

newsletter

The Bulletin of The Irish Science Fiction Association



DECEMBER 1977/JANUARY 1978

NUMBER 1

First of all, let me say that we hope all our fellow members and friends had a wonderful Christmas and that the New Year is shaping up as hoped.

With that over, it is now necessary to explain why this newsletter is late. Well, an industrial dispute is basically responsible for the delay, although there is another reason. Believe it or not, STARGATE is at the printer's and since this takes a longer time to print - the newsletter fell into second place. Then, I got my dates mixed up and suddenly realised that this newsletter would probably reach you too late for the next meeting. This is why it will be delivered (where possible) by hand or it will follow in the post after a phone call about the meeting. Why all the panic?, you may be saying. Well, the reason is now coming up.

+++++
+++++
+++ Sunday 29th January. +++
+++
+++ Since, we were finding that the Falcon Inn was beginning to get
+++ rather cramped at meetings, the committee have decided to try a new
+++ location. This is the MAN OF ARAN, 39 Arran Quay, Dublin 7 (a
+++ little past the Four Courts) - buses run from O'Connell Bridge. We
+++ shall be using the upstairs lounge from 7.00 pm. The door to this
+++ lounge is on the right, inside the main porch of the premises. The
+++ meeting will begin at 8.00 and we hope to hold another book auction
+++ - the last one was so successful! So, anyone who has books that
+++ they don't want any more, please bring them along and help the
+++ Association. Paddy O'Connell will be in charge of the proceedings.
+++ Do come along and let us know what you think of the new location.
+++ Staying there will, of course, be subject to membership approval.
+++ For those of you with cars, there is ample space for parking in the
+++ Smithfield Car Park, up Arran Street (on the right before the Man
+++ of Aran).
+++++

At the meeting in November, Garrett Hayes very kindly gave a talk on Science Fiction & the Future of Literature. Unfortunately, I missed the discussion but from the good reports I have heard from other members I hope to persuade Garrett to write up the talk for publication in a newsletter or journal.

The December meeting featured an SF quiz arranged by Paddy O'Connell. It was quite tough and Ian McAulay won the prize of two tickets to STAR WARS.

The ISFA stand at the Science Exhibition in the RDS last November, attracted quite a lot of attention and from the numerous enquiries, we have already welcomed a few new members.

Since, Bobby MacLaughlin is no longer able to assist us on the committee (owing to a new job), we are very pleased to welcome Rita Meehan onto the committee and she has already been working hard on our behalf.

Robert Lane has also got a new job and has (as of this newsletter) handed over newsletter and journal production to John McCarthy - one of our hardest workers. Please help John by getting contributions for the next newsletter to him at Paddy O'Connell's address in a week or so. Also, could you please have contributions for the next STARGATE ready in a month or so.

MASTERMIND.....

In the last issue, Brendan Ryder gave us the questions used on the BBC's famous series when a contestant from Northern Ireland chose SF as his speciality subject. Here, now, are the answers. How many did you manage to get correct?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1) TRIPLANETARY. | 9) Cirano de Bergerac. |
| 2) NIGHTFALL. | 10) Jack Vance. |
| 3) Telepathy. | 11) Sirius. |
| 4) Amazing Stories. | 12) Stanislaw Lem's THE CYBERIAD |
| 5) 700 Gs. | 13) Dock its sting. |
| 6) The dead god Cthulhu. | 14) Laid its eggs inside live human bodies. |
| 7) The Anti-Sex League. | 15) Bokonan. |
| 8) Randall Garrett. | 16) The immortality drug 'Strun'. |

Clerical Officer, Graham Andrews, scored eight points in his two minutes of questions. He passed on 6, 9 and 12 and failed to give the correct answers to 5, 7, 10, 13 and 14.

POSTAL PROBLEMS.....

Towards the end of last year there were a number of complaints from ISFA members who didn't receive copies of newsletters and even membership cards. Well, we knew that they were being posted! (Although, in one case, we had to reprint a whole batch of newsletters and send them out again.) We also began to wonder if we were receiving all of our post in Rathgar and set about to query the sub-post office in Rathmines. This was not very satisfactory.

Phase Two:- You may recall that there was a strike in postal area 6 at the end of last year. The reason? - complaints about delays in post and undelivered post. So, it seems, the ISFA was not alone in its discomfort. The problem has now (fingers crossed) been solved by the postal authorities. However, just to be on the safe side, all of our post will be mailed from the G.P.O. in future.

