanted to talk about Australian fandom, and world fandom. Why fandom? Why were we here at this convention? Why the frivolous, jolly atmosphere of the convention, which had so little to do with the topic at hand? Why publish fanzines, which was the occupation of no less than fifteen of the people who attended John Bangsund's discussion session? I'm annoyed that that particular panel is

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not on tape; mainly because I've forgotten everything that was said. People talked about the value of fanzines as communication, as an occupation, as a way of making friends; you know. But I would like to have remembered just what particular people said about their own particular creations. All I remember is that I said something utterly banal, and when John Bangsund asked Leigh Edmonds why he published fanzines, he said, "Because I'm mad." John B told us all about the fanzines that he would like to publish; part of the result has been SCYTHROP 27. :: We had dinner (much too late) at the restaurant in the hotel. It was probably the most delicious meal that I've ever had, but it cost me something more than \$3. When I mentioned this to Lesleigh some time later, she was amazed that the meal was so cheap.

Masquerade Parties are not the world's most exciting events - at least not for me. I can never think of a costume to wear, so I don't wear one, so I get funny looks and have to stand out of the way, trying not to look too bored. However, there were some mitigating circumstances (as a CIB detective might say). When I was going to my room to change into something which at least looked respectable, if not remotely spectacular, I passed two ladies who were speaking in - gasp! - American accents. By now I had picked up some sensitivity to the American language, especially the Missouri variety, so I asked the ladies if they were members of the convention, etc, etc. Yes, they were. The person-whose-name-I-remember was Jean Jordan, from Chicago. She had had some connections with Chicago fans, and her husband was in Australia on business. That made four Americans at the convention - a record. The fourth was Bruce Townley, who had got in touch with Melbourne fans some weeks earlier, as he was visiting Melbourne with his parents. Melbourne fans had urged Bruce to attend this convention, and he had travelled there with Carey Handfield. :: There were a few people beside myself who were not in costume. Lesleigh was one of them, so we stood around running out of topics of conversation while the incredible array whirled around. Paul Stevens was there as (you guessed it!) Dracula, Shayne McCormack did her best to look like Dracula-ess, Stephen Solomon had dressed as one of the guards from the film THX 1138, Lee Harding came as one of Kelly Freas' Regency-dressed spacemen (Lee looked so fine that he must have been born in the wrong century), and whatever John Bangsund wore, he was having great fun wearing it. A group of STAR TREK fans wore fetching costumes, but I couldn't begin to guess what they represented. About halfway through the night I ran into a gentleman who was wearing the oddest costume of them all. I'd never met this bloke in my life; he was wearing shorts and what could have been a shirt or the top of a pair of pyjamas; a spare plastic leg stuck out from the side of his real leg, strange plastic bits of human bodies protruded from even stranger parts of his own body; and somehow he caught my eye. "Do you know what I've come as?" he said. His tone was desperate; nobody recognised his costume. "Well... at a rough guess," I said, "you could only be from A PLANET NAMED SHAYOL, by Cordwainer Smith." The man's face lit up. "You're right!" he said. "Nobody else knew that. Do you like Cordwainer Smith's stories?" What a question to ask me! I really enjoyed talking to Peter McKay, even when he tried to convince me that Edgar Rice Burroughs was also one of ghod's anointed scribes. But to meet another Cordwainer Smith fan, and to get a decent conversation in the middle of a masquerade ball,.. That ole Sense of Wonder was stirring again.

By midnight, my consciousness, sense of wonder, and everything else had dimmed, and I struggled off to bed. This was the first time that I had taken a proper look at my room. It seemed vast, with a kitchenette, bathroom-toilet-shower, a divan, and a double bed that was so enormous that it was a crying shame not to share it with someone. When I rolled into bed, I occupied about a quarter of its area. But although usually I don't sleep much on my



SYNCON 2 PHOTOS

Photos by Gary Hoff at Masquerade.

TOP: Left: Lesleigh Luttrell, Margaret Oliver. Middle: Jillian Foyster (modest), John Foyster, Lee Harding. Right: John Alderson.

MIDDLE: Left: Shayne McCormack, Lee Harding (typical pose). Middle: Merv Binns, Paul Stevens (typical pose), Norma Green, Bert Chandler. Right: Bob Smith.

BOTTOM: Left: Aussiefan, alias Malcolm Hunt, Merv Binns. Middle: Bert Chandler, David Grigg, John Alderson, (background) Michael O'Brien, Joy Window, Blair Ramage. Right: Jean Jordan.

first night in strange places, soon I fell asleep, and awoke next morning feeling very fine indeed.

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SENSE OF WONDER 11: I've never had "free" breakfast at a hotel before, probably because I've never stayed in a hotel before. When I tottered along the corridor from my room, I just happened to bump into Lesleigh, who seemed to be the only other person on the floor who was awake. (On the first morning that we were there, the hotel left a newspaper beside everybody's door. When we went up to breakfast, nobody had collected his paper except me. On the Sunday morning, after the tiff with the hotel during the banquet on the night before, no newspapers were left outside our doors.) When we arrived in the restaurant, a few other people were there, so we talked very quietly (out of consideration for those people who had started their three-day party too well the night before), ate corn flakes or eggs and bacon or anything else we could get for free, and made plans for wasting the morning until the official program began during the early afternoon. I cannot remember what anybody said during that breakfast, but I can remember that the warm Sydney sun filled the restaurant, that the coffee was nice and hot, and that even at nine o'clock in the morning I was sure that the magic ring of convention feeling had closed around the hotel, allowing the pure essence of fandom to infiltrate through the convention hotel, fill the rooms, and transform everything and everyone into glowing agents of fannishness. There was the sense that nothing about the convention could go wrong, and if it went wrong, nobody would notice anyway. For the first time in months, I felt relaxed, at peace with the world, and ready for anything.

INTERLUDE 2: There were some minor annoyances. Nobody could get room service during the three days of the convention. (Much later I discovered that the hotel had had four changes of management during the year in which the Syncon committee had been negotiating with it, that the latest change had taken place ten days before, and that the hotel was very short-handed as the new management had sacked most of the previous employees. But more of such matters later.) I couldn't find a can opener anywhere in the hotel room, so I rang the number that was listed as "Room service" in the hotel directory. After someone finally answered the phone, I asked whether I could get a can opener. "You can come and use the big one here in the kitchen if you like," came the answer. I didn't quite catch the guffaws from the kitchen as he put down the phone. A shopping expedition was called for. I needed to go shopping anyway: somehow I had forgotten to bring my slippers with me in my case. I cannot stand to spend three days non-stop wearing shoes, so I decided that I would need to buy slippers as well. I went out of the hotel and walked up to that main-street-whose-name-I-never-heard and stood gaping for some minutes. At midday yesterday, there had been one double-decker bus every minute, and it had been possible to cross the street by dodging cars. This Saturday morning, a whopping big green bus passed about every ten seconds and the cars didn't let up at all. As a skilled jay-walker from way back, even in the middle of Bourke Street, I was rather put out by this problem. But never fear; I can still run fairly fast, and not even a lunatic Sydney bus-driver managed to flatten me as I did my shopping. It took a while to find a shoe shop that stocked slippers; and to find a seventeen-cent can opener I had to wander down the back of the largest hardware shop I've ever seen.

And I kept hearing American accents. As I've already mentioned, there were actually four American voices at Syncon, and I had been listening hard the night before, trying to find out whether Harlan Ellison or Robert Silberberg

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might have just happened to drop in for the occasion. The streets of Bondi Junction seem to hold an invading army of Americans - or was it my imagination? Or have the hardened faces of Sydney-siders also metamorphosised into harder, dryer voices, accents which I've never heard in Melbourne streets? (I should explain that I've never heard an American accent in a Melbourne street, Vietnam soldiers on R & R leave were not allowed to leave Sydney, and other US tourists rarely venture south of the Murray River.) Someone told me later that an American colony has developed in Sydney. It is mainly composed of people who either manage American companies in Australia, or are convinced that USA is going to hell in a handbasket, but want to live in a country that at least reminds them of home. Anyway, since I've been back in Melbourne, which has familiar trams which I can dodge, I still haven't heard an American accent in the street; so I wasn't imagining things after all. Maybe I am paranoid, but to spend three days in Billy MacMahon's electorate is enough to make anyone feel paranoid.

SENSE OF WONDER 12: The Saturday program began with four simultaneous panels, THE EARLY PROPHETS, led by John Foyster (who kind of looks like one of them), POPULATION: THE BIG BANG, led by John Alderson, who would seem to me not particularly qualified to speak about this topic, ARTHUR C CLARKE AND 2001, Lee Harding's panel, upon which I was scheduled to appear, but from which I escaped in order to form part of the audience of THE SENSE OF WONDER, led by Lesleigh Luttrell and Shayne McDermack. To me, this was the cameo of the convention, so much so that the participants in at least one other panel (Lee's) joined us halfway through. This panel began, like so many good things, with discussions about science fiction, and then proceeded to more important topics. Lesleigh started well by saying that the books of Philip Dick gave her the greatest sense of wonder; as the first girl I've met who has liked Dick's works at all, Lesleigh rose another notch in my estimation. People talked about the s f authors who gave them the most sense of wonder. Alex Robb tried to entertain the idea that the New Wave writers, especially Ballard, are the Only True Possessors of Sense of Wonder. I thought that this was a ridiculous idea, and said so, but Alex never quite saw my point, and I wouldn't have a bar of his. I mentioned Niven's INCONSTANT MOON as the story that had given me the greatest sense of wonder in science fiction for quite some time. The discussion moved (inevitably) to Niven, and RINGWORLD, and other science fiction which does not give me a sense of wonder. Now, you may be asking, what did the leaders of the panel have to say about this topic? Well, between us, John Bangsund, Robin Johnson, Alex Robb, and a lot of other people didn't let them say much. For John Bangsund saved the day, dropped a few good jokes (which I've spent several days trying to remember, but can't) and started to talk about the things which really give us a sense of wonder. John Bangsund mentioned fandom and sex as two topics which inspired in him a much greater sense of wonder than any science fiction did. To exemplify his point (although not too explicitly) John talked about the kind of impact that RICHARD E GEIS, a fanzine written and published by Richard E Geis, had had upon him. At about this point Richard Geis became a kind of Ghost Guest of Honour at the convention, for whenever groups of fans gathered together, and especially when they gathered near John, the name of Geis reared its intrusive head. In his fanzine, Geis writes about the things that give him a sense of wonder (e.g. sex), and people who read his magazine get much more of a kick (if that is the right word) from it than they ever did from SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. John Bangsund then explained that his small-circulation, very personalised, Geis-like fanzines had drawn much more interesting letters of comment than any recent issues of his magazines which had talked about science fiction. Lesleigh talked about the kind of feeling that fandom embodied, the sense of communication, which can certainly be seen in Lesleigh's magazines, She should know a fair bit about the Sense of Wonder that is fandom at

its best, as she has helped to run one of the most interesting sections of it for several years. ...Anyway, I think we all decided that the real sense of wonder came from the fact that we were all at that spot, talking about those subjects, as fans, as part of fandom, imbued with that heady spirit of fannishness about which I was talking earlier. We all felt that the spirit of fandom had been resurrected in Australia at Syncon, and that we had identified what the whole event was all about. I just wish that I could remember some of John Bangsund's jokes, that's all!

SENSE OF WONDER 13: I attended only two items on the program that had much to do with the official theme. The best of these items was Tony Mitchell, of the Pollution Control Division of the NSW Department of Health, speaking about air pollution as it affects Sydney and other major cities. Although we could not completely cover the windows, so Mr Mitchell's slides showed a bit faintly, he was able to show quite a few things about pollution that I did not know before, e.g. that Vancouver, of all places, has one of the world's worst rates of air pollution; that the rate of air pollution in Sydney and in most other major world cities has been steadily falling during the last few years; and that, because the most pernicious source of air pollution is still the motor car, pollution control remains in the control of individual motorists. As Tony Mitchell told me after the talk, he weighted it so that it put the emphasis on the last point, because so many conservationists cry doom, and expect government and big business to perform miracles of pollution control, whereas in the long run pollution exists because individual consumers and motorists allow it to exist. The talk went over very smoothly - until Robin Johnson came in late and started to ask awkward questions. "You should have been warned about Robin Johnson," called out somebody in the audience. :: You thought that I had forgotten about my Little Sensawonder Keynote Sermon, hadn't you? Well, I had forgotten about it. But now that you've mentioned it: I was glad that Australian conventions have reached the stage where we can ask people such as Tony Mitchell and Don Herbison-Evans (whose talk next day I was forced to miss, regretfully) to address us, that they know that they won't be talking to just a lot of "space freaks"; and we are confident of hearing knowledgeable speakers. Now we have reached the stage that US conventions reached some time ago, when we call in real experts as speakers.

