

ISFJA NEWS

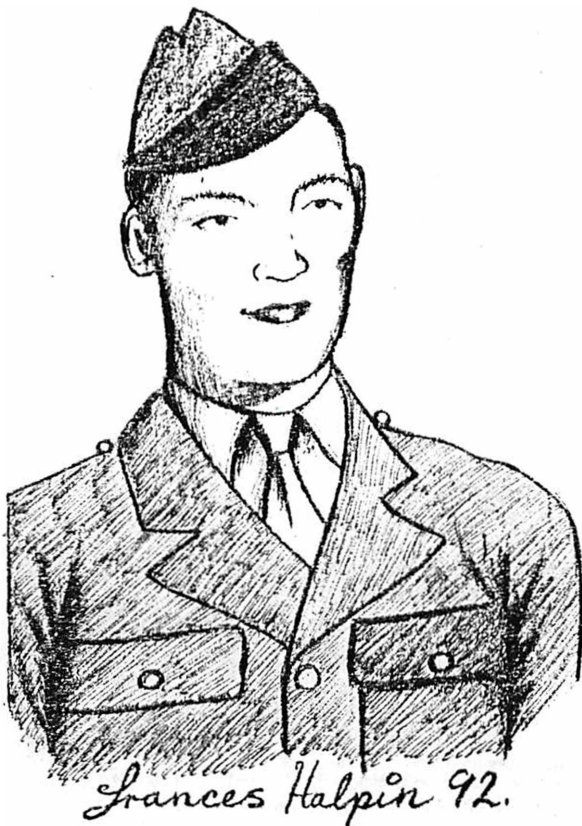
NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 75

July 1992



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ISAAC ASIMOV REMEMBERED

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EDITORIAL

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FURTHER INFORMATION FROM
THIS ADDRESS OR PHONE 934712

We welcome unsolicited contributions, on the understanding that the ISFA is non-profit-making and cannot pay contributors. Any news, interviews, reviews, short short stories in the appropriate genres, artwork, and especially letters will be received with gladness and thanks, especially if typed.

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NEWS

Asimov Shockwaves

Isaac Asimov's *SF Magazine*, August issue, will contain the last editorial written by the eponymous writer, whose death has dealt a severe blow to many publishers who had books or series connected with the Asimov name in preparation. *IASFM* will, however, continue to use that title.

Caped One is Back

Batman Returned on June 18 and took \$2m on its first night at late-night screenings. Although they were seeing the complete film for the first time some fans were already dressed in the stylised Catwoman and Penguin costumes worn by Michelle Pfeiffer and Danny DeVito.

Pratchett Bestseller

Small Gods, by Terry Pratchett, remains top of the Sunday Times hardback bestseller list, followed by the alternate-history novel *Fatherland*, by journalist Robert Harris. *Attack of the Deranged Killer Mutant Monster Snow Goons*, the

latest Calvin and Hobbes opus by Bill Watterson, has been in the middle of the top ten general list for over a month.

Large SF Contingent Supports Libraries

This year's meeting of the American Library Association, in San Francisco, featured a workshop with Anne McCaffrey, Frederik Pohl, and Stephen Donaldson. Other contributions to the event were made by Kim Stanley Robinson, Katherine Kerr, David Brin, Marion Zimmer Bradley and others, in what was the largest gathering of sf authors in one place since *TrinCon*.

MEDIA

Alien in a Box

Fox Video have produced an *Allen/Allens Triple Pack*, containing "the actual filming of key scenes" from *Allen*³ in a limited edition video, along with tapes of the first two movies (although not, apparently, in widescreen format). The boxed set costs \$40, and should be available here in the autumn.

Inverted Comments

"From time to time it crosses my mind that I might run out of ideas, but the reverse side of that is that the work is never, finished; it's like having homework forever."

Gary Larson, creator of *The Far Side*.

"I want to get back to an older type of storytelling, where you can have Death as a character and people will believe it. If that's fantasy, then fair enough."

Terry Pratchett

"I get interesting reactions from people when I have that whip in my hand."

Michelle Pfeiffer

Highlander on TV

The *Highlander* tv series will star Christopher Lambert opposite such adversaries as David Bowie and Sinéad O'Connor. There is no sign as yet of the *Tales from the Crypt* series making its way across the Atlantic. Meanwhile episodes of the show, which is in its fourth season, have been directed by such people as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Robert Zemeckis, and Michael J Fox.

New Bono, Roddenberry Scripts

Bono, of up-and-coming beat combo U2, has sold his first screen play, titled *Million Dollar Hotel*, to a production com-

pany owned by Mel Gibson. Another screenplay doing the rounds is one called **The Nine**, written by Gene Roddenberry and Jon Povill. It is based on a true story about a team of experts investigating an alien contact.

Movie News

After six weeks on release in the UK Hook holds the top spot at the box office, having taken £12m. Top sf movie in America is **Sleepwalkers**, with a Stephen King screenplay, which has taken \$26.8m in five weeks.

Other films to look forward to in the summer: **Universal Soldier**, starring Dolph Lundgren and Jean-Claude Van Damme as mechanically-improved Vietnam veterans; **Buffy the Vampire Slayer**, a teen horror starring Luke Perry; and **Cool World** in which human cartoonist Gabriel Byrne falls for two-dimensional Kim Basinger.

In brief:

Attending a centenary party for J R R Tolkien held in Madame Tussaud's in London were 250 guests including Colin Greenland, Barbara Cartland, Kylie Minogue, and Geoff Ryman...Fred Saberhagen is to novelize Francis Coppola's film version of **Bram Stoker's Dracula**...Darryl F Mallett has produced **The Work of Jack Vance: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide** with Jerry Hewitt, available soon from Borgo Press...Wide-screen videos, that is films rereleased in the original cinema ratios, now include the **Star Wars** series, **Alien**, **Die Hard**, and **Close Encounters**. There is a display widescreen tv showing these films in the **Xtra-Store** at the top of Grafton Street.

Awards round-up

The 1992 Hugo nominations for best novel are:

Barrayar, by Lois McMaster Bujold, **Bone Dance**, by Emma Bull, **Xenocides**, by Orson Scott Card, **All the Ways of Pern**, by Anne McCaffrey, **Stations of**

the Tide, by Michael Swanwick, and **The Summer Queen**, by Joan D Vinge.

