

THE MENTOR.

"The first Australian Crudzine."

JUNE 1968

NUMBER NINE.

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EDITORIAL:-

I was going to call this editorial "Rally round the Flag", for reasons given below, but I thought better of it. I have had various comments given to me about the last two issues of this fanzine. Only one was complimentary - from Mike O'Brien in Hobart. Disregarding the Sydney comments for the time being, let me attempt to answer the Melbourne fan's remarks. Leigh Edmonds commented that THE MENTOR No 7 was "The first Australian Crudzine I've seen.." and Paul Stevens declined to comment on that issue, it was "so bad!" I had only one excuse for putting out such material and I think Melbourne fans knew what it was. Issues seven and eight were purely "showing the flag" issues. They were meant to say "We are active (?) in Sydney, we have a fanzine." So what if it stank? If you are wondering, yes it was the only material I could get my hands on. As I commented in the last issue, every issue will be different from now on. At least I will attempt to make it so. And every issue will be better than the one before. If I do not have the contributions to fill it, I will either write the whole thing myself, or that month's issue will not come out, or the month's after it, if necessary.

Sydney fans seemed to agree with me that I was right in putting out THE MENTOR 7 and 8 as purely flag showing, but they agreed that better material was needed. Now I've come to the subject of this editorial: Melbourne is putting out six fanzines that I know of, and most of the material they are using originates in Melbourne itself. I know there are many readers of S.F. and fans in Sydney and N.S.W. After all, where do all the S.F. books and mags go? Who buys them? What I would like to know though, is why aren't they more active? There are some people like Pat Terry and Norma Williams who write for ASFR and who are (Pat Terry at least) willing to contribute articles, etc., to other fanzines, especially apparently, ones only starting up. Where are all the other so-called "fans" in N.S.W? Are they hibernating? It seems so. I received only a few letters of comment from N.S.W. over the last eight issues of THE MENTOR. I have sent out, in the one and a half years of publishing it.

I myself have been guilty of being late in writing comments on fanzines and answering letters from Victoria, Tasmania and Overseas, but I try to answer them. apparently some people haven't the courtesy to comment on issues they receive, or even let me know they don't want to receive any more issues. I will know not to send them any more issues and not waste the postage on something they throw into the garbage bin or wrap the table scraps in. If there are people like that I wish they would write and let me know. I think that there is in N.S.W. at least an equal number

of potentially active fans that Victoria has, who could either help build up THE MENTOR into a much better fanzine, or even put out fanzines themselves.

Paul Stevens commented in a tape he sent up to Sydney that even if a person only tries to write something, the results may be surprising. Something a person writes may not look so good to that person, but with a few alterations, or even constructive criticism by someone else may result in something that ASFR might have accepted. Not everyone can write stories like Jack Wodhams, it is true, but then stories aren't everything. Articles or reviews are well received contributions to any fanzine, including THE MENTOR. As to the type of articles, read through this issue - they may give a potential Arthur C. Clarke an idea which could crystalise into an article earning the author a place in S.F. fandom.

Try it, you N.S.W. fen. Write something; an article, poem, review, story, letter of comment, draw a cartoon, anything, and send it in to me. Victoria has six fanzines, even Tasmania has one. Is the only one in N.S.W. (not counting the ACT) to go down the drain because of lack of material? Is it to be known as "Australia's only crudzine"? The quote under the title on page one is from Melbourne! There is a well known "answer" to that. Sturgeon said it: "90% of everything is crud". I hope that I get enough good material so that issues 7 and 8 of THE MENTOR represent that "90%". It's up to you people out there. All 40 of you in N.S.W. who receive THE MENTOR.

Write something! Please.

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JOTTINGS.