SENSE OF WONDER 14: The auction is always one of my favourite parts of any convention, especially when the auctioneer is Dick Jensen, or (on one memorable occasion) John Foyster, or Lee Harding. Lee came well-prepared - with a can of something or other. It seemed inexhaustible. As always I tried to show Lesleigh how the local fauna and flora behave, so I told her the story of how Harding, stoned completely out of his mind, made almost as much money for Ron Smith during the auction at Eastercon as Ron Smith makes in a normal working day, and asked her to watch carefully the following performance. Well, maybe it was not Harding at his very, very best, but he was daunted by the quality, or lack of it, of the items that he had to auction. Shayne McCormack, orange hat on her head, hands on hips, and glint in her eye, helped Harding while he tried to interest the audience (the largest auction audience ever at an Australian convention) in the less valuable items, and Barry Danes and Jim Morgan kept score of whether Harding or the audience were winning. (Long parenthesis: one of the best things about any convention is that I can always count on a sincere welcome from those two stalwarts of Sydney fandom, Jim Morgan and Barry Danes. They don't write to SFC or subscribe to it, they don't seem to write for other fanzines, and they are rarely mentioned in club reports, but they are always there, helping to keep Sydney fandom together. When I met Barry at Syncon, he grinned and said, "Remember the propeller caps?" Anybody who read my report about Adventon

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would remember our ride through Adelaide streets wearing propeller caps.) Harding pushed through the slush pile as fast as possible, made as many jokes as he could, and conducted a joke contest with a bearded bloke at the other end of the room. The bearded bloke, whom I have never seen before or since, and who disappeared after the auction, did not meekly laugh at all of Harding's jokes as the rest of us did. He took up Harding's gauntlet and nearly vanquished him at one stage. However, out of the huge pile of old paperbacks Harding fished a book that was even mouldier than the rest, held it in the air, and said, "What am I offered for THE PRAWNS OF NULL-A?" For some reason, this fairly standard Harding line broke up our bearded friend altogether, and he retired from the contest. "Aren't you going to buy anything?" said Lesleigh to me. Ah no; auctions are much too entertaining to waste time buying any of the items. :: Sense of wonder?: trying to guess whether Lee Harding is as entertaining an auctioneer as Harlan Ellison is supposed to be, and marvelling that anybody like Harding could exist at all on either side of the Pacific.

SENSE OF WONDER 15: The other "serious" panel that I attended was THE SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION, run by Jeff Harris and Ron Ward. I knew Jeff already from the Adelaide Convention, where I found that he was one of the most entertaining speakers about science whom I had heard. The only trouble is that I can never persuade him to write about science, or anything else, for my magazines. Jeff can communicate his enthusiasm for science and his enthusiasm for science fiction, and still provide the kind of sceptical commentary that I like so much in the writing of (say) Stanislaw Lem. (Jeff Harris is a fan of SOLARIS and Lem's articles in SFC.) I hadn't met Ron Ward before. I'm not sure what I'd imagined he would be like, but he wasn't like that. He is a teacherish person (if I may use that adjective without appearing rude) who also has a great interest in science, a bit older than I expected, and with some interesting ideas that were quite different from Jeff's. That other don of the Australian let's-hear-it-for-science-in-science-fiction school, John Foyster, listened to the discussion, but did not say much until towards the end. Ron Ward took notes on a board, and if anybody copied them down, they form the only record that anybody has of any of the panels. Jeff began to speak about the ways in which s f writers ignore basic science when writing their stories; for awhile he covered basically the same items that he covered in his engrossing talk at Advention. However, somehow the discussion slipped from science to technology, which is inevitable where two or three s f fans are gathered together and one of them is Eric Lindsay. We talked about the inventions, rather than the scientific developments, which s f writers have predicted; and those that they have failed to predict, such as the computer. I pointed out that the most difficult inventions to predict are those most important for writing s f stories, i.e. the kind of inventions that affect personal relationships, even household gadgets and the like. I peddled my old line that none of these predictions and developments were important to the s f writer unless he could show how they changed the lives of individual human beings. Almost inevitably, we discussed the fact that many of the scientific developments that were predicted, accurately, in high hopes for the future, have had a damaging effect on the world, and have added innumerable complications to the job of the s f writer. All in all, we covered nearly every possible reason why it's impossible to be a science fiction writer in 1972. And the Sow? That writers keep trying, and a very small number of them succeed at times. And, as I've said often before, that sense of wonder that comes to my mind when I think that nearly everything still has to be written in science fiction, and maybe someday someone will write it.

SENSE OF WONDER 16: Is "Sense of Wonder" the right term to apply to Paul Stevens? If I used the term "Sense of Horror", I don't think that Paul would

be insulted. Apart from having the second-worst taste in films of anybody in Melbourne, the greatest ability to appear to work while not really working of anybody I know, and a true talent for acting the parts of horrible monsters, Paul Stevens is also one of the few really funny humourists in Australian fandom, one of our very few good actors, and even, on occasions, he is quite a good guy. And, at every Australian convention, Paul organises the PAUL STEVENS HOUR. Once it was called the PAUL STEVENS WAITING FOR GODOT HALF HOUR, but on one great day Godot (alias Professor Humphrey Tape) arrived, and the PSHH has long since stretched to one hour's length, or even longer. The quality of each PSH varies directly with the amount of rehearsal carried out by the actors, and it was obvious that Syncon's show did not have the benefit of hours of tedious practice. But it had several good scripts, several very good performers, and one of the largest audiences ever in the history of this unique event. (Lesleigh told us that there is nothing like the PAUL STEVENS HOUR anywhere in American fandom. But then there couldn't possibly be anyone like Paul Stevens anywhere.) John Bangsund and Valma Brown gave readings from a volume of bad verse - i.e. a volume that appeared recently of the most entertainingly bad poems of the nineteenth century. This performance, like most of the others, suffered from a lack of adequate PA equipment. Most people could hear all of Val's performance, but many people could not hear John at all. But there are few things better than bad verse - at s f conventions, anyway. Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown performed some sketches which confirmed our worst fears about Australia's longest-haired fan - and Paul Stevens brought on the PICK A BOX show, conducted by your genial host, Mr Stevens himself. The script of this was very funny, but, as I said, some of the actors were well-prepared and some were not. John Bangsund did not even know that he was going to be a victim, and he gave one of the best performances. Bill Wright made me laugh by just standing around and looking like Bill Wright, and several other Melbourne fans met their grisly ends with the proper savoir mourir. Quiz shows have long plagued Australian television screens; Mr Stevens hosted the ultimate (for the contestants, that is) television quiz show. I hope Paul finds the chance to present this script at an American convention sometime. (I didn't hear all of the proceedings, because I was frazzled by the sexy voice that delivered - if that is the right word - the commercials in between bits of the program. It took me the entire program to work out that The Voice was that of Valma Brown. You were right, Leigh Edmonds; Valma can act, after all. That Voice could sell me anything.) After the dead, dying, or consumed actors were carried off the stage, Paul Stevens presented the ultimate event: THE AUSTRALIA IN 75 FILM! This was the first time that I had seen any part of it, and it was also the first time that anybody had heard any part of the soundtrack. Fortunately, most Americans who have seen it agree with me that it is brilliant, and the finest piece of promotion we could have had for the Australian bid for the 1975 World Convention. I will never forget the first sight of Merv Binns - in a suit! - striding into that palatial emporium, the Space Age Book Shop, surrounded by those fawning acolytes and slaves Stephen Solomon and Malcolm Hunt. (Merv is lucky to get a corner of a table on which to work, let alone an executive washroom.) Bill Wright's acting talents were slightly wasted in his brief role as the Fanarchist, but Paul Stevens showed his true genius as Anti-Fan. (According to Bill Wright, there are at least eight hundred requests from American fans for Anti-Fan tee shirts.) I hope that Anti-Fan's extraordinary ability to hop around corners, through parks, and from one side of Melbourne to the other in seconds brought as many laughs at LACon as it did at Syncon. All the other actors, the victims of Anti-Fan, were very good as well, although Leigh and Valma gave me the impression that they were not acting. It was also good to see a cameo performance by a No 88 (East Preston) tram in one scene. Malcolm Hunt striding along Swanston Street to the accompaniment of WALTZING MATILDA

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and wearing his Aussiefan gear must be the funniest thing I've seen all year. But as most viewers did, I liked the villain of this film better than the hero. Congratulations from me to John Litchen, without whose generosity and directing skills the film could never have been made, and Paul Stevens, without whose talent for utter madness the film would not have been the treat that it was. And Lee Harding's commentary, which was recorded about a week after Syncon, was very good as well. I never really thought that Melbourne fandom could create something like this. They have, and they should do it again. :: And as if that was not enough, Ron Clarke showed his movies of Syncon I and Advention. I'm not sure which was more amusing - the sight of Leigh Edmonds when he had short hair (two-and-a-half years ago at Syncon I) or the sight of John Bangsund waving his red cape in front of a motor cycle at Advention, and making a convincing imitation of a Toreador. The only thing more pleasant than an s f convention is to revive memories of past s f conventions.

UNPLEASANT INTERLUDE: I hope that it won't become a habit. Staging disastrous banquets, that is. Firstly, the Eastercon banquet; then the Syncon banquet. But from all reports, the Worldcon has not had a good banquet for years, so at least we were in good company. It's not even as if I can blame the Syncon committee, or any other convenient scapegoats, except the hotel itself, which had as many problems as we did. However, the hotel staff could have taken the trouble to provide enough seats. And they might have had the courtesy to separate our area from the area where other diners in the hotel restaurant were eating. But they didn't. Paul Stevens packed away his bag of entertainments until the next convention, most of us changed for dinner (not quite sure whether this was one of those "collar-and-tie" restaurants that still darken some corners of Australia), and we arrived - to find that there were tables set for about three-quarters of the number of people who had already paid for the banquet. Shayne McCormack, who had been working during most of the last two days anyway, and who was almost asleep on her feet, had to solve some tricky problems very fast. After some negotiations, the staff brought in another table and crowded it in with the others. However, they did not move another group of very rowdy, very drunk people who were sitting in our area. One very obnoxious man hurled insults at anybody within earshot, while Shayne, Bob, and other members of the committee tried to sort out the mess. By this time it was nearly 9 o'clock, many of us had not eaten since midday, and tempers were becoming frayed. I sat down at the main table, and then discovered that John Foyster was seated, but there was no room left for Elizabeth and Gillian. The only two places left were two seats at a small table set right apart from the main table. Jean Jordan and I offered to change places with Elizabeth, but I don't suppose she wanted to upset things more than they were already. We all looked at each other, at the noisy melee at other tables, and wondered what disaster could happen next. Well, the food was cold. It had been prepared for the time when we were supposed to arrive for dinner, but the rearrangement of seating took nearly half an hour. The kitchen staff kept the food waiting for that half an hour. At least one person was very upset because she didn't receive a meal at all; somehow Shayne received (or gave) the brunt of this encounter. When finally she could sit down, all I could mouth were some of my meagre store of comforting words, and hoped that the "banquet" would finish before Shayne was finished. Bob Smith was so busy that, as far as I can remember, he never did sit down for his meal. Bob and Lesleigh and John Bangsund were to sit at the top of the main table, but for most of the time Lesleigh sat there looking magnificent, but a hit lost, and John Bangsund tried to joke his way through an uncheery situation. Fortunately, the man who was sitting to my left introduced himself, and he was Jock McKenna, one of the many SFC/LOCUS subscribers whom I had never met. I forgot what we argued about but at least this meeting meant that the night was not wasted altogether.

Of course, we've all scratched our heads since Syncon and tried to work out the best way to beat the Banquet Problem. Of course, we must have a written contract with the management of any hotel where we stage the banquet - but, as I have already mentioned, the management of this particular hotel had changed ten days before. Of course, we should do this... and that... But I can only be grateful that the banquet was the only real problem of the whole convention.