The winners of the British Science Fiction Association awards, presented at Eastercon in Blackpool, were: best novel: **The Fall of Hyperion**, Dan Simmons (Headline); best short fiction: "Bad Timing", Molly Brown (*Interzone*, issue 54); best dramatic presentation: **Terminator 2: Judgment Day**; best artwork: Mark Harrison (cover, *Interzone*, issue 48).

ISFA News

Chairman Resigns

In addition to the post of Publicity Officer there are now two more posts vacant on the ISFA Committee. Brendan Ryder has resigned, though he remains as Adviser - see Letters section for more details; David McKane, who contributed so much to the professional image of the Association last year has also had to resign, due to pressure of work. So if you feel you can help in any way please do contact us immediately. For the moment the Association address and telephone number will remain the same as always - we're really looking forward to hearing from you!

SfEx '92

Artists please note that your bill is mounting up (£1 per week per piece) if you haven't collected your work from this year's show! Ring 934712 to arrange this NOW!

June Meeting

A good turnout of about 50 had an entertaining night while we auctioned off the review copies we had in stock. This year's questionnaire was also handed out and quite a few were returned on the night. If you didn't get your questionnaire with the last Newsletter it should be included in this issue. Please do return it as it will help us immensely.

My first meeting with Isaac Asimov...

...left me gasping because he handed me a figurative wallop as soon as he clapped eyes on me.

I had just arrived at the 'Torcon in Toronto in 1973 after a long overland journey from Ohio, and when I walked into the convention hall, a hearty man wearing a straw boater was standing on a platform by the door, talking fifteen to the dozen like an old-time carnival barker. As I entered, he declared "And here comes Tony Glynn, all the way from England! Give him a big hand, folks."



The boater was doffed in my direction, the big hand was forthcoming, and that of Dr Isaac Asimov was extended in my direction. Shaking it bewilderedly, I thought that Doc did, indeed, have a stunning amount of knowledge, as we had never met before.

He was acting as greeter on that occasion and all was revealed when I saw Marion Zimmer Bradley, a friend for many years, standing behind him. She had seen me enter and put him up to it.

Asimov was enjoying himself and the spirit of that encounter was in keeping with my feeling about the old fandom I knew. There was a breezy comradeship, a cheerful clinging together of the race apart which read that peculiar fiction about bug-eyed monsters found between garish covers which, sometimes, were only just respectable.

Not that Asimov was a run of the mill pulp hack. We know his importance only too well: he was the kid who was sent off on his own lifelong questing through reading the Gernsback Amazing; he blazed trails across galactic vistas, but he started out as one of us and he remained one of us.

Perhaps I am wrong in writing of my most active fannish era in the past tense. I know that the old magic sense of wonder yet lives in new hearts and new imaginations, but the passing of yet another of those whose names we revered in the fifties makes me reflect on the way they could wrench away the narrow horizons of an often drab world and send our imaginations soaring away to the stars and beyond. Isaac Asimov was one of the giants among that company, one of those reliable friends with whose work you could hole up for a session of sheer reading enjoyment. And you stood a fair chance of learning something into the bargain.

I suppose that as an atheist Doc would prefer to have it said that he was gathered to the stars rather than to the bosom of Abraham. But whichever way you want it, Doc, Shalom. You had the magic touch and we loved you.

TONY GLYNN

LETTERS

A Letter from the Chairman

Dear Michael

This is it! I've had it! I'm exhausted!

For the past four years I have been delighted to help the Association reestablish itself after a hiatus of some three or four years. The heights it has reached now are greater than any conceivable at the outset and I believe it has a bright future in front of it! But the four years I have been involved have exhausted me - I now find my enthusiasm waning: not for science fiction, not for the ISFA, but for actually working on it.

So I am resigning both as Chairman and from the ISFA Committee. It was suggested to me that I stay on as Adviser, a position which I have accepted as it will not entail too much work! I believe fully in the aims and ambitions of the ISFA and I will be doing what I can, outside the committee, to ensure that the ISFA continues successfully in the future. I would ask all the members to give their full support to the new chairman and committee, as you have to me.

Finally I would like to thank two people in particular for their help while I was involved with the committee: first, Bobby McLaughlin whose initial suggestion at Eastercon 1988 led to the reforming of the ISFA. Secondly, my wife Helen, without whose encouragement I would not have been able to achieve what I did in working for the ISFA. Don't expect me to fade away quietly though - I have a few ideas....

Yours sincerely

Brendan J Ryder
Adviser, ISFA

Dear Editor

At long last I am able to join your fantastic club. I am really looking forward to the membership and its privileges!

Unfortunately I have not been able to contribute to the **Aisling Gheal** competition this year, but as I'm young yet I should have plenty of time.

Meanwhile, my favourite author is Raymond E Feist, next would come Stephen Donaldson for the **Thomas Covenant Chronicles**. I was wondering if you were ever in contact with Mr Feist or intend being in contact with him. I myself tried fan mail but I got no reply - perhaps he was too busy on his next book. If so he is certainly forgiven.

I also think David Gemmell and David Eddings are fascinating writers. I also like to read books with a certain historical aura to them. Some books on disasters (true or false) are very interesting eg **The Swan Song** by Robert McCammon. Anne McCaffrey's books are great - but I can never find them anywhere!

Well I think I've prattled on enough and had better let you get on with your work. Looking forward to the magazines!

Best wishes

Jennifer Winters
Drogheda
Co Louth

Concerning Aisling Gheal

(Continued from last month)

* If I tell you that a Mister Kamalanga from Guatemala was in an accident, you probably won't give a monkey's. If I tell you that a member of your family was involved in an accident, you'll at least want to know which one it was, and then you'll care or not as the case may be. The reader feels exactly the same way about your characters. If he doesn't feel he knows, likes, identifies with them, or all or the above, you can burn them, maim them, crucify them, and you might as well be picking daffodils for all anyone will care.

* The Cullen Metaphor Rule. This defines a metaphor as "a way of describing a thing that may not be familiar to the reader in terms of a thing that is".

