

ISFJA NEWS

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TOP RUSSIAN AUTHOR ARKADY STRUGATSKY DIES

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the Alchemists Head Bookshop and the
Modeller's Nook model shop, and a
membership card and badge.*

EDITORIAL

January 28th is the ISFA Annual General Meeting. It's in the Horse and Tram on Eden Quay, at 8 p.m. This is a necessary evil - it's a forum for airing views, electing a new committee, and discussing the future of the Association. Over the past year the Association has succeeded in its aims of bringing science fiction to the attention of the public in many ways: SEx had an attendance of over 700, and featured excellent and varied artwork and sculpture by both professional and amateur artists; FTL has progressed from a photocopied fanzine to a fully-printed magazine which promises a lot for the future; the Aisling Cheal Short Story Competition was sponsored by Harry Harrison, won by Brendan Farrell (who is now head of distribution for FTL!) and attracted over 60 entries; our meetings ranged from a simple book auction to 'An Evening With Clive Barker' and 'An Evening With Terry Brooks'; we also had celebrations of Blake's 7 and Star Trek; the Newsletter expanded from eight pages to twenty-four, and the topics covered within it likewise broadened; Octocon, run by ISFA members, had over 600 attendees and was a huge success. The future for the ISFA looks bright - come to the AGM and tell us where you want to see it going!

WRITERS & WRITINGS

TOP RUSSIAN AUTHOR DIES

Arkady Strugatsky, one of the Soviet Union's top writers, died on October 14th. Born in 1925, Arkady and his younger brother Boris started to publish science fiction at the beginning of the space age in the late 1950's. Arkady studied English and Japanese, then

worked as a technical translator and editor; his brother was a computer mathematician at an astronomical observatory. Their early work was utopian, but during the Khrushchev era they wrote of a society (the USSR) that was not yet utopian. This led to problems in getting their writings published though this actually increased the demand for their books. DAW Books and Collier Macmillan published some of their work in the West but it was only with the coming of 'perestroika' that their books became 'acceptable' in the Soviet Union again. The brothers were invited to many western SF conventions - the first to succeed in getting them was 'Conspiracy '87', the British Worldcon (though it seems they were baffled by the western style of conventions).

'Moscow News' correspondent Alexander Sokurov wrote:

'Arkady Strugatsky left, shutting the door noiselessly behind him, as a big, private man, who loved warmth, would do. The door did not creak; many of us did not even notice if anyone had come or gone.'

Some of the Strugatsky's books are given below:

'*Destination Ameltheia*' (1962); '*Noon: 22nd Century*' (1978), '*The Final Circle Of Paradise*' (1976), '*Hard To Be A God*' (1965).

TOLKIEN CENTENARY

J.R.R. Tolkien was born on January 4th, 1892, and to celebrate HarperCollins have re-released '*The Hobbit*', '*Lord Of The Rings*' and '*The Silmarillion*' in hardback and paperback, with beautiful new cover art. 'Lord of the Rings' comes in both a three volume set, or one massive paperback. Available everywhere!

Surely tied in to this centenary is the news

that George Lucas now holds the rights to the film version of Tolkien's masterpiece. Any film-maker is going to have problems doing justice to a book of that size - Ralph Bakshi made a good attempt with his animated version of the first part of the novel, but still over-simplified it.

As an aside, the latest issue of '*Circa Arts Magazine*', in an article on Art and Ecology, mentions the fact that, because of Tolkien's images of the despoiled shire, the poisoned water and the tainted loyalties, he is seen as a Northern European nationalist by present-day neo-fascist groups. Some print Hobbit tee-shirts, and have Hobbit summer camps which teach bomb-making and runes! (Circa)

Octocon '92 will be featuring a special celebration of Tolkien (note: this does not make it a Tolkien convention!)

ISAAC ASIMOV 'TOO ILL TO WRITE'

According to *Science Fiction Chronicle* (November) 'the Good Doctor', as Asimov is fondly known, is suffering from the side-effects of drugs taken to alleviate some health problems he has had over the past few years. Asimov is constantly tired, and while his mind is as clear and sharp as ever he's unable to do any writing at the keyboard - at one point he boasted of 90 words per minute! As a result he has been forced to give up his regular monthly science column in '*The Magazine Of Fantasy and Science Fiction*' after 399 in a row. He is still managing to write his editorials for '*Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*', and the possibility of Asimov dictating his work is being looked into. It seems that the prolific 50 year writing

career of one of sf's greats may be drawing to a close. (SFC)

'FEAR' PUBLISHERS DEBTS ALMOST £500,000!

Newsfield Ltd's recent collapse has left a number of sf fans/ writers out of pocket (the likes of Kim Newman, Dave Langford, Guy N. Smith & Ramsey Campbell). It also leaves doubts over the future of their other magazines like games magazine 'GMI' which never achieved the advertising or circulation figures intended for it. (Ansible 53)

GOLLANCZ/BOOKSHELF 'FIRST FANTASY NOVEL' RESULT

Keep an eye out for 'A Dangerous Energy' by John Whitburn from Gollancz. He receives ST£4,000 for his efforts. (Ansible 53)

LOCUS PREMISES SURVIVES OAKLAND FIRE - JUST

Charles Brown had to be forcibly removed from his home (and the location where sf news magazine 'Locus' is produced, and a vast library stored) Andrew Porter in Science Fiction Chronicle writes. The homes of other sf pros and fans also had lucky escapes - Jack Vance (COH at this year's Worldcon in Orlando), Robert & Karen Silverberg, Richard A. Lupoff, and Poul & Karen Anderson all were missed by the massive blaze. Katherine Kerr seems to have been the only sf casualty, suffering asthma problems from smoke inhalation. Some 1,800 homes burned and damage is estimated in the billions of dollars. (SFC)

NEW DAVID EDDINGS SERIES

Del Rey Publishers in the US have just signed a contract with the author of the entertaining *The Belgariad* for a trilogy (oh yeah!) called *The Tamuli*; the first book will be titled *Domes Of Fire*. Also connected to Eddings, it seems a bookseller in Australia saw a fan putting a copy of *Seeress of Kell* into his pocket. Rather than prosecute, the shopowner told him the ending! (SFC)

FANS

Octocon, the national science fiction convention, has just announced that top American author Orson Scott Card will be Guest of Honour at the Ozone convention, as Octocon '92, or O3 is getting known as. Card's books include the truly brilliant *Ender's Game*, *Speaker For The Dead* and *Xenocide*, for which he has won the Hugo Award. The December Newsletter had a specially hidden interview with him, by resident ISFA OSC expert Robert Elliott. See if you can find it! (Hint, it's on page 7).