SENSE OF WONDER 17: The best thing about the banquet disaster was that it forced us to abandon any idea that we could hold the speeches and presentations in the restaurant, which became noisier as the night wore on. At about 11 pm, after nearly everybody had grabbed food of some kind, we retired, beaten, to the convention rooms downstairs. We were exhausted, but determined that we would make up in jollity during the rest of the night for the depression of the banquet. At about 11.30 pm, the Presentations began, with John Bangsund as genial toastmaster. Actually, John had few words to say, and wisely, he shortened proceedings as much as possible. Firstly, he presented the Ditmar Awards. Lee Harding looked a bit surprised when John presented him with the Ditmar (Australian Science Fiction Achievement Award) for BEST AUSTRALIAN FICTION. Lee's story was FALLEN SPACEMAN. "I didn't know there was any Australian science fiction published last year," said Lee, modestly. Lesleigh Luttrell received the Ditmar Award (BEST INTERNATIONAL FICTION) on behalf of Larry Niven, who won the award for RINGWORLD. Actually, some of us thought that John was giving Lesleigh the trophy for being the Best Guest of Honour Ever. Then the Ditmar for BEST AUSTRALIAN FANZINE. Well, I've already told the story about that (on the back cover of SFC 28). One of the committee members had given me a slight hint that I might have won the award, so I had a sort of speech prepared in my mind. But when I stood there, and John gave me the trophy, and I looked at all those people who were so obviously ased that I had won, I could barely say a thing. I garbled a few words; stopped, said a few more, and staggered to my seat. John had said some nice things, but I can't remember those either. The speech that I meant to give is on the back cover of SFC 28. When I sat down, Paul Stevens was the first to congratulate me, and then quite a few other people, and... well, you know. These things happen very rarely. (Thank you everybody.) There were more awards: John Bangsund had designed the A75 symbol, which the Melbourne S F Club had made into a medallion which Paul Stevens presented to Lesleigh. She wore it all the rest of the time that she was in Australia; I don't know whether she still wears it. Then Robin Johnson "presented" the PAT TERRY AWARD FOR HUMOUR in a very strange way. "We haven't had time to decide an award," said Robin, telling us, in some detail, the reasons why nobody had managed to decide which was the best piece of humorous science fiction published during 1971. "Any bids?" said Robin. Robin himself suggested THE AUTHENTIC TOUCH, by Jack Wodhams, John Foyster called out THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT, by John Sladek, and there were some other suggestions. On a show of hands, Jack Wodhams won. Ho hum. I agree that Jack's novel probably was the funniest piece of s f during that year, but those voting procedures were a bit rough and ready. Finally, John Bangsund introduced Lesleigh to give her Guest of Honour Speech. With great good sense, since it was nearly midnight, Lesleigh confined her remarks to five minutes. "I believe in FIAWOL," she said. "Fandom is a way of life." She told of some of the ways in which she was involved in fandom in USA, and some of her ideals as a fan. "But I hope that you're not expecting too much from me," she said. "I'm really only a very ordinary fan." At this, John Bangsund was heard to murmur in open-mouthed admiration, "You're beautiful!"

I'm not sure what was more exciting, the presentations or meeting people afterwards. Paul Anderson came up to me and said, "Will you come to our SFC XXX 17

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victory party later?" I said yes, and wondered in what sense SFC's win was a "victory" for the Adelaide fans, who have always been SFC's greatest supporters. I had idle thoughts of the various illegal activities in which they might have indulged to secure that victory. Damien Broderick, who is a man I respect very greatly, came up to me and said, "Let me touch it" (referring to the Ditmar trophy). I was touched that he took so much pleasure in the fact that SFC had won. (Damien once gave me one of the best compliments that I've received; he said, "It's good to know that somebody is still sceptical about science fiction.") Damien began to ask Lesleigh about Women's Lib in USA, but somehow they didn't seem to be talking about the same Women's Lib movement. At about one o'clock in the morning, the official photographer took the picture that appears in this issue of SFC. I began to talk to Paul Power, a seventeen-year-old animationist and cartoonist who seems to have more energy in him than in the rest of Australian fandom put together. Some of his cartoons have already appeared in various Australian fanzines, and I can only guess at what he will be doing at the ripe old age of twenty-one. I talked to lots of other people or stood around and looked dazed. I remembered that I was supposed to attend a party in the room of the Adelaide fans. It was a relaxed party of goodwill and not too much conversation. On the shaft I stood my Ditmar beside ~~XXXXXX/XXXXXX/XXXXXX~~ Larry Niven's. John Foyster kept turning the radio dial to find a station with the test cricket scores. John Alderson was telling very down-home stories and offering people samples of his home-brewed wine, labelled sheep dip by all those idiotic enough to try a sample. John, who seems to suffer even more than I do from sensory deprivation, since he lives most of the year on a farm six miles from Maryborough where he publishes such fanzines as CHAO, made up for lost time at Syncon. Rumour has it (since there were many events at the convention which I didn't see) that Margaret Oliver suffered most from the attentions of Australia's Lochinar of the Mulga. Anyway, I managed to avert my eyes from Mr Alderson's worst excesses, and also got to sit next to Lesleigh for a whole two hours, which was the best possible way to end a very good night. Thanks, Alan and Paul and Jeff and Joy, and that bloke-whose-name-I-never-did-find-out. At 3 am I gave up the struggle against tiredness, and went off to my room. But I couldn't go to sleep: I grinned to myself, and made three cups of coffee in a row, and not-quite-did handstands around the room, and thought, "Well, well, well; you never can tell." I had gone right into orbit, and you'll forgive me if I haven't come down yet. At 4 am I collapsed, and woke up three hours later, feeling completely refreshed and ready for another day of the same.

SENSE OF WONDER 18: Sunday, August 13. Still 65° outside. Still sunny. Very few people awake until late. (Robin Johnson didn't find out until the last day that the hotel provided free breakfast.) At about 9 am, I went upstairs, and had breakfast with Lee and Carla Harding. Nobody could trust him- or herself to speak much above a whisper. Heads get delicate after a day like Saturday. Alan and Paul came up to breakfast. Alan had hired an Avis car for the weekend, so trips were planned. Meanwhile, the hotel played one of their last little tricks on us. At some unearthly hour, such as 8.30, when people such as Robin Johnson were reaching the middle of their night's sleep, the hotel rang all the people who had rooms, and said that unless they were staying the next night, they had to be out of their rooms by 10 am. This posed quite a problem, since the program was due to continue until 5 pm on the same day. Where to put our things? Finally, I arranged to place my belongings in the room of Leigh and Valma, who were staying the next night. By then Alan, Paul, David Grigg, and Lesleigh were in the foyer waiting for a much-too-late Bruce Gillespie.

Alan Sandercock is a quiet, unassuming person who has more competence in his moustache than I have in the whole of my thick head. Without any fuss or



* Some people might object because I wrote a lot about the Adelaide S F Convention at New Year, and now I am going to make a few short comments about the Melbourne S F Convention at Easter. These remarks about Melcon will be shorter because I remember less about it. From what people tell me, most of the action took place after midnight at Melcon, but because I had to catch a tram home each night, and the last tram leaves at midnight, I did not catch as much of the action as I did at Advention.

But Melcon had its moments. During the entire four days, I kept thinking stray thoughts like "Comfortable chairs? Carpets on the floors? Movies and parties all night? Microphones which actually let us hear what the speakers are saying?"

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This can't be a Melbourne convention, Gillespie. Wake up and stop dreaming." The dream continued, and the Savoy Plaza continued to provide the kind of comforts that I never expected to find at a science fiction convention. As I said in SFC 26, Australians seem to thrive on discomfort, and such events as Adventon and various Melbourne conventions held at the Somerset Place clubrooms certainly gave us plenty to thrive on. How well I remember the bracing, spine-crushing backs of those chairs at the Capri Theatre. Wasn't I lucky to be the only person who actually heard the speech of the great Greg and Grae at Mini Melcon, 1971? Those were the days: and thank ghu they have gone forever.

But, as I say, while I was sitting there at the Savoy Plaza hotel, digging my shoes into the carpets, poking my finger into the comfortable foam of the comfortable chairs, and listening to every hysterical cry of Lee Harding through the speakers, I did enjoy most of the program. Fan Guest of Honour, Dennis Stocks (from Brisbane) began proceedings well with (what else?) his Guest of Honour's speech, in which he told jokes at the expense of his Brisbane brethren and convinced us not only that we should plan to attend Q-Con 2 during New Year, 1973, but that we should allow Dennis Stocks to take over the rest of Australian fandom as well. Dennis sky-dives, which may account for his strange enthusiasm for running conventions. The program showed a dangerous tendency to stay on time when Elizabeth Foyster began the ELIZABETH FOYSTER HALF HOUR as soon as Dennis had finished his talk. Elizabeth used the epidio-whatsitsname to illustrate her talk about WOMEN'S LIB AND SCIENCE FICTION. We couldn't quite guess where her barbs were aimed. Elizabeth convinced us, if we needed to be convinced, that science fiction writers have never heard of Women's Lib. Again hardened conventioners blinked when the program continued on time, and Lee Harding described the strange people who wander into the Space Age Book Shop. (No, he didn't talk about strange people like me who occasionally pay their bills; although he did talk about people like me who write for the mass-circulation magazines like THE EDUCATIONAL MAGAZINE about science fiction, so that Lee Harding can flog some more books.) Just before Lee spoke, we tried to buy cups of coffee from the Rainbow Room on the third floor of the Savoy Plaza. It was a bit difficult to get service at 3 pm on Good Friday afternoon, but finally we made so much noise that a long-suffering-looking waiter served us. Having worked our miracle and obtained cups of coffee, other people tried to drink them for us. We missed a bit of Lee Harding's talk, unfortunately.

I will begin a new paragraph for John Flaus, because his talk, SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY IN THE CINEMA (which really discussed horror movies) remains in my mind as the highlight of the convention. John had recently arrived in Melbourne from Sydney to take up one of the first film lecturer positions that any Victorian university has offered. John is Senior Tutor in Film in the Media Centre of the School of Education, Latrobe University. Somehow Paul Stevens or one of the other convention organisers had persuaded John to attend the convention, and John was the first to admit that he had no idea what kind of audience he would face. He came prepared with a rather academic talk based on Kay Tarratt's articles, MONSTERS OF THE ID, which appeared in FILMS AND FILMING last year. After John had Defined His Terms and Polished His Propositions, he saw the light of intelligence glint in the eyes of his audience (although I admit that this was a trick of the late afternoon sun shining through the venetian blinds) and he developed his talk into a most interesting psychoanalytic interpretation of horror films, especially of such films as INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS and THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN. John Flaus' great love of the cinema medium showed during his talk, and I was almost regretful that I had to point out to him that there were some people, including

myself, who didn't see much value in horror films. (Because of my confession, Peter House could barely bring himself to speak to me during the rest of the convention. As for Paul Stevens - probably he has private detectives checking to find out whether I have a history of mental illness.) John tried to explain that there are some films that are beautiful even if they are also crappy. After "tea break", which was quite a jolly, if expensive, dinner in the Savoy Plaza's Rainbow Room, I had a chance to talk again to John Flaus, and I began to see much more of his point of view. On his part, John admitted that science fiction fans proved to be human, and even intelligent (well, he didn't say that...), and he was amazed that s f fans actually liked each other. Afterwards I gained the impression that on the other hand meetings of film fans are like Mafia staff parties.

Some convention members sat through the entire thirteen episodes of FLASH GORDON, 1936 vintage, but I confess that I gave up after the first three episodes on Friday night. Fortunately Paul Stevens showed ASTERIX AND CLEOPATRA as well. Nobody could understand the French-language soundtrack, but the songs were enjoyable. That most-anticipated of Melbourne fan occasions, the PAUL STEVENS SHOW, followed. Leigh Edmonds provided sound effects while the lovely Valma Brown, the devilish Lee Harding, the debonair John Foyster, and many others gave a reading of the script of the first BUCK ROGERS radio show. After that entertainment had finished in a fizz of static, Robin Johnson gave an excellent rendition of God speaking by telephone to his terrestrial agents. I can't think of anybody better suited for the part. I had to leave to catch that infernal last tram just before Malcolm Hunt recreated The Hulk in person, to be followed by KING KONG and other movies that finished at 4 am. Several members of the convention had taken rooms on the fourth floor, so room parties continued until the convention began again next morning. I preferred to get some sleep.

