

easily accessible, near ~ conveniently adv.  
**convent** [konvent] *n* community (gen of women) living under a religious rule; building in which they live.

**conventicle** [konventik'l] *n* (hist) illegal religious meeting of Dissenters; chapel.

**convention** [konvenshon] *n* convened to discuss or legislate; accepted social pact; accepted social (normally in minor m.

**conventional** [konvenshonal] *adj* established by social convention; in artificial standard; rigidly bound by convention; not atomic.

**conventicle**

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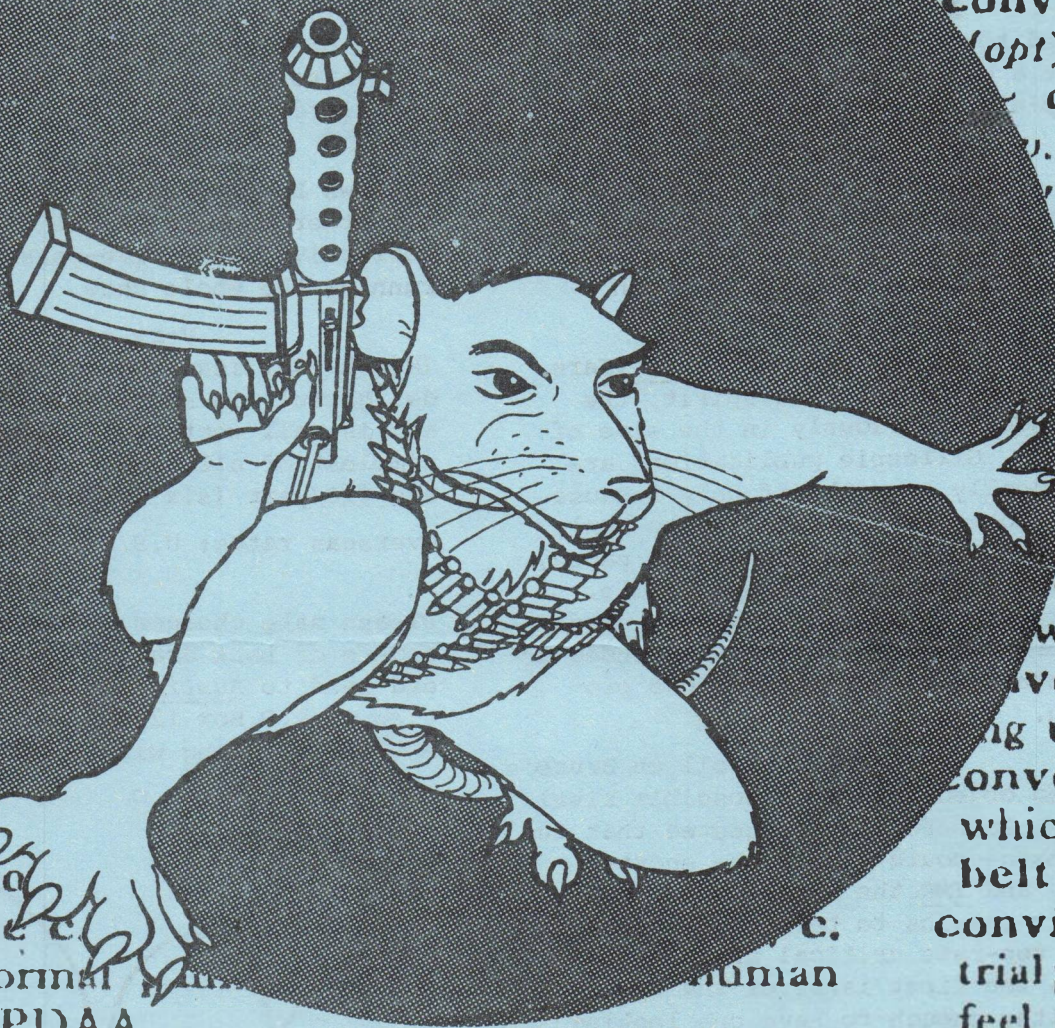
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THE AUSTRALASIAN SF NEWS MAGAZINE

April 1986



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## 'AUSTRALIAN SF REVIEW' GETS OFF TO A GOOD START

Most Australians currently reading sf - or, for that matter, publications such as Thyme - were not around as part of the audience in the days when the Australian Science Fiction Review regularly saw the light of day, but such was the reputation of the fanzine that every so often, when old copies would turn up at the occasional sf convention, they would fetch respectable prices. ASFR was gone, but not forgotten.

Even today, enough people remember the ASFR of old that its name is something to conjure with, and surely it was for this reason that rather than invent a new name for a new project, the title of ASFR has been revived.