"Deep as the ocean" was a metaphor the first time it was used in 41 BC, but nowadays it conveys no feeling of depth whatsoever, and is merely another way of saying "deep". You must imagine what is deep to your audience, and what is in keeping with the mood of the story. To describe something as "deeper than the hole left in a hull by a bleeding Alien" will go down well in an sf story being read by film buffs, but not in a sermon being read to mourners at a funeral.

There is no limit to the imagination you can bring to your metaphors, and no excuse for falling back on "rivulets of blood", "thunder of horses' hooves", "cold as ice", and all the other, erm, old chestnuts. A metaphor can be a story in itself, it can lighten or darken the mood, slow down or quicken the pace. But the ultimate purpose of a metaphor is to make the reader say "Wow - That is cold" or "Yep, I've smelled that smell." When was the last time you read "he stood paralysed with horror" and thought "wow - if he was paralysed then it must surely have been a horrible thing all right"?

* Last But By No Means A Potato

If I had to say something to potential entrants and was only allowed one thing, it would be "Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror does not mean Doom/Gloom/Gut-wrenching Philosophical Meanderings (unless you're Clive Barker)."

Lighten up! I'm not saying every story has to have four belly-laughs and one guffaw, but realism does not equal facedness. Quite the reverse. If the characters in your story were in real life, how would they converse? Listen to real people converse. You'll find that a great deal of conversation is humour, attempts to keep the mood light.

That doesn't mean wisecracks. If you want to know what it does mean, go back and listen some more. Is it al-

ways the words people say, or sometimes the tone, the gestures?

No matter how inexperienced you might be when it comes to writing, there is one area of expertise that you share with most of the people on the planet - the ability to talk. Talking is partly words, but if it was just words then we'd sound like robots. You can say the phrase "I like your dress" and make it sound sincere, sarcastic, envious, supportive, apologetic, threatening, just by stress and tone. There are parallels for all of those in writing. Anyone can tell a story. It is the stress and tone, the way you tell it, that determines how it will be received.

Michael Cullen

Coordinator, Astling Gheal 1991

Now that the postal strike is over you have no more excuses not to write to us. If you have any questions we might be able to answer, such as "who draws those great covers for Terry Pratchett?", if you want reach other fans in your area, advertise your zine, or simply start up a controversy with a statement like "I think one Batman movie was one too many", then let us have it!

Write to the editor at the address on the contents page.

THEATRE

Dracula

Performed by the Dublin Shakespeare Society

1992 is the centenary of Bram Stoker's 45th birthday, and to celebrate this the Shakespeare Society present Brendan Ellis' adaptation of Stoker's most famous novel.

As I understand it, when reviewing plays one never discusses the actual play itself, instead one talks of previous plays by the director, political events and social changes since the day the theatre was built, and the general ambience of the production. Well, I have neither a cravat nor a book of poems awaiting publication, so sod that. Presenting here the original ISFA bog-standard review of *Dracula*.

The City Arts Centre is small - A bijou theatrette, if you will - But the production of the play is so professional that several scenes made me totally forget that the stage is only "six actors lying down" across by "three actors lying down and

two chairs" deep. There is a scene in Dracula's castle in which Harker finds himself unable to escape. Harker explores the entire castle, up and down stairs, along corridors, pausing at locked doors, past the snooker room, looking out of windows, and so on. And all this is done with a few candlesticks, three members of the chorus and one very persuasive actor. Cool.

Dracula himself is played by Klaus Hassel, the tallest person in the troupe - I think this may be type-casting of some sort, but he nevertheless puts in quite a powerful performance. The only thing wrong was that he didn't have fangs. I was most disappointed, but I suppose it would have made the play a little too cheap.

Van Helsing's part has been somewhat reduced to fit into the play, and he seems to spend much of his time shaking hands with Seward and Harker and saying things along the lines of "I must leave you, may the Good Lord watch over us".



Sharon Cromwell, who appeared in the Gerry Stembridge-directed *Dracula*, which was adapted by Brendan Ellis, and finished its run in the City Centre last week.

Sean Murphy, who plays the part of Van Helsing, does a splendid job when the play allows him to stay around for five minutes without rushing off to Amsterdam. One small quibble here - I'm not totally certain, but I seem to remember Van Helsing telling Seward to watch over Lucy as he must leave for Amsterdam but will return in the morning. Quick travelling that.

The part of Lucy is played by Niamh Daly, and within seconds of the play opening she is staked through the heart. "Oh", I thought. "I do hope she's not getting paid by the line". But luckily Niamh gets a chance flesh out the character as her story is told through flashbacks, so she has the novelty of getting a stake through the heart a couple of times.

Dr. Seward and Jonathan Harker are played by Niall Murray and Jonathan Ryder respectively. Both play their parts extremely well, though by the end of the play I was getting so annoyed at Harker's whining that I wanted to go down on stage, slap him and shout "For God's sake, man! Get a grip on yourself or all is lost!"

The star of the show was indisputably Steve Curran, in the part of Renfield. He scared the crap out of me. Most convincing indeed. He wore magic, he wore, especially in the scenes with Seward. Like Van Helsing, his part was reduced quite seriously for the play, diminishing his connection with Dracula to almost nothing.

The story is told in a disjointed way - most of the first half (plays sometimes have an interval so you know that you're not watching a movie) is played with flashbacks and scenes from Harker's journal. Confusing at first, it quickly becomes fascinating to watch the story build up. I've never read the original book, so I can safely say that this works very well in getting the story across.

All in all, a great play. We left the theatre with our blood well-and-truly curdled. With luck there'll be another run in the near future, if that happens I strongly recommend it as a night out.

When I first went to see Hook, I came out wishing I could fly, but after I saw Dracula I came out wishing that I was really tall

with a big, black cloak and fangs and a castle in Transylvania.

- Michael Carroll

TELEVISION

Gimme the Twilight

Being unnaturally attracted to all things technical, it was no surprise that I fancied a bit of television. My TV once asked me out on a date but, keeping my remote control, I turned it down. I'm saving myself for a Sony with Teletext, though I'm tempted to rent one for the night, just to see what it's like. But wouldn't renting cheapen the relationship? I want it to be more like Mr Strong. A huge commitment.