I've been reading through a few copies of the 1940 FUTURIAN OBSERVER this afternoon. I wonder if fan history in Australia is cyclic? The same old troubles we have today existed also back in 1940 too. Feuding fans, clubs and fanzines. There were stabs in the back aplenty. Apparently there were about the same number of fanzines in existence then as now, but based in Sydney, not Melbourne. The fans were attempting to join together all known S.F. fans in Australia into a National organisation (called the "Futurian Federation of Australia" - see FUTURIAN OBSERVER No 53 for January 13, 1942). It appeared to start out full of hope, but somewhere something went wrong and the thing folded. I am not sure just how far it got, but I do think those behind the idea of the ASFS should look into it. Something valuable just may come of it.

Continued on Page 4.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT ROBOTS, ANDROIDS, HUMANOIDS, ETC.

It is of some interest to consider the word "Robot", and to realise that the word was first "coined" by Karel Capek, in 1921, in his dramatic story, "R.U.R." Capek called his humanoid creatures "Robots", the term originating from the Czech word "Robota", meaning - "to serve", but his creatures were made in man's image, with synthetic skin, hair, muscles, etc. Twas Edmond Hamilton back in the early thirties, who brought the word "Android", (the derivation of which I have unable, as yet, to discover,) into common usage. This was done in his writing of the wild and fantastic adventures of Curt Newton, more commonly known to dedicated fans as "Captain Future", whose first assistant was a big steel Robot, named "Crag", which was NOT made as a duplicate of a human being. However, Newton, or "Captain Future", with Crag's assistance, built another helper, which he called "Otho the Android", which was built in man's image, and became the forerunner of the many thousands of "psuedo- people" that have been written about ever since. "Cap. Future" and "Otho" lasted till 1950, by which time almost every top S.F. author had utilized the "Android" conceot, from Bradbury's "Marionettes Inc.," to Lester del Rey's "Helen O'Loy". When Asimov set up his three "Laws of Robotics", indicating that a Robot must be programmed to obey and protect man before protecting itself, there was reached the first level, and a most important one, of a ceasless attempt to find a practical method of controlling a thinking force, that could, conceivably, get out of hand.

The very word Robot, is a somewhat ambiguous word, which can mean any type of mechanical device, programmed to perform any mechanical function, requiring a flexible response which resembles thinking. Although most of us, immediately think of a "Robot" as some sort of a mechanism which resembles, in outward form, the human figure, still, a "Robot" can be in any shape or form; from a tiny box, which can be concealed, for instance, behind a false panel, or in an ornament, etc., or a small black box, or even a mile long computer, for after all, what is a computer, if it is not some form of a "Robot"? Somewhere along the line the terms Robot, Android and Humanoid were interchangeable; to lable a machine, of any kind, that resembled the human figure, or to identify a laboratory created creature, of mostly flesh and blood, for instance, again, a Humanoid born in a test tube. Lately though, in the thousands of stories, written on this subject, the division has arisen, between the "Robot, or "Android" and the "Humanoid". Still more is arising, a differentiation between "Robot" and "Android", with the "Android" becoming closer to the "Humanoid" classification.

It is passing strange that, with the thousands of stories devoted to "Robots", "Androids and/or "Humanoids", out of the sume 350 Anthologies that have been published, only five, to my knowledge, are devoted exclusively to the subject. They are, "The Robot and the Man", edited by Martin Greenberg, and

published by Gnome Press in 1953; "Science Fiction Thinking Machines", edited by Groff Conklin, published by Vanguard Press, in 1954; "The Comming of the Robots", edited by Sam Moskowitz, published by Collier Books in 1963; "Invasion of the Robots", edited by Roger Elwood and published by Paperback Library, and "The Psuedo People", edited by William F. Nolan, and published by Berkley Books in 1965 (The last named, carries a substantial bibliography of "Robot" etc. stories, at the rear of the volume). Then, of course, far more widely known, are Isaac Asimov's "I, Robot", and, "The Rest of the Robots", and Otto Binder's all "Robot" collection, "Adam Link, Robot", in Paperback Library, 1965. Beside these, I know of over 100 novels, novellas, novelettes, and short stories which have not been Anthologised, and I have no doubt that readers can, in all probability, name many more.