At a glance, if it is to be compared to an extant production, you'd call it a comparison volume to Bruce Gillespie's The Metaphysical Review.

The comparison is apt, for in his introductory guest editorial John Bangsund talks of The Metaphysical Review as being 'as close to the 20th anniversary issue of ASFR as I can imagine.'

If TMR and ASFR Mark II are incarnations of the same spirit, the difference is obviously in the size of the two. Gillespie publications are traditionally mammoth (if only because of the backlog of material to be run), while the new ASFR is a short 36 pages, A4 halved and stapled in the middle. The output of both may, however, eventually prove equal, with ASFR intended as a bimonthly - a fast and furious production.

Trying to pour oil on Bruce's troubled objections to a possible rival for TMR, John Foyster suggested that the new fanzine could handle the shorter pieces, and TMR the larger ones, and while it remains to be seen if there are enough top-rate critical articles to go around, the first issue of the new ASFR is healthy enough to have one looking forward immediately to the next installment.

Looking beyond the two editorials, the first item encountered is the beginning of what may turn out to be a Neverending Article by John Foyster, entitled 'The Long View'. Professing to be a 'longitudinal investigation of the nature of modern science fiction as re-

vealed by its popular magazines', Foyster barely lays the statistical groundwork for his study before- (cont. in ASFR #2). It will be interesting to see what he makes of his figures.

Second, to my mind, is the gem of the issue, the transcription of a talk given by Bruce Gillespie at the Nova Mob in 1981. 'Gene Wolfe's Sleight of Hand' shows why Bruce is considered one of Australian fandom's best critical & fan writers, as on one hand he despairs of ever being able to understand what Wolfe is really on about, while on the other he looks, business like fashion, at just what sort of magician's tricks Wolfe *does* use, and how, and maybe even clues as to why.

Russell Blackford is on next, 'Taking Wynne Whiteford Seriously', and if the article is a more deliberate, considered study of Wynne's works, it's entertaining enough to make you want to read (more) Whiteford.

Finally, a couple of short reviews by Lucy Sussex and Jenny Blackford, two other members of the 'Science Fiction Collective', the five-person editorial team running the whole show.

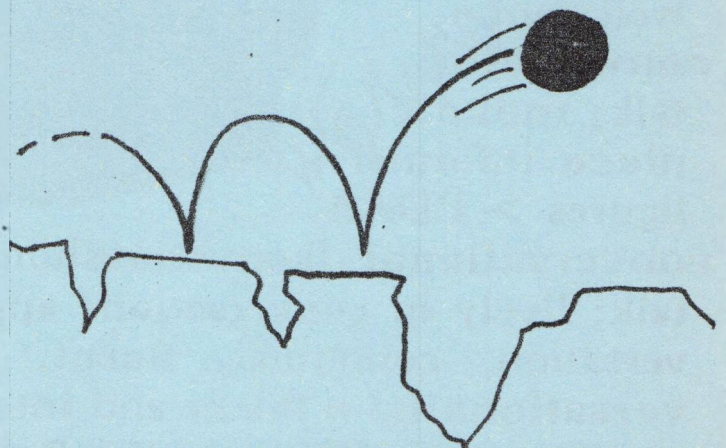
Very simply, the first (March '86) issue of the new ASFR is a delightful, in spots even challenging read, and is well worth your support and, simplest of all, your money - subscriptions are \$10/year (six issues), or \$2 a copy.

Overseas rates: U.S.A.: US\$12/year (AIRMAIL).

U.K.: £5/year (SEAMAIL).

Please make cheques, international money orders or bank drafts payable to J.M.Foyster, and send to Australian Science Fiction Review, G.P.O.Box 1294L, Melbourne 3001, AUSTRALIA, along with your name and address.

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OPTIMISM







## 'GALACTIC TOURS' UNIVERSALLY ENJOYED

a convention report  
by Peter Burns.

The average Melbourne fan could perhaps be forgiven for not realising that there was a convention on the Labour Day Weekend, such is the level of communication between media and literary fans, it would seem. But for those who didn't get to the Galactic Tours convention, this is what you missed....

The foyer of the Town House was a veritable hive of activity. People paying money to see the display of Star Trek and UFOs [The Red Cross stand sold Matchbox cars and plastic toys, perhaps indicating their preconceptions about the average sf fan], fans lounging about the comfy chairs they have in the reception area at the Townhouse.

