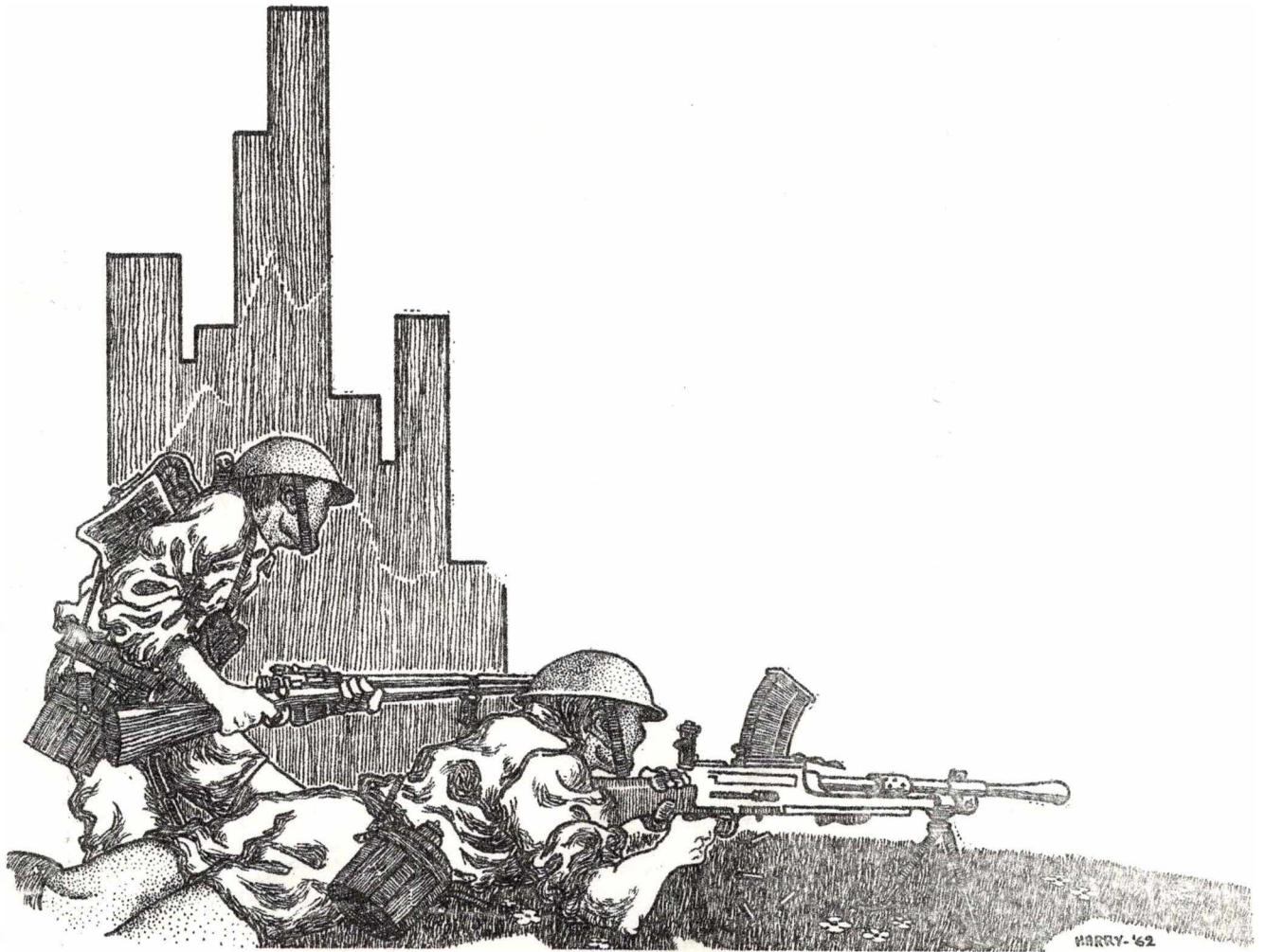


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THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BLARNEY.

MAILING COMMENTS.

OFF TRAILS. (Burn). Bruce, lad, you pierce me to the vitals with your request for more general material from members. There isn't much I can do this mailing at such short notice, but I promise you shall have a story at least next time. Then perhaps you will not be quite so enthusiastic about the idea. Seriously, I think it's a good idea to encourage the members to publish more fiction, poems etc, though there is some doubt in my mind that any but a handful of members will do anything about it.

It's a great pity that we had to lose seven members this quarter, especially when three or four of those people were among the most talented that the apa has ever had on the books. And I see that, of the six people on the waiting list, five still owe dues. Taken in conjunction, these facts seem to indicate a sudden drastic slide in OMPA popularity. At this rate it won't be long before we are down at the level of N'APA. What can we do about it? Perhaps publishing more general material, as you suggest, is the answer, but I have the feeling that it goes deeper than that.