I am indebted to William F. Nolan, and also A.E. Van Vogt, for much of my information, given in the form of a preface by the former, and the Introduction by the latter, in "The Psuedo People", and I would be extremely glad of any further information, from any reader of this, necessarily brief, and incomplete account.

- Pat Terry.

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JOTTINGS - cont. from p.2.

I think it is about time I gave readers an idea of what my policies are with THE MENTOR. Basically they are as follows.

There will be an impartial attitude taken to material submitted. If the material is well written and if I think it warrents printing, I will print it, even though I may not agree with the views expressed.

With letters of comment I would appreciate it if writers put D.N.Q. (do not quote) alongside sections they do not want printed. A further point - there will be no "back stabbing" while I am editor. If someone comments on another person, and that person replies, he will get space for a hearing.. There will be space, too, for a reply, if submitted, from the originator, but that is as far as I go. After that, if they want to carry on the argument, they can do it through the mail.

Lastly, any material submitted will be printed complete and without changes, unless absolutely necessary. For instance if there are spelling errors I will correct them, or if there is part of the material marked D.N.Q.

I think that about covers it. I may add some later when I think of them.

Leigh, do you still want me to print that contrib. of yours?

DECEIVE ME NOT.

Deep glowing eyes : dark, pearly; centuries lost in their limpid depths. Emotions played in the infinity beyond, awaiting their cues to appear. Soulless, selfless; reflecting innocently their environment, seeking only to exist. Asking at all, they asked only for peace. Soft-lidded, they closed; sealing an untroubled calm into itself. Now the quiet breathing of the cat was its only form of life.

Jon's thoughts were wandering from the problem he faced; forcing himself to attend prevented him from reaching the solution now so near. The neural energy he needed so desperately flooded into his brain. Refreshed, he faced a problem now new, stark and urgent. The solution began to approach. His mind sought the means to penetrate its fog; suddenly boiling into clear consciousness came the idea sought for centuries. Mind to mind it electroneuronically leapt the void. Jon's task was over. That of his solution had only just begun. Now he was free within the unknown creature so callous to have forced him unwillingly to solve such a problem :

He was alone. A mind apart. Reality flowed around as air about a wing, leaving him in the vacuum; apathetic, pointless, dying. He imagined himself to be above everyone, gift of the gods, invincible. An imaginative child, he had been till he was twenty as if he were an observation outpost; a camera manipulated in another time. Treating his young wife with lordly disdain he gaily masqueraded his next twenty years as a coloniser of an alien planet, indoctrinating his offspring to be fitting lords of their earthly fellows.

Now suddenly alone, divorced from wife and sons, laden with debt and gazing forlornly at a roomfull of battered science fiction novels, he wondered whether his incinerator could hold the lot. He was a fool - it couldn't. He sank into a chair. Closing eyes forced him helplessly down a black pit; sickingly, losing all sense of reality. Brightness flickered through his mental vision as his physical self writhed only to fall limp to the floor.

Without opening his eyes he knew he was in another time plane. The air was cool and wet with the sweet smell of earth. His world was darker now, though warm and still; as though no breezes blew. His mind felt free, unburdened by care or the fetters of his physical body. He had hoped that death would be like this; an untroubled world.

The uncovered coffin, cheap wood with rubbish packing, was lowered carelessly into the grave. The two or three thin, aging mourners, their faces gravely disquieting, dropped the ropes to the ground and stood at attention. The minister intoned disinterestedly the only prayer he could recall.

He and his fellow mourners would soon be as dead as the ground they now trod.

Suddenly the world was a shallow well, like a goldfish

bowl, surmounted by statues accurate beyond belief. As though in slow motion, rain began to fall; drops as large as hail-stones falling heavily onto his face. The statues melted into the darkness as he shielded his eyes from the rain.