On Saturday, April 1, John Foyster, who was one of the other convention members who had gone to bed the previous night early enough to ~~rise~~ the next day to begin proceedings at 2 pm, began to talk about the POLYPS. He showed us some illustrations of polyps from familiar-looking old magazines. We looked puzzled. "When Paul Stevens told me that I was going to speak this afternoon," John explained, "I thought that he said I was to talk about polyps, I was puzzled too, but I looked up all these pictures of polyps. Later I realised that Paul wanted me to talk about the pulps." So John talked informatively and entertainingly about THE PULPS. Among many other esoteric facts, John showed just why one dollar spent on an old pulp magazine at the Space Age Book Shop was far better spent than eighty-five cents for a 1972 GALAXY magazine. John gave a buyer's guide to the best pulp magazines (especially STARTLING) and showed some of the best work of some of the best pulp illustrators, such as Virgil Finlay. If, after John finished, I decided that, despite the earnest efforts of the organisers, this was to be a very good convention after all, the idea strengthened during the next item. Mervyn Binns moderated - or refereed - the panel, or all-in fight, on UFOs. People like David Grigg said that it didn't matter whether or not flying saucers buzzed overhead, a bloke whose-name-I-have-forgotten said why he thought that governments were concealing evidence about UFOs, and the members of the audience gave excited versions of nearly every shade of opinion in between. The "UFO-mystics", as Lee Harding described them, gesticulated and began to argue with Christine McGowan in the audience. Colin Watson gave a believable account of his own UFO-sighting, the steps that he took to make sure that nobody could doubt his credibility, and the contempt with which the newspapers treated his story. Even I became flustered during the debate, especially as Merv Binns kept ignoring my raised hand. Anticlimactically, the auction followed.
((*He was Bob Rogers.*))

BRUCE
GILLESPIE

The most interesting sections of this convention, compared with Adventon in particular and most other Australian conventions in general, were the serious talks and panels. This pleases me in particular, but I noticed that although people became drowsier after dissipated nights during the convention, they also stayed to listen to the "serious" items. Perhaps it's the Melbourne weather that influenced the change of behaviour, but I was glad to find that we can hold a free, programless convention like Adventon within a few months of a tightly-structured, informative convention like Melcon, and both could be successes.

I'm not sure which category, serious or fannish, fits the Banquet, which was held on the Saturday night. Perhaps I should include another category: "disastrous". Well, not quite; it was one of those disasters that I wouldn't have missed, although I did resent paying \$3 for the lousy meal. This was the first time that an Australian committee had held a formal banquet, American-convention-style, using hotel facilities. Now we see why every American convention committee receives complaints about their banquets, even though they still hold banquets. We paid for the "service", or for the drinks-waiter, or for anything beside the food. However, like other Convention committees, ours couldn't guess this beforehand. The banquet started late, and the waiters took longer than expected to serve it. The Kaiser Wilhelm Victory Band, a group of musicians who were going to play after the Guest of Honour's Speech, arrived at the right time, but (I've heard) had to leave for another engagement long before the Guest of Honour's Speech had ended. Ron Smith was forced to begin his Guest of Honour's Speech very late, and he decided to talk about the new range of sex books that Gold Star (his employers) were going to sell in Australia. They had already commissioned some Australian authors to write the books, and at that time Ron was offering quite generous advances. (I should explain that that scheme has since fallen through.) Ron showed us the cover paintings for the books, which had been named already and had plot synopses written for them. The covers didn't look particularly pornographic, but otherwise they were very effective. Ron handed around the covers and talked about his great schemes, which would have been all right if only a small group of people had not objected to Ron's speech in general, and its subject in particular. Although Lee Harding steered Ron into talking about his Good Old Days (to us, anyway) in American fandom, the same group of people still provided some interference. Naturally, the rest of us were all the more determined to enjoy Ron's talk, but I suspect that the opposition won. The best moments of the Banquet still remained; with much long-winded salesmanship Lee Harding managed to sell individual copies of a set of Ron Smith's Hugo-winning fanzine, INSIDE, for an average price of \$3 each, and one went for \$9. No doubt the flow of wine helped the flow of money. The Banquet shuddered to a stop at 11 pm. Some people had the cheek to demand, and see, more movies, after it had finished, and one report said that Ron Smith managed to talk to some convention members til 5 o'clock the next morning.

As you might guess, the next day's proceedings went fairly quietly - gingerly, some might say. Some people had some panels on such subjects as Comics and Australia-In-75, and Lee Harding and George Turner appeared with me on a panel about THE HUGOS AND OTHER AWARDS. Fortunately, Lee had with him a list of the recent Nebula nominations. Rob Gerrand, John Foyster, and others in the audience brought up some excellent points about problems in choosing Hugos, and Lee made a few good jokes (which wasn't a bad performance, after the night before.) Vaguely I can remember that I gave the reasons why Australian fanzines in general, and S F COMMENTARY in particular, had little chance of making the Hugo nomination ballot. During the next panel, Lee Harding asked such people as Ron Graham and Ron Smith about S F PUBLISHING IN AUSTRALIA. Ron Smith told why he didn't think it was possible to publish s f in Australia, and Ron

Graham and John Foyster demonstrated the economic facts why nobody could afford to publish even an offset, mail-order s f magazine in Australia. I hope that Ron Graham ignores the gloomy figures, anyway, and goes ahead with the project that he has been thinking about for some time, and which he may yet put into practice. Sunday finished magnificently, as Cocteau's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST was shown. This was the first time that I had seen this film, which proved a hotbed of psychoanalytic interpretations (a la John Flaus' talk). Indeed, John would have been surprised to find, if he had attended the entire convention, how many jokes can be made at the expense of psychoanalytic terminology. I recall that other FLASH GORDON episodes were shown, but I didn't stay to see them.

Next morning, the interstate conventioners, such as Paul Anderson and Alan Sandercock, reported that they had celebrated the end of the convention by staying up all night. As well, the films had finished at 5 am. Therefore, I found it weird that people were still watching films when I arrived at 2 pm. The rest of the survivors spent the few hours of the fourth day of the convention (surely Paul and Merv have now learned not to hold any more four-day conventions?) talking to each other, both informally and as part of a round-table "audience panel". Paul Stevens asked Lee Harding what was his favourite s f novel (Lee did not answer directly, but said that EARTH ABIDES is probably the s f book that is the favourite of the widest range of people); Lee Harding asked the same question of John Foyster (which he didn't answer directly; he said that BURNING OF THE BRAIN, by Cordwainer Smith, was his favourite s f short story); and I asked Leigh Edmonds to describe the fanzine that he would like to produce if he had unlimited finance and time (Leigh's ideal fanzine would contain nothing but music criticism written by the world's greatest music critics). After a few more questions, we staged the SCIENCE FICTION FANZINE FACTORY, which was good fun, except that only the participants, and none of the audience, stayed to watch how fanzines are put together. The result of our "efforts" appeared in the April ANZAPA mailing. John Foyster spent most of the time disturbing the efforts of those people who were trying to type stencils.

So yet another convention pattered to a stop? That's not quite right. As usual, it was only during the last few, less hectic hours of the convention that I managed to meet some of the more interesting people who attended. I spoke to Liz George, who has many of the same ideas about education as I have. She had spent the whole night of one of the room-parties trying to convince people that schools have had it, but even s f fans, who probably dislike schools more than most other people, still thought that schools were necessary in society. I met Charles Taylor and Erich Bak, who had both been buying S F COMMENTARY conscientiously at the Space Age Book Shop for nearly a year, but had never subscribed directly. Charles is another Philip Dick fan, so I wish we had met earlier. At times during the convention I managed to speak to Paul, Alan, and Jeff, from Adelaide, Michael O'Brien from Hobart, and Shayne McCormack from Sydney, who told me that SFC's covers weren't much good. I agreed, and asked Shayne to send me some of her own drawings.

And you would have noticed already the absence of John Bangsund, who had already moved to Canberra. This accounts for the lack of the usual spate of surrealistic stories that accompany Australian convention reports. However, Lee Harding did his best to deputise for John Bangsund. I can't imagine an Australian convention without either of them. I hope that both will attend Syncon, and so will all other Australian s f fans, and even some overseas people, including the DUFF winner, whoever that might be.

THUS SPAKE EVERYBODY

Thanks to TONY THOMAS, the Eastercon committee now has transcriptions of almost all the formal panels and talks from that convention. I have four pages left in this magazine, not forty-four, so I've decided to "pick the eyes" out of the material that Tony has given me. I hope that eventually all these talks will be published complete. Dennis Stocks' Guest of Honour Speech should be printed all at once, so I hope that he will forgive me if I don't publish any part of it right now. Also, please excuse the large number of quotes from Lee Harding. Because he is one of Melbourne's most entertaining speakers, he appeared on most of the panels.

SCIENCE FICTION TODAY (THE HUGO, AND NEBULA AWARDS)

BRUCE GILLESPIE Lee, if you wanted to win a Hugo, how would you go about it?

LEE HARDING I'd move to America, I'd get to know a lot of fans, I'd write articles for the fanzines, I'd certainly ensure I had a beautiful wife, whom I'd probably call Fuzzyblue Harding. I'd write a book.

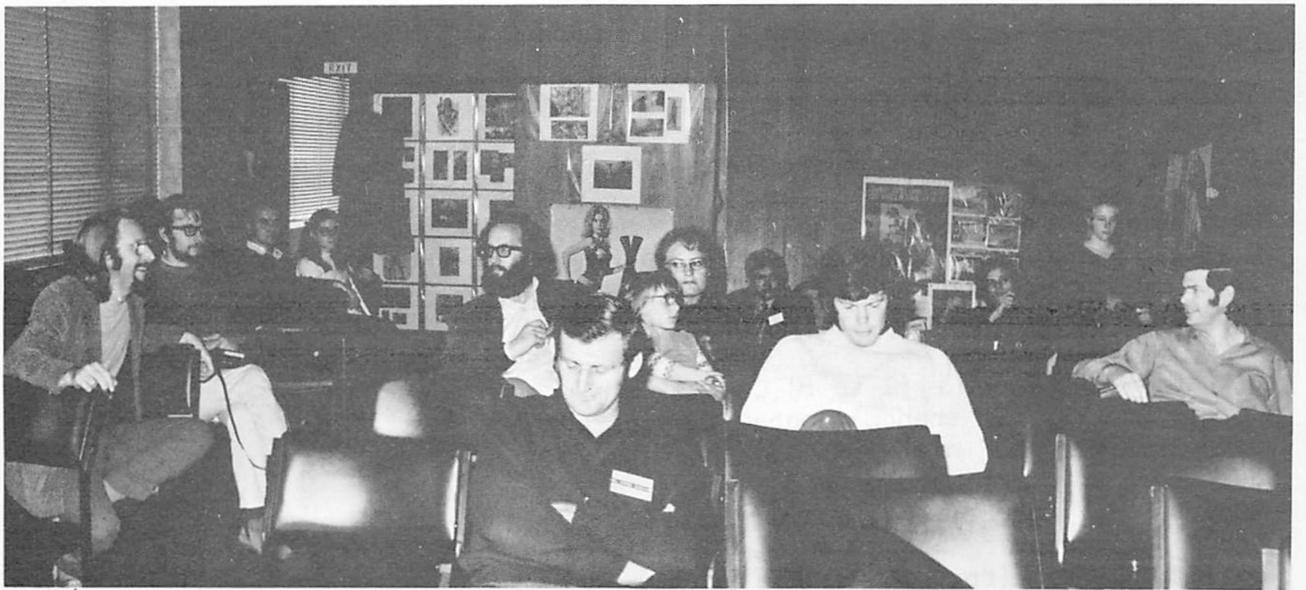
(VOICE) A good book?

HARDING Well, every book you write is a good book until you see it afterwards, isn't it? I'd shake as many hands as possible. Now if D G Compton would get out of his well, or wherever he lives in England, go over to America and meet some of these people, he'd have a Hugo like that, if they liked him as a person. And I don't think a Hugo has ever been awarded to a misogynist. Let's see the Hugo list. Larry Niven - who dislikes Larry Niven? Poul Anderson - one of the most learned, one of the friendliest people around. Bob Silverberg - everybody likes him. Bob Tucker. Hal Clement. There's no morally objectionable writer on that list. The short stories: There's Sturgeon - fandom's loved Sturgeon for years; R A Lafferty, that impish, middle-aged fellow; Gordon Dickson; Laumer, Ellison, Bova, Silverberg, Leiber, and Dean Koontz. Well, you've got to like him, or he'll stomp on you. It speaks for itself.

