

ISFJ NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 73

MAY 1992

ISSN 0791-3966



INTERVIEWS: GREG BEAR & NICHOLAS MEYER
SPIELBERG'S 'HOOK' REVIEWED
LATEST BOOK AND COMIC NEWS
ASIMOV TRIBUTES

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	2
NEWS	3
Nebula Award Nominations	
MEDIA NEWS	5
Brussels SF Film Festival	
Video preview	
'Hook' reviewed	
ISFA NEWS	8
CONVENTIONS	10
CLUBS	11
INTERVIEW:	12
Face to Face with Nicholas Meyer	
LETTERS	15
Asimov Tributes	
UPCOMING BOOKS	20
INTERVIEW:	21
Greg Bear	
REVIEWS	24
JUST FINISHED	32
THE COMICS COLUMN	32
OUT OF GAFIA	35

PRODUCTION

EDITOR: BRENDA! RYDER
COLLATING: ISFA COMMITTEE

PUBLISHED BY: THE IRISH SCIENCE
FICTION ASSOCIATION, 30 BEVERLY
DOWNS, KNOCKLYON ROAD,
TEMPLEOGUE, DUBLIN 16. FURTHER
INFORMATION FROM THE ABOVE
ADDRESS OR RING 934712

EDITORIAL

The ISFA is in its fourth year since being reformed. When we started in 1988 we decided to keep it small and gradually grow, depending on the resources we had available. We decided to essentially adopt the aims of the old Association, namely promoting interest in science fiction and its related genres. This was to be achieved through regular meetings, workshops and publications. FTL was the first publication, appearing in A5 format and edited by John Kenny for issues 1 and 2. Its aims were to provide a platform for Irish writers of fiction and articles, interviews and reviews. Artists, both illustrative and comic were to be showcased. With the advent of the fully printed version last year the possibilities for expanding interest in science fiction, especially in the art field, grew hugely. The second publication, the Newsletter, appeared in 1990 and basically deals with reviews, news and, recently, interviews.

However the printed version of FTL takes up a lot of our resources, financial and people. The delays with the current issue have been a mixture of both of these. Three professional advertising agents who were to seek advertising for the magazine have withdrawn for a variety of reasons; problems with the design also contributed to the delay. What has happened over the past six months is that the commitment by those involved in the magazine has hardened - FTL 12 will appear, and will be the launch of a strong presence by Irish writers and artists on the domestic and international scene. It will feature more pages, more art

and a more readable layout. Your support and understanding will be very gratefully received, as well as your letters and comments once you see the magazine. Don't grumble to yourself if you're not happy - write or talk to us! Nobody will lose out on any issues either as we hope to get back to our original schedule eventually.

The ISFA, following the hectic period after Octocon last year, is also reexamining its roots. The Questionnaire last year, together with comments at the AGM and elsewhere, have all been considered. Following the open committee meeting that was held at SfEx and ordinary committee meetings we expect to announce our plans shortly for the next year. So have no doubts - we are working, and hard, on your behalf.

Brendan Ryder, Chairman, ISFA

NOTE: THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS PUBLICATION ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS AND DO NOT REPRESENT THOSE OF THE ISFA, EXCEPT WHERE STATED.

NEWS

ASIMOV'S & ANALOG TO BE PUBLISHED BY DELL

Top US magazines 'Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine' and 'Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact' have been sold by Davis Publications to Dell Magazines. All editorial staff are to be retained in the move, which should mean that there will be few, if any changes to the magazines in the near future. Magazine sales in the

SF field have fallen in the last decade but seem to be bottoming out - both Asimov's and Analog sell in the region of 75,000 copies monthly, while the market leader OMNI, sells some 850,000.

PHILIP K. DICK AWARD NOMINATIONS

This award, first announced in 1982, honours the Best American Original Paperback Book of the year. Some previous winners have been Neuromancer by William Gibson, Strange Toys by Patricia Geary, Wetware by Rudy Rucker and The Anubis Gates by Tim Powers. The final result was announced at Norwescon at the end of March - I hope to have it for the next Newsletter. In the meantime the nominations are:

MOJO AND THE PICKLE JAR - DOUGLAS BELL
BONE DANCE - EMMA BULL
THE CIPHER - KATHE KOJA
KING OF MORNING, QUEEN OF DAY - IAN MCDONALD
BRIDGE OF YEARS - ROBERT CHARLES WILSON

The winner will receive \$1,000, second will receive \$500.

ABORIGINAL SF MAGAZINE NOW QUARTERLY

Charles Ryan has been forced to move to a quarterly schedule, though future issues will be 116 pages instead of the 'normal' 68 pages. He is also polling his readers on the continuation of colour

illustrations inside the magazine, the most obvious difference between AbSF and its competitors.

'OZ' THEME PARK PLANNED

Forget Eurodisney - Kansas City plans to open a \$300 million park based on the film version of Frank L. Baum's classic in 1995 or 1996.

BUZZ ALDRIN, ASTRONAUT, TO WRITE SF NOVEL?

According to SF Chronicle the second man on the moon now has some ideas for an sf novel and is seeking a collaborator. Only experienced authors need apply!

NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS

Best Novel:

ORBITAL RESONANCE

- JOHN BARNES;

BARRAYAR - LOIS

MCMASTER - BUJOLD;

BONE DANCE - EMMA

BULL;

SYNNERS - PAT CADIGAN;

THE DIFFERENCE EN-

GINE - BRUCE STERLING

& WILLIAM GIBSON;

STATIONS OF THE TIDE

- MICHAEL SWANWICK.

The results were to have been announced at the end of April - we may have the winner by next issue.

MR XCITEMENT HITS THE AIRWAVES!

"Someone or something is pumping yellow toxic waste into the River Liffey, making people see things that are not there!

Mr Xcitement and his assistant Grainne Waile are called on to solve the problem."

Listen out on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays on the Sean Ashmore Drive Time programme at 5.10 p.m. on East Coast Radio (95 FM - Dublin and 103 FM - Wicklow).

UNDERGROUND BUNKER TO HOUSE THE WORKS OF L. RON HUBBARD

A related group to The Church of Scientology has built the vast complex, which cost in the region of \$7,000,000, in Northern California. It is designed to withstand nuclear attack or natural disaster, and officials expect the work to survive for a millenium.

NATIONAL ART GALLERY STOCKS FANTASY!

Well, at least one painting could be considered for SfEx '93 - have a look at A Fantasy by Domenicus van Wynen, known as 'Ascanius'. It can be found in the Dutch school, Room XIX.

ISFA MEMBER ON TOUR!

J.O.E.L. de Rouelle Biget, whose massive cold cast bronze statue of Sagittarius stole the show at last year's SfEx, is to tour the US with a collection of his work during the summer.

NEW MAGAZINE 'SCIENCE FICTION AGE'

To be published bimonthly starting in August SF Age will have an initial print run of 40,000 - 60,000. Stories by Thomas Disch and Barry Malzberg have already been bought, and Ron Goulart, Craig

Shaw Gardner, Geoffrey Landis, Gregory Benford and Charles Sheffield will also be involved regularly. Submissions and SASE's to Scott Edelman, Science Fiction Age, Box 369, Damascus, MD 20872-0369, USA; payment will be 4-8e on publication. Response time is 4-6 weeks.

MEDIA NEWS

BRUSSELS SF FILM FESTIVAL

The Raven for best film at the 10th Brussels Festival of Fantasy, Thriller and Science Fiction Film was awarded to **TIMESCAPE**, directed by David N. Twohy and starring Jeff Daniels. Based on the classic story "Vintage Season" by Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore, it tells of the story of an innkeeper (Daniels) who receives some very unusual guests.

The jury, consisting of Lewis Gilbert (Chairman), David Blyth and Stijn Coninx, awarded two special prizes. The first went to Bruce McDonald as best director for **HIGHWAY 61** and the second was awarded for special effects to Japanese film **TETSUO II - THE BODY HAMMER**, directed by Shinya Tsukamoto. Lewis Gilbert praised the film for its innovative character and remarkable force. Honourable mentions were also given to **THE JOHNSONS**, a Dutch horror film by Rudolf Van Den Berg, and Wes Craven's latest shocker **THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS**, which received its European premiere at the festival.

PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS was also honoured as the winner of the audience prize, voted on by those members of the audience

who had attended all the films in the competition. The film received the Pegasus Award. Second place went to **TIMESCAPE** and third to **DROP DEAD FRED** by Alec de Jong and starring Phoebe Cates and Rik Mayall.

The festival also featured a short films competition. The jury for this was composed of representatives from eight TV stations across Europe, including RTE. The winner **L'ENCADRE**, by Manuel Gomez - who coincidentally designed the Pegasus Award mentioned above - will be shown on each of the participating stations.

The public also got a chance to vote for their favourite short and chose **IMPACTS**. Director Remy Giordano wins 20,000 BF and has the films subtitled in either English, Dutch or Spanish.

DAVID STEWART

RTE BANS STAR TREK'S 'THE HIGH GROUND'

Because of an indirect reference to the IRA in episode dealing with terrorism RTE have banned it, saying it was unsuitable to the largely young audience. To the best of my knowledge this is the first episode of Star Trek RTE have banned - all original 79 episodes were shown when it first appeared, which cannot be said for the BBC who banned four.

'THE PRISONER' ON CHANNEL 4

It appears that from October 10th Britain's Channel 4 will show all 17 episodes of the classic 60's series. Other celebrations are planned for the series' 25th anniversary - watch this space!

STAR TREK ON BBC

BBC 2 is to show all 79 episodes of the original Star Trek, starting in May.

DR. WHO: TOM BAKER SPECIAL

A video of the famous unfinished Who episode 'Shada' will comprise the bulk of a special retrospective of Baker's days as the Doctor. The missing footage will be filled in by Baker reading from the script. Expect the video to hit the shops in July.

SNIPPETS:

SUPERMAN V - currently a project of Alexander Salkind - may feature Arnold Schwarzenegger, though not as the Man of Steel. **ROBOCOP 3** should appear in the US in Summer - look for a Christmas release here.