ConFiction, the Dutch worldcon of 1990, just about broke even. Total outlay and income was \$380,000 but it means that gophers who worked there won't be getting a refund, as was originally hoped for. Anyone who went to the con and is interested in getting a video of the event can contact ConFiction at ConFiction, Postbus 95370, 2509 CJ, The Hague, Netherlands. Proceeds from the sale of the tape will be used to 'promote international fandom', which was one thing ConFiction certainly did. (SOB)

The Winter issue of STET, the Arts Newspaper, is liberally sprinkled with art by Pete Quicall, an interview of J.G. Ballard by

John Kenny, and a photograph of Ballard by Ariane von Orlow, all ISFA members. Available from Eason's & Waterstone's.

'Without doubt the most pornographic book I have ever read' was how Catie Cary, co-editor of *'Vector'*, the BSFA's critical journal, described David Wingrove's *'The White Mountain'* which is the third in his Chung Kuo series. Wingrove responded by sending a five and a half page letter to BSFA members directly, refuting what Cary had said. If you want to see how the row develops send ST£12 to BSFA memberships, c/o Jo Raine, 29 Thornville Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS26 8EW, England.

Also in BSFA literature recently was a nice review of Octocon '91 by Dave Harbud, and a letter from ISFA member Dave Stewart.

PFJ issue 1 appeared at the December ISFA meeting. It's a humorous fanzine by Michael Carroll, Michael Cullen & Robert Elliott. Available from Michael Carroll, 44 Leeson Park, Dublin 4 for 95p plus postage. Issue 2 (the third issue, by the way, as there was an issue 0 - it's all to do with computers, they tell me) will probably appear for TrinCon.

CONVENTIONS

TRINCON 400

The truly amazing guest list for Trincon is as follows: Iain Banks, Greg Bear, John Brunner, Ramsey Campbell, Storm Constantine, Diane Duane, Stephen Gallagher, David Garnett, Mary Gentle, Katherine Kurtz, Anne McCaffrey, Ian McDonald, Peter Morwood, Nicholas Royle, Terry Pratchett, David Pringle, Bob Shaw and David Wingrove.

There will also be role-playing, films, MUDS, Virtual Reality, a dealers room and plenty

more.

The location is Trinity College and Powers Hotel, and the dates 7th - 9th February 1992. This promises to be a great weekend and it's well worth the attendance fee of £15 adults (Children under 14 half the above rate). More details etc from The Secretary, TrinCon 400, 75 Kincora Avenue, Clontarf, Dublin 3, telephone 7021827.

ILLUMINATION, the 43rd British Eastercon. Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. 17th - 20th April. Registration: £25, rooms £28 per person per night. GoHs Paul McAuley, Geoff Ryman. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ, England.

FREUCON, the 1992 Eurocon: 24th - 26th April. Freudenstadt, Germany. Registration £20. Details from Oliver Gruter, Dept. of Physics, RHBN College, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX, England.

MAGICON, 50th World SF Convention: Orlando, Florida, USA. Registration: \$95 until April. Details: MagiCon, Box 621992, Orlando, FL 32862-1992, USA.

O3 - Octocon '92: 16th - 18th October, The Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. Registration (until April) £10. GoH: Orson Scott Card. 'Green' theme and a Tolkien celebration. Membership etc available from O3, 30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road, Templeogue, Dublin 16. Telephone 934712 anytime. (Note: anyone wishing to help out on the organisation of the con ring the above number anytime - it's a big job!)

CLUBS

RED DWARF FAN CLUB

The Red Dwarf Fan Club is personally

supported by Rob Grant and Doug Naylor. Membership (which entitles you to a quarterly newsletter 'Better Than Life', a badge and a membership card. For more information contact 52 Granville Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Telephone: 284 0201.

HORIZON, the Blake's Seven Appreciation Society. Founded in 1980, Horizon is a friendly club and welcomes new members, who will receive 4 glossy, A4 size, 70+ page newsletters (containing interviews, LOCs, articles, news on the cast etc.) plus free photo & membership card. Also vast range of fanzines & merchandise (incl. photos, scripts, notepads, mugs, badges, photo stamps & special deal on the BBC B7 videos) and regular London and regional meetings and outings. Please send 2 IRCs for application forms, current rates &/or further information to: Miss Ann Steele, Horizon Club, 66 Sherwood Park Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2SG, England.

SSTS

Star Trek group, primarily based in the south-west, but with meetings throughout the country. Publications include a short newsletter; they also ran the first Star Trek convention in Ireland. Further information from Damon Wise, 4, Lisin, Tullyglass, Co. Clare.

STARBASE IRELAND

Star Trek group, based in Dublin. £5 membership entitles you to a quarterly A4 magazine, a membership badge, certificate and card. (Overseas write for details) Memberships from STARBASE IRELAND, P.O. Box 3208, Dublin 14. SI will be holding a 'Federation Day' at the end of March, in the New Ormond Hotel, Dublin, from 11-6. Admission is £1.50 to SI members, £2 to others. Events include games, fancy dress, talks etc.

Entries are free in the Clubs section, but we would appreciate being kept up to date regarding the activities of your group. New entries will be accepted on receipt of a sample mailing (if you publish anything) and a chatty letter.



FANZINES

Ansible, by Dave Langford. 'Further sf news and gossip in the spirit of the great Mel Brooks, who said definitively: "Tragedy is if I cut my finger... Comedy is if you walk into an open sewer and die." Dave Langford has won oodles of Hugo Awards for best fan writer and this 'zine is legendary. Available for an International Reply Coupon from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, England.

PFJ, by Michael Carroll, Michael Cullen & Robert Elliott. Amusing 'zine available for 95p + p+p from Michael Carroll, 44 Leeson Park, Dublin 4.

