

As if life weren't already complicated enough. There you are, finally recovered from the effects of the last full moon, when along comes another copy of...

Thyme 30

is produced by Roger Weddall, of 79 Bell Street, Fitzroy 3065, AUSTRALIA; telephone (03) 417 1841. It is available for news or other information or in exchange for fool's gold at the following rates: AUSTRALIA: 10 issues for \$5; NORTH AMERICA/NEW ZEALAND: 10 issues for \$9; EUROPE: 10 issues for £5/DM20/whatever. OVERSEAS COPIES ARE SENT AIRMAIL. Agents: Europe: Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh St., Fimlico, London, SW1V 2ER, U.K. *** North America: Jerry Kaufman, 4326 Winslow Place North, Seattle, WA 98103, U.S.A. *** Enz: Nigel Rowe, 24 Beulah Avenue, Rothesay Bay, Auckland 10. I can generally be jollied along into giving the thing away, if you go about it in the right manner, but don't forget that a big, pink X means that this could be your last issue, unless you... DO SOMETHING! Registered by Australia Post - publication #VBH2025
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A Biased View of Australian Fandom

Perhaps the main problem encountered when reading *Thyme*, especially from the point of view of a non-Australian reader, is the difficulty of putting all the Australian news & information into some sort of context. Indeed, given the diverse nature of Australian fandom, that may prove difficult at times for some Australian readers. Hopefully the brief overview of Australian fandom presented here will help give these readers a better idea of how things work here, and why. Bearing in mind that this is only one (Melbourne) person's view of 'What's on Where', etc., read on (and feel free to write back and tell me where I went wrong, if I did).

The Lay of the Land.

In general the Australian model of 'fandom' is similar to the ones found in the USA and in Britain, but the comparative lack of population density here means that most activity is clustered in a small number of spots - six, to be precise. There are of course fans or sf people spread across the entire country but they're relatively few and far between.

In spite of the distances between capital cities, there is a lot of travel between them; both to go to conventions, and even just to move house. The distance between Melbourne and Sydney, 900km/600miles, is generally regarded as a "reasonable but long" full day's drive (or hitchhike), while the distance between Sydney and Canberra, about 200km, is by Australian standards comparatively negligible; people drive to Canberra from Sydney for the weekend without much thought about it. Perth, the full 4000km/2500miles breadth of the continent away from most other centres, tends to be left to its own devices a little, but even then there's some amount of cross-travel and certainly communication. So although well-spread geographically, sf fandom in Australia could almost be seen as a single albeit diverse community.

The main grounds on which this might be challenged is the existence of 'media fandom' - the collective term for those interested mainly or solely in television & film sf, eg. Star Trek, Blakes Seven, Dr Who - but things have not gone so far here as in America, where separate interest groups seem to keep

entirely to themselves. There is now a National Media SF Convention as well as a National SF Con and there are fansines and media fanzines but there is also more than a considerable overlap of the two spheres of interest; Australian fandom may well be on the road to "Balkanisation" but this has not yet factually happened.

Melbourne: traditionally "where it's at", and the fact that it will be hosting the 1985 World SF convention would seem to indicate that that statement holds true, but Melbourne is more just a representation in miniature of the way Aus fandom is, than the crowning jewel of its achievement. The place is made up of a few distinct groups rather than being one seething hive of fannish activity. There are the people who are running AUssiecon Two, most of whom also did Aussiecon One; there's Musfa & ex-Musfa people, based around the Melbourne Uni group; there's the Dandenong-Frankston crowd; a Dr Who group... there is a reasonable amount of overlap between all these crowds but it would be a mistake to think of Melbourne fandom as a monolithic entity, 'cause it ain't.

A visit as a stranger would probably find you talking to the older Aussiecon people, who tend to be better-known overseas (eg. John Foyster, Christine Ashby), or to the ex-Musfa or Musfa people; these two groups/mobs being the ones who tend to do things like hold Nova Mob meetings, go out in groups to restaurants or throw parties - the whole social whirl bit. Melbourne, especially in Sydney, has had a reputation as a conservative, dull place but that's partially due just to the fact that there's not nearly as much hopping in and out of each others' beds and that sort of thing that, in recent times, Sydney especially was famous for. *Nota Bene:* if you happen to be staying on in Melbourne, in '85, after the World Convention, you will have the opportunity to experience what is without doubt the worst weather that Australia has to offer: Spring in Melbourne: wet, cold and windy - singularly shithouse.