The script for **A PRINCESS OF MARS**, based on the Edgar Rice Burroughs book of the same name, is currently being rewritten. Rumour has it that Tom Cruise, Mel Gibson, or Kevin Costner may get the lead, with Sylvester Stallone an outside chance.

The budget for **BATMAN II** is now at \$75,000,000 and still rising.

A new **GODZILLA** film may be out soon, titled **GODZILLA vs KING GHIDORAH** which will feature Mechaghidorah and the Gajirasaurus!

In an interview with The Irish Times Anthony Hopkins said that he got the inspiration for the voice of Dr. Hannibal Lecter from HAL in 2001, A Space Odyssey. Other sf and related projects he's involved in at the moment: **FREEJACK** with Mick Jagger, and as Van Helsing in **DRACULA**.

Rumour has it that one of Queen Elizabeth II's pet corgis is called Spock!

VIDEO PREVIEW

STEPHEN KING'S THE GOLDEN YEARS

Starring Keith Szarabajka and Felicity Huffman

Running time : 236 minutes

Seventy year old Harlan Williams is beginning to feel his age. The cycle to work takes a lot out of him, and then he is told that he is about to lose his job as janitor in an agricultural testing facility, because his eyesight is failing. But then something happens which alters Harlan's lifestyle completely. A major experiment in the field of regeneration goes disastrously wrong, destroying the laboratory and exposing Harlan to chemicals which begin to rejuvenate him. There follows a long and complicated investigation, featuring the death of almost everyone involved, and a chase across the USA. Meanwhile, the psychotic doctor continues with his experiments, disregarding safety regulations. This is another of Stephen King's mini-series, shown in seven parts on American television. It is a good story, but a little too drawn-out. In fact, at times I wondered how they were going to make the story last for four hours, but somehow they managed it.

Some of the special effects were good - I particularly liked the glow-in-the-dark rat! - and I thought the theme music, 'Golden Years' by David Bowie was very apt. To be honest though, I was very disappointed with the ending. After sit-

ting through four hours of suspense I was expecting something a little better - especially when Stephen King wrote it.

Overall it is well worth watching. And don't say I didn't warn you about the ending.

Available soon from your local video library.

Teresa O'Connor

'HOOK'

Starring Robin Williams and Dustin Hoffman

Produced by Stephen Spielberg

I was fortunate that a month abroad had insulated me utterly from any hyperhype surrounding this film. (The French title is "Hook - ou la Revanche du Capitaine Crochet", by the way).

The plot of 'Hook' concerns the further adventures of Peter Pan. After he decided to stay in the real world, Peter Pan grew up into a normal young man - forgetting along the way his proper fairy-tale origins. He married Wendy's granddaughter and had two children and moved to America, where he became a high-flying executive, replete with portable phone. In the long tradition of executives, his work began to interfere greatly with his family life, and his wife and kids began to feel a bit neglected. The first quarter of the film explores this situation a little, but one gets a distinct impression that Spielberg wanted to get the plot background dealt with and out of the way as quickly as possible in order to get on to the wonderful Neverland scenes. As a result the first part of the film has a very compacted feel to it.

During a family visit to London to

chair the opening of an extension to the orphanage that Peter Pan grew up in, Captain Hook kidnaps Peter's children and imprisons them in Neverland. Tinkerbell comes and tows Peter Pan away to said Neverland (or Neverneverland, as it is sometimes called) in order to save his kids. When Peter reaches Neverland he is not a little stunned. He still does not remember that he is Peter Pan.

Tinkerbell, after saving him from Captain Hook, takes Peter to meet the Lost Boys. They are not impressed. Peter is old and fat. He can't fly. He can't play. He looks awful. He can't even IMAGINE anything any more. The film scores well here, in so far as it emphasises the value of imagination, as the original fairytale did.

But, as you'd expect, Peter does eventually learn how to fly, how to play games again, how to have fun; and only here does Robin Williams look really comfortable in the role. He re-learns to fly by thinking a "happy thought"...which heralds the most impressive special effects extravaganza that I have seen in recent years. You will, I promise, be as gobsmacked by the flying sequences in 'Hook' as you were by Arnie's shape-changing adversary in 'Terminator 2'. Also the aerial views of Neverland, seen from the point of view of Peter flying, are truly spectacular. I imagine that this film would lose 90% of its impact on a TV screen, so go to it in a proper cinema while you have the chance. I will not discuss any more of the plot, suffice it to say that it is both predictable and unpredictable.

What about the film itself? There are some major flaws, yes. For example, the Lost Boys speak American, not English.; and also,

Dustin Hoffman (the human, not the turkey) was not the best choice for Captain Hook. He isn't nasty and horrible enough. But there are good points to offset these; the pirates, for example, are magnificent. I would be proud to know such a dirty, greasy, smelly, lovable bunch of cut-throats. And of course there are the effects. And then there is the lovely Julia Roberts, whose performance as Tinkerbell is not bad at all. She is the perfect foil for Peter Pan: her flavour of maturity offsets Pan's childishness perfectly.

If you are a Trekkie like me, then one part of the dialogue will induce a distinct lack of rhythm. When Smee is presenting Hook to the pirates he cries, "I give you....Captain James Hook!" I fully expected to hear a middle initial 'T' in there.

'Hook' is, in retrospect, magical. Despite the flaws, there are some genuinely poignant scenes, and of course those amazing effects. Neverland itself and the scenery in general are very faithful to the original animated Walt Disney version of Peter Pan. The film works. And works well.

The last time a film really caught my imagination was when I saw 'Dances with Wolves'; I came out of the cinema trying to think of a Sioux name for myself. After seeing 'Hook', I came out of the cinema wishing I could fly.

ISFA NEWS AND COMPETITIONS

RESULTS:

The March Eason's Book Token was won by Noreen Monahan. The winners of the prizes in the

Star Trek competition were as follows: John Kenny, Noreen Monahan, Gerry Cleary, Hugh O'Neill, Greg O'Shaughnessy, James Bacon

The answers? Oh alright: Geoff Ryman (published by HarperCollins, though we did take Unwin Hyman) and Joe Haldeman was the only author in the list not to write an episode for the original series of Star Trek.

AISSLING GHEAL

Please note that the closing date for this competition is now the 30th June! Rules were printed in the February Newsletter. More details from the ISFA address or 'phone number.

SFEX '92

Some 40 artists took part in this year's Art Exhibition which was held once again in Bewley's of Grafton Street. Over 100 works were on display, ranging in media from pen and ink to watercolour, wood sculpture to metal figures. The general consensus was that the standard was once again improved, and the requirement that the work had to be mounted on at least board encouraged many exhibitors to go all out and fully frame the work.

Artists received a questionnaire to fill out; at some point in the near future we will be using the results of this to encourage them by providing specific services. The general public who attended were given a brochure and a voting form. The results of the voting were as follows:

Best Artist: Peter Queally (second was Paul Sheridan, third Arthur O'Duffy)

Best Piece of Art: Birth Moon by

Alex McLennon

Best Model: Alien Head by Martin McCanney

Best Modelmaker: Martin McCanney

Best Junior: Martin McCanney

No, I won't make any comment about Martin....!

The event was kindly sponsored by Eason's of O'Connell Street (who gave £60 in book tokens, and put up a display in the shop advertising the event) and Bewley's who gave us a day free to set-up and supplied free coffee/tea to the first fifty who came in.

Problems occurred in setting up the exhibition but once in place it ran smoothly. The lack of music was a major oversight though - the original music provided for last year's event was commented on very favourably. Overall it was a very worthwhile event, but organisation next year will need to be greater.

ISFA AWARDS

The categories for the awards will be announced in the next Newsletter.

OPEN COMMITTEE MEETING

On Saturday evening during SfEx there was the first of the two Open meetings required under the resolutions passed at the AGM. Some fifteen people turned up, a low number considering the interest expressed in it at the AGM.

Items discussed included: talks on sf that are to be given to the staff in Eason's by an ISFA member; future meetings (some ideas were - A talk on Magic; an evening with Morgan Llewellyn; a science talk). It was also requested that a new

venue be found for the monthly meetings, as it was felt that problems with the Horse and Tram were too great. This need had been recognised some time ago by the committee and a new venue is currently being sought.

The Newsletter was discussed - the general feeling was that it had improved recently with the extra pages and wider variety. The design was highly praised, though the lack of cartoons and other graphics was pointed out. Plans for the future of the publication were announced: a new editor will take over for the June issue (now confirmed as Michael Cullen), there will be more information on the media side, including a special review section on videos which are to be supplied by a certain video shop. Star Trek will also be covered specifically as it is an introduction to sf for a lot, and may serve to get new members/ readers who will then broaden their interests to include other material also catered for by the Association.

FTL received a lot of attention. An explanation for the delay to date was given by the Chairman - although initially it was intended to appear early, before Christmas, design and advertising problems caused a postponement until, it was hoped, the AGM in January. Unfortunately this proved impossible to meet due to financial restrictions - delays caused by advertising (the lack of an advertising agent, particularly) and further design problems has left the magazine in limbo until now. However, with the stepping down of David McKane from the designer position of the magazine due to pressure of work, a new designer has been found and the new FTL team

will endeavour to produce the magazine as soon as possible. No-one will miss any issues due to them, the Chairman assured.

The content and design of the magazine was commented on in detail. Stories that were overlong were criticised - after discussion it was essentially agreed that the actual design and typeface of the magazine (issue 9 - 11) made stories too difficult to read. The quality of the fiction was raised but arguments as to what constitutes a good story ensued and possibly the correct resolution was arrived at: it all comes down to the editor because it's impossible to keep everybody happy all the time! More artwork to break up the magazine was suggested, also a looser typeface. There were too many review columns, according to a couple of people, who wanted them all together similar to Interzone. Finally, a letters column was urgently needed (but nobody is writing any letters!)

Other subjects covered included plans for a new Questionnaire with involvement from marketing people as well as fans, and the plans to discuss the best way forward for Irish sf with bookshops and publishers agents, similar to the way the British SF Association was initially set up. The next Open Meeting may take place soon after the Summer - I hope the attendance is better next time!