Shards Of Babel, by Roelof Goudriaan. 'The European SF Newsletter'. Science fiction

appreciation is truly international and this certainly shows it! Available for money (25 Dutch Guilders gets you 8 issues) or news (a longer article gets you more issues submissions should be on 3½ inch disc, and hardcopy, in ASCII/WP/Word for Windows). Roelof Goudriaan, Babel Publications, Caan van Necklaan 63, 228 1 BB Rijswijk ZH, the Netherlands.

StarDate, by Patrick Walshe. Star Trek news and comments. Available for £1.50 (overpriced) from Forbidden Planet or Patrick Walshe at 23 Ashfield, Templeogue, Dublin 6W.

Entries are free in this section, but we would like copies of the 'zines to keep up to date. If we don't receive regular copies the entry will be dropped.

FIRST CONTACT

A discussion column for sf and related subjects

ELECTRIC WIRELESS

(The following piece came as a result of a phone call and a couple of meetings, - read on...)

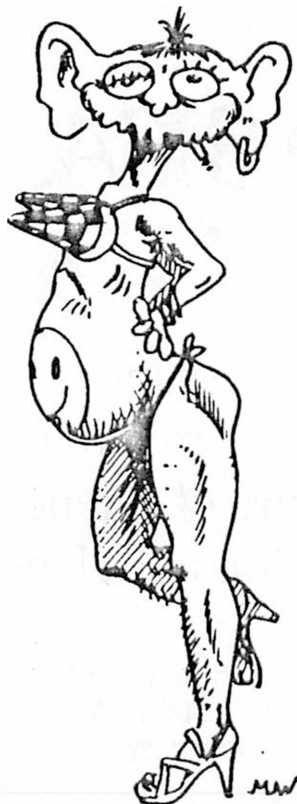
I set up Electric Wireless with the intention of supplying Local Radio Stations with programmes which were different and informative. It has taken until now, December '91, to make any head way with the idea. This was partly due to disinterest from the stations themselves and of course lack of funds.

I had been doing research into science fiction, fantasy and horror radio drama. I discovered the 'Golden Age of Radio', the 1930's and 1940's with *Buck Rogers*, *Flash Gordon* and of course *War Of The Worlds*. BBC Radio 4 also gave us some excellent science

fiction and fantasy shows. During the 1950's radio gave us *'Journey Into Space'* and *'Dan Dare'*.

Science fiction and fantasy radio continued throughout the 1960's but somehow became less fashionable in the 1970's with the development of 'more music less talk' style of radio.

Songs like *'Video Killed The Radio Star'* never sounded as true in the 1980's. The development of video film did a lot of damage to radio; it was as if the new generation of radio listeners had no imagination. Everything had to be visual; a pop song had to have a video. Science fiction on the radio was the last thing it seemed kids wanted to listen to. One or two D.J.'s did



create characters - remember 'Captain Kremmen'? - but they were not drama in the sense of storyline and plot, rather they helped promote the D.J. or personality behind the character. I mean, are Zig and Zag really science fiction?

Electric Wireless decided to create a radio character for the 1990's. The character would be Irish, he would deal with issues such as the Environment, Science, Supernatural, Social Issues like Unemployment (given a science fiction setting of course) and Drugs.

The setting is Ireland sometime in the 1990's and the character is a green hero. He will live in a city called 'Braytropolis' and his name is called 'Mr Xcitement'.

Mr Xcitement is a Private Investigator, a cross between Flann O'Brien, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Who. It is hoped to use some Rock

personalities in some of the serials, like members of the 'Golden Hoard' and 'Engine Alley'. The first serial of Mr Xcitement is called 'Mr Xcitement and the Temple Bar Mysteries!'

Each programme lasts two and a half minutes and will go out each day on East Coast Radio (south county Dublin & co. Wicklow). 'Mr Xcitement and the Temple Bar Mysteries' will be broadcast late January 1992, the time and the programme dates have yet to be decided. Electric Wireless will contact the ISFA as soon as transmission times have been arranged.

David Sherry

(In mid-November the ISFA held 'An Evening With Terry Brooks' - actually it was in the afternoon! All present enjoyed themselves, including Terry & his wife Judine...)

Dear Brendan,

Thanks again to everyone who worked on setting up 'An Evening With...', especially Desmond (Doyle), for taking on the role of Questioner. I enjoyed meeting everyone, the chance to talk to people who do a lot of fantasy reading, and the pint of Guinness.

Judine & I hope to see you all in '93.

Terry Brooks

(We also received communications from The Aids Fund (the proceeds of the raffle held on the ISFA Star Trek day in November were donated to the charity), Queen's University Belfast (hi, Eugene), BSFA, David Wingrove (see News section), Dáire Thornton, David Lally, David Stewart, Colum Lavelle, Declan Brennan, R.B.A.I. Science Fiction Society, Pádraig Holland, Michael Rea, The Golden Pages, assorted and varied publishers, and others. Christmas Cards were gratefully received from Chris Reed & Dave Stewart, at the time of writing)

ISFA AGM

your chance to
have a say in the
future of Science
Fiction in Ireland

HORSE AND TRAM
EDEN QUAY
28 JANUARY 1992

(With the review copy of "The Fetch" by Robert Holdstock came this short interview, mainly concerning the new book.)

ROBERT HOLDSTOCK INTERVIEWED:

Q: Why "The Fetch"? What is a "Fetch".

A: My titles often contain references or clues to the under-levels, or resolution, of the novel *LAVONDYSS* with its echoes of the Otherworld, Avalon, for example. "Fetch" has three immediately obvious meanings: to go away and bring something home; the ghost of a living person projected with harm in mind; and as a dialect word for "Fetish", which is itself ambiguous. By the end of the book, all three meanings have shifted in their context.

Q: Your previous two novels have been mythological fantasies, using British heroes and legends. Why the change in direction?

A: I've written supernatural or occult thrillers before - *NECROMANCER* and *NIGHT HUNTER*, for example - so it's not that much of a change. I've always mixed my



genres anyway: ghosts in science fiction, science fiction in horror, history and myth in just about everything.