HE-X. (Wells). Your comments about the pronunciation of Spanish remind me of a local tv announcer who, given the job of introducing a programme of Spanish dancing, rather selfconsciously pronounced every sibilant with a lisp - Tharagotha instead of Zaragoza, etc. I gather this is the aristocratic way of speaking, but it broke up everybody, even the dancers.

German architecture "gaudy and unsubtle"? I'm not sure what period you're talking about, but modern German architecture is easily the equal of that produced by most other countries. After all, Gropius is German and his Bauhaus group at Dessau was the starting point for almost every good idea in modern architecture.

PLAIN PSYCHO. (Hale). I was all set to mail this off to you but while filling out the questionnaire I found myself so confused on so many points that I decided it wasn't worth it. For instance, in the statement "No weakness or difficulty can hold us back if we have enough power", I don't see what kind of "power" is involved. Viewed in some ways the statement seems flatly contradictory. And phrases like "decent people" really threw me. If it was meant to have an immediate catchphrase appeal and so slip past one's guard, it failed, and if it was meant to be satirical - ie "decent" (sic) - it seemed hard to justify. Also the frequent use of the word "us" is confusing. Who is "us"?

WHATSIT. (Cheslin). In re your "complete reform": In one of Charles Eric Maine's books, WORLD WITHOUT MEN, he sees the invention of a foolproof oral contraceptive as the signal for a complete breakdown in the whole social system, beginning at family level and working outwards. Typically, he makes things worse by having women do away with normal methods of reproduction and instituting parthogenesis. But as this process produces female children only...world without men. A dud story, but interesting because it does suggest that, once freed of the

WHATSIT. (Cheslin) continued. necessity of making a home and raising a family, women would go the whole hog and get rid of men also. I wonder....

I have news for you, Ken. There was no "second page of Foyster's thing" in the last SOUFFLE. If you mean the full-page cartoon about feuds, that was done by my young brother, Philby.

Sorry - I can't think of the Australian artist you're referring to.

True, true, ALEXANDER NEVSKY is a hell of a film. To me, those Teutonic knights with the grotesque helmets are the quintessence of alienness. In fact the whole sequence showing the taking of Pskov is as alien as any sf story.

Apparently I didn't read your train story too carefully, otherwise I would have mentioned that trains do not take in water through the funnel. Generally they have a tank under the coal in the tender which is filled through a hole right in the top of the tender, behind the coal. The water goes through a pipe under the floor of the cab and into tubes around the boiler where it is converted to steam and channelled to the motions underneath. The smoke and soot from the firebox under the boiler goes up the funnel. What would happen if a few gallons of water came down that way I shudder to think.

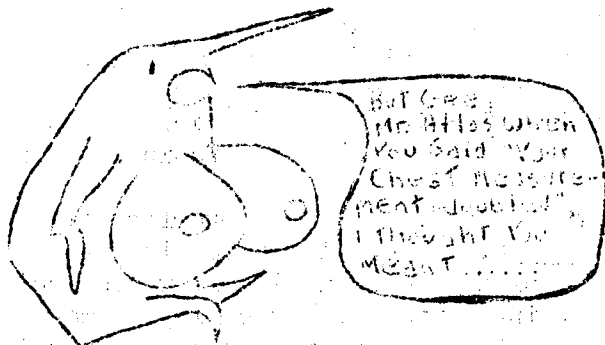
Speaking of BASRA, did you notice the clipping about MENSA in CLIPPINGS?

DETROIT IRON. (Schultz). There seem to be as many solutions to the troubles of OMPA as there are members. At the moment, I think the best hope lies in Bruce Burn's plan for more general material in the mailings. If that doesn't have any effect, perhaps we can run a poll or something on the subject.

DOLPHIN. (Busby). I won't deny that Brian Aldiss had the better of me in that poem duel, but that's to be expected. The comforting part is that he bothered to reply at all. I hadn't expected it.

ERG. (Jeeves). You have a very good point about the fan anthology deal - handled wrongly, it could be deadly dull. I had intended to offset this as much as possible by using fairly rare material with more than the normal amount of interest value. A few of the ideas I had were: to reprint the board and rules for INTERPLANETARY from FAPHRD, collect some of the better articles

from ARKHAM SAMPLER; do a sort of BEST OF BOGGS featuring things from DISCORD, RETROGRADE, SKYHOOK etc; reprint either THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR or AH SWEET IDIOCY (of course, this is more than a year ago); excerpt the best material from Ron Smith's INSIDE. There were other thoughts, but those were among the more ambitious. With luck, it might have been an interesting project.