CONVENTIONS

PROTOPLASM, Manchester, U.K. 19th - 21st June, 1992. Guest of Honour Bob Shaw. For further details contact Proto-plasm, 1 Shoemsmith 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 sf 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, FL 32862-1992, USA.

O3 - Octocon '92: 16th - 18th October, The Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. Registration (until September 1st) Attending £13, Supporting £6, Junior (U16) £6. GoH: Orson Scott Card, other confirmed guests: Gill Alderman, Graham Andrews, Catherine Brophy, Diane Duane, Martin Duffy, Nicholas Emmett, Katherine Kurtz, Scott MacMillan, Anne McCaffrey, Peter Morwood, Geoff Ryman, Michael Scott, James White. 'Green' theme and a Tolkien celebration. Progress Report 1 now available to members only. 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.

TIMEWARP, 6th and 7th March, 1993. ISFA has received just this intriguing notification about this event, and I quote: "49 weeks to the biggest Star Trek event ever seen in Ireland. Watch this space for details." Enough said.

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.

THE BRAM STOKER SOCIETY

Membership is £6 per year, benefits include entry to all lectures, films and events; a quarterly Newsletter (8 pages); an annual Bram Stoker Journal (40-45 pages). Available from Mr. Albert Power, Secretary, The Bram Stoker Society, 227 Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

Upcoming Meetings:

Tuesday, May 5th - Part 1 of the BBC Radio 4 version of "Dracula", taped on stereo audio-cassettes. Room 5025, Arts Buliding, 8 p.m.
Tuesday, May 12th - Part 2 of "Dracula". Room 4050A Arts Building, 8 p.m.

Tuesday, May 26th - "Le Golem", director Julian Duvivier, France, 1937. Black and white subtitled. Venue: Room 4094, Arts Building,

TCD at 8 p.m.

THE MANGA CLUB

'The Manga Club will keep you ahead of the pack and up to date on future releases of Japanese animation, many of which are destined to become cult classics in the UK, repeating their phenomenal success in Japan and America' To join send your name and address to The Manga Club, Island World Communications, 40 St. Peters Road, London W6 9BD, UK. It's free!

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.

INTERVIEW

FACETOFACE WITH NICHOLAS MEYER

by David Stewart

Nicholas Meyer's influence on the Star Trek movie series cannot be underestimated. After the less than stupendous STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE he gave us STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN and set the tone for the following four movies. He co-wrote the script for THE VOYAGE HOME and now he retains the centre seat for STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY, the last of the Classic Trek movies.

Nicholas Meyer was a guest at the Brussels Festival of Fantasy, Thriller and Science Fiction Films

where STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY was shown. Following the showing of the film, Mr. Meyer took part in a question and answer session. Unfortunately, my tape recorder broke down - something of a tradition with the ISFA I believe - so I am relying on my sketchy notes and memory. Also please note that Mr Meyer spoke in French so what you are reading is my translation of what he said.

The first question concerned how you get the actors to relate to a world beyond every day existence. Answer: "You pay them a lot of money. Seriously, they are profes-

sionals and they do their job well."

I then asked him if the fact that both

"I'm not a
science fiction
fan..."

STAR TREK II and VI dealt with the crew facing their own mortality was a coincidence.

"The question of their ages," he relied, "was an inevitable consequence of the story in STAR TREK II. It was easier for me to get their ages up front before people started thinking 'Hey these guys are too old for this!' In STAR TREK II it was a core fact of the movie, in VI it was more of a joke."

Moving on to the question of what kind of audience it was aimed at Mr. Meyer was most emphatic that it was not for children. "It's just a story that I tell the best way I can for intelligent people. The only people I hope have any difficulty understanding it are those who voted for Ronald Reagan." Nor is the movie aimed solely at 'Trekkies' he explained. "I am not a science fiction fan nor was I a fan of STAR

TREK. I didn't see STAR TREK until I came to direct STAR TREK II." The discussion then turned towards the music.

**"It's just a story
I tell the best
way I can for
intelligent
people"**

Mr. Meyer was full of praise for composer Cliff Eidelman. "We didn't have a budget for an established composer like Jerry Goldsmith (who wrote the score for ST: TMP and ST: TNG), besides, I was getting a bit tired of marches. I listened to a lot of young composers and I came across Cliff Eidelman (who composed the scores for TRIUMPH OF THE SPIRIT, DELERIOUS and CRAZY PEOPLE). I met him and explained what I wanted. I described it by saying I wanted something like Stravinsky's Firebird for the opening to give it a mysterious feel. Three days later he came back with a tape of the opening of STAR TREK VI.

Back to the special effects. Was it difficult getting the effects you wanted. "The weightless assassination scene was a nightmare. It was particularly hard on the actors, but they are professionals." I then asked was he influenced much by the Next Generation. "I've seen a few episodes. The special effects are far superior to the original series because of the budget. But I don't think it has the humour of the original, it takes itself too seriously. So no I wasn't greatly influenced."

Wait a minute - my tape recorder is working again - kind of. Now we're cooking.

One member of the audience then asked about the influence of Gene Roddenberry citing references in the 25th anniversary special that Roddenberry had a tight control on scripts for TNG.

"I didn't know Gene Roddenberry very well. In ten years I only met him maybe five times. He didn't work on the films except for the first one. After that he was a sort of eminence grise. He commented and gave advice but didn't make changes to the script. He saw STAR TREK VI three days before he died - I hope that wasn't what killed him - and he told me he liked it."

The next questioner addressed the philosophy of STAR TREK and the themes of the series.

"For me the secret of STAR TREK is never to repeat anything. So I tried in the three scripts I wrote, to find something different. STAR TREK II dealt with aging, friendship and death. STAR TREK IV dealt with ecology and STAR TREK VI dealt with politics."

But what about the budget. Doesn't the size of the budget oblige you as a director to bring in a box office hit but at the same time include certain non-commercial aspects?

"For me STAR TREK VI was very

**"... (Gene
Roddenberry) was a
sort of eminence
grise..."**

con-
ven-
ient
be-
cause
in Hol-
lywood
it's al-
ways
abso-

lutely essential that the film makes a profit. No profit, no film. If I had approached Paramount and said 'I want to make a film about the

end of communism, economic chaos, racism, xenophobia, political assassinations' they would

"In the Pentagon now they are proposing new doomsday scenarios to justify the arms and budgets. But against who? Klingons, I think."

have said 'No', and then if I said 'It's called STAR TREK', they would have said 'Go with God'. Because of that STAR TREK has liberated me. It's much easier to choose a subject. It's new wine in an old bottle, I think, and if the bottle is called STAR TREK, the studio doesn't mind what I put in it. The studio was very good to me. They loved the script immediately. There was no interference. There were some disagreeable discussions about budget before filming started, but once that was approved there were no further disagreements. they were very supportive.

"The theme of the film was very serious. I am afraid of change. Transitions are, I think, the most serious parts of life. Marriage, divorce, new job, new apartment, a new world. In the last three years the world has changed. Here we are now in Brussels, the centre of NATO, and what to do now with those great big buildings. They are practically useless now. There are people, good people, who are so afraid of the future, an unknown future, that they are doing naughty things. In the Pentagon now they are proposing new doomsday scenarios to justify the arms and budg-

ets. But against who? Klingons I think."

Question: "What are you going to do next?"

"I never discuss my future projects with anyone. Because it's a sort of Hollywood bullshit. I work, I write and I hope."

Final question: "Who would you like to work with that you haven't worked with already?"

"There are many actors with whom I would like to work. I like actors a lot. Many directors don't like actors. They see them as a problem but I love them. A lot of times I am so entranced by them I forget to say 'cut' because for me they are so wonderful to be able to repeat any emotion, even tears. When I was directing TIME AFTER TIME, my first film, I saw Malcolm McDowell and Mary Steenburghen and I was like this (Mimes mouth open in wonderment and then recovering and saying 'cut'). And I have many friends who are actors. I have great admiration for Ricardo Montalban (Khan in STAR TREK II), Jason Robards (THE DAY AFTER) and I like Christopher Plummer a lot. This is the only business where you can work with your dreams.

"Okay, that's not quite the answer to the question. If I had to answer the question with one name I'd say Judy Garland."

And with that the meeting ended. Those of us who wanted autographs were invited to queue while the rest headed for the bar.

I would like at this point to thank Jean Paul Bertin of UIP Belgium - who distribute Paramount - for his invaluable assistance.

LETTERS

Dear Brendan,

Many thanks for the kind words on PFJ in your March Newsletter - only one thing wrong: my address is Dublin 6 not Dublin 4. As for the actual PFJ review, well Paul McKinley is a good, fine example of criticism at its best. He's honest, precise, and clearly someone to be reckoned with. I don't care if he wasn't too fond of the magazine. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but who gives a rat's arse what Paul McKinley thinks? ... when is FTL coming out? Does the lateness of the issue mean that ISFA members will miss out on a copy? (No, see the report on the Open meeting in the ISFA News section - ed.)

Anyway... A great Newsletter. Seriously. Very interesting indeed. Please keep up the standard. I notice that you're looking for an editor - does this mean a change in the format? I hope not. I'm really getting to like it.

Reelspiel is brilliant. More power to Des. I want to see much more like this.

As for TrinCon, I think Helen was far too lenient with the committee. Nail the bastards up, I say. TrinCon was a success thanks only to the good nature of the attendees, dealers and guests. It would have been a lot more successful if the closing ceremony had included a burning-in-effigy of the committee members (particularly that dumb asshole who was in charge of the comics panel). Not all the committee were morons, of course, but there are several I could maim - I mean, name - who should never have been involved. That twit with the stupid hair and the glasses, for

a start. you know, the one who didn't know anything and wouldn't talk to anybody. And the other one with the PLO scarf, he was even worse.

The guests were great, they knew how to look after their fans even if the inept efforts of the committee seemed to hamper them at all times. And the guests were so under-used it was unbelievable. I mean, if you have a guest of the calibre of Anne McCaffrey or Greg Bear the least one can do is give them something interesting to do. Well, that's it. You wanted letters, you got one! See you soon.