Adelaide: with many of the former, fannish inhabitants having moved to Melbourne or other centres, over the last few years, and with the SCA (more of which later) having prospered to some extent at the expense of regular fandom, Adelaide is currently very quiet. Smallish Friday night outings, Paul Day's 'Black Hole' Bookshop and the occasional small convention; that's about it at the moment for Adelaide.

Sydney/Canberra: Up to about a year ago Sydney was a lively centre of sf activity but things have been pretty quiet of late; most unusual. The main reason for this has been the Society of Creative Anachronism (SCA). Originating in America (so what else is new), the idea, generally, is to dress up like a rich person of mediaeval times (the demand for shit-shovelling peasants being awfully low, these days) and become versed in all sorts of mediaeval arts such as how to dance, weave tapestries, work leather, fashion armour and kill people wearing said suits of armour with long pointed sticks. The SCA has established footholds in Perth and Adelaide but is flourishing in Sydney and has drawn many people away from any sort of organised, fannish activity. The recently-held Syncon '83, the extremely well-attended and extremely large (by Australian standards: just over 500 people) Aus.NatCon for this year also took up the time and energy of many, leaving few with a taste for organised anything. Consequently fandom in Sydney exists pretty much for the moment on a who-you-know-well basis. Small groups of people living in the same area as each other have the regular good time but seem to keep pretty much to themselves and even be unaware of most other such groups.

The one regular point of contact these days, not as alive as in previous times, is Galaxy Bookshop of a Thursday evening. Still, media fandom is alive and well in Sydney if anywhere in Australia, with Sue & Ron Clarke - up in the Blue Mountains - perhaps the best known fannish people. But for the most part, Sydney is in decline.

There are quite a few active sf fans in Canberra these days, Leigh Edmonds and Jean Weber perhaps being the best known. It's always seemed more just an appendage of Sydney fandom (due to its proximity) but nowadays, with Sydney fandom in abeyance, Canberra may well come into its own. Already it has an excellent reputation as/for being host to some extremely well-run, cosily enjoyable conventions.

Current committee: Malcolm Edwards - Chair; other members - Chris Atkinson, Colin Fine, Dave Langford, Hugh Mascetti, Martin Tudor and Paul Vincent.

Pre-Supporting Memberships are currently available, to help the bid along financially, and cost of such will be deducted from memberships of the actual con
XXXXX if when successful. The cost is fl or \$2 (local currency, USA/Australia) and
below are the addresses of agents to write to:

Australia..Roger Weddall. 79 Bell Street, Fitzroy 3065

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Speaking of winners, now is as timely a moment as any to once again plug both these excellent publications. If you are interested in the goings-on of British/European fandom and more besides, you're crazy not to be getting both these worthy publications. Ansible, bastard son of Tll Ddu, is worth getting for the humour & general quality of writing alone - and Roelof, in *Shards of Babel*, is not unable to turn a nice (English!) phrase himself, either. Recommended.

*Shards of Babel: Roelof Goudriaan,
Postbus 1189,
8200 ED Lelystad,
the Netherlands.*

£2 for 8 issues (airmailed)

£2.50/\$4 for 6 issues (airmailed)

[illegible]

Also at the recent Novascon, Australians Judith Hanna & Carey Handfield press-ganged Eve Harvey into becoming the British co-ordinator for the Shaw Fund. Eve shall undoubtedly prove equal to the task and writes:

'Bob himself is absolutely thrilled to think that you all want to see him so much, and I can assure you that he will make a great addition to the con ((the fund will bring Bob Shaw to Aussiecon Two in '85)).

'I've already a few ideas for fund raising schemes, but nothing really concrete yet except that Bob has agreed to our producing a small pamphlet (possibly about ten pages) containing humorous articles/stories that we can sell. Nothing further than 'that's a great idea' has been done yet, though.' Eve's address: 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3QH, U.K.