ERG. (continued) Your "come in and sit down" cartoon was hilarious.

About those five nurses next door, for some odd reason nurses out here aren't allowed to live away from the hospital. This makes for some unfortunate situations, one way and another. For one thing, Sydney nurses must be one of the most amoral groups of women in the country. Cooped up all week, they tend to grab what they can when they can at weekends. I wonder if this is true of nurses everywhere, or only in places where they are locked up every night at 9.30. Miss Lindsay?

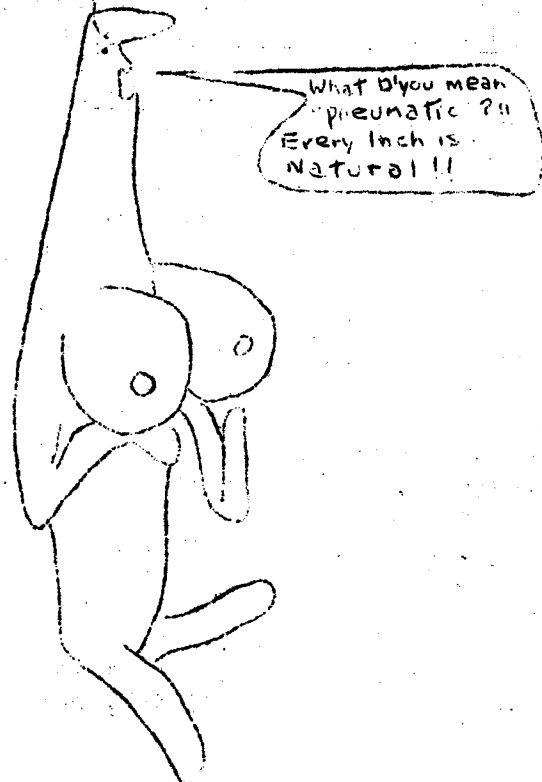
ZOUNDS. (Lichtman). "Welcome to the heart of Juliet Jones" - ha!

Local radio in our area? Pretty much like anywhere else, I suppose. There are eight radio stations operating in the Sydney metropolitan area, two government owned, the other six under the control of various groups, religious and secular. 2SM (SM for St. Marys) is RC, 2CH Methodist/Baptist, while 2KY, 2GB, 2UE and 2UW belong mainly to newspapers. Two of them run all night, while the others go off at 11pm and commence again about 6. An average day would start (inevitably) with Our Glorious National Anthem, followed by the call for the wharfies. As far as I can make out from my imperfect knowledge of stevedoring in the port of Sydney, nobody can go to work on the docks unless they first listen to this fifteen minute dirge of numbers. Maybe it has some religious significance). After this, we get the breakfast session - rock rock rock with a time call every half minute and commercials more often than the time calls. At 9, Glad Hand Harry the Commercial King goes home to recuperate and they bring on the soapies. In 15 minute episodes, they saturate the morning. Leaders include WHEN A GIRL MARRIES (For all those in love, and those who can remember), PORTIA FACES LIFE (Dedicated to the heart of every woman who has ever dared to love....completely), DOCTOR PAUL, JOHN'S OTHER WIFE, WIFE'S OTHER JOHN, THE MAN BENEATH HERBED and I don't know what else. At 12, after the news, they put on the cooking shows and the Our Home things. At 5.30, there are the kid's serials - SUPERMAN, BIGGLES etc - and then music right through to 11, shading off from pop during dinner to jazz or schmaltz depending on the station. Around 10.30 there are usually a few pure modern jazz programmes, about the only worthwhile nuggets in the whole horrible mess. Of course the government-owned stations are vastly different, though in their way they are often less attractive than the commercial channels. 2BL, for instance, plays classical music day and night, seven days a week. 2FC, approximately equal to the BBC Light Programme, alternates soapies and garden/our home shows with worthwhile comedy programmes, some good music and often good jazz. And lately, there has been a reshuffling so as to make 2BL a trifle less highbrow and 2FC a little more. The result has been quite good. We've had Brecht and Beckett, Britten and Cage, tempered with Piaf and Sinatra, and a general rise in the quality of programme. Let's hope it continues.

