

Sensor

A REVIEW OF IRISH SCIENCE FICTION

issue one

WINTER 1994

Time for a change

aeon press to launch
at Intersection

aeon press was set up as a response to the lack of adult science fiction being published in Ireland. Several Irish publishers are experimenting, at last, with SF, but so far, it's all aimed at the children's and young adult markets. *aeon press* aims to pip them at the post with mature well written SF in as attractive a package as possible.

The deadline for publication of the first novel is the World Science Fiction Convention in Glasgow, in August '95. Currently, they have four novels under consideration, but are looking for more. If this first venture is successful, they will probably go straight into production with a second novel, picked, more than likely, from the inventory on hand, if it is of satisfactory quality.

So, dust off those manuscripts and get them in to *aeon press* fast. They are looking for anything in the SF, fantasy or horror genres. Send the first two chapters only to the address below, along with a stamped, addressed envelope or IRC; if they like what they see, you will be asked to send the rest of it.

Before the novel appears it is hoped to publish a signed, limited edition of short stories by David Murphy, with art by ISFA award winning artist Paul Sheridan. Dave Murphy has had a number of short stories published in the UK and American small press, *albedo one* as well as in the short lived ISFA magazine FTL.

The primary purpose of *aeon press* is to give some exposure to new Irish writers of speculative fiction. It is hoped that this venture will open the gates to an increased presence of Irish SF writers on the bookshelves.

JK

**aeon
press**

For further information on
submitting, write to:

aeon press, 2, Post Road, Lusk,
Co. Dublin, Ireland.

Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed
envelope or an IRC

(Small Press: page 6. Publishing: page 8)

OCTOCON '94

Octocon 1994 took place in the Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire in early October this year. It featured many guests, the usual mix of panels and signings, readings, films, a games room and a Dealers Room. Yet it was not as successful as the previous conventions. It suffered mainly from a shortage of fans, brought about because of a lack of advertising of the convention - there were few posters or flyers around Dublin city centre and very little in the way of press coverage. Another possible reason for the low attendance was the Star Trek convention Irecon in Bray about three weeks previously; though this convention is a regular occurrence (only one in three take place in or near Dublin however) the attraction of a major star in the shape of Gates McFadden undoubtedly drew fans away from Octocon.

The guests were excellent: by all

accounts Robert Holdstock was a gentleman, and the regulars acquitted themselves very well too. Kim Newman, Janny Wurts and husband Don Maitz, Maggie Furey and Tom Holt all entertained on panels (and in the bar), and special comics guest, Paul Peart, was a bonus for the comics fans.

The convention was well run, with very few complaints except from the dealers who wanted to run signing sessions in the Dealers room to attract fans - it was the only convention attraction (apart from Registration) on the ground floor and didn't gain much passing trade. Panels ran to time, the Costume party was visually impressive as usual (winners: Best in show: Michelle Carter modelling a Helen Ryder creation based on a Peter Morwood character, Special Award: Martin Feeney with a costume of Brandon Lee's The Crow), and the Star Trek room was full to overflowing with Trekk(ies)(ers).

Few fan groups were represented, con-
(Continued on page 9)

ISFA AGM appoints administrator

The Irish Science Fiction Association held its Annual General Meeting in November. Following the difficulty in finding committee members last year, the news that none of the current committee would be standing for re-election was cause for concern.

The AGM was chaired by Helen Ryder and took place on Tuesday 22nd November in the Association's usual meeting place, the Horse and Tram in Dublin city centre. The reports presented showed a financially healthy position, and the year to date had gone well, with an impressive, printed Newsletter and two issues of the Association's magazine, Phase, appearing. However due to various other commitments and to committee 'burnout' the current members found themselves unable to serve again.

After much discussion and voting it was decided that, if no-one was willing to stand an administrator would be appointed to run the Association while attempting to gather a committee together. When it seemed that no-one would stand for this post either Brendan Ryder reluctantly agreed, on condition that the Association's activities would only consist of the monthly meetings and perhaps a newsletter. An extraordinary general meeting will take place in March, when, if no committee has been formed, the Association will be wound up.

BR

(More ISFA news: page 4)

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Sensor Editorial

This is the first issue of Sensor. It is intended to be a collection of information relating to what is happening in Irish science fiction, both in professional and fan circles. This first issue contains details of Irish fan publications, groups, conventions and events: it is not meant to be comprehensive (though I have attempted to make it as detailed as possible) but purely to give an indication of the current science fiction scene.

The opinions herein are attributed to the person who wrote them: most of the (slightly) controversial material was written by me. Hopefully that will change in the future when incensed readers see what has been said about their favourite convention/publication. That's good and healthy - I look forward to it.

An additional intention is for the fanzine to be a historical record of Irish science fiction. I've touched on some early events in the ISFA's existence, but a more detailed examination of how it was set up is needed. I hope to publish articles on past and present versions of the ISFA, and indeed of other groups within Ireland, north and south. I know very little about the early days of Northern Irish fandom and I look forward to hearing from somebody about it.

I am looking for commentary from both within Ireland and outside - comparisons with the current state of Irish fandom and other countries would prove useful to those attempting to set up a strong foundation for science fiction appreciation in the country. I expect the next issue of Sensor to appear before the end of the year, maybe even for Intersection so a provisional date for submissions will be 1st July, 1995.

Brendan Ryder

Editorial Address:

30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road,
Templeogue, Dublin 16, Ireland.
email: bhry @ iol.ie

Science Fiction:

Ghetto Genre or Just Another Way of Seeing the World?

Friday and Saturday (9th & 10th September) witnessed the first ever Science Fiction seminar to be held in the Irish Writers' Centre. This was the beginning of the Centre's moves to bring the genre in from the cold and have it accepted within the literary establishment as a respected art form.

