

ISFJA NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

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TRINCON

TrinCon 400 WHAT HAPPENED

Competitions

News

Reviews

BOOKS, COMICS & STAR TREK VI

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WRITERS AND WRITINGS

LARRY NIVEN has had to stop autographing at conventions, a report in Locus. It seems his back interferes with it. For anyone who was at ConFiction, the 1990 WorldCon, and saw Mr. Niven break a Polish fan's pen when he asked for an autograph - maybe it's for the better!

ISAAC ASIMOV is now recovering from prostate surgery, though his other physical problems remain and he may be in hospital for some time.

WORLD FANTASY AWARDS

BEST NOVEL:

"Only Begotten Daughter" - James Morrow;

"Thomas The Rhymer" by Ellen Kushner (tie)

BEST NOVELLA:

"Bones" - Pat Cadigan

BEST SHORT FICTION:

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" - Neil Gaimen
& Charles Vess

BEST COLLECTION:

"The Start Of The End of it All" - Carol Emsher

BEST ANTHOLOGY:

"Best New Horror" edited by Stephen Jones
and Ramsey Campbell

BEST ARTIST:

David McKean

GREG BEAR has signed with TriStar /Columbia to do a screenplay for a "science fiction monster film" with three strong female characters. He's also working on a novel called "Moving Mars" which is set in the same universe as "Heads" and "Queen of Angels"

TERRY BROOKS and JRR TOLKIEN were 4th and 5th places respectively on the Irish Times Hardcover bestseller list of February 22nd.

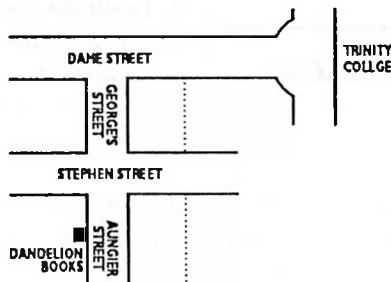
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In the same edition of the paper Eileen Battersby gave a poor review to GEOFF RYMAN's "Was". See the alternative review elsewhere this issue!

ANGELA CARTER, reported ill recently, died on February 18th.

Irish writer NICHOLAS EMMETT has a story ("Brains on the Dump") published in the new anthology "There Won't Be War" edited by HARRY HARRISON & BRUCE MCALLISTER

A talk on PHILIP K. DICK, entitled "The Transformation of Philip K. Dick" will be given by Pat Quigley of the Dublin Literary Society in the Palace Bar, Fleet Street, Dublin 2 on Thursday 5th March, at 8.30 p.m.

IAIN M. BANKS told an ISFA member at TrinCon that he appeared in 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail' as an extra!

BBR Issue 20 will appear shortly, from Chris Reed in the UK. It seems that he too is having

problems getting his magazine out (ask the staff at FTL about problems - it'll be out soon, soon!) BBR was distributed nationwide (a print run of 5,000) but did not perform as well as hoped. Anyone interested in small press in the UK and elsewhere may get a copy of the NSFA small press catalogue from the ISFA - a stamped self-addressed envelope will do nicely.

ERRATA

ORSON SCOTT CARD, it seems, is not writing a trilogy but a five book series, Robert Elliott informs me (he should know, he talked to the great man!) Another mistake made by me last issue - my news regarding Salman Rushdie's 1000 days in hiding occurred sometime in November not last month as I made it look!

MEDIA NEWS

THE CYBERMEN -WE'RE BACK!!

The BIG news on the media front was described by a Dr Who fan as the equivalent of the Second Coming - the recovery of the classic Troughton 'Cyber' tale, "The Tomb of the Cybermen"! This serial was one of the infamous junked episodes, 'never to be seen', and its discovery has opened a torrent of speculation about the existence of other lost serials.

Apparently a BBC researcher at Pebble Mill, Birmingham, who is well known as a Whovian, was asked by people in the VTR what the Dr Who code 'MM' stood for. In five seconds flat, jaw open and speechless, the said fan was holding all four film cases, just returned in a consignment from Hong Kong. The guys from BBC Enterprises (who not only handle the merchandising of tapes etc, but also sales to foreign companies) just happened to be on the premises and on being told of the discovery

wrenched the complete set from the arms of the gibbering fan for safe keeping - no way was the BBC Archive going to get their grubby paws on THIS goldmine!! The word is that the film is in top condition with both visual and sound tracks perfectly balanced, and the Enterprise people aim to preserve that quality for the fans by copying straight from the master copy - normally the stories for release on tape have to go through two or three different copying processes and by the time you buy them they are down to third or fourth generation, so the Enterprise people are doing an excellent job there. There is no word on the release date but it is understood that BBC Enterprises are going to make a HUGE splash with the release before allowing it into the BBC archives for reshewing on TV.

The speculation is now centred on the recovery of the tapes - where did they surface? It is thought that a complete set of Troughton tapes were sent to Cyprus prior to the Civil war there in the Seventies, and the films may have been sent on to Hong Kong for safety during the conflict. It seems unlikely that Hong Kong would have been sent ONLY that complete set - the episodes prior to and following would logically be in the same batch. Intensive searches are now centred on the British colony with the thought that Britain only holds it for another five years...

This info comes from Birmingham fan Ray Holloway, not the Who magazines. Apparently there is much more in the latest issue of DWB - if you can get your hands on it, as it is now sold out in Forbidden Planet, Dublin!

HELEN RYDER

ALIENS HEAD FETCHES £1200!

And a Star Wars robot head went for £300, at auction in Christie's sale of film memorabilia recently!

STAR TREK SNIPPETS

Rumour has it that if anyone out there wants PATRICK STEWART as a guest at a convention be prepared to fork out 10,000 - pounds or dollars, who cares!

Contagion, the Scottish ST con (a follow up to the immensely successful Silvercon of 1991) has confirmed GEORGE TAKEI as their Guest of Honour - see the Convention Listings for details.

Diane Duane and Peter Morwood will be attending Shore Leave, a small (1000 person) ST con which is being held at the Hunt Valley Inn, Baltimore, USA on 11th/12th July. Their Guest of Honour will be the Captain of the USS Enterprise. Which one? CVN 65 - the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier belonging to the US Navy!!!

Listen out, if you live on the east coast of Ireland, for Mr Xcitement on East Coast radio. David Sherry, who wrote the piece about the series for the December issue, has sold the series for broadcast shortly. Unfortunately I didn't have the dates as the newsletter went to press.

DCU FM is the radio station which broadcast for a week during February this year, emanating from Dublin City University. Their main drama was an elaborately produced sf comedy "Apocalypse Shortly" which was, according to the Irish Times, 'a satirical expedition into Orson Wellsian "War Of The Worlds" territory.'

FAN NEWS

CONADA, the 1994 WorldCon to be held in Winnipeg, Canada, with 'our' Anne McCaffrey as Guest Of Honour already has 2300 members, Annette Lotz the European agent, tells me. Keep an eye out in ISFA publications for more information on this con.

OCTOCON are running a room party at this year's WorldCon in Florida (no, the committee are NOT getting expenses!). This will be in support of Irish cons, tourism in Ireland, and the British bid for the 1995 WorldCon in Glasgow. Support is already coming from British fans for our contribution, and Bord Failte is also in on the act (well done Ian Sheppard!).