SELLING SCIENCE FICTION

(Lee Harding works as assistant manager of the Space Age Book Shop.)

(VOICE) You mentioned "dealings with more eccentric customers." How would you define these eccentric customers?



John (back row), Kevin (middle row), and
Susan (front row) with the group.



CASTERCON PHOTOS

Photos by Gary Hoff.

TOP: Left: Fanzine production panel - John Foyster interrupting Shayne McCormack's efforts to type, watched by David Grigg.

Right: Top: Publishers' panel (l to r): Merv Binns, Lee Harding, Ron Smith, John Foyster, Ron Graham. Bottom: Fanzine Panel (l to r) Peter House, David Grigg, John Foyster, Paul Stevens, Lee Harding, Leigh Edmonds, Merv Binns.

MIDDLE: Open Panel - (l to r) Lee Harding, Dennis Stocks, (in shadow) George Turner(?), John Straede and his wife, John Foyster, Jeff Harris, Carla Harding and Belinda, Bob Rogers, ?, Rob Gerrand, Shayne McCormack, Bruce Gillespie.

BOTTOM: Left: (foreground) Ron Graham, Cy Hord, Kevin Dillon, (background) John Breden, (bored) Leigh Edmonds.

Right: Robin Johnson: "What are you reading in PLAYBOY, Christine?"; Christine McGowan: "The science fiction."

"Eccentric" means slightly off-centre. Anyway, I've talked about HARDING eccentric customers. I've talked about those ANALOG readers. Look, there's one guy who stands there and lectures me about what s f should be. He's probably doing Physics somewhere. Now Stephen Solomon tells me when I put up the wrong posters, but he doesn't lecture me about s f and what it should be. A young lady came in the other day to buy UFO books and she had this starry-eyed look in her eyes. She said, "Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it marvellous?" I said, "Yes." I don't know what she was talking about but I said, "Yes." It was a good ploy. If you look at somebody with stars in their eyes and say, "No", there's money walking out the door. We got talking, and she leafed through this UFO book, saying, "Isn't it marvellous?" Then she said, "What do you think of it?" That was really putting me in a corner. I said, "I-it's marvellous. Modern mythology. It's terrific." You could see her jaw drop. She wanted me to believe what she believed. She wanted me to believe in the physical existence of these things. And as she'd been lecturing me, I thought it was my turn to lecture her. I explained that it wasn't necessary to believe that they existed, but just to believe it was worth believing they existed.

I believe that. ROBIN JOHNSON

Anyway, she finally bought the book, and went outside, a happier HARDING person, I hope. When young girls come in wanting books on spells I always look at them very seriously and say, "Look. None in the shop."

S F PUBLISHING IN AUSTRALIA

I'm going to ask John Foyster a loaded question. Does he think HARDING that the idea of publishing Australian s f in Australia is a pipe-dream or a possibility?

It's completely a pipe-dream, as far as I can see. I can't JOHN FOYSTER see how it's possible to publish s f in Australia. I very much doubt that it's possible to publish it on an international scale, as, say, CHANCE is published supposedly by editing from here, printing elsewhere, and distributing in England. But there are no English s f magazines any more; there's only NEW WORLDS QUARTERLY paperback. Scratch magazines completely. It's extremely unlikely that one could get a paperback produced in Australia that would sell anything like as well as a paperback produced in the UK. Even in UK I don't think the production of paperbacks is a particularly easy sport. It's very, very hard in the United States, as some publishers found out late in 1970, and some writers did also. The situation for a very skimpy market publication like an s f magazine or paperback is shrinking by comparison with the market for other publications. The market for paperbacks and magazines in the s f field is about the same size, but the population of the world is increasing, and so, increasingly the publisher must restrict himself to publications which keep up with the increase in population. That's not s f. What you want is magazines more interested in copulation, and this is where Ron Smith is on the right wave-length. Like Lee, I believe that the s f magazines are doomed. Perhaps I'd go a little further than he would - I would think, too, that s f paperbacks are going to be in for a very rough time. There'll be a lot less of them in five years' time.

Is there any possibility for an Australian offset or printed subscription magazine? GILLESPIE

EASTERCON
SPEAKERS

FOYSTER For the sum of \$3,000 you can produce a magazine with about 40,000 words in it. That's about 96 pages in F&SF print. You can print, say, 2,000 copies of this 100-page magazine, and you can pay the writers a very good amount - say, five cents a word. You get out your 2,000 copies for the expenditure of \$3,000. Now, if you sold each copy direct, you'd have to get \$1.50 a copy. Of course everybody must have his rake-off, so you'd have to sell them for about \$2.50 or \$3. Or, you can say: I won't pay five cents a word. I'll pay two-and-a-half cents, which is getting down to the bottom rate. You still have to pay \$2,000 for 2,000 copies. Now, I'm talking about dirt-cheap commercial rates there, not about four-colour covers. If you had your own machine, you could probably cut that a fraction. An offset magazine is just not on, as far as I can see. You talk about 2,000 circulation because this is about the maximum that you could expect. But it's not on. The only way you could have offset magazines, like Ron Smith's INSIDE, succeeding is not to pay the authors.

RON GRAHAM John, your figures are suspect to me. I thought I heard you say that it would have about 40,000 words at five cents a word. That's \$2,000 for a start, isn't it? But for each copy you're paying \$1 a copy for the contents without taking into account the editorial work, the paper, the printing, distribution; whatever it may be. So I can't see how you can sell for what you're talking about.

FOYSTER I wasn't talking about selling. I was saying that I could produce the thing, dirt-cheap, and have it sitting in the factory - and it would cost me \$3,000 before it got out of the factory. That's dirt-cheap offset.

THE OPEN PANEL

(Various people sat around and asked each other questions. Others listened.)

PALL STEVENS Lee, what in your opinion is the greatest s f novel ever written, and why?

HARDING I'm working on it.

STEVENS There you are - the ultimate ego.

HARDING It's very difficult to say which is the greatest s f novel. I haven't read them all. All I can say is that the s f novel that has, over the years, given me the greatest satisfaction, a novel I always re-read with pleasure, a novel I recommend constantly at the bookshop, is EARTH ABIDES, by George Stewart. I don't think any other s f novel has approached the "catastrophe situation" so well. Of course EARTH ABIDES is not about survival or about catastrophe; it's just a very beautiful book, and I think it's the best novel of its type that I have read. The thing I remember most about EARTH ABIDES is not the hero trying to survive, or the actual physical things that happened to the cities. The thing I remember most is Stewart's love of the earth, and his feeling that each generation, or each society, renews itself. Sometimes things of the past have to disappear, but each generation creates something new and beautiful. I think we all know what the protagonist is struggling to preserve the past; he's trying to keep alive skills and techniques. This is the feeling I have from the book - that Stewart is trying to tell us that this is not important; there's something great out there.

Well, I think you'd have to take quite seriously the suggestion FOYSTER that this is a question that not only doesn't deserve answering but isn't worth asking. You can't take a category as large as the s f novel, and talk about the best in that category, because there are so many measures of betterness... In POGO Churchy La Femme answers a question about sandwiches. They're sitting around at a party as usual, and someone says to Churchy, "What's your favourite flavour of sandwich?", and Churchy says, "Mostly the one I've got in my hand." I think if you're talking about favourite s f novels you have to have something like that in mind. My immediate impression would be to talk about TWILIGHT OF THE VILP or THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT, which are books that I've read fairly recently - TWILIGHT OF THE VILP quite some years ago, but it's come back into my memory because at last other people have started reading it. But, contrary to some impressions I've tried to give, I have read a few s f novels, and it's extraordinarily difficult to pick out even a favourite from those, much less a best which isn't a spur-of-the-moment guess. If you ask me what's my favourite s f short story, I can answer that. That's because s f short stories are so much more impressive than novels that some do really stand out.

Well, what's your favourite s f short story? HARDING

THE BURNING OF THE BRAIN, by Cordwainer Smith. FOYSTER

Can I ask Leigh Edmonds a question now: If he had as much money GILLESPIE as he liked, as much time as he liked, and he could put out the fanzine that he wanted to put out, who would he put in the fanzine and what sort of thing would he turn out?

I would publish a fanzine of musical criticism. I would have LEIGH EDMONDS all the best music critics in the world writing for it, and I'd have a regular opera column comprising about 200 pages at least. If I had to put out an s f fanzine and I had as much money as possible, I would actually put out a science fiction fanzine, because they return the most reward for effort. Fannish fanzines don't. I would turn out something like SFR: no, a cross between SFR and SFC, leaning more towards SFC as far as contents go but leaning towards SFR in what it looks like.

I'd like to ask Bruce Gillespie: What in your opinion consti- PETER HOUSE
tutes a horror film?

You're still annoyed because I said I don't like horror films. GILLESPIE
Well, the main sort of horror films that I wouldn't go to see are ones with titles like NAVY VS THE NIGHT MONSTERS and INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. The point against horror films that I made to John Flaus was that I had the impression, and he didn't really deny it, that they were put together by people who didn't really care a jot about horror films. They just cared about putting in a little bit of money and making a bit more out of the public of the 1930s and 40s.

Accidental art. HARDING

Yes. Which I don't like. GILLESPIE

(Okay; that's a sampler. I hope that now Tony has done the transcriptions, we can print most of the panels. "Heavy stuff", I suppose compared with other recent conventions, but there are plenty more interesting comments from the transcriptions. Plenty more Harding quotes, too. A good convention.)

BRUCE
GILLESPIE

A SENSE OF WONDER - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

there he arranged a trip which took us out of the hotel for the first time since we had arrived (except to buy slippers and can openers, of course). For the second time in my life I was staggered by Sydney; I always will be, each time I visit the place. I love the sea, and even the idea is delicious of a city built around a harbour like Sydney Harbour. We headed towards the Harbour Bridge, went over the bridge, and immediately faced the most splendiferously ugly building ever made. I'm not even sure what its name is, but it is made of what look like twenty or thirty layers of orange fruit gums piled on top of each other. It laughs at every other building on the north side of the harbour. Alan headed out to Manly, where we stopped, bought lunch and copies of one of the Sydney newspapers that featured an interview with Lesleigh (the one that called her "Leslie Luteril"), and a copy of THE REVIEW, which carried the story of the Big Scandal in Publications Branch, where I work. I won't go into details here; let's say that on Thursday everybody at work was unbelievably depressed, but that the bit of news carried in THE REVIEW showed that things must have been ironed out on the Friday that I was away. As it turned out, I had missed one of the most frenzied days in the Branch's history. And some real Sensawonder: this was the first time that Lesleigh had stood on an ocean beach! Not that the Tasman Sea/Pacific Ocean was looking very oceanic - just very calm on a beautiful midwinter Sydney day during which none of us needed to wear pullovers or coats. We fitted back into the car, and Alan performed some hair-raising stunts as he drove along the harbour-side streets on Sydney's north shore. You can almost see the money lining the pavements; all the houses overlook the harbour, since the shore is very steep; and several times we thought that the car would not be able to climb back to the main streets. Once we went abruptly down one hill and just as abruptly came up the other side. Standing in the sky just ahead of us was a tall apartment block. Just as it seemed that we would run into it, the road twisted away again and down to the shore-line. Everything is a surprise in Sydney; but then very little is comfortable, such as it is in Melbourne. Sydney is a magnificent monster, whose fiery breath and colourful skin might not suit me for very long. We drove back over the Harbour Bridge and wound our way through Paddington, where little, ancient houses cling to the hillsides. Lesleigh said that Sydney reminded her very much of San Francisco. Incidentally, this trip gave rise to one of Alan Sandercock's funny lines: "I remember listening to Bruce talking about the cost of reams of coloured paper in Australia, while at the same time being amazed at all the intricate wrought-iron work that can be seen everywhere in Paddington." (EXPERIENTIAL MAN, in ANZAPA mailing No 25). We did talk about fannish topics most of the time - how Hank Luttrell beat the draft, how the Luttrells buy all their duplicating supplies at about half the price that I pay in Australia, and similar topics of all-consuming interest. It was a grand way to spend a Sunday morning in Sydney.