Authors present included **Catherine Brophy** (Fair City script writer and author of *Dark Paradise*) **Michael Carroll** (Dublin born author of *Moonlight* and *The Last Starship*). **Colin Greenland** (five novels to his name, including *Take Back Plenty* and *Harm's Way*) and **Ian McDonald** (1990 Philip K. Dick Award Winner whose fifth novel, *Necroville*, was published in July).

Brendan Ryder (Anna Livia FM presenter of 'The Infinity Effect' and co-editor of *albedo one*, Ireland's leading small press magazine) skilfully navigated a panel discussion through the asteroid belt, touching on topics as diverse as the characteristics of the average Science Fiction reader, and the much augured demise of the book.

The Blackstaff Press Publicity Manager, **Liam Carson**, attended to give a publishers view of Science Fiction and to defend the genre as a legitimate form of literature.

The two day event included readings, talks, discussions and a 'Drabble' competition. A 'Drabble', for those of you that aren't aware of it (which includes my dictionary) is a form of short story in which the writer attempts to capture an idea, concept or startling image in just 100 words, no more, no less.

The discussions held throughout the seminar covered many topics of which some are outlined below.

The Science Fiction Sentence

Colin Greenland attempted to define the uniqueness of the sentence as used in science fiction. He described the job of the sentence as not just telling a story, but also building the world in which the story is taking place, a world which may have no common reference with reality. Due to the nature of the ideas and environments involved in a Science Fiction story, Colin concluded that the science fiction sentence was one which could have no meaning in the real world. To demonstrate this point he quoted a sentence from a scene where a young girl is waiting for her father to rematerialise in his time-machine cabinet. To describe the timing of an event he relates, 'my father was almost complete when...'

Science Fiction and Popular Culture

Ian McDonald started his talk on Science Fiction and Popular Culture by telling the joke of how a defendant in court, when asked if he had anything to say in his defence, replied by taking a matchbox from his pocket, opening it, and, holding it to his mouth, saying, 'Beam me up, Scottie'. Ian's point was that everyone understood the reference to Star Trek, thus indicating the series had invaded our culture. He also drew attention to the fact that a recent edition of a book of Useful Latin Phrases has deemed it necessary to include the phrase, 'Me ad sursum transferre, Calidonii'.

Writing Science Fiction

The process of writing science fiction, from the point of view of the 'Golden Bubble' of an idea, through the two hundred jobs you do before putting finger to keyboard, to re-writing and final preparation, was described by Catherine Brophy. She identified 'research' as being the difference between writing Science Fiction and Mainstream fiction. In Science Fiction she stated there was much more research involved, but the research is inside your head and its purpose is not accuracy in detail, but internal consistency for the environment in which the story takes place.

In Defence Of Science Fiction

Liam Carson described the difficulties faced by publishers when trying to get literary editors to review science fiction. The more enlightened literary editors will say they will review anything, except Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror or Crime. Outlining the traditional criticisms of Science Fiction, such as weak characterisation and eloquence, he pointed out that many of today's Science Fiction has redressed this problem and still the establishment treats the genre as something not quite literature.

Women and Science Fiction

At the start of Catherine Brophy's talk she counted two women in the audience and asked, 'Why do people say that Science Fiction is a male dominated Genre?' Most agreed that the genre has been dominated by men, but the winds of change are blowing with

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such notable authors as Ursula K. LeGuin, Anne McCaffrey, Diane Duane and Pat Cadigan making major contributions. When first getting into the field, Catherine felt she was entering a male domain, but felt more that she was encroaching on the territory of a club where a strange language was spoken and understood only by the initiated.

US Military

During the invasion of Grenada the US military used an artificial language to avoid eavesdropping on their radio communications. The language they used was 'Klingon', the language of the Klingon race in Star Trek. This language had been developed by 'Trekkies' in the US and was adopted by the military as a virtually unbreakable code. With sales of the 'Klingon-English/English-Klingon' dictionary running at over 250,000 the military have now abandoned its use as a code. These days more people can speak Klingon than Esperanto.

Science Fiction, the Subversive Literature

Science Fiction in the communist Eastern Bloc was quoted as evidence of how the genre has been used as a subversive media for transmitting ideas. Much Eastern Bloc Science Fiction is veiled criticism of the state. It was the only form of literature that could criticise the state and have a chance of getting past the censor.

In the 70's it was said, 'All the hippies have stuck their trousers in their boots and grown long ears.'

Mainstream Literature adopting Science Fiction Themes

The phenomena of Science Fiction themes coming up in more and more Mainstream books was put down to several factors. One was the proliferation of new technology which was predicted by Science Fiction and is now infiltrating everyday life (video recorders, camcorders, mobile telephones, satellites, video games, virtual reality, multi-channel television, micro-computers...). Another is the current concern for global issues like over-population, climatic change and pollution, all of which have been in Science Fiction for decades.

What would life be like had Nazis won World War II? You might immediately think, 'Ah, Fatherland by Robert Harris (1993). This theme was first treated in 1962 by Philip K. Dick in his 'The Man In The High Castle. This, and many other examples were used to show how Science Fiction plots have been appearing in Mainstream books without anyone recognising, or accepting that these books are, in fact, Science Fiction.

Science Fiction as Sociological Laboratory

One of the biggest advantages of Science Fiction is the ability to take an aspect of life or society, hold all other variables constant, and explore the possibilities which ensue. This has been done by many authors including Ursula K. LeGuin, whose book, *The Dispossessed*, (1975), explores the problems and pressures of life in a working anarchistic society.

That was the book that was

The dawning of the *electronic book*, brought on by advancing technology, was suggested as heralding the demise of the physical book as we know it. Views on this topic ranged from 'yes it will', through 'people will always want to hold a paperback in their hands,' to 'in the future one will merely need to stick a plug into the back of one's head to get all the information desired.' Another view suggested that environmental pressure was more a threat to the physical book than technology.

Readings

Michael Carroll read a short, humorous piece entitled 'In Dublin's Veracity' which was well received and it added some lightness to the proceedings. Catherine Brophy read passages from her 1992 novel *Dark Paradise*. The Drabble competition, which was judged by those present in the audience, was won by Eamon Honan, aged 13 - look out for him in years to come, perhaps!