OCTOCON is seriously considering running a CRECHE for 1992. However this will only go ahead if enough interest is shown (to make it a success there must be at least 15 children). Last year it was the most widely requested addition to the con (apart from bigger facilities which have been obtained!) so don't stay quiet now. If you want your child to attend the creche, or want to volunteer your services contact the Octocon committee at the convention address (see con listings).

ISFA NEWS & COMPETITIONS

Joint Memberships: As requested at the AGM the committee has decided on the rate of £15 for a joint membership for two people. This entitles the pair to receive two membership cards but only one set of publications. We don't care if you're married, brother and sister or

whatever, just that you live at the same address! This means that you qualify for discounts, reduced entry to meetings, and 10% off all ISFA merchandise, plus one copy of whatever we publish.

Life Memberships: It was decided by the AGM to offer a life membership rate of 10 times the annual rate (currently £10). Already two people have taken up this offer, which entitles the member to everything a normal membership does, for life, plus a Gold membership card. We're working on other benefits, which will be announced shortly.

ISFA Discounts: With yet another discount announced last Newsletter for ISFA memberships (in Dandelion Books in Dublin - thanks Padraig!) it's worth noting that to save the shops involved some hassle members are requested to show their membership cards at the time of purchase, not afterwards! Shops where your card will save you money are: The Alchemist's Head, Dandelion Books and The Modeller's Nook.

The ISFA committee posts have been allocated and are as follows:

Chairman:	Brendan J. Ryder
Vice-Chairman:	Paul Sheridan
Treasurer:	Theresa O'Connor
Secretary:	Richard Greene
Public Relations:	Jonathan Redmond
Marketing and Publications:	David McKane

Motions passed at the AGM in January were as follows:

- a) That, from 1993, the posts of Chairman, treasurer and Secretary be held for two (2) years.

- b) That the membership fee be raised to £10.
- c) That a 'Life Membership' fee be offered at ten times the currently applicable yearly rate.
- d) That the ISFA work towards renting or buying its own premises in which members can meet, and merchandise be offered for sale.
- e) That the ISFA work towards employing a permanent or part-time co-ordinator to run the ISFA on a day-to-day basis.

AISLING GHEAL

SHORT STORY COMPETITION:

The closing date for the competition is the 21st July, 1992 - remember that! For the rules see the last newsletter or write to the ISFA address.

SFEX 1992

Peter Queally is the person to talk to regarding this - he can be contacted either at the ISFA address or by 'phone at (01) 962685.

The rules are as follows:

1. Entries may be in any medium - paintings, pen and ink, watercolours, sculpture or models.
2. All entries must be suitably mounted, or framed.
3. The artists name must be on the back/ underneath each piece submitted.
4. No more than 10 (ten) works may be submitted.
5. The closing date for entries is the 15th April, 1992.

Enquiries and entries to: Peter Queally, Art Director, ISFA, 30 Beverlyly Downs, Knocklyon Road, Templeogue, Dublin 16. Telephone 962685

RESULT OF FEBRUARY EASON'S COMPETITION:

There were 12 entries, for 6 books. The following were the prizewinners:

Michael Carroll, Michelle Carter, Des Doyle, Robert Elliott, Helen Ryder, Ian Sheppard.

By the way the answer was, of course, Terry Brooks, and I'm not going to list all his books! Readers might note that most competitions (not just ISFA) suffer from a lack of entries. Your chances of winning are all the better because of this - so enter, dammit!

EASON'S MARCH COMPETITION

A new novel has just been published by the author of 'The Unconquered Country', about the life of Dorothy from 'The Wizard of Oz'. Who is he, and who are his UK publishers?

The prize is a £10 book token from Eason's of O'Connell Street. Entries must be in (in writing, fax or by 'phone) by March 20th.

CONVENTIONS

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.

PROTOPLASM, Manchester, U.K. 19th - 21st June, 1992. Guest of Honour Bob Shaw. For further details contact Protoplasm, 1 Shoemith Court, Merchant's Place, Reading, Berks. RG1 1DT, U.K.

CONTAGION - THE SCOTTISH ADVENTURE CONTINUES...

18 - 20 July, 1992, The Central Hotel, Glasgow. The Scottish Star Trek Convention. Guest of Honour is George Takei, who once took a convention on an early morning jog around the streets of Coventry! Further information from Contagion, PO Box 867, Rutherglen, Glasgow, G73 4HR, Scotland.

SCONE, the 13th UniCon (UK university of convention) This one's also in Glasgow, which is a great city with a very active fan scene as you can probably see! GoH is Iain Banks, and the dates are 7th to the 9th August, 1992. Details: Scone, c/o Kenny Meechan, 80 Otago street, Glasgow, G12, Scotland.

MAGICON, 50th World SF Convention: Orlando, Florida, USA. Registration: \$95 until April. Details: MagiCon, Box 621992, Orlando, 2862-1992, USA.

O3 - OCTOCON '92: 16th - 18th October, The Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. Registration (until April 31st, May 5th for fans who attend the ISFA monthly meetings) Attending £10, Supporting £5, Junior (U16) £5. GoH: Orson Scott Card, other confirmed guests: Gill Alderman, Catherine Brophy, Diane Duane, Nicholas Emmett, Katherine Kurtz, Scott MacMillan, Anne McCaffrey, Peter Morwood, Geoff Ryman, Michael Scott, James White. (Rumours regarding Neil Gaiman and his appearance at Octocon are unfortunately not true - he's actually booked up until 1994)

'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!)

TRANSYLVANIA 1992, 31st October 1992, 9.30am -midnight, Mount Royal Hotel, Marble Arch, London. The first OFFICIAL Rocky Horror Convention. Guests: Richard O'Brien, Patricia Quinn, Sal Piro (subject to commitments). Tickets £25 (including midnight showing of RHPS, with cast, props and audience participation!) until 31st May 1992, rising to £35 afterwards (without midnight showing, less £5) Details: 1 Elm Grove, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9HE, UK.

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.

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' on Saturday 28th March, in the New Ormond Hotel, Dublin, from 11-6. Admission is £1.50 to SI members, £2 to others. Events ude games, fancy dress, talks etc.

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.

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 chaty 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, issue 2, by Michael Carroll, Michael Cullen & Robert Elliott. Very amusing 'zine featuring a Benetton advertisement, Auntie Fractal's Problem Page and fiction; available for 95p + p+p from Michael Carroll, 44 Leeson Park, Dublin 4. Issue 1 got a great review in Tales from the Broken Drum, the Octarine fanzine.

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 3 1/2 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.

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

This issue sees quite a few interesting submissions, and some controversy (at last! he cries). Just one note however - from now on all letters and reviews must be accompanied by the author's name, though confidentiality will be maintained if necessary or requested by the author.

23 Rushbrook Court
Templeogue
Dublin 6W February 1992

Dear Brendan,

A few brief words on last month's (February) newsletter. I'm very impressed with the new cover printing thingy; very meritorious, even though the picture of Haldeman on page twelve made him look like Saddam Hussein.