Australian administrators of the fund, Marc Ortlieb and Justin Ackrowd,
% GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne 3001, have not been idle, either.

Marc shall shortly be putting out a FAN FUNDS' NEWSLETTER, covering not only The SHAW FUND but also DUFF, GUFF and FFANZ. (TAFF and SEFF too, maybe?) Marc mentions that the newsletter 'probably won't be called Up Yours Mike Glyer,' and that already Marc has a 'lovely piece from Bob Shaw' for the thing.

DUFF -- American Administrator Jerry Kaufman has produced a Duff Newsletter which, if you wish to obtain a copy, can be got for the expense of a SSNE sent to Jerry (4326 Winslow Place North, Seattle WA 98103). In it Jerry gives details of American voters in the last race (which he won) and lists the current state of the Duff accounts both in America and Australia. To date the American coffers stand at \$1914.50 plus many saleable items. A special mention should be made of

GUFF (Please remain seated - I am not going to solicit votes for any of the candidates.) U.K. administrator Joseph Nicholas reports the extraordinarily wonderful total of over £800 raised so far at the British end of the quest to bring over an Aussie fan for next year's Eastercon, and that's before adding in the monies raised at Novacon, where a large number of votes for GUFF were received. The deadline for GUFF votes to reach the administrators is by the 1st of January - send your forms to Joe at 22 Denbigh St. Pimlico London SW1V 2ER, or in Australia to John Foyster, 21 Shakespeare Grove, St Kilda 3182.

RFANZ Australian administrator John Newman reports that there is nothing to report - just yet. It's up to five people now, who may be standing in an attempt to win a trip to En Zed next year for the En Zed Nat Con in Auckland, but none of the possible candidates have yet given anything definite, and after the success rate of *Thyme* in predicting where people will move house to, we're certainly not going to start quoting odds on this sort of competition (see later for amplification of this remark).

IAFF - it looks as though the field has finally settled down to two British candidates to travel next year to America - Rob Hansen, and the reluctant D. West. Simon Ounsley has dropped from the race for unstated reasons.

DUFF IRREGULARITIES No, this has nothing to do with the comments of Mike Glycer/
File:770 reported in the last issue, but in fact is a slight
correction to a piece of reportage in the last issue which apparently gave an
incorrect impression. I did not intend for it to read that Mike Glicksohn and
Joni Stopa were standing for Duff on a joint ticket, but this could have been
inferred from what was printed. Further to this, since *Thyme* 29 appeared, Andrew
Porter has withdrawn his 1985 Duff candidacy, leaving, to my knowledge, the
aforementioned two as well as Bill Bowers and the Cantors - but it's certainly
early days for this, yet. The 1984 race hasn't even been decided, yet.

While on the subject of "getting in early", how about mentioning another future WorldCon bid. Yes, it's apparently **BOSTON** in '89.

Already to hand is the handsome production 'The Mad 3 Party', the bid fanzine. With brief biographies of committee members and reportage of a meeting that is not entirely without interest, if only as a contrast to the way that the Aussiecon Two mob have been operating. 'Massachusetts Convention Fandom Inc.', the organisation apparently responsible for Noreascons I and II (both of them previous WorldCons) sounds like a rather interesting beast to watch in action or at least read about, so you might be interested in receiving this quarterly publication of theirs. This first issue also includes a potted ~~XXXX~~ history of Noreascon II, and a detailed but meandering discussion of the pros and cons of MC Inc. funding a group that makes recordings of Hugo winner novels for the blind. The committee seems remarkably free with their money, but I can't resist giving their bid all this free publicity when they're supporting such a kindly cause. Now all someone has to do is to suggest that the people they're giving the money to use it to record some worthwhile material. But their hearts are in the right place, at least.

For 'The Mad 3 Party' write to Boston in '89,

TM3P.

Box 46, MIT Branch PO,

Cambridge, MA 02 139, U.S.A.