You don't know what you're missing

The seminar was stimulating and informative for those that attended. With regard to its main objective of reinforcing Science Fiction as a form of literature and as a medium for the communication of ideas, it succeeded for those in attendance. A message from the seminar to those who would never consider reading Science Fiction would be, 'Go ahead. Give it a try. It's not all spaceships, lasers and grotesque aliens and you might find that your favourite mainstream author has been writing nothing but Science Fiction all along.'

'Me ad sursum transferre, Caledonii!'

PM

Events in 1994

Legend authors **Tad Williams**, **Maggie Furey** and **Andrew Harman** featured in a major science fiction promotion by leading Irish booksellers Eason's in June 1994. At an open evening in their main shop in O'Connell Street, Dublin the three authors gave brief talks, and then went on to sign copies of their books. Also present at the event were **Anne McCaffrey** and **David Wingrove**. Over 100 people attended the evening, and the promotion ran through the entire month of June, featuring posters and competitions throughout the Eason network. Following the Dublin event the three Legend authors travelled to Cork where the local Eason's branch held a similar event.

The wedding of **Anne McCaffrey's** son **Todd** attracted all the resident Irish sf writers. A surprise visitor was **Lois McMaster Bujold** who was quietly kidnapped by the *albedo one* editors and interviewed for an exclusive!

Doris Lessing gave a reading from the first part of her autobiography, *Under My Skin*, and answered some questions in Waterstone's, Dawson Street in Dublin in November. Many of the questions after the reading dealt with her science fiction work, a point that was taken up by one of the *literati* in the audience afterwards who indignantly announced that, far from writing science fiction (which he viewed with disdain), she wrote quality, 'Doris Lessing' books. Afterwards she commented that one of her favourite memories was being honoured at the 1987 World Science Fiction Convention, in Brighton.

Northern Irish group **USS Destiny** held a 'Trekathon' in Lurgan during November. The two day event featured new episodes of *Deep Space Nine*, bloopers, quizzes and a dealers room. Attendance appears to have been poor, however: most of the groups holding similar events are finding that without a 'Star' attraction the fans are not turning up. Similarly **Starbase Ireland** have found attendances dropping at their still quite popular 'Federation Days'. Where once there could have been over 250 now perhaps 100 turn up.

David Gemmell and **Maggie Furey** came across to Dublin in December, to speak at Waterstone's bookshop in Dawson Street. In addition they attended the ISFA Christ-

(Continued next page...)

Events in 1994 (cont.)

mas party the previous night and met the sf fans of Trinity College, Dublin at lunchhour. The Waterstone's evening went well with complimentary wine (or minerals) adding to the enjoyment. A lively question and answer session was followed by the announcement of the 1994 Aisling Gheal Awards by ISFA committee member **Paul Sheridan**. The winner, **Martin Brady**, looked suitably surprised when his name was announced and was presented with his prize by **David Gemmell**.

Tier City, a model-making, costume and design group, held a multi-media FX convention called *Insight* in Dublin during the fortnight of 1 - 13th of December. The group caused quite a stir when they attended the October ISFA meeting in full futuristic military battledress, carrying seriously lethal looking weapons - they walked through a crowded bar of startled drinkers and upstairs to the ISFA meeting room.

The **Timewarp 2 Press Launch** took place in Bewley's Oriental Cafe in Grafton Street, Dublin in November. Unfortunately not too many press turned up as the government decided to fall that day! Despite walking past the assembled journalists, in costume, carrying a banner saying 'Spock for T-shock' (prime minister) the press just were not biting. Timewarp did manage to get a sizable article in the Evening Herald a week later and promises of articles nearer the convention. The press launch was sponsored by Bewley's who supplied wine and food for the afternoon.

Bewley's Christmas party this year had a Star Trek theme with its Mary Street branch being converted to resemble the bridge of the Enterprise and most of the staff wearing Star Trek or sf costumes.

A popular annual attraction in the Co. Wicklow town of Rathdrum is the **International Cartoon Festival** which takes place in the summer. Regularly attracting professionals from overseas the activity takes place in the pubs and restaurants of the town, with artists meeting their fans over a pint and doing sketches on the spot. The event attracts comics fans and this year saw a number of once off comics appearing.

The Irish Science

The ISFA was formed in 1976, based loosely on its neighbour the British SF Association. Monthly meetings, writers workshops, a newsletter and twice yearly magazine comprised its activities for the eight or nine years of its existence. But a lack of interest in the mid-80's caused its gradual decline and the Association folded in 1985.

In 1988 a group of the original ISFA members came together and set up a new Association which, not surprisingly, became known as the Irish Science Fiction Association. It started small but was based on the same mix of activities and publications as its earlier incarnation. And despite major and minor problems it has grown in the years since then. A new committee took over in January this year and the following is a summary of the year to date by one, James Peart. (Note: this article was written before the AGM detailed on page 1).

After a fairly shaky start, the ISFA got into full swing for '94. This was particularly aided by the fact that one of the committee members was able to wangle cheap printing of the newsletter, as opposed to the normal photocopying which had previously been in existence. The result was a much higher quality finish for the newsletter (combined with the ability to print book covers and photographs), never before seen in the association.

Another new innovation was the fact that no Editor was appointed. Instead, any articles etc. were published if the committee as a unit agreed that they should be.

The monthly meetings also became more structured. It was agreed that any meeting should be a multi media item where possible. Effectively this meant that a short video was generally shown on the topic of the particular month followed by a discussion, lecture or panel.

Meetings were as varied as possible, to cover as full a range of SF interests possible. These ranged from Tarot reading, UFO sighting and Star Trek as legitimate SF to how to get an SF novel published in Ireland. These were combined with the ISFA usuals such as the pub quiz and the Octocon promo.