Precariously forgetting about the pig's head cooking in my second-hand microwave, (the previous owners had odd pangs), I decided to view *The Twilight Zone*. I turned on the Bush with warmed hands (never fails), and drew up a comfortable hypermarket plan. Coincidentally, the colour broke on the TV the same moment the programme started. Unperturbed, I remained in my seat as the lights began to dim and the last chance to buy an albatross drifted from my options.

Friday's episode was "Nick of Time" starring William Shatner. You might've seen some of Mr Shatner's award-winning works, but I doubt it. For some reason, it seemed to be about a superstitious guy who believes a Fortune Teller Machine is accurately foreseeing his future, suddenly he decides it's just a coincidence, and buggers off. Despite being an archaic word for nipple, Pap is too strong a noun, but under the circumcisers, it's not strong enough. Bollocks, now there's a word.

To be fair, Saturday's "Death Ship" was much, much worse. A fifteen minute story padded out to fill forty-six minutes of solid stop non-action. Due to disinterest, I'm not going to go into detail. Take my word for it, by reading this unbiased transcription from the episode:

Man: Hey, there's an identical craft as ours crashed over there on this alien planet, and on board are humans that look just like us - only they're dead!

Quincy MD: There must be a logical explanation*

To be, for a moment, Saturday's was a ridicule on logicity, as Friday's was on illogicality. If ridicule is too strong a word, good. The friction was so great between the poor script, acting and production, I could almost smell the burning flesh. I found these so entertaining, my head exploded (please refer back to the seventh sentence, if you don't find the punchline contrived enough), and I look forward to stapling weights to my paps real soon.

Rod Serling deserves all the credit Einstein never got. After all, they both worked with formulas.

The forthcoming pasta plug is deliberate. The Sony Teletext TV plug is wired correctly.

Oddly, Simon Webster watches *The Twilight Zone* every Fri 1.20-1.50am and Sat 12.40-1.35 am, Channel 4. He eats pasta every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

*words may be changed due to copy-right restrictions.

VIDEO

Ever wandered around a video shop for an hour trying to pick something that would please everyone, then come home with *Hardware*? Is a bear Catholic?

As a service to our readers, in the hope that perhaps we can save someone some days from being curious about *Hardware*, we offer this palmtop guide to those titles that you've often passed by on the shelf and wondered about, then decided against because the last time you acted impulsively you rented *Hardware*.

The next time you go to your video store, don't lug around Leonard Maltin, trying to sneak a peek at his 1000-page comprehensive guide to everything. Take this page, hidden up your sleeve.

Horror:

The Thing - £ £ - More frightening but less interesting than the original.

Hardware - I was curious, and I got it. Now I take anti-curiosity pills. A guy getting chopped in half? Yes, I've seen *Onion* II too.

Science Fiction:

Sometimes They Come Back - £ £ £ £ - One of the best recent King adaptations, although it still suffers from Unconvincing-King-Movie-Endings syndrome. Restores some faith in his screenability after the uneventful Golden Years.

Timescape - £ £ £ - From the writer of *Warlock*, another time-bending adventure, this time set in small-town America. Strong characters, a sense of purpose - all the things a \$100m-budget can't buy.

Fantasy:

Ghost - £ £ £ - Ignore the fact that this was the monster hit of 1990 - it's just an old-fashioned out-of-body experience, with Patrick Swayze doing the *Guy Named Joe*-routine. Stunning effects, and excellent performances. You're right, it's too good to be sf.

Guide to Symbols

£ £ £ - Worth seeing as a new release, or even buying

£ £ - You could easily wait until this gets cheaper and not feel like a social outcast

£ - A good oldie, but pay full price only if you're desperate

No rating - Bargain-bin time!

Konvention Korner

Convention Report - Inconsequential (22 - 25 May '92)

Inconsequential was organised by the same people who bring you Tales from the Broken Drum (a wonderfully witty magazine that's rather like PFJ - but only in the sense that it's wonderfully witty). Robert D. Elliott, Leonia Mooney and Michael Carroll attended this most enjoyable of occasions, and here Rob and Mike (who adds his comments in parentheses) present a con report.

Derby, in case you were wondering, is one ship and two trains away. Or three trains if you get off a stop too early (Actually, Rob, that wasn't our fault - we merely followed the instructions of that BR guardsman-type chap). The journey took eleven hours, and we arrived in the Aston Court Hotel, Derby, at 5:00 the day before convention. We logged into the hotel, found the rooms to be very small, and went for a pizza. By the way, small hint: don't go into an English pub and ask for a Ballygowan, a Club Orange and a Club Lemon. You'll get a lemonade and two blank stares with ice (That's not true - you only get ice if you ask for it).

The convention opened officially on the Friday night (we met the Inconsequential people on Friday morning, and spent the day helping them set everything up), but the fun didn't really start until the following morning, when the panels and video rooms got under way.

I didn't catch much of the videos (I did - I cleverly volunteered for gopher duty in the video rooms), but the selection was great. As well as obligatory unshown Star Trek episodes, the two video rooms showed such classics as The Clangers, Samurai Pizza Cats, Magic Roundabout, The Muppet Show to name but a few. It wasn't all kiddies' programs, however, the special "Violence" night showed a few of the more graphic films, and a number of double

bills such as Alien/Aliens (special edition, natch) and the two Bill & Ted films (these two were so popular that the room was totally crammed with people - I almost collapsed from the heat).

The two programming streams were interesting, to say the least. As well as such panels as a Bigotry Workshop and New Wave SF and Other Weird Shit, there were a number of highly entertaining items, such as the Terry Pratchett's trial for Writing Without Due Care and Attention, the atheists' church service and the sumo wrestling. The toga party was a great success, and although not on the programme, Robert Rankin's room party is bound to become the stuff of legend, especially the bit about the Jacuzzi (my favourite was the live-action spelling bee. 'twas a really hot day when we stood in a line attempting to spell words such as Obi-Wan Kenobi - anyone who misspelled a word received a wet sponge in the face. Myself and Rob were the only two to emerge unsoaked).



Robert Rankin

It's very annoying writing a conrep like this without mentioning a list of what wrong. However, very little did. The soft drinks were a tad expensive, but I don't know what the standard English price is. The dealers' room was small, but this may have been a factor in sending more people to attend the panels - a not atypical remark was that people were at more panels at this convention than nearly all their other conventions

combined. Certainly this was the case with me.