I enjoyed the letter by Dennis Bershaw (he didn't really say he was from "Orygon" did he?) even though I didn't agree with everything he said. A fascinating list of recent books read; I hadn't heard of two or three of the authors, and might be tempted to look them up. As to his opinion of Japanimation (or Anim_ - where did that horrible word Japanimation come from?), I don't think Anim_ is a logical follow-on from comics; I like it, but can't stand the comics. Nausicaa and The Flying Island of Laputa made great cartoons, much better than their comic formats.

Speaking of comics, congratulations to Mark Bagnall for writing a comics review without any substance whatsoever. It consisted totally of "I liked this, and didn't like these" without going into any details at all. Comics, like any other medium, appeal to different people in vastly different ways, and subjective opinions therefore mean next to nothing unless you know the reviewer's tastes. I for one like Veich's Animal Man, and if Mark's attention span won't let him keep an interest in more than forty pages in a row, tough. If he thinks that the Batman/Predator story is predictable, it's because he's concentrating on Predator, and ignoring the Batman angle, the angle from which (in my humble opinion) the story should be approached. Of course the Predator is predictable. All Predators do is kill people, and anybody who expects anything else is not only

very optimistic and/or deluded, but also doomed to disappointment.

I couldn't finish this letter without mentioning The Silver Surfer's little piece on ST:TNG. I won't say what I think of the writer - you probably don't like the word "asshole" being used in the newsletter. He managed to write a half a page on the programme without any reference at all to the facts - most commendable. Opinions are fine, but when they descend to that level of abuse, most if not all of which was patently inaccurate, there's absolutely no point in giving them any credence whatsoever. And I for one would not publish any letters written anonymously. By the way, Surfy, I'm a programmer, most of the people I know work with computers, and all of us pronounce the word 'data' the same way. And it isn't the way you obviously pronounce it. Finally, kudos to Stephen Young for writing the paragraph that made my day. He expected a book to be good after reading the blurb on the back? I had a great chuckle at that.

Oh, yes. Five books I hated? Mission Earth vols 1-4 top the list (I expect 5 is just as bad, but I couldn't bring myself to read it), and Craig Shaw Gardner's new series is - to coin a phrase - bleedin' awful. Other than those, I can only recommend Ramsey Campbell's "Incarnate" to people who hate themselves.

ROBERT D. ELLIOTT

SILVER SURFER BLUES

Dear Editor,

This is a letter to the person called The Silver Surfer. After reading the letter printed in the last issue of the Newsletter I felt I should reply to some of the misconceptions he is labouring under. First he runs down the character of

Commander Riker. According to him this character does nothing but sit around all day chatting up women or staring into space and trying to avoid work. To someone who always watches the series I don't understand his comments. Most of the time Riker's character is on show he is shown leading an away-team into some unknown situation where anything can and often does happen. I wonder are those the actions of a womanising good-for-nothing? Personally I don't think so. If the Silver Surfer writes about Star Trek again would he be so kind to lay off the characters in the series and write about something he knows about.

There is another point I would like to bring up about this same piece - the pronunciation of the word DATA. The Americans do pronounce it correctly. According to The Oxford English Dictionary the word is pronounced Day-Ta.

CON RYAN

Dear Brendan,

...If you're really desperate enough for something to print I'll start writing film reviews, recipes, home help hints - anything is better than the infantile drivel of 'The Silver Surfer, Malahide'! Here are the best five books I've read recently:

1. Eon - Greg Bear
2. Nemesis - Shaun Hutson
3. Odysseus - Homer
4. Books of Blood, vol. 1-3 - Clive Barker
5. The Child Garden - Geoff Ryman

in no particular order, here are the five worst:

1. Star Trek, The Next Generation # 7: Masks - John Vornholt
2. Stainless Steel Rat's Revenge - Harry Harrison

3. Firestarter - Stephen King
4. The Sword Of Shannara - Terry Brooks
5. The Aenaid - Virgil

MARK BAGNALL

FIVE BOOKS

1. Hyperion - Dan Simmons
2. The Bridge - Iain Banks
3. Legend - David Gemmell
4. ~~Faust~~ Eric - Terry Pratchett & Neil Gaimen
5. Songmaster - Orson Scott Card

NIALL GILSENAN

HOBBITS, CELEBRITIES AND WRITERS

HarperCollins threw a party to celebrate the centenary of the birth of JRR Tolkien in London on January 22nd. Attendance involved a thousand mile round-trip from Cork, but I could also visit relatives - and so, I arrived at Madame Tussaud's Garden Room on time and tidy. Regiments of attendants waited to welcome the guests. 'Your coat? This way please.' 'The Ladies? This way, Madam.' There was a visitors' book to sign and a gift (the Centenary edition of *The Hobbit*), there were hands to be shaken, drinks to pick up, friends to find in the crowded room. I managed to avoid speaking to a dumb waiter, but fell instantly in love with Charles Dance, insouciant and charming among the guests in grey sports jacket - such blue eyes! He must have been similarly smitten, for he stood perfectly still and gazed at me for a long time. Some other guests were COLIN GREENLAND, *Kylie Minogue*, GEOFF RYMAN, *Dudley Moore*, TERRY PRATCHETT, *Paul Daniels*, ROBERT HOLDSTOCK, *Ken Livingstone*, M. JOHN HARRISON, *Ian Botham*,

SIMON INGS, *Martina Navratilova*, LOUISE COOPER, *Richard Branson*, PRISCELLA TOLKIEN, *Anneka Rice*, JOHN CLUTE, *Viv Richards*, ROZ KAVENEY, *Bob Hoskins*, KIM NEWMAN, *Roger Rabbit*, GAMMA, KEN MCVEIGH from *Vector* (the BSFA magazine) and JANE JOHNSON, sf and fantasy editor at Grafton. FAY WELDON and IRIS MURDOCH were also rumoured to be somewhere in the room.

Eddie Bell, Chief Executive at HarperCollins, who had individually welcomed each arriving guest, spoke in tribute to JRR Tolkien, and praised Jane Johnson, who commissioned the illustrated centenary edition five years ago when she was at Unwin Hyman. He took Bilbo Baggins's line 'The Road goes ever ever on and on' as his text and spoke of the changes and developments in the publishing of Tolkien's works. Indeed, the centenary party invitation was edged with gold and runes which, translated with the aid of *THE HOBBIT* bore an accidental significance; excised from an older inscription they read as both poignant memorial and accidental tribute: BY GEORGE .ALLEN AND ...compiled. FROM .HIS .MEMOIRS .By Bilbo Baggins. HarperCollins bought Unwin Hyman, the company formed from an amalgamation of George Allen and Unwin and Bell Hyman, in 1990 and with it, its chief jewel and breadwinner, the publishing rights to the works of JRR Tolkien. The recent savage critique in *PRIVATE EYE*, besides being inaccurate and full of spleen, is not justified in speaking of *THE HOBBIT*, *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* and the rest of the Tolkien list as the company's 'milch-cow.' I am one of several new authors to benefit by the funds Unwin Hyman had available from the Tolkien earnings for new writing. It is worth quoting the whole of Bilbo's song, while bearing its new allegorical significance mind:

*The Road goes ever ever on and on
Down form the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow if I can.*

*Pursuing it with weary feet,
Until it joins some larger way,
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.*

We hope for great things from HarperCollins

The solemn part of the evening over, we continued to enjoy the gossip, the plentiful supplies of wine and the nibbles, Japanese and Thai inspired and totally delicious - minute slices of spinach roulade, tiny meat balls, miniature satay, rare beef canap_s, half-inch square tarts filled with brie and cranberry sauce, all of it arranged on black trays and decorated with delicate flowers made from vegetables. We enjoyed ourselves so much that we had to be politely asked to leave and so, to a curry somewhere off Baker Street and the dispersal of friends to follow their own roads to other parts of London, Britain, Europe and the next book. The waxworks remained where they were, at leisure in the Garden Room; but they may have danced when all the guests had left. I doubt if *Charles Dance* lacked a partner long.