THE FETCH has a great deal to do with myth - the legend of *THE FISHER KING*, and the quest for the Grail, are at the heart of the

book, but as perceived and understood by the lonely boy who has the non-natural power. Of course, both these legends centre around the idea of "obsession", and obsession is the empowering emotion of *THE FETCH* - obsession with winning love, and with greed, by the characters, all of whom use the forgotten past - which is the author's obsession!

Q: You've been wanting to write this novel for some years..

A: I probably got the idea in the mid-Seventies. I worked at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, studying parasitic worms, and the British Museum was just around the corner. It was my haven from the test tube and microscope and I remember touring the galleries, the Celtic and Bronze Age exhibits especially, and being overwhelmed by the thought of how much had been lost. Or had it? These helmets, decorated shields, ritual blades, exquisite silver goblets, carvings of deities and strange heroes, all add up to a fragment of the art and magic of the time. I immediately "got an idea", as they say. But like all ideas, it had to wait for the right story to come along. An item in *Psychic News* was the trigger.

Q: You set the novel in Kent, where you grew up. Was there a special reason for that?

A: All my fantasy work is set in Kent in a way, even if I call it Gloucestershire! For *THE FETCH*, I wanted to reexperience my own childhood obsession with chalk pits and fossil collecting, and making hidden camps in the woods around where we lived.

My brothers Peter and Chris were companions in this (Anne and young James came along later. Big family). The young protagonist of the book makes a journey in

reality, through the pit, that I used to make in imagination. I've had to rearrange the geography of the country a bit, though, in order to get chalk up on the hills behind the desolate Romney Marsh; but just as the life of the family is on the edge of two worlds, so I wanted the house and the chalk quarry to be on the edge of the world. That's exactly how it feels, up above the Marsh.

Q: The psychic scientist in *THE FETCH*, Francoise Jeury, has featured in your work before - is she based on a real person?

A: Francoise Jeury exists. She's unusual in that firstly, she has psychic abilities (so she claims), and secondly, those abilities shift and change their nature as she grows older. It frightens her. She's had a weird and wonderful life. I'll be writing a book about her in the near future, a sort of biography with psychic case histories.

Q: Do you believe in the existence of psychic power? Do you know anyone who has it?

A: I believe in extreme forms of intuition, and am convinced that we all have shadow powers, echoes of a wider sensory perception that has been drowned beneath self consciousness and intellect. These forgotten awarenesses can manifest in dreams, in moments of distraction, at moments and times of crisis - especially adolescence, is there is such a thing - and, rarely, in everyday life.

But for most phenomena, I'm sure there are rational explanations bioelectric and biomagnetic fields do exist, but their properties have only been explored physiologically, not phenomenologically. I think skepticism is healthy (crystal healing is a con), whereas a closed mind is not (blocks of

chalk work much better). My mother's mother was highly attuned to places where emotion had run high - in particular, a deserted house on the Romney Marsh where she and my grandfather sheltered during a rain storm. She refused to stay in the place, claiming that it felt like death. Years later, my mother discovered that a family had been slaughtered there years before. In the rain, and darkness, there is no way my grandmother could have known where she was.

Q: Do you ever experience psychic powers yourself?

A: I used to be astonishingly adept at predicting the amount of royalties my early books would earn - a nice round figure - but gladly, all that has changed. Years ago, an American colleague of mine claimed that one of the fallen stones at Stonehenge was hot to her touch - it was cold to mine - but when she touched the stone, then touched my fingers, there was a discharge of static electricity between us. Somehow I don't think this will make the plotline of *Ghostbusters 3*. I've said it before; I wonder to what extent I'm channelling out my ability to have psychic experiences by imagining so much. If you are very imaginative, I suspect it's difficult to see the true supernatural. Maybe the supernatural appears to people who are not expecting it, or who can't imagine it. Open-minded skepticism always.

(Among Robert Holdstock's other books are *Mythago Wood*, *Lavondyss* and *The Bone Forest*. He was Guest of Honour at the British Eastercon in Glasgow in 1991.)

**NEXT MONTH:
JOE HALDEMAN INTERVIEWED**

MAIL ORDER MERCHANDISE FROM THE ISFA

The following merchandise is available from the ISFA by Post or at the General Monthly Meetings.

STAR TREK & SF CAR STICKERS

A/ Reality is a crutch for those who can't handle
Science Fiction B/ To Baldly Go... C/ Make
it so! D/ Vulcans do it every 7 years.

Size 155mm x 65 mm - All only 50p each + 40p
P+P for up to 10 stickers.

1992 CALENDAR OF SF/FANTASY ART

6 of the foremost artists of the Association have
put this calendar together. The art can be
framed. A limited edition of 199

Size 594mm x 210mm - only £5.95 + £1.50 P+P

U.K. MAGAZINES

B.B.R. and SF Nexus for only £4.50 inc P+P

FTL

Issue 11 of this, the only Irish SF magazine,
includes the Aisling Gheal award winner. £1.95 +
58p P+P (Free to ISFA members) Back issues
available as listed elsewhere in this issue.

STAR TRUCK - THE NEXT GERIATRICS

An A3 poster from ISFA artist Paul Sheridan
poking gentle fun at the Next Gen crew.
Size 420mmx297mm - £1 + 58p P+P for up to 5.

MEMBERSHIPS

As a special offer for Christmas a limited number of
memberships of the ISFA, plus a T-Shirt, are
available for only £10. Membership price is usually
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Tel: Day _____ Eve _____

Membership No _____ Renewal Date: _____

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Please return to The Irish Science Fiction
Association, 30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road,
Templeogue, Dublin 16.



REVIEWS

BOOKS

IMAJICA

Clive Barker, 854pp, UK£14.99,

HarperCollins, hb

With *Imajica*, Clive Barker gives us his biggest and best book to date. He's also shying away from the horror genre, and becoming more of a fantasist. Whether this is because he's sick of being compared to Stephen King (whom he surpassed long ago) or not, I can't say, but the style of *Imajica* leads me to compare the book to some of the more surreal of Joyce's shorter fiction. It's certainly his most literary book, and the best written.