This is the address for the bid as well. And as if that weren't enough, you kin become a Pre-Supporting member for \$3, or a Pre-Opposing member for \$6. Crazy, but it all sounds like innocent fun.

Return of the Jedi (Hoyts)

First and foremost the *Star Wars* movies have been billed as entertainment, pure and simple, and *Return of the Jedi* is at least visually entertaining. In fact, compared with just about anything else ever done in film the special effects are extraordinarily good. Make-up, lighting, sets and computer animation - full marks to everyone associated in these departments.

As far as what it's like to watch the film as a whole, well, it's not as simple as that. I suppose the most difficult thing about this film - and about the previous one of the series - is that it's only part of a trilogy. *Star Wars* stood alone, but *Return of the Jedi* relies heavily on the groundwork of *The Empire Strikes Back*, and more than once through the film I caught myself thinking how much of an improvement it would be, or would seem, to see the two films together.

As a film on its own, even given that the two previous had been seen at some stage, it is a stop-start affair. This is more noticeable at the beginning, where necessary storyline is couched somewhat awkwardly between gratuitous scenes that are meant to flesh out the background and yet seem curiously artificial and out of place. I have nothing against dance scenes featuring alien musical groups - the aliens themselves are nicely done - but in *Return of the Jedi*, as opposed to the pub scene in *Star Wars*, it's really just a distraction that wrecks hell with the pacing of the story.

Once the film gets truly underway the crossing from one plot strand to another and back again is reasonably well done but this time it's the nature of those scenes that somewhat mutes the effect that each has on the viewer.

The tense and weighty emotional scene in which Luke Skywalker confronts the emperor must suffer interruptions from an elegant, spectacular battle scene in space and an action-packed person-to-person tussle laced with some humour. It's a strain on the viewer to switch from scene to scene to scene with emotions to match; the film suffers because of it.

Having said that, let me say that, for the most part, that acting is at least competent. It's fairytale stuff but most of the part actors have a go at putting some life into their parts.

In conclusion, it's an adequate end to the trilogy, and if you enjoyed the previous ones you should like this offering. Roger Weddall

Brainstorm (Greater Union)

The translation of sf story ideas from the written page to the film screen usually involves a considerable time lag: recent sf films (*Star Wars*, *E.T.*, etc.) draw on ideas popular in print in the 1930s and 1940s.

Brainstorm doesn't break with this tradition. The film's central idea is a direct descendant of the 'feelies' of 'Brave New World' by way of Arthur C. Clarke's short story 'Patent Pending': a machine capable of recording, and of replaying, any experience the wearer of the device undergoes.

What makes *Brainstorm* different from the other films mentioned above, and from almost any other sf film I can recall, is that the *Brainstorm* device is not just a gimmick around which to write a screenplay - the idea is the film. The story begins with the development of the machine, and goes on to deal with how the machine is used, and with what it does to those involved in its development and use.

So far, so good. It's exciting to see an sf idea used on its own merits, and not as the background to another tale of adventure, horror or mystery.

However, *Brainstorm* isn't a great film. Except for Louise Fletcher's dedicated and betrayed chief scientist, none of the roles become anything more than two-dimensional. The romantic sub-plot involving Christopher Walken's junior scientist and Natalie Wood's semi-estranged wife, while important to the story, is also rather treacly.

The major flaw in *Brainstorm* lies not in the characterisation or human interest, but in the film's weak, almost non-existent ending. In place of an appropriate finish, the audience gets a few minutes of (quite pretty) special effects, which are there to illustrate the "Ultimate Trip" yet again. *2001* has a lot to answer for.

Dennis Callegari.

SUPERMAN III (Village)

It is not even a good one.

The direction also does not falter. Lester's talent for sight gags, shown in such films as *The Three Musketeers*, remains strong as does his flair in staging action scenes. The special effects are at least as good as in the first two films.

In *Superman III* the background is well-established and there is no obvious villain capable of matching the hero. The script attempts to create interesting conflicts in two ways: a) the attempt is made to have a machine ("the ultimate computer") as a foe offer the hero a challenge; this is moderately successful if handled somewhat clumsily. b) a conflict is created by allowing Superman to war against himself in the person of his evil alter ego. A problem: Superman, as the archetypal hero, is not really interesting, apart from his powers. To play around with "the other side" of a hero such as Superman is a difficult task and goes so against the image that it must be very well handled if the "evil" persona is to be believable. It is not well handled and is therefore not believable.