POOKA. (Ford). I'm very sorry it was Graham Stone you had to contact about your suggested extension of TAFF to include this part of the world. If it makes you feel any better - which I doubt - Stone is not typical of Australian fandom. Through sheer inertia on the part of other people in the hobby he has risen to a position of prominence and, although he has no real power, personal or official, he occupies the box seat by default. At the moment,

POOKA.(continued). The Futurian Society of Sydney, the only club with which Stone is associated, has less than six paid-up members. There is a mailing list of sorts, and occasional dodgers are sent out to the people on it, but I doubt that there is much response. Apparently the club is bankrupt. While I was in the clubrooms a few days ago - they occupy a single small room in a run-down condemned building - the landlord came in with a small cheque for the rent which had bounced. The unfortunate man on duty had to pay out of his own pocket or risk being tossed out along with the books. This gives a fair indication of how the place has been allowed to collapse while Stone has been in charge. Stone's control of the club is completely autocratic. He has complete control of everything in the rooms - library, notice board, post box - and nobody is allowed in without his permission. No material may be placed on the notice board unless he puts it there, and under no circumstances may anything to do with fandom be posted unless he is responsible for the publication of it. TAFF notices, for instance, are not allowed, nor are announcements of fan publications. When these do occasionally arrive, they are confiscated by Stone. Graham Stone has one ambition - to be a famous fan. Yet, ironically, no man ever had less personality, talent, imagination or popularity. If he is ever famous, it will only be for his beerishness, and perhaps for the incredible string of Daugherty projects he has managed to promote in his years of activity.

I think I can safely say that Stone does not represent the thinking of Australian fandom. For one thing, he doesn't have the right to express the viewpoint of we fans down under. Nobody has that right - there are no major clubs and each fan makes his own way as best he can. As for having ideas, none spring immediately to my mind but perhaps discussion would bring out a few. As I see it, the biggest strike against the plan is that there are very few fans in Australasia and so the necessary money would be hard to raise. There are probably less than 20 active fans in Australia and NZ, and none of them are rich. One idea that does seem workable is that of an assisted passage. A few locals have had the thought to visit the US or UK, but it's been impossible to raise more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  the fare. If some sort of subsidy system could be promoted, then an Australian/NZ rep. might be able to make a con sometime. I know Mervyn Barrett, late of NZ but now living in Melbourne, would like to visit the US, and most of us would work like hell to get the trip for him if it were possible. He'd be a great representative and, I'm sure, a popular visitor as far as you people were concerned. It's impossible not to like Mervyn. Anyway, if this interests you, perhaps we might discuss it in the future.



AMBLE. (Mercer). I take it "What would you have done?" is a rhetorical question. If not, I'll send you my answer under plain wrapper next mailing.

There is one thing more annoying than clapping the end of a jazz solo - it's clapping a tune as soon as they realise what it is. It really gretches me.

"C&Stalt" and "It's Savvy" were beautiful puns. Do you aspire to the title of "Mild and Mellow Archy Mercer"?

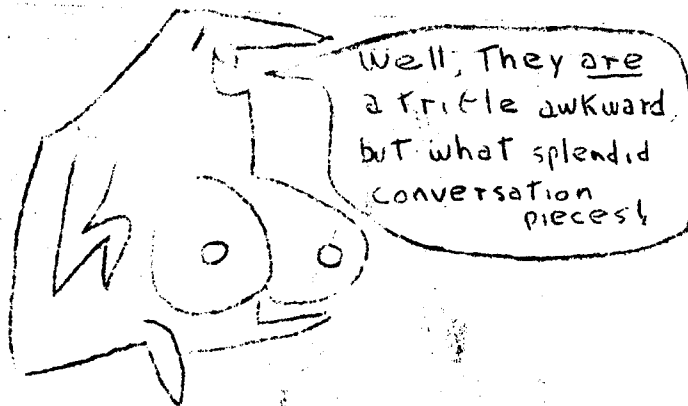
SMOKE. (Locke) At last! Another fan who reads on the toilet. I thought this was an odd perversion reserved for myself, alone until it cropped up as a question in that ridiculous book KNOW YOURSELF AS YOU REALLY ARE. No w I realise that all the best people are constipated unless they have a book with them in the bathroom.

Wasn't "Volstad Gridban" John Russell Fearn, like Vargo Statten etc?

I'll concede that experimental science fiction is rare, but it does exist. The most worthwhile example I know is James Blish's TESTAMENT OF ANDROS (in FUTURE January 1953 and a couple of later anthologies). Damon Knight once described it as the most complex story in the English language and after Jim had explained the levels I didn't see (I thought three was a pretty good score but that hardly scratched the surface) I'm inclined to agree with him.

The Potters seem to have had more fun in their caravan than I did in mine. Last year the department sent me to Newcastle, 100 miles north of Sydney, for a few weeks. Thinking to save money, I stayed in a caravan tethered in an almost deserted park and "did for" myself. It was cheap, but it was also miserable. During those few weeks I learned the ins and outs of caravan life intimately, and may lightning strike me if I ever even look at one again. Of course I may have been unlucky with my caravan. When the wind blew and I was unwise enough to leave the little ventilator in the roof open, the door would crash open at irregular intervals. When I left the ventilator closed, I almost suffocated. About the only worthwhile result of the venture was an indirect one - attacked by boredom I decided to write my first sf story which Ted Carnell bought a few weeks later. So it's an ill wind....