Plotwise, it's a simple tale of boy meets androgyne, boy travels into new dimension with androgyne, boy loses androgyne, and boy tries to reunite all five dimensions into one. Well, not that simple; at 854 pages there's obviously more to it than that. Basically, our hero, Gentle, is a man with no memory except for the past ten years. When he tries to stop an assassin from killing Judith, one of his former girlfriends, he lets himself in for more than he realises; the assassin seems to be indestructible, and escapes with injuries that would have killed ten mere mortals. Soon we learn that Earth is but one dimension, or dominion among the five that make up the *Imajica*. It's also the only one that stands alone, with the In Ovo, a sort of cosmic sea, separating it from the other four. Can some great man (I won't say who) manage to reconcile the dimensions which, like all good cosmic exercises, can only be done once every two hundred years? The book is primarily concerned with the attempts to reconcile the five dominions, making them mutually accessible. At first, this sounds like a bad thing, but soon all become concerned that it becomes

necessary. No-one actually says from then on that it'd be a bad idea, but that impression is given. Thus the reader is left yelling at the book *don't do it!*, while our protagonists do all to reconcile the *Imajica* at the appointed hour.

The plot is not without its holes; at least one entity returns from the grave with an unsatisfactory explanation, while another dies under dubious circumstances indeed. These, however, are only minor niggles about an otherwise excellent book.

With the characters themselves I was very impressed. Complex doesn't even begin to describe them, with Gentle and Judith both undergoing the sort of character development one normally needs a trilogy to achieve.

Although primarily a fantasy, there are definitely shades of the Horror writer in there; being strangled by a dead woman who uses her own viscera to perform the act is an image I particularly remember for some reason. If you only read horror (you know who you are), this is the book to introduce you to fantasy.

If you only buy paperbacks, buy this and use it as a bookend when you've read it. But buy it, and read it.

Robert Elliott

ONCE UPON A TIME,

ed. Lester Del Rey & Risa Kessler, Legend, 336pp, UK£9.99, tpb

"Why don't they write them like they used to?" asks the blurb on the back. "The answer is, nobody asked them". Well, Lester Del Rey and Risa Kessler asked them, and the result is ten excellent fairy tales, complete with dragons, princesses, quests and unicorns.

The list of contributing authors is impressive - Asimov, Brooks, Cherryh, Kurtz and McCaffrey to take a few from the blurb. With

such an array of authors, one would expect the tales to be of a high calibre - and would not be disappointed.

All stories are fairy tales; you know the good guy will get the girl, the dragon will be slain and all will live happily ever after, but this in no way detracts from the tales. Most are written in the authors' own styles, but some try to make sure the fairy tale atmosphere is complete, with a style one instantly identifies as being out of Hans Anderson or the Brothers Grimm. This doesn't always work - Susan Dexter's *Thistledown* tries too hard, and jolts the reader into awareness of the fact.

That's about the only fault I could find with this book. I've tried, but the only other thing I could come up with is that the blurb uses a phrase I've always hated - "for children of all ages".

My favourite story was *The Old Soul* by Wayland Drew. Mr Drew is an author of whom I hadn't previously heard, but this story has me convinced that I should search out anything else he's had published. Other stories worth mentioning are Asimov's *Prince Delightful* and the *Flameless Dragon* (and you thought he didn't write good stuff any more), and Barbara Hambly's *Changeling*.

Did I mention the art? Each story has an excellent plate painted by Michael Pangrazio. I'm getting sick of writing superlatives in reference to this book by now, but it really is a book that everyone should read. If you've got sprogs of your own, you've got an excuse. If you haven't, then go into the bookshop and say it's a present. But once you've got a copy, read it.

Robert Elliott

THE GAP INTO CONFLICT:

The Real Story,

Stephen Donaldson, Collins, UK£12.99,
1990, 173pp

My first reaction on seeing this book in The Alchemist's Head was 'Wow, a new Donaldson book!'. I picked it up, and my second was 'Wow, it's a small book!'. And that was when I thought that it was 173 pages. Little did I realise that there was a twenty page afterword included in that number, and such a big typeface...

One thing about the title of this book; I'm not sure what it is. In his afterword, Donaldson refers to it as *"The Real Story"*, and the Library Catalogue Data calls it *"The Gap into Conflict"*. Both titles appear on the cover, but in their own boxes. So I think that 'twill be hereinafter referred to as *The Book*'.

Anyway, this is Donaldson's tenth book (not including *Gilden Fire*, one of the great ripoffs of the publishing world), and his first novel-length foray into science fiction. The action rotates around three characters, the Archetypal Roguish Good Guy (Nick Succorso), the Archetypal Complete Bastard (Angus Thermopyle), and the Archetypal Helpless Female (Morn Hyland). Helpless Female is captured by Complete Bastard, but as soon as she locks eyeballs with Roguish Good Guy, the whole world knows that he'll rescue her. And guess what? He does.

Donaldson tells this story in a strange way. Right at the beginning he gives us the whole tale, and spends the rest of the book expanding on it. The idea behind this seems to show us that things are not always as they seem, and also to show us the character of our protagonists. Whatever about the former, in the latter he fails miserably.

Complete Bastard, we are told, is a coward; this is mentioned every couple of pages lest we forget. Yet valourwise, he performs no better or worse than anyone else. In fact, in some areas where he disappears like a rat out of an aqueduct to avoid a fight, we learn that he hadn't a hope in hell, so had he fought

he'd be dead. It seems that cowardice is a handy thing. And Donaldson takes pains to show us that Complete Bastard is just that in every respect; he goes through a lot of pain just to cause grief for someone else, because it 'feels good'. However, no reason is given for such behaviour, it just is. Considerable more detail is given for Helpless Female, and even Roguish Good Guy gets better background. All this despite the fact that the whole book revolves around Angus the Bastard.

Coming from the man who gave us Thomas Covenant, one of the best character analyses ever, the book is a disappointment. Even given that it's an introduction to a new series, I expected more. The multitude of Donaldson fans will buy it, but they'll be disappointed.

Robert Elliott

THE GAP INTO VISION:

Forbidden Knowledge,

Stephen Donaldson, Volume 2 of 5 in 'Gap' Series, HarperCollins, UK£14.99, 410pp

After the awful first volume I was reluctant to pick up this second tome in the 'Gap' quinthumping. Fortunately, I forced myself, and my faith in Stephen Donaldson has been restored.