GILL ALDERMAN

We also heard from James White, Joe Nolan, David Stewart, Tony Carter, Damon Wise, Bobby MacLaughlin, Niall Perry, Jim Smith, Chris Reed, The National Library, Tony Glynn, Dave Lally, and others.

CON-REPORTAGE

TRINCON 400 - A Conrunner's View

7-9th February 1992

Trinity College and Power's Hotel, Dublin

Running a major science fiction convention is no joke. More likely it is liable to become a major headache if it is approached without due care and forethought. That is why I applaud anyone who takes it into their heads that it IS feasible and has the determination to bring their ideas to fruition. The Dublin University SF Society (DUSFS) are reputedly the largest student body at the college, with over 1000 members, and hold film showings and irregular author visits for their members. Trincon was an ambitious project co-sponsored by Trinity Societies to celebrate the university's 400th anniversary by bringing over twenty major authors and artists to Ireland for a weekend of SF, Fantasy, Horror and comics. As a member of the Octocon committee, I (with my fellow committee members) had a vested interest. Octocon has now two cons under its belt, both with favourable reviews. Trincon was our first major publicity launch, and we were to be visible with flyers, posters and specially-designed sweatshirts.

Memberships opened at 12 noon on Friday, and Brendan, Noreen and myself arrived to join up. It is fortunate that we knew where we were going as the Trincon signposts had not yet gone up. The registration desk was in the GMB, and we were a little surprised at the apparent lack of membership packages - we filled in a form and received a copy of the programme book and a badge on which we wrote our own names. We weren't assigned a membership number, so we wondered how the con was going to keep track of the numbers for safety and security purposes,

never mind after-con figures. The con proper started at 6pm with a charity dinner in the Commons Dining Hall, normally only open to the members of the college and scholarship holders unless by special arrangement. The food was described by one of the Trincon committee as being 'deliberately rustic', which didn't seem to be appreciated by a couple of the guest writers. I enjoyed the meal for what it was, an opportunity to dine in a representation of history. I feel that if the nature of the meal and its traditions had been explained in the con book, a lot of us would have appreciated it more.

The opening ceremony started late at 7.30, but that's not new in conrunning. It was also the start of my usual lamentable habit at cons - I get so engrossed in conversations that I tend to miss panels! The programme itself was single-stream, a maximum of thirteen panels over the weekend, with alternative streams of videos and films. To my mind this was badly thought through by the committee, as it was woefully inadequate for utilising the vast range of talent they had brought to Ireland. The panels they HAD organised looked exciting in concept, but from reports I heard the direction of topics by the moderators was limited.

There was no way I was going to miss the first of the publisher-sponsored parties, and we trooped off to the Atrium where the reception was held. It was great seeing faces, old and new, many of them ISFA supporters, including former Octocon GoH's Terry Pratchett and Geoff Ryman - Geoff especially renewing his friendship with the Irish fans. The response to the news of his attendance at Octocon again this year was NOT muted...The party didn't stop when the bar shut but moved onto nearby hotels. The social atmosphere generated was to carry on through the weekend, making it an extremely warm con.

Saturday started with Octocon/ISFA setting up their table in the fan room in Power's Hotel. The hotel was to be the venue for the fan room, the dealers' room, the con bar and some of the author readings. This unfortunately served to split the con and I spent a lot of my time in Powers, as did a lot of the guests. Our stint in the fan room didn't last for long because of its multipurpose nature - interview room (with a charming Ramsey Campbell and cooperative Greg Bear); readings (excellently read by Steve Gallagher); and then finally Star Trek videos, when Damon Wise and followers relocated there after being evicted by the Mont Clare Hotel. They had been given permission, and when I reminded a committee member, evident by his wallyphone (walkie-talkie to uninitiated), of our presence in the said room he admitted that he had "forgotten about you"... This was the last straw as far as a fan table was concerned, so we did a bit of relocating ourselves into the ground floor dealers' room, where we stayed for the rest of the con. This added to its attraction as a focal point, and that's when the craic really started!

Two of the main events due on Saturday were the launch of Greg Bear's new book 'Anvil of Stars', and the Tolkien centenary lecture, to be given by Dr Pfeiffer of Trinity College English department. Prior to the Launch Party there was a panel called 'Star Trek or Star Dreck?', featuring Peter Morwood, Diane Duane, Greg Bear and Geoff Ryman, which went down very well. The first three have all written ST books, and Geoff is an ST fan from way back. The panel was so popular there were calls for it to overrun, which prompted an ill-placed remark that "this isn't Octocon, you know!" - a reference to the overwhelming numbers of ST fans who joined in the fun at Octocon '91 last October. The remark was greeted in the manner it deserved...

Disturbing rumours of lack of organisation for the launch party reached everyone's ears pretty quickly, and later turned out to be true - even the guest concerned didn't know its location until five minutes before the start. As a party the location was acceptable but for a launch, I feel that the sponsors may have been a little disappointed with the lack of the publicity they had paid for. The Tolkien lecture was extremely stimulating, and the resulting debate set up the dry throats which had to assuaged by the NEXT reception!

Sunday saw me back at Power's, manning the Octocon table with Noreen, Brendan, Ian and Leonia - and that is where I remained for the rest of the day, enjoying the flow of conversation around us. We had missed the pub quiz the night before, and were dismayed to find it had not materialised. In fact it ended with the fans being physically thrown out of the hotel by the bar staff - not the best PR I've ever heard. Of the panels on Sunday, I saw the closing ceremony which ran late (shades of Octocon?) then we adjourned back to the hotel for a great evening of chat and craic with the Scots from 'Scone', the next Unicorn.

Overall the consensus was for a good weekend, but an average con. The Trincon committee gained good marks for the widespread publicity within Dublin city; the quality of the posters; the sponsorship received; the excellent 'cast list'; the panel items; the production of the programme book; the social atmosphere engendered by the parties; and the city centre location of Trinity.