Where SF events took place in between the meetings it was agreed that all members should be encouraged to come as a social outing for the association. These proved to be a lot more popular than was first anticipated and members were seen everywhere from the Rathdrum Cartoon Festival to openings of art exhibitions.

JP

All in all, not a bad year

FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE ISFA CONTACT
The Administrator, 30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road,
Templeogue, Dublin 16

The ISFA this year, from my point of view, was quite successful. The printed Newsletters were great - but then, so were the printed magazines a couple of years ago. Neither could be sustained financially, however nice they might have been to look at. It seems surprising that, with all the exposure science fiction gets through the media, especially television and film, that the genre does not attract advertising revenue. Even successful magazines such as Asimov's, Analog or Interzone do not have the sort of advertisements that would allow them to develop. Publishers do not support small press magazines, and indeed are reluctant it seems to advertise in a known market leader such as Interzone (the US news magazines seem to do a bit better). Perhaps it's something to do with aiming at a new audience - as a science fiction shop owner said to me recently he doesn't want the fans - he has those in his shop already. He wants the general public, and so won't advertise in fan publications. Yet to make an impression in the fan groups, and even outside the groups as circulation of their publications grow would cost so little. The ISFA has been short of financial backing since its inception and unless grants, investment or a vast influx of advertising comes in it will continue shuffling along, getting nowhere.

As a comparison with the modern ISFA I will have an article on the original ISFA (founded 1976) in the next issue. I would appreciate comments from anyone who was involved at that time - I know there's a few out there still!

BR

Fiction Association

The Irish Science Fiction Association was formed again in 1988, shortly after a group of fans met at the British Eastercon in Liverpool and decided it was time to have another go at a national science fiction organisation. Posters were displayed in a few shop windows (mainly the Alchemist's Head, Ireland's only sf bookshop at that time) and about twenty people turned up for the first meeting held, not surprisingly, in a pub.

Wrangles over the name were eventually resolved by adopting the name the Association originally had, before it folded in 1984-85. Indeed the Association bore a lot of resemblance to its predecessor - monthly meetings, a Writers and Artists Workshop, a newsletter and, within a year, a magazine. The Newsletter was to be just a four page, A5 production, but cheap photocopying and enthusiasm saw it reach as high as 28 or 32 pages. Quality also improved as a number of the members were involved in the computer business and had access to laser printers and desk-top publishing software.

FTL, the Association's magazine, was born in 1989. Intended to be a quarterly magazine it did in fact appear every season until issue 10, the second of the fully printed issues. But more of that later. Originally the magazine was an A5 publication of around 40 pages. Issues one and two were poorly produced on a dot-matrix printer: they featured fiction and reviews. From then on the quality improved, with issue 3 and later having a printed cover, photographs and interviews.

In 1992 issue 9 appeared. It was fully printed on glossy paper, professionally designed and was A4 in size, 32 pages. It caused a shock to the membership, with a lot of support being balanced by other voices complaining at how how much it was costing. Two more issues of the magazine appeared over the next year: it was eventually replaced with the Phase series in 1993.

The ISFA also held two Art Shows in central Dublin. Forty artists exhibited at each event which received some press coverage. The second event, in 1992, was sponsored by the Dublin European City Of Culture committee and this enabled the ISFA to bring James White, Bob Shaw and Robert Rankin to the show. These shows were useful in gaining exposure for the Association, though the initial event lost money.

The Association made various attempts to reach out from its Dublin base. A meeting was organised in Cork during the summer of 1990. Unfortunately the experiment did not succeed due to poor publicity, the problem with so many fan run events.

1994 saw some new faces for the ISFA committee and some enthusiasm returned. The thoughts of one of the committee from last year can be read opposite.

BR

The PHASE magazines

The Irish Science Fiction Association produces four individual magazines a year to encourage and support writers and artists working in the science fiction/fantasy/horror field in Ireland.

Phase One consists of short stories with accompanying art.

Phase Two is Ireland's best SF/Horror comic.

Phase Three is devoted entirely to award winning stories entered in the ISFA's short story competition. Aisling Gheal, sponsored by Aran Book Publishers.

Phase Four features the work of artists and writers or attend (or submit work to) the ISFA's Artists and Writers Workshop.

The magazines are available as part of the ISFA membership package: this also includes 12 issues of First Contact, a monthly Newsletter. Membership costs £13 a year. The magazines may be ordered individually, at £1.75, plus P+P, from the Administrator's address.

PS

Six issues of the Phase magazines have now appeared, with a seventh on the way. However it looks likely that they will not continue, at least in their present guise. How successful were they? Was it not confusing to have so many different styles and contents in such an infrequently appearing publication. While the ISFA may intend to promote science fiction and related genres, is it not trying to satisfy everybody at the same time and in fact satisfying no-one? Comments on the series to date would be appreciated to the Editorial address.