Forbidden Knowledge starts off exactly where *The Real Story* left off, with Nick Succorso rescuing Morn Hyland from the evil clutches of the dastardly Angus Thermopyle. Angus is arrested, and Nick 'n' Morn fly off into the starset.

But all is not as it seems. Nick proves not to be the most companionable of rescuers, and Morn must spend hundreds of pages trying to stay alive and sane. And to make matters worse... she's preggers. And Nick ain't the daddy, not that she's telling him that. Boy, will he be annoyed if he ever finds out..

This second book more than makes up for the first. In fact, as it's a continuation of the story, it takes some of the awfulness out of the first in that it clarifies and/or explains some of the bad bits of the first volume. It can't do anything, however, to alleviate the fact that the first volume was bloody awful when read alone.

Just as the first book told the story from Angus' point of view, in this book Morn is our main protagonist. Angus still gets some of his own supplementary chapters, but we'll have to wait for a further volume before he comes into the limelight again. She has a much more convincing character in this book, and one that makes very entertaining reading. Still emotionally scarred from her encounters with Angus, she has to deal with Nick and his crew, and this she does very well. Donaldson manages to portray very well a seriously screwed-up cop who has to mentally juggle many problems at once.

Angus, however, still has his (for me) badly thought out character. His is still constantly referred to as a coward, and even when he's fit to kill someone, his fear of everything tends to override him. I don't agree with the term 'coward' in this context; yet again his cowardice either saves his life or keeps him sane through a myriad crises.

Plotwise, this is much more involved than the first volume (though that wouldn't be hard). Nick's dealings with the alien Amnion race are particularly well done, although there are definitely one or two areas where holes might occur. Being part of a series, it's hard to tell whether the incongruities are mistakes or plot devices, but I strongly suspect the former.

Overall, it's worth reading. The first volume is now out in paperback, so I'd recommend buying that and proceeding directly to volume two. Together they make one good

story (or two-fifths of one) at any rate.

Robert Elliott

FOUNDATION'S FRIENDS,

ed. Martin H. Greenberg, pb (sorry, I've the American version).

This book came out in America in 1989 to celebrate 50 years of Isaac Asimov as a science fiction writer. The British version, therefore, made it out just in time to celebrate Asimov's fifty-second anniversary, but we won't hold that against the publishers.

'Foundation's Friends' contains seventeen stories by some of the world's best writers in honour of the Good Doctor, all set in the *'Foundation'* universe (or the Empire or Robot universes, since he tied them all together). And the Black Widowers aren't left out either. There are also two prefaces and two afterwords - it seems that everyone wanted to get in on this. And why not? Asimov, along with Robert A. Heinlein have done more to popularise science fiction than any other writers. And at least Asimov is still around to write an afterword to this book.

But enough sentimentality. We know he wrote a lot of great stuff, but what's this book like?

In any short story collection, you can usually count on one or two being crap. Therefore this collection is also unique in the sense that all the stories are good. Most are just good, but there are some that stand out as essential reads.

Orson Scott Card's *The Originist* deals with the setting up of the two foundations, and shows just how Hari Seldon manipulated people to achieve his ends. *Carhunters of the Concrete Prairie* by Robert Sheckley is a humorous look at a planet of Robots who aren't under control of the Three Laws. My favourite, Pamela Sargent's *Striprunner* tells of Amy Barone-Stein, the best striprunner in

New York City. Other stories to watch out for are Harry Harrison's *Fourth Law of Robotics* and Sheila Finch's *PAPPI*. Asimov's own contribution, in the form of an afterword, is also well worth reading. It's titled, appropriately enough, *Fifty Years*. Fifty Years! He's been writing for more than twice the time that I've been on this planet. No wonder he sold more stories than I did.

It's always difficult to review anthologies; they usually end up with a list of what's worth reading and what to avoid therein. All I can say in this case is that with such contributors as Mike Resnick, Poul Anderson, Ray Bradbury and Hal Clement, this is an anthology to read. And definitely one that no Asimov fan should be without.

Robert D. Elliott

THE HELLBOUND HEART

Clive Barker, Fontana, 128pp plus change, £3.90, 1991

You can just see the guys in Fontana. "So what if it's only a novella, they'll pay for it. It's Clive Barker, for Chrissakes". Well, maybe I'm just being cynical. But four pounds for a 128 page novella is a bit much, even with the eighteen pages of padding (mostly in the form of quotes) at the front and thirty-two pages from Imajica (his new novel) at the back. Oh, did I mention the blank pages between chapters?

But enough bitching. What's the story like?

If you've seen the movie *Hellraiser*, you'll know what it's about. If you haven't, rent it after finishing this review. The story concerns Frank and his quest for Ultimate Pleasure. He's been assured this will happen if he solves the puzzle of Lemarchand's Box, a type of occult Rubik Cube. Apparently, solving the puzzle will invite into this world the Cenobites, who are dedicated to pleasure in all its myriad forms. Unfortunately,

somewhere along the line the definition of 'pleasure' got mistranslated, so what he actually gets from the Cenobites is something completely different.

Enter stage left, Julia, Frank's sister-in-law. Upon moving into the house where Frank left this world, she realises that not only is Frank stuck, but she has the ability to bring him back. All it takes is blood - other people's, natch.

I'm more of a fan of Barker's fantastic fiction rather than his horror, but I loved this. No doubt some of the impact was taken away having seen the film, but nonetheless this remains a great story. Julia's character is very well described, and the gamut of emotions to run through in the course of Frank's rescue from the Cenobites, are excellently portrayed. Kirsty, a secret admirer of Julia's husband Rory, is also well drawn, albeit slightly simplified in places.

I can never take horror books seriously enough to be scared by them, so I can't really comment on the "scared the shit out of me" area of the story. All I can say is that it's a great story, but I can't recommend it at its current price. If you happen to come across the horror anthology *Night Visions 3*, the story's in that, and much better for being worth the price.