(Possibly the most enjoyable part of the con was breakfast with the GoH on the last day - me, Leonia and Rob were quietly musing over the muesli and contemplating our corn flakes when Mr. Rankin approached and asked to join us. He expressed his great love for all things Irish, and thanked us for the bowing and scraping we performed over the course of the weekend)

This was a small convention; at any one time there were no more than ninety in attendance. There is little doubt that everyone who attended will have plans for attending Inconsequential II should it ever be held.

Upcoming Conventions

O3 - Octocon '92, 16-18 October, The Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. Registration (until Sept 1) Attending £13, Supporting £6, Junior (under 16) £6. GoH Orson Scott Card. Other confirmed guests: Gill Alderman, Graham Andrews, Catherine Brophy, Diane Duane, Martin Duffy, Nicholas Emmett, Katherine Kurtz, Scott McMillan, 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.

18e Beneluxconventie - Hillcon III
27-29 November 1992

Guest of Honour : Peter Schaap (international GoH to be announced).

Fan Guests of Honour : Johan-Martijn Flaton & Jo Thomas (editors of The Jo-Jo Intersection)

Contact Address : Hillcon III, Kitter 5, 1186 WH, Amstelveen, Netherlands.

Attending Rates -

Adults : 52,50 Children : 20

ConSept : Fun & Fantasy Convention
Provisional dates : 25th - 26th Sept. '93

Committee :

Bobby MacLaughlin

James Crook

Leonie Mooney

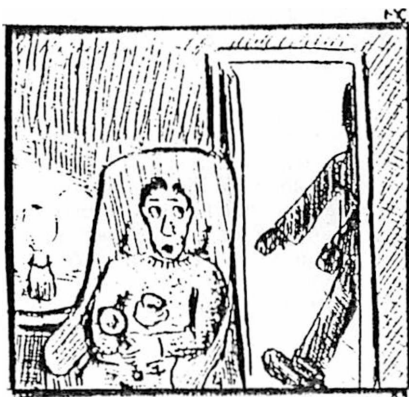
Michael Carroll

Theresa O'Connor

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33 Wellington Lane, Dublin 4

More Information will appear in the next ISFA Newsletter.



AFTER A WEEK
HE FINALLY
DECIPHERED THE
WRITING ON THE
OLD BUS TICKET.

SUDDENLY THERE
WAS A STRANGE
NOISE FROM THE
OTHER ROOM. ...

REVIEWS

by Brendan Ryder

Over the past while I've been sampling a wide range of short fiction, from the professional to fan writing at its worst. First the professional:

I haven't read an issue of *Interzone* for quite some time, and I was reasonably pleased with what I found in the February 1992 edition. There are seven short stories, two by Big Names (Watson and Ballard), a short letters column, two interviews (Tom Holt and Lawrence Sutin) and two review sections - one on tv/films and the other dealing with books.

Of the stories Watson's is excellent, Ballard's short and humorous. The lesser-known writers provide a mixed bag - 'Not of this World' by Don Webb reminded me of an Asimov story, but was worth while nonetheless; 'The Big Yellow Car' by Diane Mapes and 'Destroy All Brains' by Paul di Filippo were unusual and interesting, very *Interzone*, and the remaining two were forgettable, being 'The Circle of Stones' and 'The Blackness' by Chris Beckett and David Redd respectively.

A week after reading the magazine I could remember all but the last two stories - not a bad recommendation. Artwork throughout is of a higher quality than I usually associate with *Interzone*, though one of the artists is uncredited. Unfortunately, the lack of imagination in integrating the artwork into the stories makes it seem like it was added in at the last minute. One story in particular, 'The Circle of Stones', is badly laid out and possibly suffers because of it.

But equally important to *Interzone* is the quality of its reviews. John Clute has long been considered Britain's foremost critic - this column is one of his weaker efforts, concentrating on just one book, but it's worthwhile anyway. Mary Gentle follows with an excellent column traversing a wide range of material including comments on hard sf, *Women's Press*, and Clive Barker. Other reviews are by Ken Brown and Wendy Bradley.

As a magazine it has a nice mixture of fiction to other material, about 3:2, and it's well worth the money overall - about £3 here.

Territories, volume one, number one, is published by Glasgow fan McNair. Subtitled 'The Slipstream Journal' (which is defined as the area of turmoil where any two genres meet), the magazine says it will deal with sf, slipstream, mainstream and non-fiction. In the first issue is an excellent interview with David Wingrove, author of the Chung Kuo series, as short story, two comic strips, and reviews. What art there is is bold and interesting - no intricate pen-and-ink work here. 'Nuts

In May' is a three-page comic strip with excellent art and an okay story, and 'Bozos of Zonk' is a single-page strip of silliness.

The reviews section in particular is worthy of mention - very well-written, about interesting books, it makes you long for more time to read. I was very impressed with this first issue - it's slightly off centre and something different.

It's photocopied (but neatly so), well laid out, with 28 A4 pages. The design is interesting: two or three columns, pull quotes, and clear (maybe a little boring?) headings.

Available from:

McNair, 65 Niddrie Road, Strathbungo, Glasgow, Scotland, G42 8PT. Price £1.80.

The editor states that subscriptions will start with Issue Two (I got my issue at TrinCon).

I mentioned I would cover all types of material in this review section, and next is writing of the most fannish type.

IDIC LOG 6 is a (Classic) Star Trek fanzine, the sole purpose of which is to tell more stories about the characters everyone knows and loves so well. It's published by IDIC, one of the better Star Trek fan clubs, who produce a number of different titles regularly - for more information write to the address below.

With no design to speak of (it's A4 photocopied with one column per page and very little art) the writing has to be of the highest quality. Unfortunately that's not the case. There are 14 pieces, of which half are poems, a couple are short short stories, and five are stories of more than four pages.

The poetry ranges from short appreciations of Kirk and McCoy to epics on 'the five year mission' and Kirk's yeoman. As fan poetry goes it's reasonable enough.

Of the fiction three stories are worth mentioning - Spock on Vulcan attempting to achieve Kollnahr ('Perfectly Logical'), a piece about Kirk taking command of the Enterprise after his brother George Samuel was killed in action ('Trust Restored'), and the only truly imaginative piece, about dancing, swinging planets ('Lady of the Night'). The rest are poor.