BOOK REVIEW.....

by John McCarthy

MINDBRIDGE by Joe Haldeman.

No one can accuse Joe Haldeman of a lack of imagination or ambition: this new work embodies a great deal of the former and reflects a healthy alicie of the latter. Its not perfect: there are occasional weak points in the physics, but they are certainly minor and don't detract from the book.

The basic story is quite simple: a group of explorers are transmitted to a new planet where they discover an interesting creature which can enable men to read other minds by touching the animal (hence the title). This is also coupled with a very odd device for FTL travel. Soon, thereafter, mankind meets an intelligent race which proves to be extremely hostile to mankind. At length, they are pacified and all is well.

The details which Haldeman throws in make the story as enjoyable as it is. There are numerous functional digressions (in a manner similar to Brunner's in STAND ON ZANZIBAR) in the form of official reports, media publicity, flashbacks and subplots which lead to very concise scene setting and plot development. Yet, in spite of the seemingly mechanistic approach to the work, Haldeman ends up by revealing the source of all human conflict, the nature of racial maturity and incidently, a proof of the existance of an afterlife. (Hence, the ambition mentioned above.)

Readers of the FOREVER WAR will recognise a few fundamental assumptions about life in general which Haldeman seems to endorse. Without going into details, I'd say the best part of the book is how he makes the aliens so determined to slaughter earth explorers while blaming it on human nature. Brilliant!

Your reviewer, already known for his cynical approach to many works is forced to put MINDBRIDGE into the 'Don't Miss It' category. It is a genuine pleasure to read.

SCIENCE FICTION ROCK MUSICAL.....

On St. Stephen's day, BBC 2 presented a rock musical written by Melvyn Bragg with music and lyrics by Ken Howard and Alan Blaikley. ORION tells the story of a doomed world and a journey into space to look for the new earth. Pollution has destroyed man's hope for survival on this planet. Idealist Hoan (a play on Noah - if you hadn't noticed) builds a space craft and peoples it with his wife and assorted straggling survivors. Most of these people are quite nice, pleasant kids. Well, all of them, except one - the rearing of evil's ugly head to combat the god-head figure presented by Hoan and to liven up the action (naturally). Bruce is a nasty piece of work from the beginning and is given the now typical Presley/macho style of lyric. After failing to have his way with one of the young ladies in the cast, he treacherously jettisons Hoan into the void. A fight ensues between Bruce and the one boy who would stand up to him. The baddie is electrocuted and the victor becomes the new leader of the voyage to find a new home. As the musical draws to a close, the first space- child (free from the conflict of life on earth) is born.

Its a sloppy tale, with just-so music although, I will admit that like all rock musicals it grows on you with further listenings. The cast are OK as rock musical casts go (no spots and plastic faces); handsome young men; pretty, leggy girls; and the statutory coloured couple, all playing in curious sets. It seems that in the space flight of the future, space won't be a problem. (Oh, sorry about that.) Its all sickeningly symbolic. Maybe its just as well it only lasted 55 minutes. Oh, by the way, (as in BLAKE'S 7), the space ship didn't exactly look all that aero-dynamically sound. Does anyone really care?

...

...

...

Another work to look forward to this time is a film made by the Hamburg Opera, produced by Rolf Liebermann and directed and designed by the composer, Giancarlo Menotti. HELP, THE GLOBOLINKS tells of the invasion of the Earth by strange aliens called Globolinks. These beings have the power to change all the people they come in contact with into Globolinks also. If that isn't bad enough, they can also disappear and reappear at will anywhere they like. They arrive on Earth in the forest near a large boarding school. A party of children are returning from an outing in the school's mini-bus when, the engine grinds to a halt. They are soon beset by a horde of the weird and wonderful Globolinks. (If they had turned out to be benevolent, they would have been great fun to have around.) The car horn frightens the aliens away and the children discover that if they play the musical instruments they have with them, they can keep the Globolinks at bay. Young Emily (played by Edith Mathis) sets out for help, playing her violin as protection. The plot thickens as the Globolinks attack the school. A concerted effort then (if you'll pardon another pun) disperses the Globolinks or, so everyone thinks!!!