Aisling Gheal Award Winners

1979

John McCarthy

1980

Graham Andrews

1991

Brendan Farrell

1992

Michael Carroll

1993

Michael Cullen

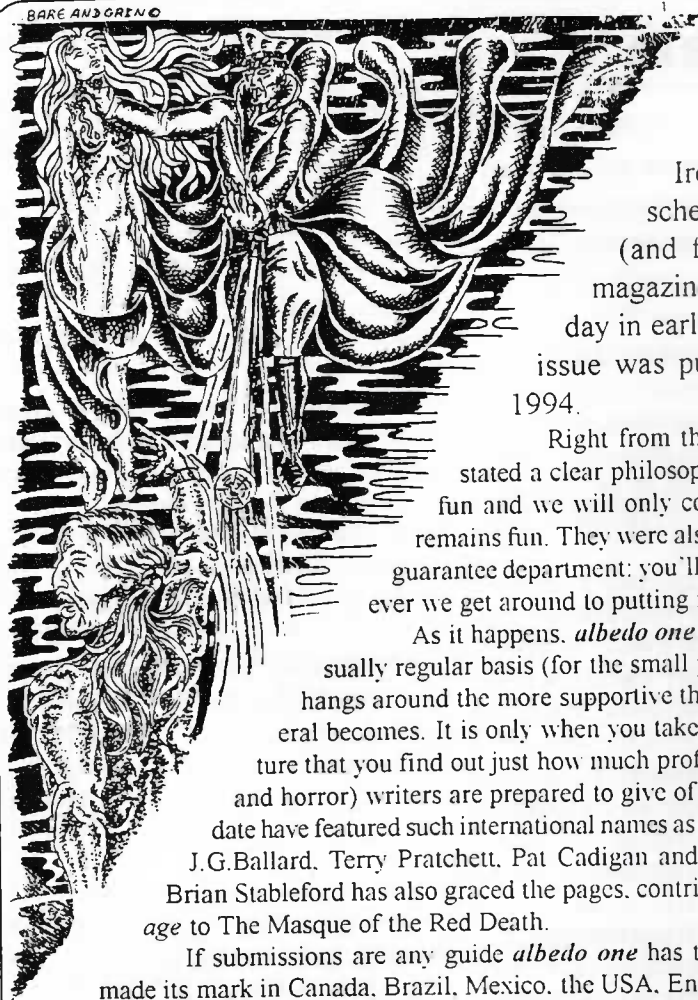
Aisling Gheal

For a national Association whose stated aim is to promote the enjoyment of and participation in science fiction, what better way to encourage fans and non-fans to participate in the genre than to hold a short story competition? The 'Aisling Gheal' ('Bright Vision') was first run by the ISFA in 1978 with prizes of £50, £25 and £15 - it continued until the demise of the Association, as mentioned above.

Following the rebirth of the ISFA the *Aisling Gheal* became a possibility again. With the generous donation of the trophy by Harry Harrison (sculpted by Dublin based artist Peter Langebroek) the competition restarted in 1991, drawing an average of 35 entries. Last year Irish publishers *Aran Books* became associated with the competition by way of sponsorship. They have again sponsored the competition this year with three prizes of £150, £75 and £50. In addition the top six stories are published in the ISFA magazine *Phase Three*. The winner of this year's competition was announced in November, at a ceremony in Waterstone's Bookshop in Dublin.

BR

1994 Aisling Gheal Award Winner: Martin Brady



Irish Small Press magazines and fanzines

albedo one is Ireland's only regularly scheduled science fiction (and fantasy and horror) magazine. It first saw light of day in early 1993 and the sixth issue was published in October 1994.

Right from the beginning the editors stated a clear philosophy: we're doing this for fun and we will only continue to do it while it remains fun. They were also defiantly remiss in the guarantee department: you'll see the next issue whenever we get around to putting it together.

As it happens, *albedo one* has been fun on an unusually regular basis (for the small press). And the longer it hangs around the more supportive the SF community in general becomes. It is only when you take on a venture of this nature that you find out just how much professional SF (and fantasy and horror) writers are prepared to give of their time. Interviews to date have featured such international names as Julian May, Clive Barker, J.G. Ballard, Terry Pratchett, Pat Cadigan and Lois McMaster Bujold. Brian Stableford has also graced the pages, contributing a wonderful *homage* to The Masque of the Red Death.

If submissions are any guide *albedo one* has to one degree or another made its mark in Canada, Brazil, Mexico, the USA, England, Scotland and Belgium. Reviews have appeared in the likes of Interzone, BBR, Vector and First Contact, ranging from supportive to highly complimentary. There have even been mentions across the big pond in SF Chronicle and Locus.

So, what's next for *albedo one*? As usual with a magazine like this, the answer depends on the fans. What's needed is more submissions - art particularly, but all fiction submissions will be appreciated and considered although even at this stage there is a very high rejection rate - and more subscribers so that the print run (which has more than doubled in the course of eighteen months) can be further increased. Unfortunately back issues have become a serious problem of late as there are almost none available and the requests roll in regularly.

Overall, the message from *albedo one* is that we want to hear from you as much as you may want to hear from us. Send us something - a story, an illustration, a letter. Anything. We'll even accept money.

BN

Small Press comment

Ireland has never been the source of a great many small press magazines. Apart from what the ISFA produced no-one else seemed inclined to have a go until *albedo one* arrived. Most of the magazines mentioned opposite have managed one, perhaps two, issues and then disappeared. There was even an advertisement in a national paper some time ago for stories for a new science fiction & fantasy publication. Whoever it was got cold feet though - that was nearly three years ago and it still hasn't appeared.

It's not just fiction magazines - comics too suffer the same fate. In the past year I have seen two fully printed comics (newsprint quality) but issue 2 of both have yet to surface. The popularity of comics indicate that, purely on a copycat level, there should be some Irish titles. Artists are numerous at any science fiction event, and can achieve a high quality of work.

Copies of this issue of Sensor will go to all the addresses opposite - perhaps next issue some responses may throw light upon the situation. I look forward to hearing from the editors

BR

albedo one

2, Post Road, Lusk, Co. Dublin. Currently on issue 6, accepting submissions of fiction and artwork. £1.75 plus 50p p+p £8/4 issues.

ENGAGE! To boldly go.....

Magazine of USS Destiny, a Northern Ireland Star Trek group. Available for £1.50 plus p+p from Elaine Burns, 8c Rockland Drive, Moneyreagh, Co. Down, BT34 6DB.

Federation Times

Starbase Ireland magazine from 1990 to date. Available as part of membership pack only. Contact Starbase Ireland.

P.O. Box 3208, Dublin 14 for details.

Finger Cramps

Two issues seen, last issue December, 1993. A4 photocopied magazine. 50p plus p+p.

Available from: 71 Saint Fintans Road, Sutton, Dublin 13

First Contact

The current ISFA Newsletter, A5. Recently has been fully printed, varies in page count from as high as 32 to as low as 4. Available for 50p or as part of the ISFA membership package.

FTL

No longer published. ISFA magazine, started as A5, photocopied, 40 pages. From issue 9 went to A4, glossy, fully printed. Issue 12 was due to appear in December 1992. Replaced by the PHASE series (see ISFA article).