Within its coffin the cadaver moved. An arm and dirt covered hand reached up as they were laboriously scraping dirt into the grave. They watched transfixed.

The statues had come to life! Threatening they loomed over him, grasping weapons defiantly. His mind seethed with schemes of defence and retribution, of hatred toward these lesser creatures, of destruction and of death. But he was alone and there was nothing in his well-world with which to defend himself.

The coolness of fear washed over him, submerging him in grateful unconsciousness.

Its last convulsions subsided, the body fell limply onto the loose earth. The four terrified onlookers cautiously approached the gravemouth, reached it and gazed on the corpse.

"Dead?" said one to the desert emptiness.

"Looks as though," said another quietly.

"Leave him there, uncovered. We haven't the strength."

"It's hot. We'll have to get back to the shelter."

Four thin old men limped painfully across the barren plain. Not one looked back. They had already forgotten the one they had just buried when they filed into their dugout. The sun sank complainingly on a silent world.

- Michael Black.

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REVIEW.

Nova Express.

William Burroughs.

Jonathan Cape, Publisher.

Panther Books, soft cover version.

The author has had six books of note published to date, unfortunately four of these are not available in Australia. In order to fully appreciate this novel it must be remembered that Burroughs is or was a user of mind expanding 'hallucinatory drugs' and as such has been able to reach a realm of fantasy not available to the general writer of S.F.- Fantasy.

Nova Express is an Hallucination inthe form of a novel, an interplanetary and interstellar war between the Nova Police and the Nova Mob; the most notable character in the Nova Mob being the Subliminal Kid, who creates illusions through

Continued page 10.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY.

To write a comprehensive article on computers would take both more knowledge and more space than available to me. In this article I will attempt only to mention some of the more obvious points about the history and operation of computers.

The impact of computers on everyday life is considerable. A computer insures that the electric power supplied to homes is available when demanded and in the amounts needed by controlling N.S.W.'s generating and power distributing system. A computer controls the stock in the local supermarket, ensuring a constant supply of fresh goods when needed. A computer controls the printing, mailing and the subscriptions for many large circulation magazines (but not, as yet, for any fanzine). In fact, investigation of almost any field of business activity will reveal some form of computer participation. When other uses of computers, for example for engineering and scientific calculation is considered, it can be seen that in the space of a decade computers have already influenced life in a considerable fashion. The influence that will be felt in the next decade must be greater, and I feel that too few S.F. stories take this into account.

What is this marvellous device that has had these effects? Basically it is nothing more than a development of a calculator, reinforced by the ability to store commands and results until they are needed in the process of future calculation. The earliest calculator was an abacus, in the simplest form just two piles of dirt in which marks could be placed, and then erased to simplify calculation. In the 15th or 16th century beads were used to provide a more portable calculator.

The principles behind the present day desk calculator were first developed by Pascal and Leibniz in the 17th century, but it was in the period from 1820 to 1871 that Charles Babbage attempted to construct two mechanical computers. His first, a special purpose computer, was successfully constructed but his second computer was never finished. The concepts Babbage used in the design of this computer included many, but not all, of the concepts important in modern computers. Whilst theoretically sound, Babbage was too ambitious in his design as even today the building of the computers he envisaged would be a large task. If he had built a smaller model it is certain that development would have taken place in this field much earlier than proved the case.

The principles Babbage suggested were not applied until just before the Second World War when an attempt was made to produce an electro-mechanical computer at Harvard. This attempt was successful, and the computer was completed in 1944.

The basic difference between a computer and a desk calculator is the existence of a storage program. This program directs the system through a sequence of operations without the intervention of the operator. The information specifying the operations is fed to the computer with the data necessary for the problem. The system is divided into two principal parts, an information storage unit (memory) and an arithmetic and control unit which does the actual work. The "memory" stores the results of intermediate operators, a requirement obvious to anyone who has performed several problems, each of which

requires the answer to the previous problem before calculation can be commenced.