Overall the zine is of reasonable quality, good enough for a very quick, light read. It's available from:

Sheila Clark, 6 Craigmill Cottages, Strathmartine, Dundee, Scotland.

The price of the average zine from IDIC is about £2 - write for more details.

UK

Far Point
The Editor
Victoria Publications
PO Box 47 Grantham
Lincs
NG31 8RJ
UK

(artwork especially atrocious - good opportunities for artists)

Interzone
Either of the following addresses:
Lee Montgomery
53 Riviera Gardens
Leeds LS7 3DW
UK

or

David Pringle
217 Preston Drive
Brighton
BN1 8FL
UK

(Story submissions in the 2000- to 6000-word range, should be sent singly and each one must be disposable and accompanied by two international reply coupons. No guidelines re art: generally good, worth a try.)

The Lyre
Nicholas Mahoney
275 Lonsdale Avenue
Intake
Doncaster
S Yorks
DN2 8HJ
UK

(Regular fiction competition with £100 prize money, fiction paid for at rate of 1/2p per word. No guidelines re art: artwork in the only issue I've seen was poor.)

New Moon
1, Ravenshoe
Godmanchester
Huntingdon
Cambs
PE18 8DE
UK

(First issue was excellent, both fiction and art. Second issue appeared in January which I haven't seen)

USA

The Ultimate Zomblo, The Ultimate Witch

c/o John Batancourt
37 Fillmore Street
Newark
NJ 07105
US

(current needs: Original zombie and witch (witchcraft and magic) stories from 2000 to 10,000 words (but preferably under 5000 words), psychologically strong character- rather than splat-driven. If you want to see what the books will be like, read The Ultimate Werewolf, Dracula, and Frankenstein books. Reading until 1 November, 1992.

Payment: 8c per word

Reporting time: 3 weeks, longer if it's in with a chance.

For more details see Science Fiction Chronicle, May 1992.)

There Will Be War, Volume XI: Battle Drums

John F Carr, senior editor
J E Pournelle & Associates
3960 Laurel Canyon Boulevard, #372
Studio City
CA 91614
USA

(Current needs: sf stories with a military or combat theme. The focus of the book is war and combat in the future. We always need good essays on future war, and sf war poetry. We welcome new authors as well as established pros.

Payment rates: 3c to 8c per word for originals

Reporting time: 90 days

This is the first of what will be an irregular series of lists which I hope will encourage writers and artists to submit material abroad. It is not meant to be exhaustive - if you have any information which you feel I should include, please contact me at 934712 any evening. Alternatively write to me at 30, Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road, Templeogue, Dublin 16.

BRENDAN RYDER

BOOK REVIEWS

STRONGHOLD

Melanie Rawn

Pan, 587pp, UK £8.99

I'm always wary of books that have rave reviews all over the back cover. **Stronghold** seems to have been loved by Marion Zimmer Bradley and Anne McCaffrey (both of whom seem to love every book they read, judging by the amount of new books that have favourable comments by them on the back), while "Rave Reviews" (whether this is a publication or merely a description, I don't know) says that Ms Rawn does for fantasy what Frank Herbert did for science fiction. At this, alarm bells started sounding. Comparing authors and books is always dangerous, and for some reason the authors used for comparisons are always ones that I can't stand (Herbert, Tolkien, Donaldson...). So I picked **Stronghold** up and began to read with some trepidation.

This is a big book. A weighty tome. Trade paperback, nearly two inches thick, and the best part of 600 pages long. Unfortunately, it doesn't have enough story to fill 60 pages. The story appears to centre around the "end of the world as we know it", but it's an idea that's been done before, and done better, than Ms Rawn does it. It doesn't help that the inhabitants of Glasnevin Cemetery have more life than her characters, her plot has slightly less action than the University of Limerick on a Sunday afternoon, and Dolly Parton beats her prose hands down in the style stakes (an interesting pair of metaphors - Ed). If I'd been the editor reading this manuscript, it would never have reached publication..

DORIAN GRAY

SURFING SAMURAI ROBOTS

Mel Gilden

Lynx 1988, Paperback, \$3.95, 246 pages

This book suffers from a bad (or at the least wildly inaccurate) self-image. It looks like one of those spoof SF novels that have begun appearing on our shelves in recent years, and that image does the book a great injustice.

SSR is a mildly humorous SF/detective novel, concerning Zoot, an alien from the planet T'toom who comes to Earth in search of a mystery. The inhabitants of T'toom have been receiving radio broadcasts from Earth for a long time, and have all adapted English as their first language, thus conveniently getting over the usual communication barriers. Zoot is a

young chap who's very much influenced by Philip Marlowe, and believes that he could solve any Earth mystery as well as Chandler's great detective.

So Zoot travels to Earth and lands in Malibu, where he immediately befriends a group of easy-living surfers. Whipper Will, the leader of this tie-died band, is the inventor of a sort of psychedelic yogurt, the secret to which is sought after by a local gang of bikers. The bikers challenge Whipper Will's group to a contest in the upcoming surfing championships, with the proviso that if the bikers win, they get the secret of Yoyogurt, and if they lose they'll leave the beach and never return.

Hmmm... It all seems too easy, doesn't it? Well, within hours all of our good surfing buddies find that their surfing robots (nobody does any actual surfing themselves - they're all really laid back) have been destroyed, and there's no way they can buy any more; all the surfing robot stores have been bought out of stock by some unknown party.

So Zoot decides that this is a mystery worthy of his skills. The trail leads Zoot to the Surfing Samurai Robots company, where they find that the owner of the company has a little mystery of his own he needs solved. And so the thick plot-tens. With the aid of a robotic duck called Bill and various other typical Californian characters, Zoot solves the whole thing just in time for the book to run out of pages. Close one that. I really enjoyed Mr. Gilden's offering. It isn't totally hilarious, nor is it very thought-provoking, but it's a good read and great fun. Definitely a worthy purchase.

MICHAEL CARROLL

GREENMANTLE

Charles de Lint

Pan, 328pp, UK £4.99

This book follows along the lines of its predecessor *Moonheart*, introducing an alternate world of wonder, magic and imagination for the reader. The plot is a little complex, but it involves the main characters living their lives in the modern world with its many problems, while trying to unravel the mysteries of the otherworld.