It is all great fun. Children (for whom it was originally written) should love it but, anyone who can dispense with logic for an hour or so should find it thoroughly delightful.

The Limerick Music Association presented the film a little over a year ago at the Player-Wills Theatre. With any luck, they may repeat it.

THE SKY AT NIGHT.....

Brendan Ryder recounts 'The Voyager Missions', the September 1977 programme in Patrick Moore's long-running TV series.

Voyager 2 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a sunlit, cloudless day at the end of August. After some initial trouble with one of the camera-booms, it went safely on its way to Jupiter from where we can expect data in early 1986 and Saturn - some years later. It will investigate the moons, magnetosphere and cloud-belts of these two giant planets.

Voyager 1 went up early in September and everything went according to plan. It will investigate the moons of Jupiter, moons and rings of Saturn and hopefully, if all goes according to plan, Uranus in 1989 and Neptune later.

Patrick Moore (complete with ruffled hair and fast voice!) invited Dr. Gary Hunt, a well-known astronomer, to talk about the two probes. Dr. Hunt said that the two space-craft had a large - four metres wide - dish with a smaller one inside for sending back messages to Earth. They also have a fourteen metre long arm for collecting various other types of data and a smaller arm with four television cameras on it for sending back motion pictures. This was the one piece of equipment that went wrong. Voyager 2's arm did not spring out after reaching space - as it was meant to - and gave the controllers back on Earth some anxious moments. However, after some experiments with a model of the craft and a lot of praying, they managed to get it out and found it to be only 1° or 2° out of place.

There was, however, an unlikely moment in the mission. Voyager 1's controllers sent it out an order to carry out a function and it flatly disobeyed (honest!), or so Patrick Moore said. Obviously, the computer forgot Asimov's Second Law of Robotics: 'A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings ...'. However, it eventually did the experiment much to the relief of its controllers back on Earth.

One final snippet of news. The Planet Uranus, seventh planet from the Sun, has been found to have rings!! This was totally unexpected and while nobody has actually seen them from Earth, they are known to exist from data collected by various space-craft. They are, however, much thinner than Saturn's rings and will probably never be seen from Earth due to our turbulent and murky atmospheric conditions.

So, what other wonders lie in wait for someone to discover within our Solar System - never mind the Universe?

...

...

...

It has been decided that the many revolting jokes about the Rings around Uranus will go unpublished in the ISFA newsletter. We would, however, still like to hear them.

+++++

BOOK REVIEW.....

by Fred Woods.

I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC by Ray Bradbury.

In Newsletter No. 12, I mentioned Ray Bradbury's MACHINERIES OF JOY, in which there were two stories with an Irish connection. For those Bradbury fans or for those who like stories set in Ireland, read I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC. This collection contains no less than three stories set in Ireland.

The first of these, THE TERRIBLE CONFLAGRATION UP AT THE PLACE, takes a humorous look at The Troubles in Ireland and tells how the men of one small village played their part.

In THE COLD WIND AND THE WARM the fairies come back to Ireland for a brief visit in Autumn. I don't know at whose knee Mr. Bradbury heard his fairy stories but, the fairies he writes about buy rounds of drink in pubs before leaving on the boat from Dun Laoghaire.

The third story THE HAUNTING OF THE NEW is a rather mystical tale of a girl who tries to rebuild a very wild past. Despite spending lots of money over a long period, the result is an expensive failure.

One heartrending story called YES, WE'LL GATHER AT THE RIVER, describes the plight of a small town which depends on income from the passing trade, being bypassed by a new road.

THE LOST CITY OF MARS tells how an odd group of people search for 'the most awful city in history ... to find why the legend says that having built it, the Martians ran screaming away from it.' When they find the city it grants all their desires and dreams - or does it?

The collection contains eighteen stories in all, one told in verse, and all worth reading whether you are a Bradbury fan or not. Here, Bradbury has created a galaxy of strange characters and odd situations, too many to describe in detail ... the story of Py, a human baby born in another dimension ... the last man left in England ... a shining green intelligence, in the sea, which wants a man - (Definitely one for our beloved Chairman - talk about tension .../... I'll take your word for that, Fred. R.) ... and the title story which takes a long look down memory lane.

MARTIAN MYSTERY....