OUTPOST. (Hunter) "Have an Auspro" indeed - I was hoping everybody had forgotten that particular barb.// Those FILMS AND FILMING articles on eroticism were by Raymond Durnat, late of CAHIERS DU CINEMA and currently running MOTION. You're right - he's an idiot. But an amusing one. His film parodies are often hilarious.// My ignorance of the Shetland Islands is matched only by my curiosity about them. Are there really Shetland ponies up there?





MORPH. (Roles) You know, it wasn't until I met Bruce Burn that I discovered you aren't an Indian by birth? Your stories of life in the Indian Army, the caricature Arthur Thompson did of you, the general tone of MORPH all savour of the exotic east. It's astonishing how wrong one can be, and how unintelligent your "intelligent guesses" can turn out.

Chauvel's JEDDA - yes, I saw it a couple of times. You couldn't avoid doing so after the saturation showing it got out here. To be honest, I wasn't impressed by it at all. The treatment was novelettish and the action mostly poor. But I can see how it might have been interesting to Europeans with its scenes of aboriginal life. Speaking of aboriginal life, the aftermath of the film has been rather tragic. The girl who played Jedda - I forget her name - was semi-adopted by a white couple, but eventually she drifted back onto the reservation where she lives now, ugly, dirty and poor. All her money went on liquor and useless luxuries. Robert Tudawali, the male lead, fared even worse. He too went back to the reservation, caught tb, was arrested a number of times for alcoholism and finally ended up in jail. I heard that he was released recently but no doubt he'll land in there again soon. It sounds patronising to compare the natives with children, but nevertheless it seems to be a fair comparison. No matter how talented they are, how well recognised and rewarded, they remain irresponsible and completely unable to arrange their own lives once they become more complex than mere nomadism.

THE BIG SLEEP was a bit murky, I suppose - of course, as a fan I say it was masterfully shot in low key lighting and that the chiaroscuro... well, you get my meaning.

Incidentally, may I pick your bookseller's brain? The other day I bought a beat-up old H. Rider Haggard book called ERIC BRIGHT EYES. It's dated 1891 and seems to be a rather bloodthirsty essay into Scandanavian mythology on Haggard's part. Is it rare, at all? And is it worth reading? As far as I can gather after a casual dip, about the only worthwhile things in the book are some excellent engravings by one Lancelot Speed. But I could be wrong.

SCOTTISHE. (Lindsay) Beautiful cover, excellent illos, and thanks for publishing the poem. Otherwise no comments come to mind. Sorry.

In answer to your question, I'm twenty three - twenty four on 14th December next. How old are you?



THE NEW ASHMOLEAN...(Johnstone). I'm not sure exactly how much the Australian government will pay American immigrants but I know it is a fairly substantial amount. When Don Stuefloten was out here he depended rather heavily on the allowance, although he had to pay it back as he left before the statutory period was up. As for prices, I've always thought that household appliances and other luxuries are cheaper in Australian stores than their American counterparts. A new refrigerator costs about \$350, tv sets \$400, irons about \$50. How does that compare. Cars, of course, are far more expensive, I know. The Falcon, last years US model, costs about \$3500.// I don't know a great deal about job openings in your field, though from my own attempts to get a toehold in the film game I would say they are as tight for the pro as they are for the keen amateur like myself. Opportunities must increase though. There are already three tv channels operating in Sydney and at least two in all other capitals, with new ones cropping up all over the country in the larger towns. Another channel opens in Sydney next year, and no doubt there will be more. Movies are less well established but as the licencing commission is demanding something like 40% Australian-made shows for all new channels it looks as if things might pick up. The feature film field, however, is rotten and looks like continuing to be rotten. There have been some good directors through here recently - Joseph Losey, Seth Holt, Zinnemann, Kramer, Reisz - but they have been interested only in making films with their own teams. Chances of breaking into their game is pretty small.// I wouldn't worry about the American accent. There are more Americans in entertainment out here than Australians, and most of the Australians imitate American accents anyway. On top of this an astonishing number of people have moved here to get away from The Bomb. Advertising, entertainment and general promotion swarm with them. The local American colony is a large and active one - so large, in fact, that it is less a colony than an integral part of the community.

I agree with everything you say about LAWRENCE OF ARABIA. I can't think of another film that was more visually powerful. There are flaws, mostly factual, and a few errors of artistic judgment, but against the enormous quality of the film in general they don't count. I've seen it three times so far - I could see it a hundred times more and never be bored. Significant, don't you think, that the first British "spectacular" should also be the best to date?