Michael Carroll

Dublin

(Ed: I'm keen to hear from readers about the Newsletter, as I am printing a wide variety of material covering, I hope, the wide range of media and genres that the ISFA caters for. From the next issue Michael Cullen will take over as Editor - support him with letters, articles and reviews and you will see the Newsletter improve again - he has quite a few interesting ideas. I've enjoyed editing the NL immensely and I hate dropping it. I'm just glad I've managed to please quite a lot of people. I do intend to write regularly to Michael about sf and I hope I may encourage others to as well.)

Dear Brendan,

Since the last newsletter (and Michael Carroll's comments) I have received a number of comments about the Trincon report, most of them saying that I wasn't hard enough. I don't believe in kicking a committee to pieces. The points I raised in the report should have shown how much thought I put into it. It is always easy to

rubbish other peoples efforts but I felt that due to my reasonably high profile in Irish SF any really derogatory remarks could provoke accusations of 'superiority' or 'jealousy'. This would not be true.

As a founder member of Octocon and a person to whom science fiction means such a lot, my concern is that sf fans get the best possible efforts from a committee and a convention of *which the fans are paying customers*. Octocon has always tried to live up to this, and I hope that in the future that other groups will hold this ideal. As long as we can all work together to coordinate and timetable our activities (eg. avoiding clashing of conventions), and think first of the people we are serving, SF in Ireland should have a bright future.
Helen Ryder

Dear Brendan,

I enjoyed ISFA News, no. 70.

I particularly enjoyed the interview of Joe Haldeman. I have only recently read Haldeman, for the first time, but he seems to embody the type of realistic science fiction that was partly swamped by the popular success of space operas like STAR WARS, and the rise of sword and sorcery. His comment that couples stay together for complex and mysterious reasons, is often true.

I recently got a copy of Harry Harrison's 'There Won't Be War' which includes a story of mine. The Joe Haldeman story 'Beachhead' was my introduction to his writing. I will buy some of his books when I get back to Ireland. Every story in the anthology interested me. Kim Stanley Robinson's 'The Lucky Strike' is a simple but profound alternative history story,

in which the atom bombs are dropped on Japan, but not on the cities.

Ballard's 'The Terminal Beach' illustrates again that Ballard is nothing less than a great writer. The protagonist moves in an unreal atmosphere, driven deeper and deeper into existential horror, until the blocks and the illusion of his wife and child, are all that hold chaos at bay. Ballard's experience in the prisoner of war camp, during childhood must have driven him into the existential position. Being very much alone, or very alienated, can bring one to this position.

Yet I believe a form of existentialism, allied to humour, can be a most useful philosophy, for it can indicate an attitude towards freedom, an attitude towards chance. My own story, 'Brains On The Dump' was first published in Northern Ireland in 1973. It concerns the foolishness of war, the foolishness of terrorism, of violence. It defies belief that the Troubles nineteen years later are as horrific as ever.

I was surprised last Autumn to read my story 'A Brass Chair' in FTL 4, Spring 1990. I had forgotten the story, yet it seems better that much I have written since. Have rewritten it, extended it, polished it up and send it off to an American magazine.

Recently finished FTL, issue 11. A high level in the fiction, in Pat Quigley's piece, and in your James White interview. I particularly liked 'Without Honour' by Robert S. Neilson. 'Gligots' was cheerful, and in contrast 'The Chase' was true horror, with an almost Beckett-like ability to leave the reader nowhere to hide.

A Norwegian publisher asked me to submit a story for an SF an-

thology, and it should appear later this year.

Regards,
Nicholas Emmett
Oslo, Norway

FIVE BOOKS:

Stand On Zanzibar - John Brunner

Foundation Trilogy - Isaac Asimov

Foucault's Pendulum - Umberto Eco

Discworld Series - Terry Pratchett

Cthulhu Mythos - H.P. Lovecraft

Eugene Doherty
Belfast

(That's the most 'Five Books' to date - about twenty!)

We recently heard from Science-Fiction Belgium about a company called LEADBELLY PRODUCTIONS. They have published four comic strips INTERPLANETARY LIZARDS OF THE TEXAS PLAINS, #1, #2, #3 and THE BOOK OF THE LOST SOULS. You can expect them to appear on the Irish scene shortly, if they haven't already (and if they have, can I have a review please?)

FIVE BOOKS

The Elfstones of Shannara - Terry Brooks

The Wishsong of Shannara - Terry Brooks

Magician - Raymond E. Feist

Prince Of The Blood - Raymond E. Feist

The Diamond Throne - David Eddings
Michelle Carter
Dublin

A letter received from David Lass, Hon. Librarian of the Bram Stoker Society, gives some details of their upcoming meetings, which are detailed in the Clubs section. The Society is dedicated to promoting the serious appreciation of Stoker as a writer and to further the reading and recognition of his works. It also encourages interest in other Irish authors in the supernatural fiction field, including Charles Robert Maturin (1780 - 1824), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814 - 1873) and Lord Dunsany (1878 - 1957). More details are available from the address in the Clubs section.

Dear Brendan,

My all-time top ten books:

1. **The Silver Locusts** (original UK title for **The Martian Chronicles** but my favourite) by Ray Bradbury
2. **Stranger in a Strange Land** by Robert A. Heinlein
3. **Childhood's End** by Arthur C. Clarke
4. **Lord Of The Rings** by J.R.R. Tolkien
5. **The Weapon Shops of Isher/ The Weaponmakers** by A.E. Van Vogt
6. **The Way The Future Was** by Frederik Pohl
7. **The Stand** by Stephen King
8. **The Right Stuff** by Tom Wolfe
9. **It** by Stephen King
10. **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep** (original title for **Bladerunner**) by Philip K. Dick

Books I've been disappointed by:

1. **The Stone God Awakens** by Philip Jose Farmer
2. **So long, and Thanks for all the Fish** by Douglas Adams

3. **Protectorate** by Mick Farren
4. **JOB: A Comedy of Justice** by Robert A Heinlein
5. **A Heritage of Stars** by Clifford D. Simak

Books I've enjoyed recently:

1. **The Time-Lapsed Man** by Eric Brown
 2. **Songmaster** by Orson Scott Card
 3. **Ubik** by Philip K. Dick
 4. **War Fever** by J.G. Ballard
 5. **Them Bones** by Howard Waldrop
- John Kenny

Dear Brendan,

With regard to your Isaac Asimov tribute I would like to ask if any films have been based directly on any of his sf works. I recently saw a preview on video showing excerpts from "Nightfall", based on Asimov's short story published in "Astounding Science Fiction" in 1941.

David Lass, Dublin

(I believe I saw that clip too, on BBC 2's "The Late Show", a couple of days after his death. I don't believe Asimov has had any connections with the film industry apart from his involvement with Fantastic Voyage from the late 1960s. A number of his stories were optioned, most notably the Robot series, but I'm not aware of any films having been made. Has anybody else any information?)

We also heard from: Diane Duane & Peter Morwood; Colm Ryan (whose article on STAR TREK VI I will try to fit in next month!); quite a few members wanting to know about the Starbase Ireland day in

March (and which went quite well, I hear.)

ASIMOV TRIBUTES

Dear Brendan,

I was sorry to hear of Isaac Asimov's death... Although I have not read his work for years I still treasure my collection of Asimov paperbacks, my favourite being The End Of Eternity.

Michael Minogue, Co. Clare

From Pdraig Holland in Donegal:

Dr. Isaac Asimov will be remembered within the sf fraternity, I suppose, for his robot stories and the Foundation series, but they are not the most important part of his legacy.

Isaac's great achievement was the building of bridges between the world of science and the layman. Whether you read Reader's Digest, Playboy, the Times or your childrens' storybooks, you were certain to sooner or later read an Asimov article, and to be bowled over by its clarity and accessibility. From there it was an easy step to his Doubleday collections of essays, his short stories and bingo! If not an sf reader for life, you became a layman who could read science without being intimidated or slightly ashamed.

Asimov taught us that science, like art, was a transcendental expression of the human spirit.

I used to struggle with the conflict within myself between my scientific training and my desire to write artistically. After discovering Asimov I learned there was no

contradiction. I began to write, and sell. I also discovered that the cutting edge is more often than not the despised rockets-and-bugeyes of modern sf. Forget the Booker Prize, Philip Jose Farmer and Ray Aldridge are where it's at. Asimov gave me more than that. Despite his confirmed atheism and belief that life was three score years and ten and no more, he presented a wonderful overview of the human billion-year-sprea condition. Reading Asimov, one felt a closeness both to Stone Age man and the galaxy-spanning civilisations of the future, and indeed a responsibility to make this Earth as beautiful and viable a place as possible. His "The Problem of Population", for instance, should be required reading for every man and woman of child-bearing age on this planet.

I will not miss Isaac as a parent, but rather as a trusted favourite uncle, always there and always wise.

From Declan Fox, Co. Tyrone:

I was standing in the Bank of Ireland in College Green waiting for a harassed manager. It was Wednesday 8th April and I had been tearing around for two days; I looked at a copy of Tuesday's Financial Times on the counter to catch up with the news while waiting. Isaac Asimov's death was in one of the little bits down the left hand side of the front page and I felt real sorrow. I never met him; I never wrote to him, I never even saw him at a convention but he was real to me. And Swann-like, I flash-backed through maybe thirty years to reading science-fiction in primary school before I even knew

what it was. All I knew was that I liked these far-out stories about space-travel and spent the next six years hunting them out in school libraries until our English teacher named the genre. After that it got easier and it was easier still when I joined the town library; yellow plus VG equals sf! I could spot the genre and pretty soon I could spot the masters. Asimov was one of the first I remember; I read the Robot stories and some of his collections, I loved the stories and I loved the little bits of personal background even more. I read "Nightfall" and I still think it's a classic I read the "Foundation" series and it knocked me out with the whole sweep of it, I read some of his science writing and liked that too.