The Sunday World of January 8th ran a photograph which at present is baffling the American scientists in charge of the Mariner series of explorer craft. The photographs of the south polar region of the planet (taken by Mariner 9) clearly show rectangular shapes which, according to the scientists are all precisely angled structures between 2½ and 3 miles across. The scientists have noted that Inca cities were structured along the same regular lines. Geologists are in agreement that the shapes 'could easily be interpreted as a sign of intelligent life.... the 90 degree angles are rare in natural geological formations.'

The logical place for life forms to exist on Mars would be at the poles since, no traces of water have been found anywhere else on the planet. Also, if these structures did turn out to be buildings and built by an intelligent life form then, they could possibly be as much as 200 million years old.

The scientists at NASA hope to arrange for a Viking lander to send back on the spot photographs some time in the mid 1980s.

Will this turn out to be what we have all been waiting for?

BOOK NEWS from P.J. Goode.

There isn't very much this time I'm afraid so, I'll give you some info. about magazines that have reached us. However, books first.

ENCHANTED PILGRIMAGE by Clifford Simak. Fontana Books, 75p....is a journey back through the centuries - to the present in an alternate world where the fierce strangle-hold of the mediaeval church has never lost its grip, and the powers of the Inquisition are unquestioned. Witches, goblins, harpies and hell-hounds abound in this brilliant fantasy from a master of the art.

NIGHTWATCH by Andrew M. Stephenson. Orbit Books, 85p....is an honest-to-goodness SF novel from a new young writer. It contains all the paraphernalia of the genre - moon bases, alien space ships, robots and computers - yet raised above the ordinary, everyday SF work by good characterization, sound plotting and a good basic sense of storytelling.

And now, the magazines.....

IT COMES IN THE POST - is a review-type catalogue of fanzines published in America, Canada, Britain, Australia and Europe. (ISFA even had a mention in the last issue!) The address to write to for information is New Prooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, Virginia - 230605. USA.

ARENA 6 (36 pages). Edited and published by Geoff Rippington, 15 Queens Avenue, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8AY, UK. Articles, reviews, artwork and letters intended for consideration for publication to the above address. ... ARENA 6 contains an interview with Robert Sheekley and an enquiry into his work, a review of SF for children, a letter column, book and film reviews and some first class artwork ... all-in-all, a very professional mag for only 40p, 3 issues for £1.00.

DARK HORIZONS 17. Summer '77. (36 pages). The Journal of the British Fantasy Society contains Moorcock's GOM speech at the 2nd World Fantasy Convention 1976, six short stories, some poetry, a letter column and a lot of evocative artwork from seven assorted artists. This is THE journal for fantasy fans and, as always, it is up to its usual high standard.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK.....

Pierrot Publishing Limited have been in touch with the committee looking for full details about the ISFA. These have been supplied and with any luck, you will see our Association mentioned in the first edition of the above mentioned Yearbook which is due out in September this year.

FILMS.....



Well, the city's cinemas have not exactly been inactive with regard to SF and fantasy films over the Christmas period.

However, I have heard absolutely nothing from ISFA members who I'm sure have certainly seen one if not all of them!!

Now, I'm not asking you to write reams of criticism. If you have seen a film, why not pen just a few observations. Surely that isn't asking too much.

In the next newsletter we would like to run a section about STAR WARS. So, how about it??

Other current films we would like to hear about are DEMON SEED, THE PEOPLE THAT TIME FORGOT and SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER.



NEW TV SERIES.....

Not only have you all been deathly silent about films, but about television's SF contributions also. There is quite a lot going on in the little box in the corner at present so, why not let us know what you think about that also. The BBC have started BLAKE'S 7 while UTV are telecasting the series based on the feature film LOGAN'S RUN. Of course, there are also shows like MAN FROM ATLANTIS, SPACE 1999, BIONIC WOMAN and of course, old faithful DOCTOR WHO.

IS VON DANIKEN CORRECT?.....

In late 1976, a joint British-Ecuadorian expedition set out to explore the Tayos caves which stretch deep beneath the tropical forests, 430 miles south of Quito, Ecuador.

Von Daniken has put forward the theory that the enormous cave system (which might stretch as far as Peru to the south) has been constructed by intelligent beings using advanced technology. (See GOLD OF THE GODS for full details of Von Daniken's theory).

The scientific co-ordinator of the expedition, Dr. Philip Ashmole of Edinburgh University, said at the outset that they were very sceptical of Von Daniken's ideas. "If there's anything to support these fantastic claims, we'll find out." - Maybe we'll hear something soon.