INDEX TO SF ADVENTURES. (Burgess). Very Worthwhile, Brian - thanks. This gave me rather a nice personal kick too - the first time I've been included in a checklist

QUARTERING. (Fitch). I wouldn't get so miserable about this issue, Don. It is nowhere near as bad as you paint it. Apazines are always a let down when you read them over. So are most things, if it comes to that.

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CLIPPINGSCLIPPINGSCLIPPINGSCLIPPINGSCLIPPINGSCLIPPINGSCLIPPINGSCLIPPINGSCLIPPINGS

NEW YORK. Radio jingles written by humourist Stan Freberg, son of a Baptist minister, will be launched on American radio soon to "sell" religion. A sample of the jingles, which will be broadcast by the United Presbyterian Church of the United States: "Doesn't it get a little lonely sometimes/Out on that limb/Without Him?/ Why try to go it alone?/ The blessings you save may be your own."

No doubt to be followed by "You get a lot to like with a saviour", "Where there's a man there's a messiah" and "Communion tastes good like a sacrament should."

...

LONDON. A nude woman recently opened her door to a man she thought was a blind piano tuner. She took him by the hand, led him in and sat him down at the piano. When he had finished she took him by the hand - fully dressed by now - and led him out again. It was not until next morning that he discovered the woman had been expecting "Old Tom", the firm's completely blind tuner. The story was told today by the chairman of the Piano Tuner's Publicity Association (Mr. T. Hicks) in an appeal for more boys to become pinao tuners. "It is an interesting and exciting career" he said.

No comment.

...

SYDNEY. Interviewer. Mr. Henty, can you tell us when Australians will be allowed the freedom that citizens of other countries enjoy in their choice of reading matter, and when we will be able to read books like LOLITA, LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER, ANOTHER COUNTRY and other worthwhile works now banned in this country?

Senator Henty, Minister in charge of customs and censorship. Well, you know, I don't think the average healthy Australian looks at it like that at all. Most Australians are perfectly satisfied with the system as it is. I get more letters in support of my decisions - far more - than I get criticising it.

...

LONDON. MENSA, a society for people with very high intelligence quotients, held a meeting this weekend and released a press handout with five misspelled words. The misspelled words were "differencies", "principle" (where "principal" was meant), "proffessors", "independant" and "comparitive". "Perhaps" one newspaper said, "they are just like people after all."

Perish the thought.

...

GENEVA. The question of legal "marriage" between homosexuals was worth "serious consideration" a group of pastors, doctors and professors said recently. They made the suggestion in a report by the Social Studies Committee of the Swiss Pastoral Society.

Darby and John? Who used to be Jack and Bill?

## SHADOW, SHADOW ON THE WALL.

Last quarter was a patchy one for films, but nevertheless there were more good movies around than we are used to out here. This is due primarily to the increased activity of the Sydney film groups and societies who seem suddenly to have received a new lease of energy. After years of lack-lustre presentations, of POTENKIN in church halls and CALIGARI in the basement, festivals of Russian folk dancing in overexposed Eastmancolour and Polish amateur comedies, they have during the last six months been catapulted out of their lethargy to such an extent that they are now importing quality features off their own bat and showing them, adequately supported, in the best small theatres. I've been following the societies for more than two years without getting more than the traditional Eisenstein, German silents and such. Yet in the last two months I've been offered, in quick succession, Kurosawa's RASHOMON, Mizoguchi's UGETSU MONOGATARI, Von Sternberg's THE BLUE ANGEL, Leni Reifenstahl's TRIUMPH OF THE WILL, Munk EROICA, a Cocteau season and revivals of almost every major short film released in the southern hemisphere for the last five years, including Marcel Marceau's A PUBLIC GARDEN, Bert Haanstra's GLASS, Serge Bourbignon's THE SMILE and dozens of cartoons, including the classic MOONBIRD, cartoon films from Jiri Trnka's puppets and experimental things by the local artist Dusan Marek who created such a sensation at Annecy this year. I'm still wondering what hit the place.

Of the regularly released commercial features, three stand out. THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE is reviewed at length elsewhere. The other two are Resnais' LAST YEAR IN MARIENBAD and David Lean's LAWRENCE OF ARABIA. Of MARIENBAD there is little I can say. After reading dozens of analyses and commentaries, I'm no longer sure which ideas are my own and which those of other writers. One thing I should say - I enjoyed it very much. MARIENBAD must be the most completely absorbing film ever made. One doesn't dare take one's eyes off it for a second for fear of losing a vital clue. Seeing it the second time, I was amazed at how much I had missed on the first occasion when my attention had wandered for a moment. It's a fascinating and a beautiful film - but, to me, it was fascinating as a puzzle is fascinating. The challenge was less to understand the point than to "get it out" and, just as one seldom remembers the few new words picked up in a crossword puzzle, so I have a blank spot in my memory where MARIENBAD is concerned. I wonder how many other people have a similar experience of the film.