The low points were mainly those of organisation and public relations - the inadequate use of guests; the paucity of panels, and lack of opposing items; the disorganised registration desk (what if the 1000 people HAD turned up?); the overloading of the visual programme with films - no episodic features at

all; the inadequate proofreading of the programme book (spellchecks are easy to do...) and the dreadfully reproduced programme sheet (anyone got a magnifying glass?); the lack of signposts - did anyone actually find the Games Room?; the debacle of the pub quiz; bad hotel liaison (did anyone ACTUALLY rap their knuckles for their bad behaviour?); the bad guest liaison (when an ISFA member bought Iain Banks a pint he grumbled, "It's about time one of you bought us a drink" - then apologised when he realised she wasn't a Trincon committee member); the widespread nature of the site - boy, were they lucky with the weather!; the siting of the dealers' room caused misgivings amongst the retailers; the lack of Virtual Reality (which we were told had pulled out only a week before) and the MUDS, with no explanation to the attendees; the overuse of wallyphones by the committee members - they WERE necessary with such a large site, but they prevented the committee from talking to anybody else ...like the guests, the dealers, the hotel, the attendees...

A first convention is forgiven many things, but when it has already been shown that an SF con can be run in Ireland with REASONABLE organisation then it was unacceptable that so many basic organisational mistakes should have happened - and THIS sentiment was told to me by a British fan of many years standing in conrunning circles. We in Ireland are lucky to have such good relations with the Sf community here, and with the publishers, to counterbalance the problems. There IS room for two cons a year in Ireland, in fact it would stimulate a positive competitive aspect which would be both beneficial for the fans and would stop us all becoming stale. We have proved we can do it - now let's do it well.

HELEN RYDER

TRINCON 400

Having arrived in rather late on Sunday morning I was a little bit lost for all of 30 seconds. It's amazing what comes over you when you are around people like yourself. Waving programmes in front of authors' noses and thrusting a pen in their hands became a sort of competition to see who could get the most scribbles on their programme. Considering the fact that I arrived two days late I did find that I was slightly disadvantaged. Still that was my fault. The high price of the con (£15 for the weekend, £7 a day) did turn away many of those wishing to attend. It happened to be the best £7 that I had ever spent, incidentally.

After the initial feeling of being alone in a crowd had passed I found myself at a panel on media. With Stephen Gallagher finding himself chairing the panel at two minutes warning it soon descended into a cheerful havoc. Mr. Harry Harrison arrived in a quarter of an hour late and then proceeded to run the show regaling the audience with tales of his own experiences as an author. The subject matter didn't get very much discussion except for the consensus that those creatures inhabiting some mythical land called Hollywood speak their own brand of gibberish. After some more scribble collecting I tramped on to the film room to watch "Alien". An interesting version of it I thought, wishing I knew how to lip-read. Still, once over this problem it was quite enjoyable. The selection of films was quite interesting with all of the old favourites and some different ones as well. Arriving down from the film it seemed I had missed some controversy. The panel as to whether SF should be considered literature included an Irish Times literary critic who was forced to admit she hadn't read any sf. It seems this didn't stop her from making some er

sweeping statements as to the value of sf in literature. She based most of this on the fact, one assumes, that she had actually read Jules Verne at some stage. It appears that the literary equivalent of a lynch mob were waiting outside and no more was heard of her.

Onwards to Powers Hotel where the dealers room and more importantly the liquid refreshment unit was situated. A few happy hours were spent chatting to David Garnett and Iain Banks. It seems Iain was made a tall person in armour appearing in Monty Python's quest for the Holy Grail. He is still a tall person, and he has added to this a loud voice, which he used to great effect and much amusement during the panel on censorship. It was quite chaotic again as it was also the final panel. The main conclusion came to was that if Mr Banks ever gives up writing he has a career as a stand-up comic (or a hide-under-the-table comic for that matter.). The closing ceremony was short and sharp, particularly for the man with the mike as Mr. Banks got quite attached to his leg. On again to the pub where a lot of advice was offered on writing and suchlike. I want to particularly thank David Wingrove and his friend Rob Carter for their advice to me (and the drinks). I only wish I'd been there since Friday.

NIAL GILSENAN

(Editor's note: Now that TRINCON is over I would appreciate comments from people on all aspects of both it and Octocon. How can conventions in Ireland progress? An obvious route to avoid is a flyer such as that produced in November by TRINCON, wherein they disparaged the faculty in Trinity; encouraged 'mad drunken raving weirdos' (then gave a family membership for the con!) and sleeping bags on the floor in hotel rooms. This flyer was not distributed by the ISFA - we felt it was

unsuitable, but did promote the con in our con listings. The flyer elicited a four page letter of complaint from Jim Smith, and numerous verbal complaints. I'm still waiting for the reply to Jim's letter from TRINCON; if I get it I'll publish both in a future issue. It also provoked some comments in BSFA newsletter MATRIX, where it had been distributed with the previous issue.)

MASQUE

14-16th February 1992

New Cobden Hotel

Birmingham

UK

This was the first costumers convention to be run in Britain and as a novice costumer I was determined to get as much from it as possible. The con was planned around three masquerades (Historical, Science Fiction and Galactic Fashion Show), with workshops and displays throughout the weekend. Everything started at 7pm on the Friday night with an opening ceremony, the workshops following. I missed these as I had to meet an old friend to see a certain film opening that night (Star Trek VI) but returned at 11pm for the showing of 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show'. Other films shown during the weekend for their costume content were 'Flash Gordon' and 'The Six Wives of Henry VIII'. Saturday started off with a wander through the Dealers' Rooms, where wares included beautiful handmade wooden items decorated with pokerwork and delicately painted; handmade longbows; medieval-style clothing; latex costume masks; and a pair of answering horns, one of which I succumbed to before the day was out. I was lucky enough to gopher at the Historical Masquerade that morning and got a behind-the-scenes look at

the detail and accuracy that goes into making authentic historical dress. The masquerades were run by experienced costumers, and the lighting and sound system showed a very wise use of funds as it added immensely to the presentations.

I attended as many of the workshops as I could, learning to use my body and mind in presenting a character through mime; delving into the history of medieval dress; basic mask-making; spinning, weaving and lace-making; illuminating costumes by use of electronics (a little above my skill level!); basic pattern making; and the correct use of a haberdashery, including the wide range of materials provided therein.

The Art Show provided an occasion for despair and inspiration! Anne Page, veteran of masquerades since the 1970's, was Guest of Honour for the weekend and supplied us with many anecdotes; but there was a special guest, American costumer Animal.X, who brought along information, costumes, videos, brochures and documentation from the Costume Cons (now up to No 13). The Art Show included all of these, and also a display of dressed dolls which were delightful.

Although I didn't take a costume, I had a chance of appearing in a masquerade on Sunday morning after a 'scrimmage' in a workshop, where we invented outfits from clothes and materials donated by the con-goers. Make way for the Space Priestess! The closing ceremony came all too soon on the Sunday afternoon, but the foundations for Masque II are already laid, as well as working towards providing real competition to the Americans in the 1995 Worldcon - WHEN Glasgow wins the bid!

With an attendance of about 100, the atmosphere of the con was very social and if you were on your own and showed a willingness to

join in you were made extremely welcome. You didn't need to be the most extrovert person in the world, just have an appreciation of costumes and spectacle. I came away extremely satisfied and look forward to next year - with a costume!