Gotterdammerung

Tommy Ferguson, 42, Ava Drive, Belfast, BT7 3DW, Northern Ireland.

Personal fanzine from a long time sf fan with some strong opinions. Currently up to issue 7. Available for 'the usual'.

Grotesque

Small press magazine from David Logan in Northern Ireland. No other details.

PFFJ

Small press magazine from Michael Carroll, Michael Cullen, Robert Elliott and Simon Webster. Now on issue 10. Humorous, A5, available from Michael Carroll, 42 Willow Drive, Green Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 for £1 + p+p.

Phase 1 - 4

Current ISFA magazine, see ISFA page for details.

Shadow

One issue seen, Summer 1994. A5 photocopied magazine, 32 pages. Available from Joseph Coveney, Kentstown, Navan, Co. Meath

Stargate

ISFA magazine from 1976 to 1984 (approx.) Originally A4, went to A5 from issue 3, then usually A5 with some special issues. 17 issues produced. Article to follow in issue 2 of Sensor.

T.A.S.H.

The Amazing Sentient House
Tommy Ferguson again, address as for Gotterdammerung. Issue 12 appeared at Octocon 1994. Available for 'the usual'.

Irish Book Publishers

The following is a list of the larger or more active Irish publishers who regularly publish fiction or folklore material.

Anvil Books/The Childrens Press
(C)

45 Palmerstown Road, Dublin 6

Appletree Press Ltd, (L)

7 James Street South,
Belfast BT2 8DL

Aran Book Publishers, (C, Fi)

46 Charnwood, Bray, Co. Wicklow

Blackstaff Press Ltd, (Fi)

3 Galway Park, Dundonald,
BT16 0AN

Brandon Book Publishers Ltd,

(L,Fi), Cooleen, Dingle, Co. Kerry

The Gallery Press, (Fi)

Loughcrew, Oldcastle, Co. Meath

The Goldsmith Press, (L)

Newbridge, Co. Kildare

The Kavanagh Press Ltd, (L)

Newbridge, Co. Kildare

The Lilliput Press Ltd, (Fi, L)

4 Rosemount Terrace, Arbour Hill,
Dublin 7

The Mercier Press, (L, F)

PO Box 5, 5 French Church Street,
Cork

The O'Brien Press Ltd, (C, L, Fi, F)

20 Victoria Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6

Poolbeg, (Fi, C)

Poolbeg Enterprises Ltd.,

Knocksedan House, 123 Baldoyle
Industrial Estate, Dublin 13.

Town House and Country House,
(Fi)

42 Morehampton Road, Donnybrook,
Dublin 4.

Wolfhound Press, (Fi, C)

68 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1

Key to symbols:

C- Childrens
Fi - Fiction
F - Folklore
L - Literary

Publishing In Ireland

Ireland is said to have the highest percentage of readers in Europe. The country's literary heritage is well known, with writers such as Joyce, Wilde, Yeats, Behan and more recently Roddy Doyle respected on the international stage.

In the fields of science fiction, fantasy and horror Swift, Dunsany and Stoker are among the earliest practitioners. But very little has emerged from Ireland since science fiction and related genres came of age, from the pulps of the thirties to date. Home grown Irish publishers have yet to see the attraction of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror, with the exception of the children/ young adult market. There is a marked reluctance to try anything different: the newspapers rarely review genre books of any sort, preferring to concentrate on 'quality' books of poetry, reminiscences or the exploits of U2 or the Irish soccer team. Despite the constant bombardment of television and cinema screens of genre related material and with science fiction, fantasy and horror accounting for 10% of book sales in Ireland the publishing scene aims for quality, literary books and unfortunately genre areas are not deemed worthy of attention by Irish publishers. The Arts Council, despite being approached on a number of occasions with sf related projects, has failed to provide any backing.

Of course, exceptions are made, such as Catherine Brophy's well received novel 'Dark Paradise' (1992) (published by Wolfhound Press) and a more recent publication, 'The Lost Scrolls of Newgrange' (1994, Poolbeg) also had some favourable reviews. In general, however the only outlets for novel length work in the country are the childrens and young adult lists, from publishers such as Aran Books, Wolfhound and others.

Ireland has a population of 3,500,000 and as a result print runs in the Irish publishing field are quite small by international standards, usually in the region of 3,000 for a first printing. The smaller publishers have difficulty getting books distributed and displayed and problems with long periods of credit required by distributors and bookshops can leave independent concerns with cash flow crises: this makes the likelihood of someone taking a risk on publishing a science fiction novel very small.

Brief details of the Irish publishers and some upcoming books are given below.

BR

Recently Published Books

The books detailed below are those in the sf/fantasy/horror fields due to have been published in the lead-up to Christmas. In some cases they have not appeared - this is a provisional list.

Adult

Sheila Barrett -

Walk In a Lost Landscape - Poolbeg
£6.99 pb. orig. ISBN 1-85371-401-1

Tom Richards -

The Lost Scrolls Of Newgrange - Poolbeg
£4.99. ISBN 1-85371-299-X

Young Adult

Elizabeth Winthrop -

The Battle For The Castle - O'Brien
£3.99 ISBN 0-86278-404-2

Don Conroy -

The Celestial Child - O'Brien, £4.50,
ISBN 0-86278-381-X

Michael Carroll -

She Fades Away - Aran, £3.99,
ISBN 1-897751-16-8
(Due October, not seen)

Young People

Kate Thompson -

Switchers - Aran, £3.99
ISBN 1-897751-01-X

Tony Foster -

Inn Spirits - Aran £3.99,
ISBN 1-897751-40-0
(Due October, not seen)

Ronnie Lambkin -

Japanese Whispers - Wolfhound, £3.99,
ISBN 0-86327-458-7

Jack Scoltock -

The Magic Of The Unicorns - Aran,
£3.99, ISBN 1-897751-35-4

Michael Scott -

Sealord - Wolfhound, £3.95

Carolyn Swift -

The Secret City - O'Brien Press, £3.99
ISBN 0-86278-382-8

Jim O'Leary -

The Secret of the Stone - Aran, £3.99
ISBN 1-897751-06-01-0

Conventions

Upcoming Irish Conventions

Ireland to bid for 1997 Eurocon

Following five years of successful Octocon's (Ireland's national science fiction convention) a combined committee consisting of members from past and current years has been formed with the intention of bidding for the 1997 European Science Fiction Convention, the Eurocon. The bid committee are currently investigating suitable sites capable of accomodating the expected 900 - 1000 fans. In previous years the convention has been held in the Royal Marine Hotel in the small south Dublin town of Dun Laoghaire. This hotel has proved successful to date, coping with the largest attendance of some 650 fans, but a larger convention might prove difficult to cater for.