From the 'Melbourne' room emerged a tall, dark figure with a very bad case of asthma and a face mask with grilles. [One suspected that this Darth Vader was not the real McCoy, although at a con with David Prowse as Guest of Honour, you couldn't be certain of anything.] The effect was instantaneous and quite dramatic. A couple of small children backed up against the wall with fear, another presumably making a healthy escape tripped and fell on the step, where his father comforted him. Quite a dramatic introduction to a convention, but fortunately not one which set the tone for the event.

After the backbiting of Aussiecon, the goodwill seen at this convention was a welcome change. David McDonnell wasn't going until a few days before because of the price (\$40) and the necessities of rent and food. That was, until Shane Morrissey heard and suddenly there was a Complementary membership available. David wasn't the only person to be treated so at this rather unusual convention designed to promote interest in science fiction, and fans getting together, rather than closet these things behind closed doors.

So the table was being 'personed' by David (who thought he owed the con something for being so generous) and Mandy Herriot (who seems to naturally gravitate towards a working role at conventions - the con repaid her for the time she put in with a place at the convention banquet).

It was a very good con to work for, and a very easy one - and partly as a result ran very smoothly and was enjoyable for everybody, not just those outside the organisation. There were the usual occasional personal gripes like "that guy in charge of Security is a Nazi" from a couple of people. This was the same fellow who, as we were sneaking in the back way to watch the banquet, came up to Roger and handed him a set of radio headphones with the simple instruction: "You're a gopher." "I'm a what?" "You're a gopher." "But what am I supposed to do?" "Don't ask questions, you're just a gopher." "???" Like I said, it was a fun con to work for - they were very good at using people who just walked in off the street - and this was a banquet where even the gophers were fed, a nice touch, I thought.

David Prowse was a very good Guest of Honour, quietly spoken but extremely sociable. He reportedly spent some of his GoH speech showing off holiday snaps, such was the informal tone of the con. Then of course they had him answering the 'phone for them to help out on one of the mornings they were short a few workers.

The programme seemed to be mostly pretty self-running, low-key, with the main room divided into three areas and various clubs arranging items for each area. So on Sunday afternoon you had a choice between a trivia quiz, a Star Trek theatre group or a serious lecture about aspects of 'Blakes 7'. If none of those appealed, there was always the artshow to look at or, failing that, the bar.

It was also the 1986 Australian National Media Convention, a fact pretty well hidden and mentioned only inconspicuously on p.31 of the programme booklet. It seems they were the 'Stand-by Convention' in case nobody else bid for 1986 (which no-one did). I don't think anybody regretted this choice, however unconventional the method by which it was reached.

We don't have a detailed breakdown of total attendance yet, but it appears that membership of the con proper was around 350, and Saturday and Sunday (no figures yet for Monday) saw about 1,200 people pay to go around the displays set up on the Ground Floor. I doubt very much that the Red Cross will be displeased with this result. It was a good con all round.



Peter Burns.

## KINKON 2

We here at Thyme have been frapped on the knuckles for predicting that KINKON 2 would be a 'smallish but pleasant convention'. The organisers wish to make it known that it will instead be a huge, crowded, exciting convention that everyone will want to travel for miles and kilometres to attend. [You can let go now, I said what you told me to - ow! Lay off!] KINKON 2 should be a rather visual experience, with much attention being paid to the medium of film (with both panels & talks on it, and a fair number of films as well) [Hey, what are you doing with those pliers?] There will be an exciting masquerade - and all the sort of stuff one finds at the usual convention: parties, room parties, lift parties, dead dog parties.... Should be good.

Dates: 7th - 9th June/Australian Queen's Birthday Weekend  
Rates: Attending: \$20 till April, then \$30 till 1st June, then \$40. Day rate: \$15.  
Venue: Metropole Convention Centre, 287 Military Road, Cremorne 2090 (Sydney).  
Rooms: Single/Twin/Double: \$50 per night. Triple: \$60 per night.  
A deposit of one night's tariff, and indication to the committee what nights you're staying are, as usual, necessary.  
Mail: All cheques, mail, to: Syncon 86, Box 272, Wentworth Building,  
Sydney University 2006.

HALLEYCON - the 7th New Zealand National SF Convention

Dates: 30th May - 2nd June.  
Rates: Attending: \$30. Supporting: \$10.  
Venue: Southern Cross Hotel, 118 High Street, Dunedin, NEW ZEALAND.  
Rooms: Single: NZ\$80 per night; Double: NZ\$90 per night.  
As above, a deposit of one night's worth, etc., required.  
Mail: Halleycon, P.O.Box 5516, Dunedin.