A lot of credit must go to de Lint for creating two separate worlds and combining them without making a mess of the book. There is a lot of action to supplement the wonders of the Other world, to prevent overuse of the subject.

This is one book I could read and enjoy, but at the end the subject of the book eluded me. Was it fantasy, a modern-day thriller, a mixture of both, or something else entirely? My only advice is to read the book and make up your own mind.

GER O'BRIEN

Morgan Llewelyn is known to fantasy fans the world over for her bestselling novels which include *The Lion of Ireland*, *Grainne, Bard, Druids*, and *On Raven's Wing*. On Tuesday, August 4, the ISFA will host an evening with Morgan Llewelyn in the Horse and Tram, Eden Quay, at 8pm.

THE MASTER OF WHITESTORM

Janny Wurts

Harper Collins, 448pp, UK £15.99 hb

How to describe Korendir, the Master of Whitestorm? Multifaceted, many-talented, he feels no task is insurmountable, no beast is invulnerable. He escapes from seemingly-hopeless situations only to put himself into worse peril by embracing the problems of others.

First he gains freedom from a position on a slave galley. Then he hears of a blight on the Kingdom of Torresdyr. A vengeful wizard has stolen the wardstone which protected them. Many men had attempted to recover the stone. Many men had been buried. Only Korendir was successful. Armed with the reward from the king, he proceeds to Whitestorm, where even greater treasures are waiting. After five chapters of the book, already enough detail has been provided for an entire novel. There are strange creatures, elementals, witches and slavers over which Korendir has prevailed. He proceeds to build an impregnable castle on Whitestorm cliffs. He wants to get away from Mankind and all its inherent problems. He now has a reputation as a mercenary, so various people call on him for help. The Master will only respond out of a combination of altruism and desire for financial and physical security.

You may wonder why he needs this? Once the castle is built it is still not safe. It requires magical protection, for which he will need a wardstone from the White Circle, governing body of the magicians. His further quests are to find some way to persuade them to make or provide such an item for him.

There are many reasons in his background as to the conflict between his restless nature and his desire for security. I have to remain vague about this so as not to spoil the story. I found it fascinating, well up to the standard of her works in collaboration with Raymond E Feist. I am delighted to see that she has a trilogy (*Cycle of Fire*) which I have not read, and I'll be on the lookout for more of her work.

CHRIS O'CONNELL

BURYING THE SHADOW

Storm Constantine

Headline, 406pp, UK £8.99 pb

In the city of Sacramento strange things are afoot. The Eloim find their numbers dwindling due to suicide, the townspeople find their numbers dwindling due to the Holy Death, a sort of non-death.

The Eloim are artists, playwrights, and actors who live in one area of Sacramento. They are only seen by their patrons when not performing. They have a secret which they do not wish revealed, but time is running out for them, for they need the help of an outsider, a soulscape (a soulscape being a mind-doctor). The Eloim fear their decreasing numbers, as never before has any of their race sought self-extinction; longevity is theirs and none wish to part with it. But an old enemy has roared its head. The Fear is back.

The Eloim decide to guide a soulscape trainee to prepare her for their mind, as they have their own telepathic ability, but unfortunately it takes about 32 years for the soulscape to be experienced enough for the Eloim to use.

Storm has mingled two very good ideas in the book, those of the mind vampires and of the actual vampires whom they are trying to eradicate. The prose in the book is a little too long for my liking, and the book itself could be about 150 pages shorter.

Don't get me wrong, I liked the book, but I thought it could be a little faster moving and less verbose.

RONAN FITZGERALD

MYTH-NOMERS AND IM-PERFECTIONS

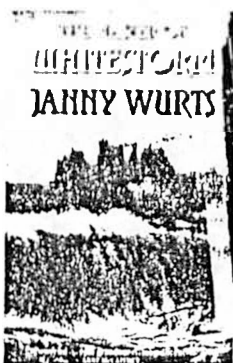
Robert Asprin

Legend, 200pp, UK £3.99

This is the eighth book in the *Myth* series, of which I had read the first two or three. Reading any of the earlier books, however, is not necessary to make sense (of

sorts) of this one. The basic story is that Aahz, the friend and mentor of our hero, Skeeve, has done a bunk (for reasons best known to himself), and Skeeve decides to go and un-bunk (de-bunk?) him. This mission leads him into assorted strange predicaments, such as being arrested for fainting in a restaurant, and getting drunk (and rolled) in a dodgy bar. Having read some of the earlier books in the series, I approached this one wondering whether Asprin would turn out to be like Piers Anthony, who's been repeating himself since about the third Xanth book, or like Terry Pratchett, whose Discworld books just seem to get better and better. As it happens, Asprin follows neither of these examples. He is neither as repetitive as Anthony, nor as good as Pratchett. If Anthony is the McDonalds of humorous fantasy (repetitive, and you're hungry again five minutes after leaving the place), and Pratchett is a really good Italian pizza joint (good, filling, and fun), then Asprin is a bag of marshmallows - mildly amusing but pretty insubstantial. I enjoyed the book, but I don't think I'd bother buying it.

DORIAN GRAY



Fire Pattern

Bob Shaw

Grafton 1984, Paperback, 1.95, 208 pages

Yippeee! Another Bob Shaw book! I've been looking for this one for a long time, and was lucky enough to find a second-hand copy in The Alchemist's Head last week.

Uncle Bob is a great writer who sometimes doesn't write great. This is one of those times. *Fire Pattern* is like some other BoSh books (*The Palace of Eter-*

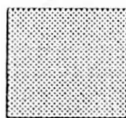
nity, *Orbitsville Departure*, *Orbitsville Judgement*, *The Fugitive Worlds*, *Medusa's Children*) in that it starts out as one type of book and ends as another. Take *Medusa's Children*, for example. It starts as a strange semi-fantasy and ends as pure SF.

Fire Pattern has our hero Ray Jerome (a rough-and-ready journalist who used to be an engineer and is much put upon by his female boss whom he secretly fancies but daren't tell) investigating a case of Spontaneous Human Combustion (for more details on SHC see *The Fortean Times* June/July 1992). Jerome becomes fascinated with the details of the case, and while checking through the archives for details of similar cases notices a seemingly trivial connection, which I won't reveal here.