The site for the 1997 Eurocon will be decided at Intersection next year and the Irish fans are hopeful of winning the bid.

For more information, or for a copy of the first Progress Report, write to:

Octocon 1997, c/o 30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road, Templeogue, Dublin 16, Ireland

Worldcon News

INTERSECTION

The 1995 Worldcon in Glasgow will have the largest Irish presence of any Worldcon to date. Previous British worldcons have happened at inconvenient times for Irish fandom (when it was too young or dead!) - ConFiction in the Hague had quite a number of fans as a result of the healthy state of the Irish Science Fiction Association in particular at that time.

The Irish Agents for Intersection are planning on hiring a coach to take fans to Glasgow, thus encouraging more to attend. With awareness of conventions and fandom at its height it is likely that fifty or more will travel to 'the Scottish Worldcon' next year.

Rumours:

There may be a Cyberpunk event with William Gibson, Bruce Sterling and Pat Cadigan in Dublin shortly.

A major Star Trek Convention is planned for Northern Ireland next year.

Nana Visitor (Major Kira in Deep Space 9) will be GOH at a convention, probably in Dublin, in 1996.

A major Small Press event is planned for Dublin in 1997, possibly based around the Eurocon if Ireland wins. Contact albedo one (small press page) for more details.

11th and 12th February, 1995

Leprecon XVI

Ireland's Oldest Games Convention
Trinity College Dublin
Admission £3/day. £5 weekend.
More details from Box 18, Regent House, TCD, Dublin 2.
email: bgamers@maths.tcd.ie

11th and 12th March, 1995

Timewarp 2

Major Star Trek convention.

Confirmed guests: Leonard Nimoy, Majel Barrett Roddenberry, Diane Duane & Peter Morwood. Venue: The Grand Hotel, Malahide. Membership rates: £30 (adult), £20 (junior, under 16). Further information from Timewarp, P.O. Box 4183, Dublin 16 or Email:

DAVEMC@toppsi.gn.apc.org

October 1995

Octocon 1995, the sixth Irish national science fiction convention.

Venue and other details: To be announced. Further information from Octocon, 20 Newgrove Avenue, Sandymount, Dublin 4.

Gaelcon 95:

The Irish Games Association's National Games Convention

Ireland's major role-playing games convention, usually taking place in the beautiful surrounds of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. Further information from Irish Games Association, P.O. Box 4345, Dublin 1.

(Octocon article continued from page 1)

sidering it is the only major SF gathering in the country. The Irish Science Fiction Association had a large and well stocked table (Phase I, 1994 was launched at a special event called the ISFA Happy Hour - it wasn't very happy though as the hotel wouldn't allow alcohol - even specially made punch - on its premises without a large corkage being paid). Sector 001, a Star Trek group also had a table, *albedo one/aeon press* were the only small press publishers there. Timewarp II, Intersection the 1995 Worldcon, and the British Eastercons for 1995 and 1996 were also well represented.

The biggest scandal to hit an Octocon to date occurred when a fanzine (Cortex) was distributed denigrating some of the guests and dealers using very strong language. Controversially this led to the recommendation that the writers of the 'zine be banned from any future Octocon conventions, and indeed any future conventions, as copies of the fanzine were to be passed around the fan circuit. This reaction met a mixed response, cries of 'free speech' being heard amongst the murmurings of agreement with the decision. Other problems with the hotel and hotel management surfaced (a wedding reception was taking place beside the dealer's room and the hotel weren't happy about loony sf fans getting in the way of the bride and groom) but all seemed to be sorted out reasonably quickly.

So the fifth Octocon, with the lowest attendance to date, was perhaps also not the most successful. It is a vitally important event for Irish fandom and publishing, and it must continue and grow. Publicising and promotion of the next convention must begin in earnest immediately following the previous and the relationships built up with Irish and UK publishers should be further enhanced. From my point of view it was very enjoyable, and I doubt if there were many present who will not return again next year. A new committee was formed immediately following the closing ceremony and planning has already started for the sixth in the Octocon series.

Chaos Journeys - an exhibition by Peter Queally



Peter Queally is a 26 year old Irish artist who has been active in the Irish science fiction field for the past four years. He was winner of the Best Artist award at the science fiction art exhibition run by the Irish Science Fiction Association to celebrate Dublin's period as European City Of Culture in 1992. In addition Pete Queally has contributed to magazines in both Ireland (FTL, Phase, First Contact, *albedo one*) and the UK where he recently illustrated a tribute to Clive Barker published by the British Fantasy Society.

His first solo exhibition took place in August at the Jo Rain Gallery in Dublin's cultural quarter, Temple Bar. The paintings were primarily acrylic on canvas, and some mixed media. They ranged in size from A3 to A0 or larger, their main theme being of a journey through chaos and the recurring use of ogham symbols which combined the pagan past with the modern world. Prices ranged from £100 to £500.

The paintings were well received with a number of sales before the end of the two week exhibition.

BR

The Infinity Effect - A Way of Infinite Lives

Place your fragile mind in the hands of a true Science Fiction visionary and you can be instantly swept away to worlds beyond imagining.