My father died two years ago next month. He wasn't much of a reader but I remembered him reading two sf stories, one in an Irish boys magazine (called OUR BOYS, natch) about a trip to Ganymede, the other one of my few paperbacks from teen years - Cordwainer Smith's "The Planet Buyer". I think he enjoyed them both. I can hear him saying "For sheep's sake!" from the latter book) at the dinner table and us both having a good giggle at it. Twenty-odd years ago. I hope they're all out there somewhere, whether as souls or quantum equations or whatever, Asimov, Smith, Heinlein, Dad and all the others who were important to me. Wouldn't that really be mazel tov?

From John St John, Dublin 7:

My tribute to The Master

*Robots may malfunction and rust,
Foundations may flounder and
fade,
Writers of Asimov's calibre are
born,
They could not possibly be made.*

*Spaceships and planets will in time
disappear,
Earth, Moon and Stars will all go.
But as long as mankind has a
memory,
The name Asimov we will all know.*

*He was The Master
and none will surpass him*

U P C O M I N G **BOOKS**

The following is a list of some upcoming books. The letter at the beginning indicates (roughly) the genre: F - Fantasy, GN - Graphic Novel, H - Horror, M - Media, NF - Non Fiction, SF - Science Fiction, ST - Star Trek. Where there is no letter I have no information on the title. All the books given are due from British publishers within the next few months. Next month will be a list of American Upcoming releases.

Banks, Iain M. - **The Crow Road** (Scribners, April, hd)
(SF)Baxter, S.M. - **Anti-Ice** (Grafton, June, hd)
Brooke, Keith
-**Expatria Incorporated** (Gollancz, May, hd)
(H) Campbell, Ramsey - **The Claw** (Futura, May, pb)
(H) Campbell, Ramsey - **The**

Nameless (Futura, May, pb)
Cherryh, C.J. - **Helburner** (NEL, May, hd)
(NF)Clarke, Arthur C. - **How The World Was One: Beyond the Global Village** (Gollancz, May, hd)
Devenport, Emily - **Shade** (The Women's Press, May, tp)
Doctor Who:
(M) Cartmel, Andrew - **Cat's Cradle: Warhead** (April)
(M) Hunt, Andrew - **Cat's Cradle: Witch Mark** (June)

(F) Duane, Diane - **The Door Into Sunset** (Corgi, May)
(H)Fowler, Christopher.
-**Red Bride** (Macdonald, April, hd)
(H)Fowler, Christopher - **City Jitters** (Futura, April, pb)
(GN)Gaimen, Neil & Dave McKean - **Signal To Noise** (Gollancz, April, hd, tp)
(H)Gallagher, Stephen - **The Unforgiven** (NEL, April, hd)
(F) Gemmell, David - **Morning Star** (Legend, April, hd, tp)
Gordon, John - **The Burning Baby** (Walker, April)
Harrison, M. John - **The Course of the Heart** (Gollancz, June, hd)
(H) Herbert, James - **Portent** (Hodder & Stoughton, May, hd)
(F) Kerr, Katherine - **A Time Of Omens** (Grafton, June, hd)
McAuley, P. J. & Kim Newman (eds) - **In Dreams** (Gollancz, June)
(H) Massie, Elizabeth - **The Sineater** (Pan, May, pb)
(SF)Miller, Walter M. Jr. - **Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman** (Orbit, June, hd)
Norton, Andre - **The Mark of the Cat** (Legend, May, hd, tp)

(F) Pratchett, Terry - **Small Gods** (Gollancz, May, hd)
 (SF) Shaw, Bob - **Warren Peace 1** (Gollancz, June, hd)
 (SF) Sheffield, Charles - **Transcendence** (Gollancz, April, hd)
 (SF) Shepard, Lucius - **The Dragon Griaule** (Grafton, April, hd)
 Silverberg, Robert - **Kingdoms of the Wall** (Grafton, May, hd)
 (SF) Steele, Allen - **Labyrinth of Night** (Legend, June, hd, tp)
 (H) Tem, Melanie - **Blood Moon** (The Women's Press, April, tp)
 Thomas, Sue - **Correspondence** (The Women's Press, tp)
 (SF) Vinge, Joan D. - **Summer Queen** (Pan, June, pb)
 (ST) Vornholt, John - **Star Trek: Sanctuary**

INTERVIEW:

GREG BEAR

interviewed by Robert Elliott

Greg Bear has been writing professionally for over twenty years, winning a number of awards along the way, with three Nebulas and two Hugos, as well as a Prix Apollo. His novels include 'Eon', 'The Forge of God', 'Eternity' and 'Queen of Angels'. He has three short story collections, 'The Wind From a Burning Woman', 'Tangents' and 'The Venging'. He has written one Star Trek novel, 'Corona'.

The interview with Greg Bear took place at Trincon, on 08.02.92.

"I'm not blowing up any more solar systems..."

We started out the interview mentioning his two new books, 'The Venging', a short story collection and 'Anvil of Stars', a novel. Both of these were launched at Trincon. I mentioned that although he had a fair number of stories published in the digests, he was not considered primarily a short story writer. "I have had two collections out, but I haven't written many short stories recently. I don't write many short stories, about four or five a year. Usually I reserve short stories for relaxing from a novel or exploring an idea, or writing fantasy, or something surrealistic. That's why they only come about once every two years or so."

A lot of writers use short stories to



launch into novels, or find themselves turning a short story into a longer work. Does he write short stories with a view to expansion into novels?

"I specifically set out to write short stories. I don't waste much time on them, I won't sit down and start writing a short story unless the idea is very firm and I know how long it's going to take. Very seldom does a short story spin off into a novel. Sometimes a short piece of fiction will expand on something in a novel, like 'Heads' expands on 'Queen of Angels' and is set a little in the future from that. The next novel I'm writing will go on from where 'Heads' left off. But I m

pretty sure now when I get an idea how long it's going to take me to explore that idea."

The hard science doesn't appear to be as prevalent in his short stories as it does in his novels.

'Heads' is hard science fiction, and 'Blood Music' was hard science fiction. However, I really do like short fiction fantasies."

We then moved onto his new novel, 'Anvil of Stars'. James asks if this is a sequel to 'Forge of God'? "Yes it is."

But it is self contained, isn't it?

"Yes, as long as you realise that the Earth is dead. That's all you need to know."

Ah yes. He's quite fond of destroying the planet isn't he?

"Well, I'm not blowing up any more solar systems after 'Anvil of Stars'. At least for a few more books. That was something I worked through in my adolescence."

We moved next to his Star Trek novel, 'Corona'. Was this something he wanted to write from the age of ten?

"Not from the age of ten. I first saw Star Trek at the age fourteen and I was quite impressed, and I wanted to do it. I was definitely a Trekkie. Star Trek came out in 1966, and I was brought into Star Trek fandom in 1968. Star Trek was pretty much gone by 1969, but its fandom lived on. And I would attend Star Trek conventions, sometimes on the committee, sometimes just to be there, to meet people. I've never lost being a Trekkie. I don't see much of The Next Generation, because I have to young kids who go to bed at that time."

"But I have a great deal of respect for Star Trek. For one thing, it's been a vast influence on me. When the opportunity came up to write a Star Trek novel, I didn't feel ashamed. There were some things in Star Trek I wanted to fix a little bit. 'He's Dead, Jim' never struck me as being very appropriate for that level of technology. In my novel it's very hard for Bones to say 'He's Dead, Jim.' What he has to say is 'He's dead, Jim, because we erased all of his memories.' Not as dramatically strong as a simple statement, but more science fictional. I noticed that a lot of the things I used in 'Corona' were either thought of or picked up by the people doing The Next Generation."

Did he ever write a Star Trek episode?

"Almost. I came very close to writing for the next Star Trek TV show in about 1978. But they didn't go ahead with it. Instead Paramount

"He's Dead,
Jim..."

decided make a motion picture. But I did a story idea, parts of which seemed, through no conspiracy on the part of anybody, to end up in "The Wrath of Khan."

Like the Genesis probe?

"Yeah, the Genesis probe. It would have been an alien version of the Genesis probe, coming to convert the Earth."

On the subject of TV, we mentioned the episode of 'The Twilight Zone' he wrote.

"The story is in 'Tangents', 'Dead Run'. Did they show it here?

"I'm a great fan of monster movies"

I mentioned

that I saw it twice.

"A friend of mine was story editor on the second 'Twilight Zone', there actually were three. I'd never sent him anything, I didn't think I had anything immediately obvious as a 'Twilight Zone' episode. However, a mutual friend sent him a copy of 'Dead Run' and said 'Look at this, this is wonderful', and he liked it. Which is ironic, because it was rejected by Twilight Zone Magazine for not being Twilight Zone enough. It was eventually published by Omni, who paid more for it. It was very ironic all the way round. It ended up on the program, and I think it was one of the better shows. They did a good version of it; the script was brilliant" So he was happy with it then?

"Certainly I think they did a good job. They didn't change anything in terms of content. A very funny thing is that a network executive who oversees content on the show and called in one of the guys on the show and said 'I wanted to talk

to you about 'Dead Run'. You know, you have a real opportunity here to get at people like Jerry Falwell. Go to it.' They weren't afraid of it, and in fact they got a tremendous response. They got two letters. Apparently evangelists don't watch The Twilight Zone"

Next, we discussed things cinematic, particularly his new screenplay.

"I'm working on an original screenplay with a friend of mine, Phil Tipett, the stop motion animator. Probably the best in the world, I think he was over here for the filming of Dragonslayer. Now he's in Berkeley, doing Jurassic Park. Together he and I are putting together a showcase in the next step in monster movies, special effects and animation."

Is it going to be robotic, or what? "Well, there's going to be a robot in it, but it'll be very organic otherwise. Other than that I can't tell you much, but it'll be called 'Biosphere' and it'll have a lot of things you haven't seen before."

Is he fond of monster movies?

"I'm a great fan of monster movies. This will be very sophisticated, PG, non-splatter, but a very strong, very science fictional film. It'll have there strong female characters, all of them scientists. No scientists' daughters in this film, off to make the coffee or marry the hero when he's conquered the monster."

James mentions that Jim Cameron originally had a similar idea for The Abyss, with scientists, but the public would relate better to blue-collar workers.