Damn. This is one of those books that you can't say too much about without giving the whole thing away. So I'll skip to the concluding paragraph of this review.

Overall, a good read. Not very plausible, but the plot as a whole works rather well within its self-imposed limitations. But if you want a really good Bob Shaw book, read *Night Walk*, or *The Ragged Astronauts*, or *Orbitsville*, or *Who Goes Here?*

MICHAEL CARROLL



Note to Reviewers

Please ensure when submitting reviews that you include the title and author's name, price, length in pages and publisher if possible, and your own name. It is also advisable to give a contact number so that details can be checked, if necessary.

DRABLES

This first entry for the Drabble Competition comes from J R R Hartley, Glastonbury.



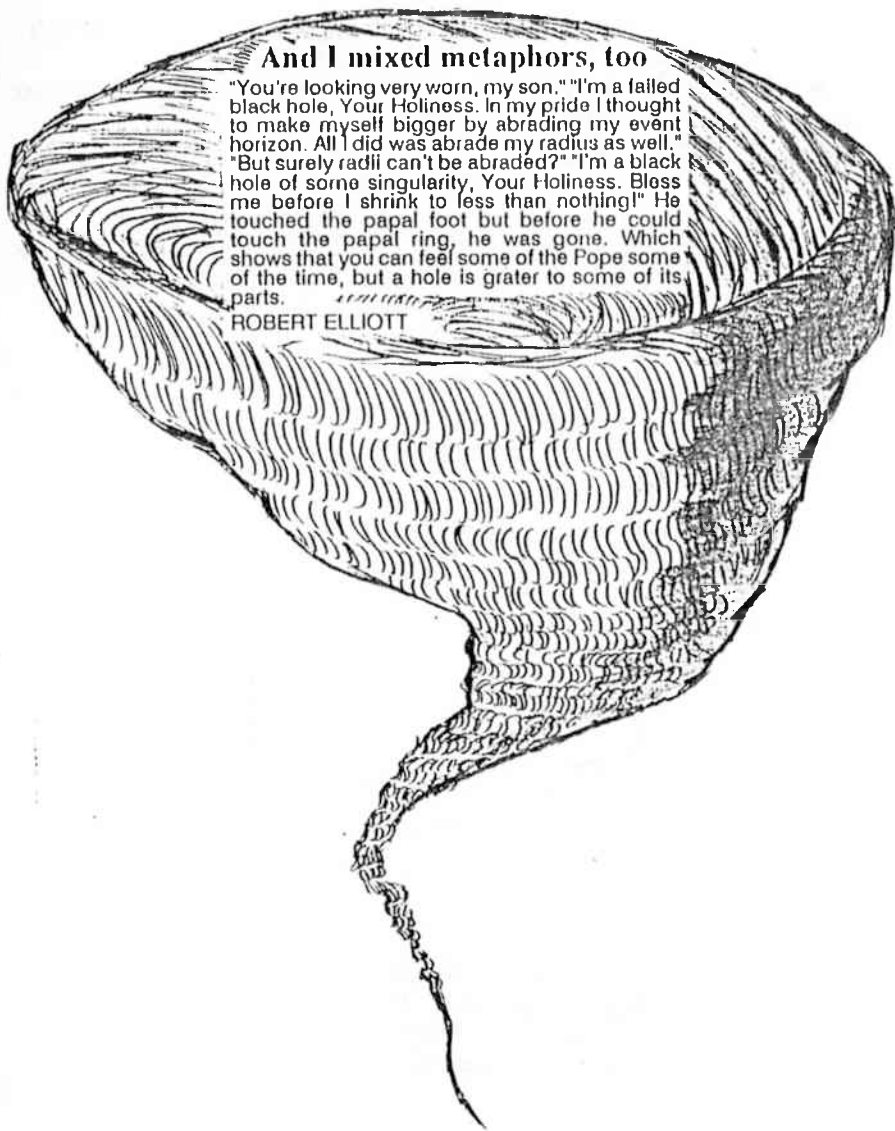
Lord of the Flies

"What would you say," asked Prenyda with a gentle flap, "if I told you I had dreamt of a world where there were people like us, but without wings, earpoints or grab-tocs? Where people did not perch or nest, but walked on hind legs, and lived in stone broods?"

"I'd recommend," said the nest-mother, "that you apply yourself to work, and leave those thoughts to children."

But Prenyda's dreams continued, and one day she alighted on the tallest oak in the forest and took out a carbon-stick and some flat stones. And that was how the first humantale was written.

ARTWORK BY: Frances Halpin 92.



And I mixed metaphors, too

"You're looking very worn, my son." "I'm a failed black hole, Your Holiness. In my pride I thought to make myself bigger by abrading my event horizon. All I did was abrade my radius as well." "But surely radii can't be abraded?" "I'm a black hole of some singularity, Your Holiness. Bless me before I shrink to less than nothing!" He touched the papal foot but before he could touch the papal ring, he was gone. Which shows that you can feel some of the Pope some of the time, but a hole is grater to some of its parts.

ROBERT ELLIOTT

Due to the postal strike, sort of, it has been decided to leave the judging of the Drabbles until the next issue. We hope that these two entries will have got you thinking. Remember, even if you don't win there is still the honour of getting your work in print!!



Current Membership Rates: £10
within Ireland.
Send a cheque or postal order to:

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

They trip off the tongue like -
well, something really sticky.
Return to the 36th
Chamber...A Black Veil For
Lisa..Hardware..

Yes, we've all seen and passed
them, painfully, on the video
shop shelves, but have we
ever considered how much
thought goes into thinking up
such memorable phrases -
like ... none?

Now you can consign these
films to the celebrity that they
deserve: nominate them for
our Worst Movie Title
Competition. The worst title
sent to us, of a real movie, at
the address on page 2, or told
to us at the monthly meeting,
will win an unforgettable
prize whose nature escapes
me for the moment.

In your Newsletter next month:

Ramsey Campbell interviewed, plus the first
annual mega-quiz. Lots of prizes, and a
challenge for SF trivia nuts.

Plus all the usual features, news, and
reviews.

Cover art:

Private Asimov, prior to
demobbing in 1945

by
Frances Halpin.