RECORDS.....

For fantasy film enthusiasts, there are two recent releases on London Records that will be of great interest.

If you are a film buff then the name of Bernard Herrmann should ring many bells. Bernard Herrmann was, during his long career, the uncrowned king of fantasy and thriller movie scores. Besides composing the music for Alfred Hitchcock's masterpiece PSYCHO, he also worked on VERTIGO and MARNIE.

In the science fiction film world, he has written music to complement such excellent films as THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL and FAHRENHEIT 451.

To the fantasy fan he will always be remembered for his remarkable music which coupled so beautifully with the animation works of Ray Harryhausen. THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINEAD was the first in the partnership and animator Harryhausen has this to say about it: 'When Charles (Schneer) told me that he knew Bernie and was thinking about trying to sign him up to score for SINEAD, I could have not been more pleased. One afternoon at the Columbia projection theatre, we ran the rough cut for him. Not much was said during the showing but the omens were good. Mr. Herrmann had not voiced one insulting remark about the picture as he is so often reputed to do. Although he came from the projection room with a rather grim expression on his face, he apparently liked what he saw well enough to feel he could contribute something to it. And this 'something' was most effective, as anyone who has seen the picture must readily admit.'

After the SINEAD, Herrmann to work on JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS, THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER and THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND.

The records on the market have a selection of the best themes composed by Mr. Herrmann for the fantasy film world. In fact, the first is called THE FANTASY FILM WORLD OF BERNARD HERRMANN. It carries the following tracks:-

SIDE ONE: JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH and THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINEAD.

SIDE TWO:-THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL and FAHRENHEIT 451.

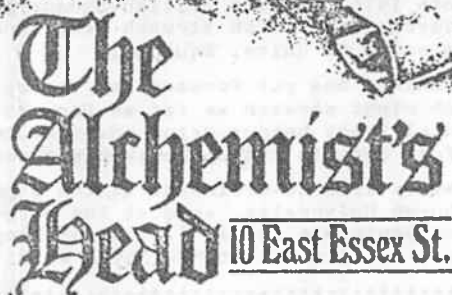
The second album is THE MYSTERIOUS FILM WORLD OF BERNARD HERRMANN, with the following musical treats:-

SIDE ONE: MYSTERIOUS ISLAND and JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS.

SIDE TWO: THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER which is a minor masterpiece in itself.

Both of these records are well worth adding to your collection. You can take my word for that!!!

All enquiries regarding the ISFA should be addressed to the Secretary, Paddy O'Connell, 11 Templemore Avenue, Rathgar, Dublin 6. (SAE please)

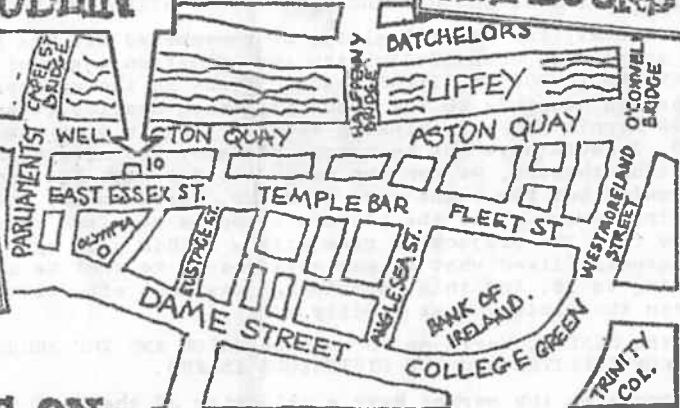


IRELAND'S ONLY SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY
AND OCCULT BOOK SHOP.

**RIGHT HERE
IN DUBLIN**

**POSTERS,
CALENDARS
ART BOOKS**

ALL THE
LATEST
IN S.F. &
HORROR.



BOOKS ON:-
PALMISTRY, PSYCHIC PHENOMENA,
MEDITATION, I CHING, ASTRONOMY,
UFOs, ASTROLOGY, ZEN, MYSTICISM
TAROT ETC.

SPOKEN ARTS RECORDS:
TOLKIEN, VONNEGUT, HEINLEIN, ETC.

MAIL
ORDER
BOOKS
BOUGHT