"Yeah, there's a certain amount of truth in that, except that some of the best monster movies have scientists. But the whole pitch was

that the movie would be about scientists, and at least one of them had to be a woman, the mad scientist had to be a woman. This was a brilliant suggestion, it completed in my mind the idea."

Will it be ready for, say, 1994?

"I have no idea. It's got a lot to go through, the screenplay has to be finished, we've got to find a director, it takes a long time."

What about options on his books? "Blood Music" has been optioned. It's got a wonderful screenplay, and it's by Lewis John Carlino. This could get off the ground. Carlino is very well connected, very sharp, made a lot of good movies like 'The Great Santini', and I could not have done better on the screenplay.

Next, back to his books, and we started talking about the science in his books. A lot of his novels are hard science fiction, and I wondered was he possibly alienating some people by putting this in the books?

"Oh, probably. Whenever you write something that has some content, there are going to be people who don't like that content. I'm surprised that I'm as successful as I am. It's probably not because of the physics in the book, but on the other hand it's probably not despite the physics. I love these things, I love getting comments from scientists saying 'I might know how to do that, I might know how to make an infinitely long tube shaped universe out of space-time. Sounds good to me. I get comments from physicists, which is very exciting, because I'm not that good at physics. My maths is terrible. But I love reading complex texts, hoping to pluck an idea or two. I don't understand them com-

pletely, and sometimes I get things wrong, which interests the scientists too. It gives them a new perspective on things. The weirdness is there in the physics, and I love to pluck them out."

Does he never get hate mail from scientists, saying 'You forgot to carry the two'?

"Never. I deserve it, I'm sure. There are all sorts of things, certainly conceptual errors. But scientists are pretty forgiving. They like to read books by people who enjoy what they are doing."

Sadly, we had to finish up here, as Greg had about fourteen interviews to follow. I'd like to thank Greg for agreeing to the interview, and to Simon Hess from Legend Books for arranging it.

REVIEWS

SASSINAK

Anne McCaffrey and Elizabeth Moon
Orbit, 333pp, UK £4.50

This book is the first in a series called The Planet Pirates. The time in which it is set is many years ahead of now, and most of the important action takes place in space.

Sassinak is a woman who rises from being a slave girl to being captain of a space cruiser. She is an interesting character. Her family are all killed by pirates and she is taken as a slave. After being rescued by the Fleet of the Federation of Sentient Planets, Sassinak vows to have her revenge on the

pirates. She joins the Fleet and works her way up, piecing together the truth about the pirates as time goes by.

Her character is well drawn. Sassinak is an independent person who gets along with other people. She has a good rapport with aliens, and has many friends among them. She is very resourceful, and you get the impression that if anyone is to get the pirates, Sassinak will!

The book is written in sections. Each section is usually years ahead of the previous one. This adds to the pace. Before the middle of the book, she's a Captain in her forties and in serious pursuit of the pirates.

According to her short biography, Elizabeth Moon served in the American Armed Forces. This has been to her advantage for the descriptions of the Fleet. The military details are convincing and have an air of authenticity. McCaffrey chose her collaborator well.

Sassinak is an enjoyable read and I found it quite absorbing. I'm looking forward to the second book in the series, *The Death of Sleep*.

ANNEMARIE NUGENT

THE TOTEM

David Morrell

Headline Feature, 306 pp, UK £4.50

This book has just been reprinted after ten years, presumably to cash in on the success of his latest book. Never having read one of his books (but after seeing all three Rambo films, which were written by him) I was looking forward to reading it.

Slaughter is the police chief in a small, sleepy little town where nothing

happens, the only smear on its reputation being the destruction of a hippie colony ten years before. Hundreds died and the stigma remained. Slaughter finds a dead hitch-hiker and later, on arrival at the coroner's office, finds the coroner dead and the body gone. As murders begin to occur, Slaughter realises he is dealing with no ordinary mass-murderer and so the plot thickens.

Drawing heavily on Salem's Lot and Rosemary's Baby this book is hardly original. Morrell goes further, relying on "rhythm, lean prose and Jungian imagery" to emphasise the terror in the book. This all sounds great in theory, but in practice it breaks down. I didn't notice the Jungian imagery, the prose was too lean, with descriptions non-existent giving an unfinished look to the book. The rhythm is astounding but with the sketchy paragraphs I found myself reading the paragraphs again and again. After the first hundred pages this became downright annoying. The biggest downfall however was the ending. It just didn't make sense. After rereading countless paragraphs and then coming to a pointless ending I was severely tempted to throw the book in the fire.

The blurb on the back puts *The Totem* in the ranks of the ten scariest books ever. After reading it however I can safely say that I have lost all respect for back-page critics. I recommend this book for rainy day reading only, but try the other nine scariest books first.

GERARD O'BRIEN

THE SEA OF POSSIBILITY

Hugh Daly, ONFA Publications, IR£4.99, 87pp

Ireland has precious few sf/fan-

tasy writers, so I was delighted to see this book in Forbidden Planet. Described in the blurb as a romantic fairy tale, it seemed most promising.

First of all, "The Sea of Possibility" is a children's book. It doesn't specifically state this anywhere, but the condescending tone and lack of attention to detail that pervades this book means that the author is aiming at children or scientologists. The story concerns four friends who, on a whim, set off in search of the Sea of Possibility. They don't know what it is, or anything about it, but as soon as its name is mentioned, voom. They're out of there. This seems a particularly rash decision, especially giving that two of our protagonists spend the first two pages talking like people fresh out of university.

This sense of incongruity goes all the way through the book; actions go unexplained, characters act without a shred of consistency. One can only conclude that the author was of the opinion that mere children wouldn't care about such details. I, for one, suspect him to be gravely mistaken.

It's unfortunate that with so few sf or fantasy books coming out of Ireland that one of the few that makes it is of such poor quality. The only redeeming feature I could find is that it's too short to take up more than an afternoon.

ROBERT ELLIOTT

KNIGHT OF SHADOWS

Roger Zelazny

Orbit, 251 pp, UK £4.50

This is the ninth book in the Amber series and the fourth narrated by Merlin, son of Corwin the narrator of the first five books. Like the previous books this is a fast paced

and slickly written fantasy of magic and alternate worlds with lots of violence and mayhem featuring the royal family of Amber.

It opens slowly with two chapters of discussion and explanation of some events in the previous three books before Merlin is plunged into ten chapters of non-stop action with many sudden changes of locale via magic doorways, Trumps (magical playing cards that can be used as communicators or doorways) and mirrorsets.

Roger Zelazny seems to enjoy creating exotic locations, new mysteries and yet more explanations of the fundamental nature of his fictional reality. In Knight of Shadows he introduces a place between shadows, alternate realities, beyond the control of the twin poles of Order and Chaos, the Pattern and the Loryus, which are just visible manifestations of the struggle between the Unicorn and the Serpent. All this makes for a certain mythic resonance in an enjoyable action adventure with too many questions still unanswered. This to my mind is the most annoying thing about this series - how long do we have to wait for answers?

Read this if you like action and being puzzled but start with the first volume, Nine Princes in Amber or volume six Trumps of Doom.

RORY LENNON

THE GHOST FROM THE GRAND BANKS

Arthur C. Clarke

Orbit, 253 pp, UK £7.99

Never start with an apology! It was a struggle to read this and I can see why no-one was in a hurry to do a review. Orbit Books would have us believe that this is classic Clarke. Wrong! This is Clarke on

the downside of the normal distribution curve. (Ask a mathematician). Perhaps all authors fade out in such a manner.

The Story. It's set in 2010, a number not unfamiliar to Clarke fans. In two years time it will be the centennial of the sinking of the Titanic. The remains of this great ocean liner lie four kilometres down on the Grand Banks of the Atlantic Ocean. The urge to raise the wreck in time for the Centennial celebrations proves irresistible for some major consortia. Two solutions are proffered, but the sunken ship hasn't given up all its secrets. There are some items of interest in the story e.g. the Mandelbrot Set (which is a good title for a social club), various ways of raising the ship, references to Ireland and Lord Dunsany. Also a stowaway gets her hundred year old brain repaired. Hopefully molecular brain repair will be available soon, I need it after the above.

And so to classic Clarke. Plenty of submarine interest in *The Deep Range* (1957), *Earthlight*, *A Fall of Moondust*, 2001, *Imperial Earth*, *Rendezvous With Rama*. I'm sure others have more titles to add to this list.

CHRIS O'CONNELL

THE M.D.

Thomas M. Disch
HarperCollins, 401pp, UK £14.99
Bill Michaels is a doctor. He's got a magic stick (a.k.a. caduceus). If he makes up a rhyme and touches a person or object he can help people or get revenge. But his shooting stick sometimes misfires, because he's not a great poet. So where did he get this useful item? When he was young he nicked it from his brother, paid homage to

the God Mercury, and turned him into a drooling idiot.

Plenty of opportunity for Disch to throw in medical terms to show his erudition. Some of the conditions he describes are quite interesting e.g. Ondine's curse and Tourette syndrome. His stick could cure Dutch Elm disease and AIDS too. So he invented a new plague, ARVIDS, to keep his medical research funding. It is spread in a manner whereby vegetarians are safe. The author takes the opportunity to slag smokers, Catholic schools, alcoholics and religious fanatics along the way.

Stephen King's name appears on the dust-jacket blurb. He thinks it's brilliantly entertaining. Would you buy a second-hand novel from this man (either King or Disch)? I'd welcome a second opinion. Dean R. Koontz says it's full of well-observed and convincing characters, often darkly hilarious yet with serious intentions that give it considerable impact. Sounds like a runaway truck.

CHRIS O'CONNELL

VIRTUAL MODE

Piers Anthony
HarperCollins, 315 pp, UK £14.99
In an age when teenage suicide and underage sex are becoming dismally prevalent in our society, some of the subject matter that Piers Anthony attempts to broach in his latest novel 'Virtual Mode' may raise an eyebrow. The novel revolves around Colene and Darius; Colene is a fourteen year old girl who is suicidal and was raped when she was thirteen. Darius is from another dimension where he is "the king of laughter" and has arrived on Earth seeking a wife who can self generate joy so

as he can siphon it off and redistribute it to his people without depleting the woman from whom he is siphoning off. The two meet and their adventures take off henceforth.