SAD. FINALE: For me, Syncon had to fade out in a fairly unspectacular way. I had to catch a plane at 3.30, so I wanted to leave the hotel by 2.30, so I had to have lunch early, and... Organisation is not my forte, and by 2 o' clock I was in a complete flap. I collected my things from the room of Leigh and Valma, who still looked tired out from the trip from Melbourne to Sydney. Also, during the entire three days, their room, across the corridor from mine, was about twenty degrees warmer than my room was. One side of the hotel heated badly; the temperature of the air-conditioning was about ten degrees more than is comfortable for me or anybody else. I turned off the air-conditioning on the Friday, but Leigh and Valma had kept the air-conditioning switched on. Result: my room stayed comfortable, but their room became hotter and hotter. Valma said goodbye wearily, and went back to sleep; I clumped downstairs and said goodbye to as many people as I could see, and hoped that I would meet

as many of them as possible in Melbourne during the next fortnight or so. I didn't have time to order any photographs from the official photographer; I still haven't solved the problems posed by that mistake. I kissed Lesleigh goodbye, and if she'd known the agony that she would face during the car trip home, she would have caught a plane with me right then. Outside, the taxi driver arrived on time; we bowled through Centennial Park, where thousands of people were enjoying the sun, and arrived at the airport, which looked just like Spencer Street station at peak-time. Every seat on the plane was filled. As we lifted off, the pilot said, "As we approach Melbourne, we can expect increasing cloud cover. The weather in Melbourne today is overcast, with occasional showers." Sniggers from the passengers. At 5.30 pm the plane touched down. I walked out of the plane in my shirt-sleeves, and my mother told me that it was bitterly cold outside.

65° to 45°! Probably the bleakest day of the year in Melbourne, which did not even have winter this year. From light to shadow; out of the magic circle on to a long, cold road home. Nothing left but memories? Had it all finished? My mother made some remark about the convention; I thought it rather silly and snarled back. Tense silence all the way home. The End? There were memories. The huge amount of hard work done by the small number of Syncon committee members who kept everything running. (Shayne started to talk about "her" convention, and sometimes it seemed that she wasn't far wrong.) John Bangsund, the toastmaster, a kindly presence rather than the usually flamboyant jokester; John Bangsund, the producer of the brilliant convention booklet. John Litchen, the proud father of the A75 film, watching over his creation on the night when it was unreel. Being introduced to a gaunt, gleaming-eyed man, and John Bangsund saying, "This is a great moment in fandom. Doug Nicholson, meet Bruce Gillespie; Bruce, meet Doug.", and not having a clue who Doug Nicholson was until John explained that Doug was producing fanzines in Sydney in 1953. People who put money in my hand for SFC subscriptions, although I did not even take any copies to Sydney with me to sell; I came back with more cash in hand than I went with, although some of this was due to Ron Graham, who is now paid up to about Issue No 1000. People, faces, bonhomie, three days when nobody had an enemy, but only friends - that magic circle.

Riding home through bleak Melbourne streets, dark at 5.30, I thought that the circle had broken, that the yawning horror of my usual reality had returned. But I was wrong...

SCHERZO:
A DUFF report

Here's my story; no doubt Lesleigh will tell her story, and there might not be much resemblance between the two.

The Down Under Fan Fund was set up in order to enable fans to make visits to and from Australia, to further the cause of International Fandom, and, incidentally, the cause of Australia In 75. John Foyster was Australian organiser and Fred Patten was our man in America. After a few false starts, the DUFF race finally got off the ground, with two candidates, Lesleigh Luttrell and Andy Porter. I did not know who to vote for, especially as originally I wanted Sandra Miesel to stand as a candidate. (Actually, I would have really liked Franz Rottensteiner to stand, but I thought that US fans would have treated him with about as much enthusiasm as American voters recently treated George McGovern.) Andy Porter was the original "Australia In 75" man; I think he first made such a suggestion in 1967 or 1968; he produces ALGOL; he seems

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to have been around fandom for a long, long time; he knows everybody. Lesleigh Luttrell was known to me as the very efficient Official Editor of APA-45 my favourite apa; with Hank, the editor of STARLING, a magazine which, during the last three years, I have tipped as one of the top five or six fanzines, a good writer about all sorts of topics in which I have not the slightest interest (e.g. comics), the writer of the very occasional letter and the even more occasional review for SFC, a good friend of Leigh Edmonds, and the goddess of Columbia fandom. I tried to stay neutral, but eventually I voted for Lesleigh. The Australian vote was about equal for each of the two candidates; the American vote was strongly in favour of Lesleigh.

After several months of negotiations, during which Lesleigh was never quite sure whether or not Robin Johnson would actually get her on a plane to Australia, she finally made it to Sydney. Stayed a few days with Shayne, who was completing the last stages of preparations for Syncon. Lived through Syncon, and lived through (what was later reported as) a nightmare journey down the Hume Highway to Canberra in David Grigg's car, with David, Leigh, and Valma. Stayed overnight at John Bangsund's in Canberra, and met some of the Canberra fans. Lesleigh said later that John Bangsund kept refilling her wine glass. "I'm not sure what his intentions were," she said. On Tuesday the journey began again. Somewhere between Sunday and Tuesday Lesleigh had been out to Bob Smith's and picked up a huge pile of SFCs and read them on the journey from Sydney to Melbourne. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, as they say, the Adelaide fans had passed through Melbourne on their way back to the city of churches and trufans. Paul Anderson came out to our gothic mansion (or rather, the State Savings Bank's gothic mansion) in East Preston, and we played some records and looked at things (a "thing" is any book, article, or piece of correspondence which has lain in my Urgent file for six months or more) and talked. Then Paul went home, and I prepared for a quiet week dedicated to the production of two issues of SFC. Famous last intentions.

David Grigg and I arranged to take Lesleigh to lunch in Carlton on Wednesday at lunchtime. (What's the date by this time? August 16.) With that rare sense of timing which so endears him to me, Paul Stevens rang me halfway through the morning and said that he had arranged for Keith Dunstan, a SUN journalist who has done a lot to publicise the Space Age Bookshop, to interview Lesleigh at 12.30 pm (my lunchtime) at the SUN offices so Paul Stevens promised to get Lesleigh from the SUN to Chianti's restaurant by 1 pm - David had a limited time for lunch, and I didn't want to stretch my luck too far. So David and I exchanged idle gossip from 12.30 to 1 pm, kept looking at our watches, fended off an impatient waitress, and said to each other, "Will she make it?" Almost exactly at one o'clock, Paul and Lesleigh walked through the door. After lunch, Lesleigh and I wandered back to the Special Services Division building. I was late, of course; therefore we met my boss, also returning to work. Anyway, I used one of the many underhand tricks available to me, showed Lesleigh a bit of Melbourne, and we returned to the Space Age Book Shop. Wednesday night: the most exciting of Melbourne venues, the Degraeves Tavern. Henry did us proud, and more than twenty people turned up, including an expatriate American, Ron Smith, who was never introduced to Lesleigh, as far as I know. Afterwards about ten male fans and one solitary female fan, Lesleigh, wandered up to the other fannish gathering place in Melbourne, the Pancake Parlour. I suspect that Lesleigh was so tired by this time that she could hardly stand up. But she insisted on standing up - and kept on keeping on.

I think everybody would have willingly let Lesleigh rest for a few days, but she insisted on fitting in as much as possible in as few days as possible. On
30 SFC XXX

Thursday, John and Elizabeth Foyster took Lesleigh to some of the highlights of Melbourne. On Friday Lesleigh helped unpack books at the Space Age Book Shop (no, I don't believe it either; but Lesleigh had good fun, and Paul Stevens had good fun talking to Lesleigh while she unpacked books), and at night she went to our place by tram. I never found out whether it was the first time that Lesleigh had ridden on a tram; certainly a tour through Smith Street, Collingwood and High Street, Northcote is one way of seeing a section of Melbourne that few international visitors ever see. Although my mother was not very well, I was very grateful that she was able to serve a "slap-up" Aussie-style roast dinner. Lesleigh seemed to enjoy the Gillespie hospitality afterwards; certainly Lesleigh is the only person who has ever had wit enough to ask me just how my books are catalogued, since I have a strange system which nobody else uses. But the tone of the conversation rather got away from books. On Saturday, Lesleigh became only the second person ever to help me produce S F COMMENTARY - she proofread some stencils in the morning (as she had promised at Syncon). We were going to publish a one-shot fanzine, but somehow we never got around to it. Two very good non-fan friends of mine, Rick and Maureen, drove us via Eltham to the Colin Mackenzie Wildlife Sanctuary at Healesville. We had a barbecue, and it threatened rain all day, but held off. Maureen mentioned that her mother kept giving the name ELECTRIC ORANGE to that film. While we were looking through the sanctuary, we read the following notice: GOANNAS PROTECTED BY ELECTRICALLY-HEATED SLEEPING PADS. We saw a lyrebird standing stockstill in one of the ridiculously small enclosures that the sanctuary provides. We could only call it the "Electric Lyrebird". One cage had a small hole cut in the fence. Above the hole there was a small sign. It read: "YOUR CAMERA". After it did finally begin to rain, we travelled back to town, had dinner at a South Yarra restaurant which specialises in French pancake cooking, and went back to Rick and Reen's flat, then home. The best day of my life. :: Sunday: Lesleigh had already arranged to visit Foysters' farm, so my father took us into town to catch the country train. It was the first time that I had seen Carlton streets deserted. We dodged through the completely empty campus of Melbourne University. Spencer Street station looked like Sydney Airport at peak-time, as thousands of people took advantage of the Victorian Railways' excursion fares. John Foyster (who, like me, does not drive a car) met us. He looked suitably ready for the rigours of farm life. John was glad to meet my father for the first time, for, as he put it, he had visited our place twice and had never met either of my parents. We pushed our way through the crowds, and said goodbye to Lesleigh and John. It was the first time that Lesleigh had ever travelled on a train. Later she said that she had had a good day.

Monday (August 21, for all those people who worry about these things): Lesleigh was due to be interviewed by the THIS DAY TONIGHT team at the Space Age Book Shop at 9 am. The TDT team arrived at 10.30. This was the first day of my August holidays, so I wandered into the city and arrived at the shop at 9. (Actually, I had woken up at some unbelievable hour, since my parents had to get up early to take my sister to catch a plane at 7 am. For some reason not even known to myself I had been playing THE CHUCK BERRY LONDON SESSIONS at 6 am.) For an hour or two I talked to Lesleigh and the staff of that mightiest machine of enterprise, the Space Age Book Shop. They had about one customer before 10. George Turner rang to say that he was ill and could not meet Lesleigh that afternoon, as planned. The TDT mob arrived. The interviewer looked around the shop and at some books. "That's my father!" he said, pointing to some books by J T McIntosh. Everybody was interested, but we could not decide whether that long-distinguished Scottish s f writer was indeed the father of the ABC interviewer, who certainly did not know much about science fiction. However, everybody muddled along: Lee Harding managed to

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describe the whole Australia-In-75 bid in the three minutes that the interviewer allowed him, and Lesleigh was asked a few questions. (When the interview was shown, nine days later, bits of the A75 film were included, and the blind twits left out the interview with Lesleigh.) All this finished at about 11.30. Now that George Turner was not going to turn up at the Australia at 3, Lesleigh had to kill an afternoon until the special gathering which had been arranged to take place at the Madeleine Restaurant in the evening. So we wandered around town, bought presents for all the folks back in Missouri, ate a terrible meal in a little joint in one of the arcades, wandered towards the Arts Centre, kept going through the Alexandra Gardens and the Botanic Gardens, and finished up at the Foysters'. (I should explain that at first Lesleigh had been staying at Leigh-and-Valma's. She stayed two nights at our place, and during the rest of her stay in Melbourne, she stayed with the Foysters, who provided their very best hospitality.) After John arrived home from work, we went back to the Madeleine, had an enjoyable evening attended by many more people than I thought would turn up, since the night had been arranged at the last minute, and Leigh and Valma and Lesleigh went to the Australian Ballet. I went home and conflued stencils.