However the movie as a whole is so weakened by inconsistent script as to be only mediocre. The series is beginning to look familiar and laboured; I am not looking forward to the rumoured Superman IV. Mark Lippman

Mark adds as a P.S. that the film, as yet unreleased in Australia, is due to appear very soon on video cassette - sounds like the movie houses have an opinion similar to his of the relative worth of the film.

New Zealand: Speaking of marriage & so on, Rex Thompson & Pauline Meinung finally got around to announcing their engagement; somewhat sneakier were Mervyn Barrett and friend Julia, who went so far as to hold a party to which many were invited, only to be told at the door that it was to celebrate their recent (yes, past tense and all) marriage. Meanwhile, Frank Macskasy is still in Auckland. Frank's (been?) trying to se'l his house before heading Europewards more or less (more) permanently, but has had no luck; it seems clear he will be in New Zealand at least until the New Year....

Canberra: Sue & Richard Hryckiewicz have a sort-of change of address. Because some local kids have discovered the joys of raiding mailboxes, please send all future mail to: A319702, Cpl. Richard Hryckiewicz, Base Radio, RAAF Base, Richmond 2755 - whups, how did that get into the Canberra section? They live, of course, in Smithfield, a suburb of Sydney. Oh well, now that I have your attention, I might as well mix the Sydney and Canberra items in together. A real Canberra item - one that should make a lot of people happy - is that...

The CSFS recently held their AGM and new President is Carole Nomarhas, Secretary: Dorothy Wilson; Editor: Jean Weber. Their Christmas Party is on 13th December at Carole & Jim Nomarhas' house, 27 Dalgleish Close, Spence (phone: 582821). Somewhat appropriately, the CSFS now meet on the first Public Service Pay Thursday of every month. Sydney: to coincide with Harry Harrison's touring round Australia, there will be a smallish Syncon '84 on the 24th-26th of February weekend - more details, as with Circulation IN, as they come to hand....

Perth: the annual Bad Taste Party - your host Julian Warner - has now been moved back to the 9th of December. This was, it transpires, to become a trans-Australian event, with similar parties held on the originally organised date - the 26th of November, with the Sydney do at Bob Ellis' place and the Adelaide splurge hosted by the founder of the Perth Bad Taste parties, Bob Ogden. As fate would have it, there has quite independently been organised a Bad Taste party in Melbourne on that same date - and unknowingly Terry Stroud (also in Melbourne) has also just announced a Bad Taste party for that night. Now is that good taste (or bad timing; or bad taste and good timing) or what?□□□ Michelle Muysert and Jo Masters will be holding an Underwear Party at Swancon 9, with a Slave Auction as well; you have been warned.□□□ So much for events in one W.A. Meanwhile, in another WA, Cliff Wind & Jerry Kaufman are getting their Spawncon act going... Jerry writes:

'We talked to the Norwescon committee today, and we are firming up our ideas for our first issue of Spawn of Prophecy. It looks like this: small fee to join Spawncon, to cover mailing costs, etc. Separate Norwescon membership. Large party will be main Spawncon programming, but also several panel discussions, presentations etc. on Australian fandom and prodrom. Probably a special button for Spawncon members, which can be sold as souvenirs. Excess cash, if any, to DUFF. We expect to publish the first Spawn in January, and it will have rates for Spawncon and promises, ideas, etc.'

Spawncon, to be held in conjunction with the 1985 Norwescon, is of course that year's National Australian SF Convention, and is the first AusNatCon ever held outside Australia-an historic event, dontcha know.

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"Torm t' go, me li'ul frenz... but before I do I'll say thanks a lot to all the people who helped out with this issue, especially Roelof, Carey, Pascal, Dennel, Mark, Jean, Nigel, Justin and - I'm running out of ways of saying this - VICTOR, Seeyuz, Ruger.

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