Robert Elliott

DARK HAND OF MAGIC

Barbara Hambly

Grafton, 309pp, U.K. £3.99

This is a fantasy book. And yes, sword and sorcery are the main subjects. Despite that, it's not bad. It's about an ex-mercenary who has become a wizard. His main aim in life is to find a teacher of wizardry. But his old mercenary troop have asked him to help them again. They want him to defeat a wizard who has cursed them. Of course, he'd prefer

to see if the wizard would teach him. The core of the book is his struggle with loyalty, and this gets a bit tedious after a while. You find yourself wishing he would either leave the troop or stay and quit agonising. Still, the characters are interesting. The women are better drawn than the men, especially the women warriors. Speaking of women, the background world can get rather sordid - a lot of time is spent on who's raping whom. Some of the slang is invented and sounds surprisingly natural. Despite its drawbacks I would recommend it as a good read.

Annemarie Nugent

RED DRAGON

Thomas Harris

Corgi, 354 pp, U.K. £4.99

With all the fuss generated about the film release earlier in the year of *'Silence Of The Lambs'* based on the novel by Thomas Harris it may be forgotten that nine years earlier Harris released a book entitled *'Red Dragon'*. Like *'The Silence Of The Lambs'*, *'Red Dragon'* deals with the subject of serial killers. Thankfully this excellent novel has been re-released to coincide with (or cash in-whichever you prefer) on the success of *'Lambs'*. The novel basically has two central characters: Will Graham, an investigator who specialises in forensics; and the serial killer who calls himself *'Red Dragon'*. Both these characters are inexorably drawn together by a symphony of violence that permeates the novel's text. Harris succeeds at everything he attempts to do; he creates a protagonist - Graham, a special investigator with a knack of tracking down serial killers by trying to emulate their thought processes. And the antagonist - a seemingly passive yet incredibly violent man driven by repressed sexual desires and a demonic hunger to kill. Both central characters are complex and

fascinating, diametrically opposed yet bonded by murder and destruction. Harris explores Graham's character with skill alluding to the fact that Graham is very much like the men he hunts. These allusions are begun early in the novel when Graham goes to visit everybody's favourite after dinner speaker Dr. Hannibal Lecter the mad psychiatrist whom Graham caught years earlier. Similar to scenes in '*...Lambs*' Graham goes to Lecter for help in tracking down the '*Dragon*' and the interplay and dialogue between the two is gripping. The '*Dragon*' himself is an equally fine and complex character, though at first Harris' explanation of society and its horrors of everyday life being responsible for the creation of the '*Dragon*' may seem a bit clichéd, but as the author delves further into his past it seems chillingly believable.

Violence plays a major part in this novel. Thankfully though it never delves into sensationalistic violence for violence's sake which is evident in many novels and films. The scenes of terror are expertly written and horrifying without being sickening or over the top.

The only qualm I had with this novel is when Harris tries to regain some sympathy for the killer by having him fall in love. It's a bit ham-fisted and by this stage the reader definitely doesn't have a shred of sympathy for the '*Dragon*'.

In recent years America has become obsessed with serial killers as they seem to pop out of the woodwork, thus this book although ten years old is a timely re-release. Its examination of what drives a man beyond the point where few of us tread plus the role of the sensationalist media in possibly antagonising serial killers is as topical today as it was in 1980 and I suppose as it always will be.

'Red Dragon' is a riveting read and one of the best novels I've read in quite a while. Go out and buy it today - it'll keep your light burning well after midnight.

Eamon McGrane

MAN-KZIN WARS II

created by Larry Niven, with Dean Ing, Jerry Pournelle & S.M. Stirling. Orbit Books, UK £3.99

Known Space. A part of the galaxy populated by humanity, various alien races and the artifacts of long-dead civilisations. Created by Larry Niven and explored in his *Tales of Known Space* series. Heavy metal stories for the hard science fan. (Not a gnome or cute dragon in sight).

Having read all the original tales I was looking forward to reading some new ones. The fact that the two stories that make up this book (*BRUAR PATCH* by Dean Ing, and *THE CHILDREN'S HOUR* by Jerry Pournelle & S.M. Stirling) were not by Niven was a little off-putting but I have good memories of the originals so I looked forward to reading this book.

Unfortunately, I was disappointed.

BRUAR PATCH concerns what happens when a human and his deadly enemy, a Kzin (an eight foot orange cat with claws and an *ALTITUDE*) are thrown together and learn to respect each other and become, gosh darn it, friends. It demonstrates how the physically weak human manages, by brain power and sheer strength of moral fibre, to earn the respect of those who should, in any reasonable universe, have him for dessert.

CHILDREN'S HOUR tells what happens when Earth Command discovers that a Kzin General is trying to do the impossible. To make male Kzinti co-operate. This story is by far the strongest of the two and reads well.

I suppose that my major problem with these

stories is that they are not written by Mr Niven. By that I don't mean that they should have to mimic Mr. Niven's style - all writers should write as themselves - but if you want to play in someone else's sand pit you have to follow the existing rules. By publicising these stories as being part of the Known Space series they are leaving themselves open to comparison to the originals and by that standard these stories, in my opinion, lack the joy in introducing and solving apparently insoluble scientific problems. These stories are part of Known Space but they have not developed it. They use the characters and conventions but, to me, have not advanced the overall concept in any way. They picked up the ball ran with it and then put it down. They never managed to kick it into the next galaxy which Niven always did.

If you have not read the originals my advice would be to get your hands on some of them and read hard SF the way it should be written. Maybe then you can dig out a copy of this book. Now... where's my copy of *INCONSTANT MOON*?

Brendan Gillen

GROUNDLED

Chris Claremont

Pan, 352 pp, U.K. £4.99

This is the unbelievably dull sequel to 'First Flight' which was Claremont's debut as a novelist. Claremont is perhaps better known as the writer of the comic 'X-Men' having mapped their adventures for 17 years. What is notable about Claremont's comics work and this novel is the role which women play. Claremont is known for his strong female characters in the X-Men, he also has applied this talent in 'Grounded'. The central character is Nicola Shea, an independent no-nonsense young woman and a decorated astronaut to boot. (On her *First Flight* she

encountered for the first time an alien civilisation.) Thankfully Nicole is not a 'tough as nails' man disguised as a woman type character which many male authors tend to do in this type of story. However almost 200 pages into the novel I began to realise why the novel is called 'Grounded' ... it takes so long to get off the ground. The pace is so slow that I often felt like chucking it into the fire, but sense prevailed and I stuck it out till the partially conclusive end. Having said that, 'Grounded' has a couple of things going for it: some fine descriptive writing which gave a good sense of place and a number of well choreographed action sequences. But on the down side again some of the dialogue used by certain characters drove me up the wall. Don't buy this unless you're a real Claremont fan.