Tuesday: I met Elizabeth Foyster and Lesleigh in the city, and Elizabeth took us for a guided tour of The Suburbs, before heading towards the Dandenong Ranges and Carla Harding's. The weather, which had been a bit unfriendly during the weekend, had improved greatly by Tuesday. It turned out to be the best weather that we have ever had during August school holidays. It was interesting to see the way in which the landscape developers have ruined Mount Waverley and Syndal, where I lived for four years when that area was still on the outskirts of the suburbs, and still half-country. A brief stopover at Monash University. Millian, whom we had picked up from school, talked to us on the way to The Basin. I felt very nostalgic when we reached that house in the hills. It was almost exactly two years since I had visited here, and the old magic still surrounded this retreat. Erik and Belinda and Stephen showed us their rabbits and other animals. A stray dog wandered along, which didn't please Millian very much. We were talking inside when we heard an agonised yell from Erik. The stray dog had hopped into the rabbit hutch and taken one of the rabbits! Carla and I tried to catch the dog. Neither of us had run so fast for years. The dog dodged around the other side of the house. Carla went round one way; I went round the other. Carla caught the dog first, and after a struggle put its nose in a puddle of water until it released the rabbit. The rabbit was still breathing, and it recovered. The dog received a loud thump on its rump, and finally got the message to go away. Even Erik recovered; he really thought that the rabbit was done for. John Foyster, who had rung earlier, caught the train to Boronia and arrived at about 6. After a romping, tumbling meal, made up equally of food and kids climbing all over us, we set off for Melbourne. I already had tickets to see the Czechoslovakian film based upon Alan Marshall's Australian novel, I CAN JUMP PUDDLES. Lesleigh and I went to see the premiere at the Palais, and Alan Marshall came out on stage and introduced the film. I know that I should have written a review of it for THE EDUCATIONAL MAGAZINE, but I didn't really notice too much of the film. When we got in a taxi to go back to the Foysters, the driver said, "I think I've got a puncture." He drove half a mile. "Yes, it's definitely a puncture. I hope we can get there." And the last wisp of air was escaping from his tire just as he pulled up in front of the Foysters'. It was that sort of day - odd, in a euphoric way.

Wednesday: A complete account of this day exists in Leigh Edmonds' SUGAR TOOTH (in ANZAPA) and GENUINE VICTORIAN WICKER DUNCLE (in APA-45), and, I presume, in the next issue of RATAPLAN. I won't reprint it here since I don't

have room. (Leigh's address is PO Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria 3183.) It was a strange day, probably because I was dead tired by this time. I have a very low endurance level for excitement. I met Leigh Edmonds, who had got a day off from work, in the morning, and we made lugubrious conversation over several cups of coffee until midday. We went up to the Space Age Book Shop, met Lesleigh, went down to Flinders Street station, and caught a train to Frankston. The weather was magnificent; it began coolish, but by the time we actually wandered down to the beach, the sky had set into a shield of iron grey which was mirrored in the completely smooth sea. One small fishing boat could be seen on the horizon. Nobody was bathing. Leigh talked to Lesleigh most of the day - I think it was about the first time that Leigh had had time to talk to her since she had arrived in Australia. For lunch we bought those ultimate symbols of Australian barbarism, examples of pine sauce (also known as "pie and sauce"). I read later in APA-45 that she was not very impressed by pie and sauce. We travelled back to Melbourne. I suppose it must have been the first time that Lesleigh had travelled by suburban train.

Thursday: I said goodbye to Lesleigh. The End. Magic circle broken. :: At night there was a party for Lesleigh at Robin Johnson's flat. From all reports, it was a great success. The Australia In 75 movie was shown twice. Friday: The Foysters took Lesleigh to Tullamarine, from where she left for Adelaide. Saturday: Adelaide, which still had a petrol strike, so Lesleigh was not able to see much of Adelaide itself. Adelaide fans held a party for her - from all reports, that was a great success as well. Sunday or Monday: back to Sydney. I don't know whether Lesleigh ever did stay at Laura Molesworth's, as was originally planned. But I did hear that Sydney fans held another party for Lesleigh, where she said that she enjoyed her trip to Australia and would have stayed here if umpteen other commitments had not prevented. I think it was Wednesday when she left for Los Angeles and LACon.

Okay, that's reportage. Now a few comments: (a) Robin Johnson rang me on Sunday, August 20 and said something like, "What's Lesleigh doing? What program have we got arranged for her?" This was after she had been in Melbourne for four days. I was able to reassure Robin that everything was arranged - but I was fairly disturbed that no itinerary had existed before Lesleigh had arrived in Melbourne, and that everything had to be arranged ad hoc. Most of us felt that she should have had a thoroughly good rest as soon as she arrived in Melbourne, but Lesleigh made things difficult by refusing to rest, and refusing to admit that she was tired. Also, most of us had in the backs of our minds that Lesleigh would stay with Leigh Edmonds when she was in Melbourne, but nobody had really asked her what she wanted to do. As it turned out, the Foysters were in a much better position than Leigh and Valma to provide accommodation at the time. (b) Which brings me to the second, insoluble problem. Problem (a) could have been solved by the sort of forethought which fans don't seem to be very good at. But there was nothing anybody could do about the fact that only two people were on holidays during the fortnight that Lesleigh was in Melbourne. They were Elizabeth and me. (Elizabeth is a teacher; and I have teachers' holidays.) So, although Andy Porter may blanch at the thought, if he had come to Australia he would also have had to put up with our company for much of this time, or else struck out on his own into the wilds of Melbourne. This was something that Lesleigh was unwilling to do, although most of Melbourne is fairly safe for tourists. I've thought that future DUFF candidates should come to Australia during January, when quite a few of us have holidays - but of course American fans do not have holidays then. (d) Although we knew that Lesleigh was a comics fan as well as an s f fan, we never did arrange for her to meet Australia's leading comics fans. Dennis Stocks was in New Zealand, John Ryan could not come to Syncon and neither

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could Stephen Campbell, and nobody has said whether Lesleigh met Gary Mason in Adelaide. However, Lesleigh did meet John Breden, Paul Stevens, and some of the other comics fans of Melbourne. (d) Money: The most encouraging thing about this DUFF trip was that people did donate enough money to make the journey possible. Lesleigh had quite a bit of money left when she had finished her trip. We hope that people will be as generous in 1974, when we hope that DUFF will take one Australian fan from Australia to Washington. Again, thanks to John Foyster and Fred Patten for organising the journey, and to other people such as Leigh Edmonds and Leigh Couch who put special efforts into the DUFF competition. (e) Success of the DUFF trip? Only Lesleigh could tell you that, and so far her report has not appeared. It all depends what you mean by "success", doesn't it?

CREDO:
Ah Austerican confrontation

From hearsay evidence, I gather that about the only people who talked to Lesleigh for long periods of time were the Foysters, especially Jillian, Leigh and Valma, and me. From her I learned a vast variety of interesting things about the many differences she could see between Australia and USA, and especially differences between Australian fandom and American fandom. Perhaps I'm wrong in taking Lesleigh's point of view as in any way typical of that of The Average American Fan; after reading several thousand pages of APA-45 mailings and other American fanzines during the last few months, I guess that many American fans would share her views, especially about Australia. To see Australia in the company of someone who was seeing it for the first time certainly gave me some new ideas about the country.

Perhaps it is useless to compare Melbourne fandom and Columbia fandom. Nobody who read the fanzines from each city would ever have mistaken the one for the other. At any rate, I was impressed by the way that Lesleigh believed in Columbia fandom. She spoke of its members in almost the same way that she spoke of her own family. For instance, people who criticise any members of Columbia fandom seem to be immediately confined to outer darkness by all the other members; people who are "in" are "in" for everybody. Columbia fans, it seems, meet each other nearly every day, mainly because they live very close together in the college city that is Columbia. In a way that is certainly alien to Melbourne fandom, they seem to share each other's tastes in books, records, etc. Columbia fans seem to be able to "time-bind" better than anybody I know in Australian fandom; according to reports in APA-45, whenever people visit the Columbia fans, they always seem to be out on picnics, or playing Diplomacy, or records, or reading, or cooking, or watching television. Yet during the last two years, between them Hank and Lesleigh, Terry Hughes, Chris Couch (when he's been in Columbia), Dough Carroll, Jim Turner, Creath Thorne, and others, have managed to publish a remarkable variety of high-class fanzines. Letters of comment and articles from these people appear in each others' fanzines, and in extra-Columbia fanzines. In its heyday, Columbia sounds as if it was a permanent convention centre. However, its heyday has passed; Hank and Lesleigh moved to Madison. For reasons that I can well understand, they provided the focus for most of the fanac in Columbia, much as John Bangsund provided a focus for activity in Melbourne while he was here. To judge from the latest APA-45 mailing, the Columbia fans who have stayed there are a bit lonely and sorry for themselves, as well they might be. They are bereaved, too.

most of the Columbia fans are in their early twenties. Most Columbia fans are "dropouts" from the regular American scholastic rat-race; during the early part of 1972, three of them were dish-washers at the local hospital. Lesleigh said that she felt a bit left out, as the only non-dropout. Melbourne fans are fairly ambitious in an aimless sort of way. I've always wanted to be a writer of some sort, but I took a roundabout way to become one, and even now I'm not the sort of freelance writer that I would like to be. John Foyster is aiming at his Ph D, but has to devote a fair amount of time to his job, which he must do in order to earn enough money to keep working towards his Ph D. Elizabeth is a very successful teacher; that keeps her busy as well. Leigh Edmonds wants to become a great musician - or at least learn to play the piano well. Valma is ambitious to become an actress, although currently Melbourne is very unfriendly to aspiring actors and actresses. Lee Harding has had a solid reputation for some years as one of Australia's leading s f writers, but he wants to extend the range of his writing. Merv Binns wants to run the world's best s f bookshop, and he puts a huge amount of time into the organisation of the Space Age. Paul Stevens also invests much time in the shop. David Grigg is not quite sure what he wants to do; he seems to be doing well as a public relations booster with a Melbourne PR company. Although the advertising field has been in the doldrums for a year or so, David probably has quite a few opportunities there. Bill Wright and Robin Johnson and John Breden and the others? Most of them have steady jobs and steady promotion. All this activity takes our time and energy.

So everybody is usually so busy carrying out these ambitions that they don't get to see each other. The social centre of Melbourne fandom is not anybody's house (as the Luttrells' place seemed to have been the social centre of Columbia fandom) but the Space Age Bookshop. Several fans, such as Leigh and Valma, Robin, and now Lee and Irene, live within a few miles of each other in St Kilda. Everybody else, and especially me, lives a long way from everybody else. As Lesleigh found out, Melbourne, with 2½ million people, has a surface area about the same as that of Los Angeles (with 8 million people), so it can be time-consuming to get from one side of it to another, especially if you must travel by public transport, as I do. Fortunately, many areas of Melbourne still have reasonable public transport. It's just that it can take me 1½ hours to travel from my place to that of Leigh and Valma. Sometimes, for instance, I don't see John and Elizabeth for weeks at a time. Why? Because they are too busy and I am too busy. Of course, this situation has its advantages: people don't drop in just as I'm in the middle of producing a fanzine or writing an article. But that's a disadvantage, too: there's never anybody to help produce my magazines (for reasons which I fully understand; no offence meant here) whereas everybody in Columbia fandom seems to help produce everybody else's fanzines. In Melbourne, if you want to do something, you do it yourself, or it doesn't get done. In Columbia, you call everybody around for a collating party.

So, I don't know which is a better way to conduct fandom. Perhaps a Columbia fandom can exist only when you have the right people together in the right place at the right time. A Melbourne fandom can keep on for twenty years: the Melbourne S F Club celebrated its twentieth birthday at Easter. But Melbourne has a lot of lonely people in its fandom, and we'd like to find some way to alter that sense of isolation and loneliness without treading on anybody's toes or disturbing anyone else's ambitions. But if you want an Australian fandom that seems very Columbian, Adelaide probably comes the closest. Perhaps Melbourne will change sometime, but we might need people with the same belief in "social fandom" as the Luttrells to do this.

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I spent several hours hearing about Lesleigh's marvellous family, the Couches. They form a phenomenon which doesn't yet exist in Australia - a whole family dedicated to fandom. The Haldemans in D.C. form another fannish family. From what Lesleigh said, and from comments I read in fanzines, it sounds as if Leigh Couch (Lesleigh's mother) is one of the greatest women in American fandom, Norbert Couch is an interesting bloke, and Chris and Mike have always been the prodigies of American fandom (until Bruce Coulson came along). Everything the Couches do creates legends; I was glad to hear the legends at first hand.