The power of the computer is determined by the size of the memory - it can be seen that with a large memory a computer can perform a long sequence of complicated operations which would not be possible with a small memory. The speed of operation of a computer is determined by the speed of the two sections; the speed at which the operation (such as addition) can be performed, and the speed with which needed information can be obtained from the memory.

As mentioned before, the present history of computers began with World War Two. The details are still not clear, but it appears that several computers were built for specialised purposes during the war, and it is strangely only now that details are being unclassified! After the war there was much competition to build the biggest and best computers, between Universities in England and America. In the middle fifties the large American companies began building computers for commercial use. They were so successful that by the sixties the major use of computers was by business houses, and all computers were built by the companies such as I.B.M. The progress made in the fifties was something of a revolution, but by now the process is more like evolution, with gradual incorporation of new advances.

Much development has been made in the means of giving instructions to computers. Initially, the only way to get a computer to solve a problem was by physically changing the circuits inside the computer by altering switches and putting in temporary wiring. If the computer was to solve only one problem, this might be satisfactory, but could you imagine setting 3,000 switches every time a new problem was to be solved? For this reason a system of computer language was developed, the computer doing the switching as instructed. It was still necessary for the programmer to know what to tell the computer to do. This was still not satisfactory, so much work has to be done to enable the use of a simplified language which can be used without knowledge of the computer. Languages such as FORTRAN now in use have this advantage, as all that needs to be done is to form a new language with which to speak to the computer. The computer translates commands in this language to give the necessary switching, and proceeds to carry out the instructions given, printing out the results in the form requested by the operator.

So much for the past. What about the future? How will computers develop? I can only speculate, but what seems most likely is increased domestic use of computers, and for this it seems computers will have to understand written English (or should I say American?) or even the spoken word. A general information service (consulted by telephone) may be developed and small, specialised computers may be used in the home. Computers will become more sophisticated, although it is a matter of some debate whether machine intelligence will develop (such as predicted in 2001).

A computer is an idiot, and has to be told how to do everything (or have the information incorporated in the structure of the language used) but is not this true too for a human child?

No matter about the future trends. One sure forecast is that computers will play an increasing important role in an increasingly complex society.

- P.G.D.

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The Science Fiction Book Club.

Most people, fans included, like a bargain. I am still a University student, and in the past found that the money available for buying s.f. books was severely limited. Thus the discovery of the (British) S.F. Book Club was very welcome to me. This club produces one hardcover S.F. book per month, selected from the lists of (almost) all British publishers. It is not tied to any one publisher, and hence the choices tend to be the best of the current editions, though of course all readers won't agree with the choice of the selectors.

Physically the books are identical with books on sale at the normal retail price, generally being printed from the same plates, and on good quality paper. Because of the peculiar distribution and price structures for British books in this country, the books sell for about a third the price and arrive at the same time as the books for retail sale. The price is nine shillings sterling, including postage to Australia. Although it is easy to send money to England, the club has simplified payment by establishing an account with the Bank of N.S.W. Payments can be made at any branch of the bank - surely the ultimate in convenience!

As an illustration of the books chosen as the monthly selection, the following were the choices for the last six months of 1967:-

A Plague of Pythons - by Fred Pohl
The Corridors of Time - by Poul Anderson
Interstellar Two-Five - by John Rankine
Mindswap - by Robert Sheckley
Spectrum V - anthology

October the First is Too Late - by Fred Hoyle

Not only does the club publish regular choices - often additional books are offered as optional choices. (One recent example was the large Analog anthology, too big to offer as a regular selection)

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impressions on the sub-conscious mind, and the awesome Mr and Mrs D, also known as Mr Bradley Mr Martin.

The serious points of this novel are both obscured and enhanced at times by the novelist's humour. Reflections of present day life in the U.S. are presented in an oblique manner; sometimes horrific, sometimes absurdly funny.