Eamon McGrane

FIVE BOOKS

(I asked four ISFA members to list five books they had enjoyed reading - not necessarily their favourites, just the first that came to mind. They're presented below, and might be worth spending some of those Book Tokens you got for Christmas...)

Robert Elliott:

The Stress Of Her Regard - Tim Powers

Earth - David Brin

The Movement Of Mountains - Michael Blumlein

The Warrior's Apprentice - Lois McMaster Bujold

Maps In A Mirror - Orson Scott Card

Mark Smullen:

The Mote In God's Eye - Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle

The Player Of Games - Iain M. Banks

The Great & Secret Show - Clive Barker

Eon - Greg Bear

There Will Be Time - Poul Anderson

Annemarie Nugent:

The Door Into Fire - Diane Duane

Lord Of The Rings - J.R.R. Tolkien

Earthsea - Ursula K. LeGuin

Downward To The Earth - Robert Silverberg

Hounds Of The Morrigan - Pat O'Shea

Pete Queally:

Lyonesse - Jack Vance

Stormbringer - Michael Moorcock

Frankenstein - Mary Shelley

Dracula - Bram Stoker

Weaveworld - Clive Barker

The only author to feature twice is Clive Barker - he will be pleased! If you want to send in the titles of any five books that you enjoyed please get them to me by 20th January at the latest. Alternatively I'd be interested to know of any books or authors that influenced you, in your outlook on life. Asimov and his fervant anti-smoking comments certainly influenced my opinion on the subject.

THE COMIC COLUMN

DOOM PATROL, no. 50

2000 A.D., Fleetway, no. 761

Sandman, D.C. no. 32/33

Despite the questionnaire results I'm back to the 20% who go to Forbidden Planet and don't buy comics - it doesn't hurt and you might like it.

Now for the Obituaries. 2000A.D.'s rival, *Toxic*, has collapsed. Although the stories in the final issues were all excellent I'd expect that the high-price and low quality of story in the beginning put many people off. *Blast!* has

also bit the big one. The final issue features the beginnings of stories, but you'd have to buy the graphic novels which will be available next year from Tundra to find out what happens next.

Grant Morrison's *Doom Patrol* reached its 50th issue this month. This extended issue charts the return of the *Doom Patrol*'s most feared enemy - the Brotherhood Of Dada. This super-villain team are the only group to have defeated the Doom Patrol. Three different artists contribute pages so you get to see the work of Jamie Hewlett, Ron Hughes and Richard Case. This comic is weird! What can you expect with baddies called Mr. Nobody, Alias the Blur, The Lone Glove, "I" and Number none. Despite all the weirdness the story works well. It's an experience!

For horror buy the SANDMAN (D.C. £1.40). Written by Neil Gaiman (who collaborated with Terry Pratchett on *Good Omens*) it's an excellent read. A well crafted story links New York to a strange Fantasy world with ease. It's what every comic should be.

2000 A.D. certainly isn't. 'Prog' 761 (Fleetway 70p) sees the end of the reasonably good monsters, the start of another tale of Bix Burton - Master of the Rum and Uncanny which is occasionally excellent. It's written by Peter Milligan, with art by Jim McCarthy. There's an ordinary Judge Dredd story written by Garth Ennis and a new 'thrill' called Thrash starts. The title says it all. The problem with 2000 A.D. is that it tries to please its younger audience, as well as 'mature' readers and it never seems to get the balance right. But, they have hit upon a solution - from next Easter there should be a junior 2000 A.D. for all the crap stories. There's only one problem - Fleetway is

owned by Maxwell Communications so watch your pensions lads!
Mark Bagnall

Since the days of the early Marvel/DC joint ventures - Spiderman and Superman, and Batman and The Hulk company crossovers have been popular. They've only recently come to the fore, however, with two major releases.

Judgment on Gotham, the Judge Dredd/Batman team up (story by Wagner and Grant, art by Bisley) is a bit of a disappointment. Alright, it's a total disappointment. Artwise, it's typical Bisley, so either you like it or you don't (I don't), but the story is a tad weak. The problem is that it's aimed primarily at an American audience, and America being the Land of the Free and Home of the Batman, the story is told from our favourite vigilante's point of view. This means that Dredd is portrayed as a total fascist, with very little to his character beyond the "kick ass" ethos of the police state. Because it's told from Batman's viewpoint, Americans are likely to appreciate it more than those of us on this side of the pond.

Batman vs Predator, on the other hand, is a decent read. Written by Dave Gibbons with pencilling by Andy Kubert, it's a typical Predator story, with the bonus that this time he's in Gotham City. This is a three part story, available in rip-off, square bound format as well as plain ol' comic. If you've seen the Predator films and read the Dark Horse comics, you'll know what to expect by way of behaviour from the Predator - it kills people. Batman, however, is very well portrayed by Gibbons, who I always thought of as an artist who tried to write on occasion. This, I'm glad to say, shows that he's an artist who can very well when he wants to. And it's

cheaper than *Judgment on Gotham*, even in ripoff format.

Robert Elliott

UPCOMING ISFA EVENTS

FUTURE MEETINGS:

January: 19th, The Vintage, Camden Street, 8.00 p.m. Writers and Artists Workshop.

28th: The Horse & Tram, Eden Quay, 8.00 p.m. - AGM.

29th: Terenure House, Terenure - General Knowledge Table Quiz. First prize at least £100, plus spot prizes. £12 per table of four. Michael Cullen will once again set the questions.

February: 4th, The Horse & Tram, Eden Quay, 8.00 p.m. To be announced, but may be a Book Auction.

18th: The Vintage, Camden Street, 8.00 p.m. Artists & Writers Workshop.

AISSLING GHEAL 1992 - The rules and closing date for this year's competition will be announced in the next (February) Newsletter.

SfEx 1992 - The location, dates and rules will be announced in the next (February) Newsletter.

In next month's Newsletter: Joe Haldeman interviewed, SF in the Media, The Comic Column, letters, cartoons and more