Although Lesleigh and I talked a lot about differences between USA and Australia, I found it difficult to gain an overall picture of them. Probably Lesleigh was being polite about Australia. In one of her APA-45 magazines early in 1972, Lesleigh said that she expected that Australia would be something like USA was during the 1950s. Also she said that she found it annoying, when organising the trip to Australia, to worry about "passports, visas, customs, and all the other things established by governments to make it difficult to visit your friends who don't happen to live in your country." I take the implication here is that Lesleigh thought that when she came to Australia, she would merely move from one country (USA) to another country (very like USA), and that the travel arrangements were really only minor impedimenta in a fairly easy journey.

Lesleigh found out that she was wrong; I suspect that she suffered major culture shock, and I can only speculate on the nature of that shock. One day she might like to publish her own findings.

Lesleigh was shocked most, it seems, by the lack of central heating in Australian houses. I've heard that most American middle-class houses have a basement and a furnace to provide central heating during the winter. This stands to reason; not many areas of inhabited USA miss out entirely on cold winters. However, few places in Australia suffer from cold winters; on one morning while Lesleigh was here, the temperature fell below freezing point; that was about the only day for the year when this happened. Most of the rest of the time the temperature was in the low or mid-sixties, and there were quite a few days when I could go around in shirt-sleeves. But Lesleigh still found it hard to sleep in houses which had no central heating. Fortunately, the Foysters' house is one of the few I know of which has this convenience.

In short, Lesleigh was most surprised by aspects of Australia which have never worried me much. For instance, she laughed a lot when we told her all about our system of British governors and governors-general, and the fact that Parliament is broadcast over the national radio network. Those things are absurd, I know; but I've grown up with the fact that in many ways Australia is still a British colony. Where it is not a British colony, it has become an American colony. We tried to interest Lesleigh in those things about Australia that are Australian, but she was rightly horrified by pie and sauce and fish and chips, and not all that interested in the works of Patrick White, who has been the runner-up for the Nobel Prize for Literature several times, and who, almost alone at times, helps to redeem Australia's lamentable reputation as a refuge for sportsmen and kangaroos. Leigh and I told Lesleigh that television had been introduced to Australia in 1956. "How backward!" she said, or something like that. Speaking for myself, I consider the introduction of television into Australia as the greatest single cultural disaster to hit us since the birth of Mr B A Santamaria. I tried to compare Australia and USA in many ways; but somehow these comparisons came to little. I couldn't get over the uncomfortable feeling, however, that Lesleigh really did expect that the rest of the world would be like USA.

In the back of my mind, I had the impression that Lesleigh was part of the "counter-culture" about which we've heard so much. However, I could never quite communicate the idea that I don't have the latest duplicator, the latest electric typewriter, a car, etc, for the simple reason that I can't afford them. Australia has poor highways and poor schools and shoddy public services because the money doesn't exist for anything else. On the other hand, the Luttrells seem to be quite rich in comparison with any of us: the latest of everything, a car, good accommodation, plenty of free time, etc. "Well, if wages here are half those in America, and if prices are the same, why do you stay here?" said Lesleigh. For a start, because USA carefully excludes all but a small number of immigrants. Also, because in other countries, such as England, people earn half again of Australia's wages, and pay prices that are nearly as high. And people in a third of the world earn a thousandth or a millionth of the money earned in Australia or USA. So, we are puzzled: was Lesleigh really speaking from an ivory tower that is USA, or was I mistaken? And if she was, do all American fans have the same sorts of illusions about the rest of the world as she did? And if fans have these illusions, what hope has the rest of the world for any understanding from Americans? I remember that Mike Glicksohn (who lives in the Yankeeist of Canadian cities, Toronto) once ticked off English fanzine publishers because they don't publish illustrations that look as good as those in American fanzines. Mike seemed quite surprised when it was pointed out to him that English fans couldn't afford offset repro, or even electronic stencils. So: I'm not sure what to make of the "counter-culture". At one time I hoped that USA might offer something worthwhile to the world out of the middle of its own chaos. But if all that is offered is a different way of consuming a different brand of goods (and it has already been noted that the Woodstock festival was just a "festival of consumption") then none of us have any hope, and Paul Ehrlich is right after all. On the other hand, Lesleigh, as a representative of the American "counter-culture" (or was she?) seemed surprised by Melbourne fans who genuinely do not conform to society's expectations about the growth economy - few of us drive cars, we don't own too much of anything except books and records (and I'd like to have my books around after The Revolution, if nothing else), and we are not as enamoured of physical comfort as Americans seem to be. Without any effort at all, Melbourne fandom seems to have become a counter-culture itself, although few of us look like freaks, almost none of us ever see marijuana, let alone smoke it, and people like myself dislike the latest "style" in anything.

But all this is speculation after the debate, much of it, as I say, based on reading between the lines in APA-45 and other American fanzines, and upon other reading and conversations in which I have engaged. It was fascinating to notice the slips between the viewpoints of Lesleigh and myself, and to wonder what that Other Universe over the Pacific is really like. Next year I'm going to see for myself.

BENEDICTUS

Recently, the magazine RICHARD E GEIS has threatened to turn all fandom into a branch of TRUE CONFESSIONS magazine. Harry Warner Jr is not too happy about this trend, and he advocates that before a fan writer pastes his heart all over paper, he should ask himself whether he wants these particular confessions to be read in twenty years time, since even magazines with tiny circulations tend to turn up in the hands of wives or girlfriends a long time after they are first published. So, Harry and Dick Geis and everybody, here is what I would still like to be read in twenty years time, provided that anybody wants to keep this issue of SFC at all:

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I fell in love with Lesleigh Luttrell. So did the rest of Australian fandom. John Bangsund did his best to abduct her in Canberra, and she created a glow in the hearts of David Grigg and Paul Stevens and Leigh Edmonds and almost every other male who met her. It was a complete surprise that I was capable of falling in love at all; no girl has ever shown any interest in me before, and long ago I gave up love as a hopeless enterprise. Melbourne fans and I shared the impression that I kept my heart packed in either ice or vitriol. It was an even greater surprise that Lesleigh did not reject my company. And since she left, I've been really scratching my head: is it possible that I might even become a human being because of her visit? I might yet finish up as a bitter bachelor: but I was going to finish up that way anyway; because Lesleigh saw in me something I didn't see in myself, perhaps I might hope for something better.

I still don't know what Lesleigh felt about all this, or whether she even remembers me. Perhaps the Lesleigh Luttrell who visited Australia is quite different from the Lesleigh Luttrell who lives in Madison, Wisconsin. All that I know is that for two weeks I was happy - for the first time in my life - and that lady called Lesleigh seemed to be happy as well. She made me realise that it was not enough to spend my life writing and publishing fanzines; in the words of the song, she "made me want a lot of things I never had". This year I had several successes which I didn't expect but which were the direct result of four years' non-stop work on this magazine - the Hugo nomination, the Ditmar win, membership of the Australian Society of Authors, and, best of all, John Bangsund's tribute issue to SFC. But Lesleigh's visit makes even these events look dim. For most of my life I've been like a train speeding along a single railway line towards a destination which I could never quite see, but which I regarded as invaluable. Lesleigh was like another train that came from an unexpected direction, knocked me off the rails, and set me to trundle around the fields beside the railway line for the first time. It's a pleasant thing to happen. Of course I was desperately miserable during the weeks after Lesleigh left to go back to USA; but for the first time in my life I actually missed another person. When ordinary life resumed control, I did not feel depressed, as I thought I would, but more contented and free than I've ever felt. I don't need to cut off friends because of my own pigheadedness; if Lesleigh liked me, perhaps everyone else doesn't hate me; perhaps the world is a pleasant place after all. Perhaps there might be Another Person... somewhere, sometime?

I won't describe Lesleigh, because I can't. Take the admiration described by Terry Hughes in the SYNCON CONVENTION BOOK, multiply it many times, and you come close to my own admiration for her. All my life I must have had in my mind an idea of the Ideal Woman; then I met her. She had a kind of seriousness, a balance, and a dedication that I've never found in anybody else. Perhaps she was an angel after all; she kept insisting that she was just "an ordinary person". Either Americans are extraordinary people anyway, or Lesleigh was underestimating herself. In a religious phrase: she "saved my soul". Can any person do more for any other person?

God is not dead; she is alive and well and living in Madison, Wisconsin.

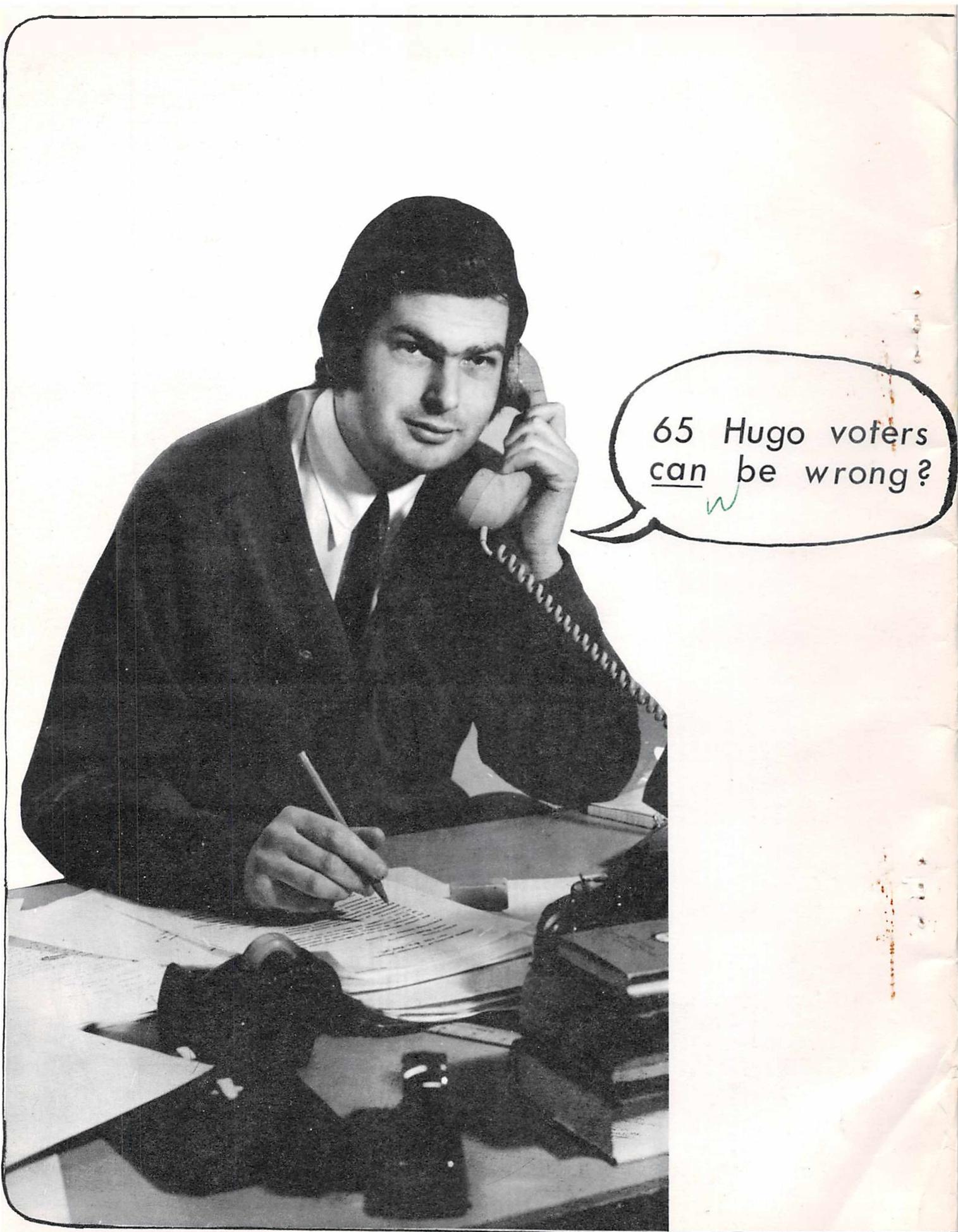
- Bruce Gillespie, November 18 1972

((EDITORIAL: And the end of this piece is THE END. Right? So long as there are no more misunderstandings than are absolutely necessary. :: An alternative name for this blockbuster could have been, "How Lesleigh Luttrell Was Guided Around Notre Dame by Quasimodo". :: Letters of comment are welcomed. Next issue: back to science fiction. Don't cheer so loudly.))
Last stencil typed: November 26, 1972.

A SENSE OF WONDER

Alive and well in Sydney and Melbourne





65 Hugo voters
can be wrong?