Incidentally, I'm looking forward to Resnais' new film L'IMMORTELLE. It appears to follow rather closely in the footsteps of MARIENBAD, at least as far as technique is concerned. One critic said that it would have lasted only 20 minutes if each shot had been used only once. However, as they are used again and again throughout the film, it runs nearly two hours!

By comparison with MARIENBAD, David Lean's LAWRENCE OF ARABIA is one of the most completely awe-inspiring works in film history. There is no intellectual slap-and-tickle about this film - it is direct and unignorable as a blow in the face. I have never in my life seen a film as visually powerful as this, nor one in which character and background are so skilfully blended. It is the

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supreme motion picture epic of modern times, and undoubtedly the best film produced by Britain in many years. Lean uses the 70mm frame magnificently. Instead of filling it with ludicrous close-ups or milling crowds, he throws it open like a window, often shooting from one or two miles away to show the vastness of the country. Figures move like ants on a bare floor, dwarfed by the immensity of their surroundings. If you think you've seen the desert, this film will astonish you. The huge emptiness of the Jordanian wastes make the Australian entre look like a park and Monument Valley like a graveyard.

This is not to say the film is flawless. There are errors here and there. Admittedly none of them is large enough to mar the immensity of the achievement, but they are worth mentioning. Robert Bolt's screenplay is admirable, but on occasions his search for dramatic situations leads him into doubtful areas. In the film, Lawrence is so twisted by his torture and violation by the Turkish Bey of Deraa that he begins a campaign of personal vengeance against all Turks, ending in the massacre of some thousands of retreating soldiers near the village of Tafas. He is supposed to have recruited a handful of condemned murderers as a bodyguard, and to have lost all dignity in the eyes of the Arab princes who led the revolt. To put it quite plainly, this is a load of old rubbish. There is no doubt that Lawrence was severely disturbed by his experiences at Deraa, but there is no escaping the fact that he was never sufficiently in charge of his men to prevent them from attacking if they were severely provoked. His was not an army in the Western sense of the word. The massacre at Tafas (which was part of a larger battle, incidentally) was led by Auda Abu Tayi and not by Lawrence, and there was no order "No prisoners". The actual order was "The best of you are those who bring me the most Turkish dead" which may not be very different in substance but has a vastly different emphasis. As for the moral Arabian sheikh who tried to restrain Lawrence, there was no such person. Lawrence's bodyguard consisted of a force of 90 picked Ageyl tribesmen, not 15 as shown in the film. Nor were they condemned murderers. At that time, there was no such thing as a "condemned" murderer in Arabia. Justice was meted out on a purely personal basis by the families concerned. No doubt the bodyguard was made up of cutthroats - but then so was the entire Arab army. Besides this, the brief Arab occupation of Damascus was by no means the farce that the film makes it out to be. There is no mention at all of the Abd el Kader revolt which caused so much trouble at that time. The war in the desert is often falsified for dramatic effect, and occasionally errors in props and settings are apparent. The railway lines Lawrence blows up are of wooden sleepers and metal rails. In Arabia, the sleepers were always metal. Lawrence used mainly to put charges in the centre of the sleepers and blow them into an inverted U shape, pulling the lines inwards and twisting them hopelessly. But I suppose this is just nit-picking. On the whole it's a hell of a good treatment.

THE RAVEN is good fun, and probably the best fantasy yet released out here. It has that beautifully irreverent note that made Hubbard's UNKNOWN fantasies such fun. I'll never forget the magic duel between Boris Karloff and Peter Lorre. Working with something between a sextant and a firework, Lorre conjured up a horrendous thunder storm. At its height, Karloff makes a few passes and a bolt of lightning blasts Lorre. As the smoke clears, all that is left is a seething pool of crimson. Someone looks down in horror, dips in a cautious finger, tastes it. He looks surprised. "Raspberry jam?" he says in astonishment.

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME...

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE is a damn good science fiction film. Almost by accident - certainly not by design - it succeeds in fitting the generally accepted description of sf; fiction about the effects of a scientific development on the human race. This is ironic, as most films claiming to be science fiction - the monster epics, etc - do not fit the description. Film monsters are made not by man but by nature. Frozen in ice, isolated by geographical changes, occasionally transplanted from space, their displacement in time and space provides the action. Man-made monsters are rare and man-made effects on humanity in general rarer still. Happily THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE has no monsters. It does, however, have a scientific invention and a number of characters affected by it. There is a plot built around this situation. In short, there is a science fiction story.