HELEN RYDER

REVIEWS

THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION

(Some time ago I asked for a piece on Homer's Iliad, as it is considered by some as the first science fiction story - in a loose sense of course. I was surprised and delighted to get the following submission....)

HOMER: THE ILIAD AND THE ODYSSEY

700BC is about as far from the future as you can go, yet this is about the time when Homer began to write his epic poems 'The Iliad' and its sequel 'The Odyssey'. Science fiction usually uses the basis of science to create a new world or project an idea of future. Homer's age did not have the benefit of science as we know it, so to create his world he used what was available to him the mythology handed down to bards for generations, and his religion. He created a place inhabited by heroes, gods, monsters, magic - and people. Despite the absence of technology he wrote what was to become the forerunner of science fiction.

It is important to remember that both the Iliad and the Odyssey were based on stories handed down orally, adapted by each individual bard. What we have today is Homer's interpretation of these poems - he was the first person to use the newly available writing skills to commit his version to paper. As a result, the oral style is

used in both works - whole passages were memorised concerning certain actions (for instance preparing for battle) which were regularly inserted. This is most apparent in the Iliad, making it at times difficult to read.

Homer's retelling of the Trojan war is different from the way in which it is normally told. Of its ten year duration Homer writes of about fifty-two days in the last year of the war. The remainder is told either in flashback or by implication. The reason for this is that Homer does not concentrate on the war so much as on a quarrel between the greatest hero of them all, Achilles and the commander of the Greek forces, Agamemnon. Also to tell of ten full years of war would bore his listeners, and take from the immediacy of the story.

In order to show the gathering of the Achean armies, Homer uses a crude flashback indistinguishable from the 'present' story. We learn how by taking Achilles' slave-girl Brises, Agamemnon injures Achilles' pride. He withdraws from battle, praying to the gods through his nymph-mother Thetis for revenge on Agamemnon. His prayer is answered, and the Trojans under Hector (a son of the Trojan king Priam) gain the upper hand. Even when Agamemnon tries to reconcile with him Achilles refuses to return to battle, sending instead his friend Patroclus. Only when Patroclus is killed does Achilles once again take up arms, and turn the tide of the war. By his constant rustic imagery and Achilles meditation on life, Homer conveys his distaste for war. Despite the frequent intervention of the gods, the battles are described in a down to earth manner. The gods look upon the mortals as a form of amusement in the Iliad, while their concern is best illustrated in the Odyssey.

The Odyssey takes up the story ten years after the fall of Troy. Odysseus, a hero from the Iliad, has been gone from his homeland Ithaca for

twenty years. His son Telemachus has grown up with no memory of his father. Penelope, Odysseus' wife, has for three years been besieged in her own home by one hundred and eight suitors, who believe Odysseus to be dead. Odysseus is not dead, however, but has met with much misfortune: for three years he tried to reach him, during which time he enraged Poseidon the sea god by blinding his son, a Cyclops, and lost all his crew who incurred the wrath of the sun god. Odysseus was saved from destruction, only to spend seven more years on the island of the nymph Calypso. These adventures are narrated by Odysseus. Even on returning home Odysseus is still not safe and must deal with the suitors to reclaim his throne and be reconciled with his wife. Odysseus is not entirely alone: he receives help from his patroness Athene (goddess of wisdom).

Homer's scope and imagination is never limited by his subject. Within the epics many different themes are explored, such as Achilles' disillusionment with war and the growth to maturity of Telemachus paralleled by Odysseus' voyage home. He deals imaginatively with the gods and the monsters encountered, giving many their own background. Although it is at times difficult to relate to some of the warriors detailed, Odysseus is an almost perfect example of a modern hero, using his intelligence and cunning to get out of difficult situations. Both epics were written to entertain, and over 2000 years later they still succeed.

(Editor's note: Gene Wolfe's 'Soldier of The Mist' and 'Soldier Of Arete' remind me of Homer's writing, though there is less in the way of gods and magic in Wolfe. They detail everyday life in Greece in 479 BC as seen through the eyes of a soldier, Latro. The writing is brilliant, and the atmosphere conveyed memorable. Worth looking at.)

NIGHTFALL

BY ISAAC ASIMOV

GRAFTON, £4.99 STG

"Nightfall" is regarded as one of the best sf stories ever written. In this volume it is the first of a wonderful collection of short stories that only goes to prove how well Isaac Asimov deserves the title of Grand Master.

Before each story there is an introduction from Asimov himself, explaining how and why he wrote each particular piece. These introductions also give the reader an insight into the author's life, containing, as they do, many interesting and witty anecdotes.

Some of the stories appealed more than others.

"Hostess" was confusing. It ends with the sentence "She had finally learned why Drake had married her." "She" may have found out but the reader is left guessing!

"The Up-to-date Sorcerer" one feels is written tongue-in-cheek and does not have the feeling of reality that the other stories possess in such abundance. It is a comedy of errors and rather "twee" in style.

All the other stories were marvellous. They contained so many different ideas, some simple, some complex, but all interesting.

This new edition of Asimov short stories is issued to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the title story. Published by Grafton Books, it is a thick paperback book and costs £4.99 sterling. Even with the extra it will cost in Ireland it is still great value.

PAMELA MCAREE

THE GODWARS VOLUME 1:

FORBIDDEN MAGIC

BY ANGUS WELLS

ORBIT, 586pp, £4.99 STG.

This is the first Angus Wells book I've read and,

frankly, I t say I overly enjoyed it.

Calandryll, younger son of a city lord, goes on a quest for a magician called Varent. He has a mercenary companion Bracht who teaches him swordplay and, among other things, not to trust the first magician you meet. That means, yep, that Varent is the baddie who wants to raise a mad god on an unsuspecting world.

Calandryll laps up all his lies and is only confronted with the truth in the last 100 pages. The book is rather slow moving. Calandryll and Bracht have no trouble apart from some annoying assassins. Along the way they meet two companions, a megalomaniacal magician and a beautiful warrior woman, who Bracht falls for. For such an important quest there is remarkably little interest in the companions and at most, I guessed the ending 200 pages into the book.

There are few twists in this book, those there are painstakingly obvious and the ending was rather rushed and predictable, as if the author couldn't wait to finish the book.

Overall the book is well written, it's got a nice cover but that's it. Fine reading for a rainy day but little to make it stand out from other fantasy books. There's no need to rush out and buy it, however, I've a feeling there will be plenty of copies left for a good while.

GER O'BRIEN

SUBTERRANEAN GALLERY

BY RICHARD PAUL RUSSO

GRAFTON BOOKS, 344pp, £4.50 STG

The blurb for this book compared the author to Lucius Shepard, among other authors, and like Shepard's 'Life During Wartime' this book is set in a near future where the USA is bogged down in an unspecified number of interminable and senseless wars in Central and Southern America.

Rheinhardt, the main character in this novel, is a Veteran of the war in the 'mericas and a sculptor who lives in San Francisco in an artists' colony known as the Warehouse where his lover Terry is one of the Administrators. Rheinhardt finds it increasingly difficult to work in the warehouse which has become a haven for no-talents and decides to leave, alienating Terry.