The New York Herald Tribune says ; "The element of humour in NOVA EXPRESS has moral strength of heroic proportions.....It is an absolutely devastating ridicule of all that is false, primitive and vicious in current American life : the abuses of power, hero worship, aimless violence, materialistic obsession, intolerance and every form of hypocrisy.

To sum it up, this novel as a fantasy is a must for the SF bookshelf. However whilst reading this book the reader must keep in mind that this is fantasy which is very closely allied with possible future fact.

- Frank Blamey.

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The S.F. Book Club - cont from p 9.

For any impecunious fans interested in further details, the address is

Science Fiction Book Club,
10-13 Bedford Street,
London, WC2,
England.

- Peter Darling.

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FURTHER JOTTINGS.

I have noticed that some readers seem to think they can get some idea of what THE MENTOR will be like by reading past issues. They could not be farther from the truth. I will not be following any hard and fast line of presentation of type of material. The probable result will be a series of issues totally different in style and content. It will be, of course, purely for experiment, and I would like it if readers would let me know which issues they preferred.

I am aiming for a purely N.S.W. content for THE MENTOR, but I will print interstate material, especially that from States other than Victoria, where there are fanzines after material too. With any luck the next issue will be out in early August. Also, with luck, it will be bigger and better than this issue.

CLUBS' NEWS.

N.S.W.

Sydney Science Fiction Foundation.

Well, I wish there was something to report apart from trivialities. The club formed a theatre party and went to see that stunning film 2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY, which was mildly successful.

Several meetings have been held since then but apart from listening to tapes from Melbourne, and being incensed over the puerile attempts at ...wit? and so called helpful comments plus other juvenile ramblings and sending back a tape to them as a reply, nothing has been done.

This is a crying shame-in the beginning this club had some good ideas and intentions. In fact the Foundation even revived interest in the Melb. clubrooms, sooooo, what went wrong? This club has several good inventive minds in it, that we know of. As our new members come along they bring new ideas and new interests with them. It is up to the present members and the new to bring these into the open. This club is for all the members, not just one or two, so speak up - give us all your ideas on how you want this club to be run.

One reason, perhaps, is that so far there has not been a great deal of space, but then there have not been many people, and perhaps it is time to take the limelight away from our president; after all, she is only one person. We don't want one person to be our leading figure and a feeling of discontent about our President is already being felt. It is up to you to take the club into the hands of all the members.

A film evening has been arranged for the 4th of July by Peter Darling. Short story writing has been suggested, debates and regular film evenings are planned.

So there you have it, friends, now it is up to you.

- L.S.

Note from the President.

On behalf of the club I wish to thank the members who have been kind enough to donate and lend books to the Foundation. Especial thanks to Peter Darling who has been our largest lender. Also thanks to P.D. for his efforts to expand the club activities

- Mrs Z. Wilkinson, (Pres.)

Australian Science Fiction Association/ Futurian Society.

Unfortunately my knowledge regarding this (these?) organisation(s) is strictly limited. There have been two meetings in Sydney to my knowledge; one at Randwick and the other at Ryde,

taking place at members' homes. There was a hint from Grahame Stone at the Ryde meeting that future meetings would be monthly, or so he hoped. At the Ryde meeting there were seven people present, including myself. Things were a little slow in starting off, but meetings in the near future will probably decide the future of this old (?) club.

- R.L.C.

VICTORIA, QUEENSLAND, ETC.

I have not received any official news from the other capital cities or from any other S.F. club interstate. I would appreciate hearing from the Secretaries or members concerned with news outlets for those clubs. Their reports would give a wider breadth to this column, which would be welcome, I think, by most fans.

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That looks like the end of this issue. I would like to thank all those people who sent in contributions and to all those people who gave me moral support. As you can see, the typeface is different this issue, as is the duplication. This is the result of me purchasing another typewriter and investing in a duplicator, which I hope in the long run will prove of benefit not only to THE MENTOR and the Foundation but also to Sydney fandom at large.

- Ron L. Clarke.