And it isn't a bad story either. The plot twists and turns like a Van Vogt special yet it has a solid dramatic base. Briefly, the story is this: During the Korean war, an American army patrol is betrayed to the Chinese by its Korean interpreter. The nine patrol members are drugged, flown to Manchuria and for three days "brainwashed" with a new Soviet technique which wipes away every trace of individuality. "Not only have their brains been washed" a scientist quips. "They have also been dry-cleaned". In a show before a chillingly clinical group of Russian and Chinese brass, Sgt. Laurence Harvey is ordered to shoot one of his own men and strangle another. He does this without question, clam even to the point of thanking Spl. Frank Sinatra for the loan of his pistol. The worth of their system proved, the Russians implant a false memory of the three missing days, convincing all the survivors that Harvey heroically saved the patrol and fought his way with them back through the enemy lines after being cut off. He gets the Medal of Honour and is sent back to the United States as a hero, not realising that he has built into his brain a set of compulsions and commands. The pattern is keyed by the phrase "Why don't you pass the time by playing a little solitaire?". He plays until the Queen of Diamonds turns up - after that, he is amenable to every wish to his operator, a completely efficient and inhuman killing machine. His primary task is the murder of a presidential candidate at a party convention, thus allowing the Vice President, a Communist tool, to take over. (Ironically, his method is to shoot the man through the head with a high-powered rifle fitted with a telescopic sight.)

Although it has established stars, this film is dominated by Hollywood's new generation, a sort of fitful nouvelle vague. In his first three films - THE YOUNG SAVAGES, ALL FALL DOWN and BIRDMAN OF ALCATRAZ - the director John Frankenheimer seemed to

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be searching for a personal style which unfortunately always evaded him. However, because this is not primarily a film of character, his insecurity is not as noticeable as in previous productions. His handling of the unlikely plot is crisp and intelligent. His cutting on action is especially good. I won't easily forget a brutal karate duel between Sinatra and the Korean spy in Harvey's apartment. Screen fighting these days is as formalised as a ballet (in fact Hermes Pan once staged a fight as a ballet - remember DESIGNING WOMAN?). But Frankenheimer brings new energy and imagination to the old cliché of punch, block, counter-punch, bash him with a table. The two men fight in brief nervous bursts, slashing at each other like fighting cocks. Karate throws and hand chops quickly reduce most of the furniture to kindling but they fight on in a ruin of splintered wood and littered paper. This is just one example of Frankenheimer improving his material with sheer inventiveness. Of the other men involved, Dave Amram turns in a fine musical score, atmospheric and apt. You may remember Amram as a jazz french hornist and leader of the Amram-Burrows Sextet some years ago. George Axlerod in his first screenplay since BREAKFAST AT TIFFANYS doesn't get carried away by the intoxicating irrationalities of the plot. His script is fast, tight and often witty. As:

Vice-Pres. James Gregory, eating breakfast: I wish we could fix on the exact number of card-carrying communists there is supposed to be in the State Department. You change the number so often I lose track.

Wife/string-puller Angela Lansbury: You'd like one simple number to stick with then?

Gregory.(shaking tomato sauce onto his steak). It would make things a lot easier down at the Capitol.

Lansbury looks at the bottle of Heinz tomato sauce he is using and smiles.

Cut to Gregory addressing the senate: And I say to you that there are no less than fifty seven card carrying communists...."

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE may not be great art, but it is a thoughtful film, a film of ideas. And as the ideas are basically science fiction ideas, this makes it doubly interesting for fandom.

So be it - so see it.

IN MEMORIAM.

It was bright day;  
As bright a day as that on which he died.  
Holding the paper unread,  
Ignoring the screaming headlines  
I turned back to the night  
And wondered if there had been some sign.  
But I had not woken sweating,  
Bolt upright, staring,  
Aghast at something sensed outside  
In the darkness.  
There had been no thunder, no trumpets ;  
Only a quiet summer night  
And mist among the trees.

Still hardly believing it  
I stood by the road and the rivering traffic.  
Among the cars I saw an open window  
And in the window, looking out and up, a child,  
A face of idiot serenity  
Turned sun-dazed like a flower to the sky.  
Three nuns attended her with faces  
Like dead dry leaves.  
Here was an island of unconcern  
In our bewilderment.  
For these four, the world had not changed.  
The sun still shone, the vesper bell still rang.  
God was still in his heaven.

And for us? I looked down.  
The paper had become a paper again.  
I stuffed it into my pocket.  
They were right - life goes on.  
But I hated them for proving it to me.

John Baxter.