The bulk of the novel is in two parts, the first concerning Rheinhardt's struggle to create his masterpiece and the imminent drafting of his best friend. The second part, five years on, deals with Rheinhardt's return to San Francisco and the emergence of a new, more vibrant grouping of artists which coincides with the violent end of the warehouse project.

One of the more annoying aspects of this book is the appearance of a Vietnam vet, Justinian, who seems to have taken it upon himself to ensure that Rheinhardt will continue to sculpt. This he does by dancing on the roof of Rheinhardt's new studio. Justinian's motivations are never explained, but he very clearly has an agenda.

The book is very well written, in particular Rheinhardt's struggle to complete his masterpiece which left me almost as wrung out as Rheinhardt. Despite the unsatisfactory way in which the scenes in which Justinian appeared are dealt with I loved this book. I read this book looking for excitement, it's a study of people under pressure and of how they come to terms with what they are and the world they live in. It's all the more worth reading for that.

COLETTE GODKIN

BLACK MILK

BY ROBERT REED

ORBIT, £4.50 STG

Dr. Florida is a Genetic Engineer of the future. Not only he is able to give people the type of

child they would like, but he fashions many wonderful creatures to help mankind. Dr. Florida is fabulously wealthy and has enormous power. People love and admire him. They trust him implicitly. They never question him.

Ryder is one of a group of genetically fashioned children who live normal everyday lives in an ordinary country town. They meet Dr. Florida and fall under his spell.

Suddenly it is revealed that some of Florida's creations, the creatures known as Sparkhounds, have gone out of control. The children, their families, and the world, watch horrified as catastrophe follows catastrophe and the very existence of Planet Earth is under threat.

The story is written from Ryder's viewpoint. The "action" takes place on the Moon's moon, a captured comet that is owned by Dr. Florida. Everything is reported on television and the tension mounts as events unfold.

Robert Reed's ideas of life in the future have a decided ring of truth to them. The book is unusual in that the reader is not taking part in what is happening but identifies with Ryder who is merely an on-looker.

"Black Milk" is published by Orbit. It costs £4.50 sterling. Robert Reed also wrote "The Hormone Jungle" and was the first winner of L. Ron Hubbard's "Writers of the Future" award.

PAMELA McAREE

WAS

BY GEOFF RYMAN

HARPERCOLLINS, £14.99 STG

Geoff Ryman is a very powerful writer who in his previous books has manipulated the fantastic to present images beyond the normal suspension of belief. I have often found that they really stretch me and fill me like an extremely satisfying meal. WAS is more comfortable in a way, because by dealing with

images we have all known for decades ("The Wizard of Oz" by Frank L. Baum), we are more willing to immerse ourselves in the book - familiarity breeds laziness. Because WAS is a book which challenges those images; challenges the idylls we want to be there, and replaces them with disturbing viewpoints - bite into the gingerbread house, and find that it is made of crumbling mortar.

WAS follows the 'true' stories of the 'real' Dorothy; of a young teacher who was to later write a children's book; of actress Frances Gumm, and her pushing mother; of a modern actor called Jonathan, who clings to his belief in the message of 'The Wizard z' as his last refuge in his losing battle with AIDS. Each of their stories initially elicit sympathy from the reader, whose perceptions then change as each character tells of his or her life. And each story is a story of betrayal - of childish trust; of hopes; of dreams; of desires; of body; of mind - the novel reveals multiple layers of hypocrisy and secrecy. The positive aspects of the book come from the ending (when it slips into the fantasy we have come to expect from Ryman) and from its initial material - a beautiful tale of a girl and her dog, who fight evil in a magical world in order to come "Home, Aunt Em - Home..."

WAS isn't for the 'Easy Fantasy' reader - WAS is for everyone who doesn't NEED to look for a rainbow...

HELEN RYDER

FANZINE REVIEW:

PFJ

Issue no. 1

28 pages, A5, 95p

This is a review of PFJ issue 1 (which is in fact the second issue - edited by computer

programmers it started with issue 0) a new Irish fanzine devoted to funny fantasy and science fiction. Rather than fill out pages with reviews of 'professional' funny fiction i.e. Robert Rankin & Douglas Adams (I'm NOT going to mention Terry Pratchett in this review) the editors policy is to use all new material produced by amateur authors. Now, anyone who has tried their hand at writing will know how difficult it is to write funny material. Much harder than writing straight fiction or factual articles. Killing 28 pages every two months with genuinely funny material is a very tall order - so how have they done?

The format of PFJ is one of four short (<3000 words) stories and a selection of even shorter fillers - a problem page, letters and odd bits. Of the stories, the least successful is "Hamsternator II" by Edward Hickey (inspired by guess which recent movie hit) while Robert Elliott & Michael Carroll's "The Uncanny Y-Front" (not a little reminiscent of the X-Men) would work a lot better in cartoon form. The remaining two, "Grabbed By The Gobbies" and "One Small Step For Mankind" by Michael Carroll and Robert Elliott, I could take or leave.

Lest you think there is nothing to recommend PFJ I must say that I did find some very good bits - my favourites being the "Touchrama" page and "A Christmas Story" by Michael Cullen. There is also some good Pythonesque humour on show in the "PFJ Calendar" and the answer to "Otto Bdean's" letter on "Auntie Fractal's Problem Page" raised a wry smile.

As I said earlier, humour is difficult to write and is very subjective. The editors and writers of PFJ (in most cases one and the same) are to be commended for the effort but it remains to be seen whether PFJ will take off from this slightly shaky start or sink into oblivion.

PAUL MCKINLEY

(Editor's note: PFJ #2 is now out, available from the address in the fanzine column. It's a much improved 'zine, and even I found some of it funny!)

REELSPIEL

by Des Doyle

The Hollywood Price Wars continue to rage. The relative commercial failure of 'HOOK', i.e. in Spielbergian terms, taking a \$96 million gross in 7 weeks has added to the concern of Movie Studios that films are getting far too expensive to make. 'HOOK' which cost \$84 million to film needs to hit \$170 - \$200 million to start breaking even. Unfortunately for Universal, once 'HOOK' clears \$100 million there is an automatic 40% cut of the profits divided between Spielberg, Hoffman and Williams. That means that unless the boys are willing to take a big pay cut or the film starts doing phenomenal business, Universal aren't going to make a penny out of it.

It's news like this that has Carolco worried as well. Even though they scored big last year with 'T2' they, along with Orion Pictures, have also had to file for bankruptcy protection. Their next project which was to have been a \$50 million action adventure directed by Renny Harlin entitled 'GALE FORCE' has been put into turnaround.

Meanwhile at Orion, after selling off 'THE ADDAMS FAMILY' to Paramount and then watching it clear almost \$80 million domestic in a month, they have become a little more cautious. 'ROBOCOP 3', written and directed by Fred Dekker ('THE MONSTER SQUAD') has had more distribution deals than I've had hot dinners but now seems definite to be an early Spring release through Fox. Rather than take a lump sum this time Orion are in on a

percentage deal but as to how well this sequel will fare after the disastrous 'ROBOCOP 2' only time will tell. This new distribution deal will seemingly also cover Woody Allen's much delayed 'SHADOWS AND FOG' which stars Madonna and Jodie Foster amongst others.