While this may be a light fantasy novel some of the issues that Anthony tries to address are quite strong such as the issue of teenage suicide. However it is on this quite considerable social rock that Anthony perishes. The writing is assured and relaxed, the sign of an old pro enjoying his craft. But it is his handling of Colene and her characteristics that is less than satisfactory. Her plight fails to jump off the page and involve you: it really is "colour by numbers" characterisation. It is a worthy deed to try and involve social issues in the light fantasy genre, but Piers Anthony glosses over his subject matter and thereby misses out on a golden opportunity to examine the circumstances that drive young kids into a life of despair which causes them to contemplate, flirt with and eventually commit suicide.

The plotting of this book is also at fault; it is sloppy and careless which causes events in the novel to take place too quickly. A plot is generally used to knit the story together so everything meshes in a coherent manner. Unfortunately this doesn't happen in "Virtual Mode". This novel is the first in a series of "Mode" books. I suppose the acid test of any series with connecting themes is whether you'd want to go out and buy the follow-ups. And while I'm sure that Anthony's legion of fans will no doubt lap this up, I'm afraid I will not be around for the series' duration.

EAMON MCGRANE

THE FACE OF THE WATERS

Robert Silverberg

Grafton, 348 pp, UK £8.99

Robert Silverberg is a name I've heard bantered around quite a lot but this is the first of his books I've read and I quite enjoyed it.

The year is 2450. Earth has been destroyed and the remnants of humanity are scattered around the galaxy. Some have come to Hydros, a planet with a globe-encompassing ocean and only a few artificial islands. Mankind lives on these islands by the grace of the local inhabitants, the Gillies. Hydros has not one but around a hundred types of intelligent lifeforms, all living in complete symbiosis. When the inhabitants of Sørve, one of the islands, they go in search of the mysterious face of the waters, a place where no human has ever returned from.

The underlying theme is that no man is an island. The humans are out of place on Hydros and they hope this quest will give them a sense of belonging. Silverberg is very good at portraying this sense of loneliness and frustration. He also creates a world full of exotic marine animals, some harmful, some harmless but all living together in one great cycle. I couldn't help feel sorry for the humans who seemed drab in contrast to this imaginative world.

Overall, this is a good book. It's very well written, easy to read and I've only one bad remark. The ending threw me off completely. I was expecting something totally different but what was there was good though very strange. It left me slightly puzzled but satisfied. A good book for the shelf and definitely for any Silverberg fans.

GERARD O'BRIEN

INCENSE AND CANDLE BURNING - THE PRACTICE AND PURPOSE OF A SIM- PLE MAGICAL ART

Michael Howard

(Aquarian Press-Paths to Inner
Power series; 112pgs; pbk;
stg£3.99)

The only thing I wanted to burn, when I had finished reading, was this book! When I first opened this book I thought "Great, a book for the beginner, with no mumbo-jumbo, no silly spells to thwart thine enemy, no collecting ingredients at midnight...." Unfortunately, the following 112 pages proved me wrong. On Page 10, the author states that, "... (he) presume(s) that everyone reading this book does believe in such a concept (some kind of Supreme Creator)....", by which time my only presumption was that anyone still reading was either a sadist or a poor innocent reviewer (still can't figure out which I am). Also on page 10, we encounter the first (of too many) references to the Angelic Hierarchy (whatever sacred image of the Godhead you worship or respect) - at this stage the desire to consign this book to the trash nearly

overwhelmed me, but I persevered, surely it had to get better? Well, maybe not. The first chapter then degenerated further into a self-righteous acclamation on the glory of the occult, which included the obligatory diatribe against the Catholic church. The rest of the book improved slightly, but only slightly. I found the subject matter to be interesting and some of the author's insights to be enlightening. However, his persecution com-

plex and moralising continually intruded on the content of an otherwise tolerable book. If you want my advice, don't buy this book.
LEONIA MOONEY

FIREBIRD

Peter Morwood

(Legend; 308pgs; stg£14.99 hb,
£8.99 tpbk)

The first book in Peter Morwood's 'Prince Ivan' series (of the same name) introduced the main characters present in 'The Firebird', but there is sufficient information in this new tome to allow a new reader to enjoy the book and hopefully they will then have the good sense to go out and buy the original as well. The era is the early middle ages and the scene switches from the cold steppes and kremlins of Old Russia to Teutonic Germany and the Knight Crusaders. Permeating both cultures is - magic. Prince Ivan of Khorlov and his wife Mar'ya Morevna ('the fairest princess in all the Russias', as we are repeatedly told) are safe and settled after their previous adventures, but are disturbed from their rest by urgent news from the Prince's father of the possibility of war with the other Russian Princes. The reader knows who the mysterious adversary is from the beginning as we are introduced to Grand Master von Salza and 'The Order of Knights of the Hospital Church of St Mary the Virgin of the House of Teutons in Jerusalem', back from the crusades, practising arcane magics and eager for conquest of new lands and new riches. Von Salza needs inside help from Russia and gains it in the form of an old enemy of Prince Ivan - Baba Yaga, the sorceress...

The riches in this book are not simply from the excellent and well researched plot; the vivid and accurate descriptions of the weaponry and tactics of that era; the careful use of phrasing and timing. They are also to be found in the bibliography where details of the recipe books used by Morwood in his research are listed, for the poor reader who ends the book with taste buds tingling at the thought of *schii, ryabchik, kasha* and *smetanniki*

Peter Morwood not only writes a rollicking, stirring fantasy in exotic settings, he also puts a lot of himself into his work, sometimes too evident to those who know him. And by the way Peter, where was Blackadder?

HELEN RYDER

THE DRUID OF SHANNARA

Terry Brooks

Orbit, 423pp, UK £13.95

This book is the second in a four volume series "The Heritage of Shannara". This series is set 300 years after the "Shannara" series in which the druid Allanon was killed and Brin Ohmsford and her descendants received their "trust" from Allanon as he lay dying.

This book is mainly concerned with the search for a single black Elfstone which has the power to restore the Druids' keep of Paramor, and subsequently the Druids who were lost in the third book "The Wishsong Of Shannara"

Confusingly, there are two other quests which run parallel in this book. They're not worth mentioning because they are barely touched upon. They almost appear as an afterthought which led me to think why they were included

in the first place. Unfortunately these two extra quests break any rhythm this book would otherwise possess.

Brooks' use of ideas may be questioned. He has hardly created any original ideas since the first Shannara book which was very similar to "Lord Of The Rings". The same magical items are always used and the same types of people use them.

The ending of the book came as quite a shock and I was fairly disappointed. Still, it's nice to know he's got two more books to straighten things out.

Overall Brooks creates an involving read. No-one can question his writing ability and his fine descriptive manner makes the book more than a little captivating. Plenty happens, there's lots of action so you won't be too bored. One of the least original going but another one for a rainy day.

GERARD O'BRIEN

ORBITSVILLE JUDGMENT

Bob Shaw

Orbit, 281 pp, £4.20

Imagine a place where there's no horizon... Instead the land rises up, so it always seems as though you're living in a bowl. A place where the sun is always directly overhead, where night arrives as a huge shadow dashing across the ground.

At last, Bob Shaw has finished the legendary Orbitville trilogy. For the uninitiated, Orbitville is a Dyson sphere, a huge inside-out planet completely encircling its sun. This gives it roughly five billion times the surface area of the Earth.

In the first book, Orbitville was discovered and populated. The second book, set two hundred

years later, showed strange things happening to the sphere, after which it was unceremoniously dumped into another universe. But why? And where did it come from in the first place? Well, the third part finally answers those questions.

Much like the second book (ORBITSVILLE DEPARTURE), this concentrates on how Orbitsville affects the life of one particular character, albeit indirectly. Jim Nicklin is a mild-mannered, shy, retiring sort of guy, who inadvertently comes into contact with the travelling preacher Corey Montane. Montane professes that Orbitsville is just too convenient a find for Humanity, so therefore it must be a trap laid by the Devil. The book focuses on Nicklin's character as he's changed from a pleasant wimp into a sarcastic sod (and very believable it is, too). Shaw's always been good at writing bastards, and Nicklin's one of the best he's ever created.

Without giving the whole thing away, I'll say that by the last page Nicklin solves the entire mystery of Orbitsville. And is it interesting? Does it make sense? Yes, sort of. I really don't want to spoil this most enjoyable book, so I say read it with caution and a raised eyebrow. Uncle Bob occasionally ruins his stories by dumping in an unexpected wheelbarrow load of metaphysics in the last couple of chapters, and this book is not exempt from that most awful of habits.

I really enjoyed the first ninety per cent of the book. The rest of it left me cold.

MICHAEL CARROLL

THERE WON'T BE WAR

Edited by Harry Harrison and Bruce McAllister

Tor, 309 pp, UK£3.25 (US Edition)
Jerry Pournelle has edited millions and millions of anthologies in the "There Will Be War" series, and Harry Harrison (not being one of Jerry's biggest fans) one day decided that Jerry was doing it all wrong. Together with Bruce McAllister he has produced the most interesting thematic anthology in a long time: a collection of stories with an anti-war theme.

Maybe not a very original idea, but it works extremely well. Authors include Robert Sheckley, James Morrow, Isaac Asimov, Jack Haldeman, Joe Haldeman and Frederik Pohl. One or two of the stories here do seem a little out of place, but only marginally. My favourites are 'SEAG and Destroy' by Charles Stross and every other story except one.

This is easily the best anthology I've ever read. With the exception of five stories, this is all-new fiction. Two of the reprints are 'The Liberation Of Earth' and 'Generation Of Noah' by William Tenn, unlikely to be seen again in the near future, as his excellent collection OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS seems to be out of print (but I don't care, because I've got one). As mentioned in the March Newsletter, one of the stories is 'Brains On The Dump', by ISFA member and Octocon '92 guest Nicholas Emmett (whose name actually appears first on the back of the book - lucky sod). Mr Emmett has had fiction published in FTL, so now you know it is worth sending in your stories.