On the last Thursday of every month with a repeat the following Saturday, The Infinity Effect tries to avoid such pretensions because its main aim is to inform and entertain listeners who may not be completely au fait with the vagaries of fantasy, horror, contemplative, speculative, or science fiction.

Infinity Effect host Bob Neilson introduces mainstream listeners to authors, artists, publishers and fans from all walks of fantasy fiction. Featured dignitaries have already included Anne McCaffrey, Geoff Ryman, Colin Greenland, Paul McAuley, Robert Jordan, Stephen Hawking and many fan groups in the science fiction, Star Trek and science fields. Wide ranging discussions on subjects as diverse as the current state of televisual science fiction to angelic intervention take place regularly. Prizes of books and other merchandise have been given away for the price of a phone call and at the risk of being the last name out of the hat.

In addition there is an in-depth "What's On Guide" in science fiction and

science in the Dublin area, and a comprehensive news section keeps listeners up-to-date about coming projects in film, television and printed matter worthy of

Authors on The Infinity Effect in 1994

Robert Jordan
Anne McCaffrey
Diane Duane
Peter Morwood
Michael Carroll
Pat Cadigan
Colin Greenland
Ian McDonald
Geoff Ryman
Katherine Kurtz
Scott McMillan
Stephen Hawking
Paul Kearney
Robert Holdstock

the attention of either the discerning aficionado or the mildly interested

Okay, so that's what the programme does. What it fails to do is treat Science Fiction fans as subnormal three year olds. Neither will it ever get so tech-

nical that only a theoretical physicist could understand it. And it doesn't review rubbish and make it sound like gold dust. (Sponsorship may play an important part in keeping the programme on the air but it isn't allowed to dictate editorial terms.)

With a down-to-earth attitude and roving reporters gathering the views from the streets, The Infinity Effect is more than just a magazine programme on the radio - it's the only magazine programme of its sort on the radio. an audio-glossy crammed with more fascinating features than the alien make-up department of Babylon 5.

The Infinity Effect

7.30 p.m. last Thursday of
the month, repeated the
following Saturday.
Broadcast on Anna Livia
FM (Dublin and environs)
103.8 FM.

*Miss it and several universes
remain unexplored.*

SW

The Twilight Zone

Science fiction mentions in the general media

The Octocon award winning costume (modelled by Michelle Carter, created by Helen Ryder) featured in the Irish Independent the day after Octocon. Michelle was pictured with actor Michael York at a walk to raise funds for the Trocaire charity in Dublin city centre which they went on during the Sunday of the convention. Other members of the convention went, including Paddy Kickham and Simon Crane who were included in a similar photograph in the Sligo Weekender the following week. The walk was completed by Timewarp members who carried a banner advertising the convention.

Irecon 4 had two photographs of Damon Wise and his bride getting married at the convention in September. Both photographs featured Klingons as honour guard - The Star and The Sun carried the photographs, and The Star also had a small photograph of Gates McFadden.

"Scarves that are long enough for any follower of Dr. Who who might like to take a space trip through intergalactic glaciers over the next few weeks." Irish Independent fashion page, 5/9/94, accompanying a photograph of a model wearing a long scarf!

An article on the future of television mentioned Arthur C. Clarke's 'City and the Stars' as a possible future road technology might take. Irish Independent, 29/12/94

Books reviewed:

Pasquale's Angel - Paul J. McAuley was reviewed in the Irish Times and the Sunday Press, favourably in both cases and they even mentioned it was science fiction/alternate history.

Kurt Vonnegut's 'Welcome to the Monkey House' and 'Palm Sunday' were reviewed together, again in the Irish Times. 'The quality is uneven, the style at times irritatingly, self-indulgently clever' was what the reviewer thought of Monkey House.

Authors interviewed:

Pat Cadigan was featured on a full page section mainly dealing with her novel 'Fools' in In Dublin.

Doris Lessing was interviewed at length in the Irish Times (and her science fiction output was not mentioned, even once).

Michael Carroll appeared in the computing section of The Irish Times (he's a computer programmer) where he talked about his books 'The Last Starship' and 'Moonlight'.

An interview with Brendan Ryder for a small local paper (The Templeogue Echo) featured photographs from Octocon 1990 showing Terry Pratchett (with costumer Peter McCanney as Death) and, in a separate photograph, fans Kari and Denis Caswell.

This has been Issue One of Sensor, an occasional review of Irish Science Fiction and related topics. Though long in the planning it was finished in a rush - apologies for the typos, inaccuracies and omissions - issue two will only correct them if you let me know about them though. Speaking of issue two - expect it sometime this year (1995) but don't hold your breath. However it's very easy to make sure you get it - write a letter, submit an article/ cartoon/ art or (the boring way) send a stamped addressed envelope (within Ireland) or an International Reply Coupon (from guess where?) Alternatively come to Octocon (if there is one) and buy me a drink. That will get you at least a lifetime subscription. And of course, a copy of your fanzine will get mine in trade.

Many thanks to those who submitted articles to this issue (and who are now sorry they did). The guilty parties are:

JK -	John Kenny
PM -	Peter McClean
BN -	Bob Neilson
JP -	James Peart
HR -	Helen Ryder
PS -	Paul Sheridan
SW -	Stephen Walker

You probably guessed BR was me, Brendan Ryder.

The address for Sensor is:

**30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road,
Templeogue, Dublin 16.**

This address may bear an uncanny resemblance to a lot of other addresses in the fanzine - yes, I'm involved in quite a few projects!

So why did you receive this fanzine?

- ☐ Publisher
- ☐ Bookshop
- ☐ Other professional concern
- ☐ I would really like your opinion
- ☐ I know I'm going to get your opinion
(after what I wrote about your magazine/event)
- ☐ It's in trade for a fanzine I received from you
- ☐ After what has been written about you/your event/ publication you really should see it
- ☐ You represent a local fan organisation
- ☐ You represent a national fan organisation
- ☐ All of the above