The big news closer to home is that the Dublin Film Festival is trying to get a copy of the Director's cut of 'BLADE RUNNER' for inclusion in this year's programme. This cut eliminates all of Harrison Ford's narration as well as restoring the original ending. There is also a variation in Vangelis' soundtrack as well as a sequence showing Roy Batty & comrades making their escape and stealing the shuttle. This version has been playing to packed houses in the Los Angeles Playhouse and has proved so successful that Warners are considering releasing it on video. However the big screen is the place to watch this film so check with the Film Festival Office. They will also be screening David Cronenberg's version of William Burrough's novel 'THE NAKED LUNCH' which promises to be very interesting.

James Cameron will write and direct a big screen version of Spiderman as soon as he completes work on his current project 'THE CROWDED ROOM'. And speaking of comic book characters 'BATMAN RETURNS' should have finished six months of principal photography in L.A. for a June release stateside. The inside word on this one is very promising. Extensive reshoots for 'ALIEN 3' have also just completed as Fox were unhappy with director David Fincher's original cut, feeling the film sagged too much in the middle and considered the ending lack enough thrills. It's now set for an early June release, though if Batman bites big this may be pushed back a month.

Upcoming (or already arrived) in Dublin are 'STAR TREK VI', 'THE LAST BOY SCOUT' and 'JFK' which open the aforementioned Film

Festival. Director Oliver Stone will be in attendance for that and will also be giving a Directors Masterclass in one of the UCL cinemas. It is rumoured that Kevin Costner may also attend the premiere as this will give him a chance to put some more work into the Michael Collins movie he still insists he will do once he completes 'THE BODYGUARD' opposite Whitney Houston. If you're looking for a director Kev, you know where to find me.

DES DOYLE

STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY.

You know who's in it.

This, we were told, would be the final Trek movie. Woah Nelly, we really mean it this time. Well, we'll see how this one does. Maybe we'll do another one. Or two.

The first point to make about this movie is that it's better than ST5. "No!", you all cry in a universal (sorry, Paramount) expression of irony. "Yes!", I cry, but am behoved to add that it's also better than the first four. From this, one can logically infer that I liked the movie.

The plot is simple; Peace in Our Time. The Klingons' main energy centre has blown up, leaving the Klingon Empire with approximately fifty years of life. Rather than go out in one final war, they decide on Peace. However, not all Klingons (or Feds, either, for that matter) share this view, so when Kirk & Co are sent to escort the Klingon Ambassador to Earth, problems are encountered. The rest of the plot, I leave to you to find out for yourselves.

Star Trek movies seem to all have one thing in common - holes in the plot. This is not as bad as ST V, nor does it have the plethora of scientific flaws present in II, but nonetheless there are some significant omissions. The

doppelganger scene is cliched, except for its resolving - they didn't bother providing an answer. There isn't any tension; we know bloody well who isn't going to die.

The direction isn't perfect, either; there's one scene at the beginning when all of Starfleet's highest sit around a table, waiting to be addressed. As the mysterious speaker walks towards the table, we are given a lengthy shot of him walking towards the podium - a shot of all except his head. "Gosh", we all wonder. "Who could that be?". Only kidding. Everybody knows who it is. This, sadly, is typical of the attempts to inject tension into the film.

"What else can he slag off?", I hear you mutter. Well, how about the pacing? Fine for the most part, but the photographer must have some fond memories of Alaska, as we get some very picturesque, but very long, shots of the snowscape.

Basically, it's a flawed movie. However, it does better than most SF movies in that it tries to give us something above and beyond the SFX, spectacularly done by Industrial Light and Magic. It doesn't succeed all the time, but does a creditable job. Despite the flaws, a movie to go to the top of the "Must See" list. But, you didn't need me to tell you that.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT ELLIOTT

UIP STAR TREK VI COMPETITION



To coincide with the release of Star Trek VI we're delighted to announce that, in association with United International

Pictures, Film Distributors, we have t-shirts, compact discs, cassettes or posters from the film to give to the first 16 correct entries drawn from the hat. All you have to do is answer this simple question:

Who of the following list DID NOT write an episode for the Original Series of Star Trek - HARLAN ELLISON, JEROME BIXBY, DAVID GERROLD, JOE HALDEMAN

Answers to the ISFA address, by fax, or by 'phone by March 20th. Please include your 'phone number so we can sort out prizes.

THE COMICS COLUMN

by Mark Bagnall

I was asked at TrinCon 'How do you get into comics?' This struck me as a strange thing to ask, along the lines of 'How do you get into reading books?' The answer is obvious and the same in both cases - go to a shop and buy the things! Or is it? Thinking about it, maybe it's not such a strange question - maybe there are science fiction fans out there (even reading this) that look down on us comic fans? Could it be possible that people who have been looked down upon for reading or writing "juvenile fiction" treat comic fans in the same manner? I hope not, but I'm afraid I've been met with near laughter from sf fans who hold these unenlightened views. I hope that by regular reading of this column I can help these people 'see the light' and discover (or even rediscover) comics and see them as what could be the best medium for telling science fiction short stories.

ALIENS

Trident, £2.75

The original question also reminded me how I got into comics. After seeing the film 'Aliens' a friend lent me his 'Aliens' comics and I was very impressed. Now comes the excellent reprint from a new company, Trident. The 64 page magazine reprints the original Dark Horse

'Aliens' and 'Predator' comics. This month they begin serialising 'Genocide'. It has the makings of a great story: a new breed of meaner aliens are born, a female commander leading an expedition to wipe out the creatures, a new wonder drug which has some unexpected side effects. But there is one small problem - where did all the people come from? The aliens had completely wiped out the Earth (apart from Ripley, who of course saved the day). If you forget about that it's good. The artwork, reminiscent of some Japanese Mongu comics, is suitably 'gross' when necessary. Also included is the original Aliens story (without which I wouldn't be here today - probably) and a 'Predator' story - for my views on this read last month's column.

Editor Required

for the ISFA Newsletter

Must have a broad knowledge of
sf/comics/fantasy etc.

Must have an IBM compatible
or an Apple Macintosh computer.

Experience preferred.

Applications to:

The Irish Science Fiction Association,
30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road,
Templeogue, Dublin 16

UPCOMING ISFA EVENTS/ FUTURE MEETINGS:

March: 24th, The Vintage, 6, Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2, 8p.m. Note change of date!! Writer's and artist's workshop.

April: 7th, The Horse & Tram, Eden Quay, Dublin 1, 8 p.m. Michael Scott, author of many, many books (he has ten appearing this year alone) will talk and answer questions.

April: 21st, The Vintage, 6, Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2, 8 p.m. Writer's and artist's workshop.

April: 25th & 26th, Bewley's Of Grafton Street, Dublin 2. SfEx '92 - art exhibition featuring many works by amateur and professional artists, modelmakers and sculptors.

May: 5th. VENUE TO BE ANNOUNCED! A classic science fiction film followed by a debate on its merits.