I know I'm a maniac Harry Harrison fan and very likely to be biased, but

I defy anyone with an interest in the future of this planet not to be moved by this book.

Harrison and McAllister, by challenging some of the best authors to produce something different from the norm, have come up with a winner.

MICHAEL CARROLL

JUST FINISHED:

The following is a list of books recently completed by authors, and currently with their US or UK publishers. Note that there is no definite date for publication for any of these. The key is the same as that used for the UPCOMING BOOKS section.

(H) Russell, Ray - **Absolute Power**

(SF)Gibson, William - **Virtual Light**

(H) Simmons, Dan - **Children of the Night**

(SF)Bisson, Terry - **Bears Discover Fire**

McDonald, Ian - **Necroville**
Wolfe, Gene - **Night Side the Long Sun**

Cadigan, Pat - **Parasite**

Cadigan, Pat - **Rites**

(H) Andersson, C. Dean - **Buried Screams**

(F) Forward, Eve - **Villains by Necessity**

(SF)Bova, Ben - **Triumph**

(SF)Bova, Ben - **Empire Builders**

Moffett, Judith - **Time, Like an Ever-Rolling Stream**

Kerr, Katherine - **A Time of Omega**

(F) Emerson, Ru - **Dyadd**

Spinrad, Norman - **Down In Flames**

Costello, Matthew - **Masks**

(H) Jones, Stephen - **The Mammoth Book of Vampires**

(H) Jones, Stephen & David Sutton - **Dark Voices 4**

Dann, Jack & Jack Haldeman - **High Steel**

Norman, John - **The Captain**

THE COMICS C O L U M N

Mark Bagnall

Reviewed this issue:

THE COMPLETE JUDGE DREDD

(Fleetway Editions, £1.25, Issue 2)

STAR TREK (TRIDENT, £2.15, ISSUE 1)

METROPOL (EPIC, £2.75, ISSUE 11 NO. 1)

At last, somebody has decided to print every 2000A.D. Judge Dredd story, and not only that, but in order too. The answer to every (reasonably young) Dredd fan's dream. In The Complete Judge Dredd you get sixty-four pages of Dredd. The artwork is slightly disappointing considering that most of the stories are drawn by either Ian Gibson or Mike McMahon. The stories are fairly crap though occasionally they can be quite amusing. In fact reading these for the first time makes me wonder how Dredd survived for fifteen years! Despite this, The Complete Judge Dredd is essential for all connoisseurs of the genre.

New from Trident this month is Star Trek. I'm not particularly a fan of ST, I much prefer the Next Generation. For your money you get the first parts of three stories. The first two are set (correct me if I'm wrong) after the third movie, and

the final story is set at the end of the t.v. series. All of these are reprints of D.C. material, not the current series. As they're only the first fifteen pages of the story it's hard to tell if they're going to be good or not. I don't quite see how a comic like this can be a success, on the back of just one film, especially considering how Marvel's Next Generation magazine recently folded.

After much cajoling from certain friends I've finally read an issue of Metropol. Published monthly it is the brainchild of Ted McKeever; he created, writes and draws the comic. The basic storyline revolves around four angels who have visited the city of Metropol to wipe out a group of Demons who are planning to takeover the Earth. Also there's a back-up story called "The Resurrection of Eddy Current" which I liked better. It's described on the cover as a cross between Clive Barker and Kafka which, judging by this issue is a slight overstatement. I feel that I may have got a weak issue, and I also think that it has the potential to become an excellent comic. Try it if you're looking for something different.

And finally, a word about a new monthly magazine about comics. The Comics Collector this month features an interview with Alan Grant, an overview of the Sandmen, news and lots more. After the death of Speakeasy this deserves to be supported.

MAINSTREAM #1, ED STEPHEN REID, £1

Remember back in about 1988 or 89 when the first (and only) issue

of Odyssey came out? It seemed then that the world wasn't ready for an Irish homemade comic, and indeed Mainstream is the first to come along since then. That alone makes it a worthy effort, but before we sing its praise to highly, what's it like?

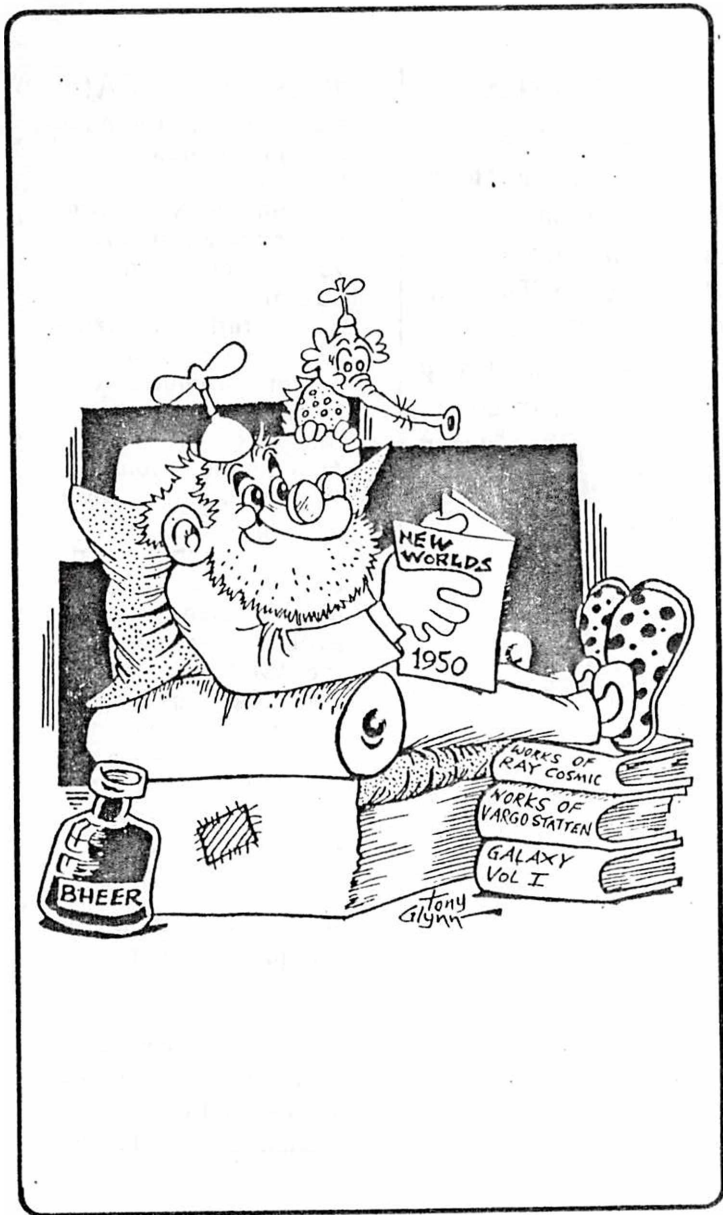
The comic contains three stories, all of them with one creator who does both the writing and the art. This originally seems a bad idea; it's relatively rare for someone to be competent in both fields. This is the case here, certainly in two of the three stories.

The first one, Vex, is written and drawn by the comic editor, Stephen Reid. It chronicles the adventures of the eponymous hero, aka Jason Velacroix. Vex seems to be your average 21st century superhero; trashing the bad guys and posturing as he does so. The art is very good most of the time; there are some cases where it isn't quite as dynamic as the context would suggest. However, the plot is weak, and the dialogue appalling. Chris Claremont at his worst was never this bad. However, the art is good enough most of the time that we can (almost) ignore such gems as "Pack my things before they figure it was I, Dr Era Botch who was behind those diabolical murders!" I didn't quite know what to make of the second story, the work of one George O'Shea. Basically "The Real Man Who Came to Mailego" is the story of a misogynistic

bounty hunter who beats the crap out of an all-female gang of bandits. The dialogue and plot aren't bad, but there's far too much misogyny on the part of the hero to be forgiven, even given the twist in the tail. The art ranges from below average for the most part to some very good individual panels. Finally, we have Rolling Thunder by Kieron Stynes. The writing on this one isn't bad, telling of the second gunner on a futuristic tank called Rolling Thunder. A bit of a naive kid, his diary suggests he wears rose-coloured glasses as part of his uniform. Despite some lapses, the dialogue is usually believable, even if the commander uses the word "bleedin'" a bit too much. If this was an attempt to use "harsh language", it fails miserably. As, in fact, does the art; it's atrocious. This guy should be a writer, not an artist. His backgrounds and technical stuff is fine, but the story revolves around people, and people are something that he can't draw. However, the story is strong enough to survive it.

Overall, Mainstream's maiden voyage is no disaster, but it could have been far better had each of the three people concentrated on their own forte and got somebody else to supply the rest. I'm looking forward to the second issue.

If you can't find a copy, write to
Mainstream, 113 Briarfield Villas,
Kilbarrack, Dublin 5
ROBERT ELLIOTT



Title: "Out Of Galia" by Tony Glynn

FUTURE ISFA MEETINGS

June: 2nd - Venue: The Horse
& Tram, Eden Quay, 8 p.m.

Topic to be announced

June: 16th - venue: The Vin-
tage, 6, Camden Street, 8 p.m.

Writers and Artists workshop

July: 7th - venue: to be an-
nounced. Topic: Alien
Landscape, brought to you by
Paul Sheridan.

JOIN THE ISFA!

Members of the Asso-
ciation receive the
following:

- A monthly Newsletter,
minimum 24 pages -
you're holding a
sample!

- A quarterly magazine,
FTL - full of fiction,
artwork, reviews and
Interviews

- Discounts in The
Alchemist's Head,
The Modeller's Nook
& Dandellon Books

- A membership card
Discounts on any
merchandise or
events produced by
the ISFA

- Two meetings a
month - general
members meeting & a
workshop

Membership costs £10
within Ireland.

Interested? Send a
cheque or postal
order to:

Membership Secretary,
ISFA, 30 Beverly Downs,
Knocklyon Road,
Templeogue, Dublin 16