## TIME-WARPED CONVENTION

Dates: 3rd - 5th October, 1986.  
 Rates: Attending: 'Suggested Price': \$50.  
 Venue: Hyde Park Plaza Motel, College Street, Sydney.  
 Rooms: Urk. There will be prices given as soon as they're available. It will be a regular, live-in convention, in any case.  
 Mail: All cheques & correspondence to: Time-Warped Convention, Bob Johnson, 401/26 College Street, Sydney 2010.

Bob is the fellow who runs the programme of 'Star Trek' and other sf serials screenings up in Sydney, and who owns the Melbourne end of it too, although his name is not well known down there. There will be films & serial screenings galore, of course - enough to make any KINKON 2 programmer green with envy, one suspects - and a whole feast of other events, besides, including the usual panels, auction, trivia games - a masquerade, there'll be a special convention banquet (\$22 per person)... an early publicity leaflet exhorts attendees to bring their favourite cuddly animal - there will be a prize given for the best! There will be an art show... in all, it sounds like a rip roarer of a convention if everything promised eventuates. Oh, we almost forgot...

Guest of Honour: Walter Koenig.

Sounds like fun, hey? Write to the above address for further information - but if that's the only reason you're writing (as opposed to joining up, say), the organisers would like you to enclose a 33c stamp to cover the cost of return postage. Got it? Good.

## ECCENTRICON

Dates: 3rd - 6th July, 1987  
 Rates: Attending: \$25 until July 1986; it will be at least \$50 at the door.  
 Venue: There are also Family and Pensioner rates, available on request.  
 Rooms: in 'the beautiful Blue Mountains, West of (great polluted) Sydney, the venue will be the Everglades Hotel, Leura (opposite the famous Everglades Gardens).  
 Mail: 'Live'in accommodation will include all meals, morning & afternoon tea - but is available only to the first two hundred. We have a second, adjoining hotel but their prices are higher.' In other words (and following in the live-in tradition of conventions in the Blue Mountains, such as the fondly-remembered Medvention) it will cost you, but be great - write to the address below for costs details.  
 Eccentricon, P.O.Box C377, Clarence Street, Sydney 2000.

Eccentricon has a flyer out which announces, as some of the attractions, a 'Separate Children's Programme', a 'Great Space Regatta (in the tradition of Henley-on-Todd)' [whatever that means it, sounds like fun], an 'Art Show', a 'Fanzine Production Workshop', 'Build Your Own Space Model'.... There's a Banquet ('for the first 150 only'), a 'Why I should Be Fan Guest of Honour Essay Competition (hey, we're serious!!)' and much, much more. In fact, the people running it sound completely open to whatever ideas you may have; they stress that it is a do-it-yourself convention. Anyone who has been to such a live-in convention where everything is catered for will know just how relaxing and enjoyable such an occasion can be. As we said, such events don't just happen for free, but if you can afford it (must find out about those hotel costs) it's not something to pass up. In such a location, if you tire of the con programme, there's always the heated swimming pool or the sauna, or squash, billiards, table tennis or the tennis courts to try out. Ah, that's the life.

## CAPCON - the 1987 National Australian SF Convention

Nothing's been heard from the people running this since Aussiecon 11, last August, which could either be a good sign or a bad one. In between then and now some of the committee members have been engaged in such frivolous pursuits as getting married, or moving house...

Dates: 25th - 27th April/Anzac Day Long Weekend  
 Rates: Attending: \$15 till Swancon XI, \$20 till Christmas '86, \$25 till the event, and \$30 at the door. Supporting: \$5.  
 Venue: New Airport International Hotel, Queanbeyan, A.C.T.  
 GoH: Robert Asprin  
 Mail: All mail, cheques, to: P.O.Box 312, Fyshwick 2609, A.C.T.



GUFF - 1986-7

WHAT IS GUFF? The Going Under Fan Fund (known in alternate years as the Get Up-and-over-Fan Fund) was established in 1979 to further contacts between European and Australian fandom by bringing a well-known and popular fan from one hemisphere to attend a convention(s) in the other. GUFF exists solely through the support of fandom. The candidates are voted for by interested fans all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a fee of not less than one pound sterling or two dollars Australian. These votes and the continued interest and generosity of fandom are what make GUFF possible.

WHO MAY VOTE? Voting is open to anyone who has been active in fandom (fanzines, conventions, clubs etc.) since June 1985 at least and who contributes at least one pound sterling or two dollars Australian to the fund. Contributions in excess of this minimum are gratefully accepted. Only one vote per person is allowed; proxy voting is forbidden and you must sign your ballot. Details of the voting will be kept secret. "Write-in" candidates are permitted. Cheques, postal orders and money orders should be made payable to the appropriate administrator and not to GUFF.

VOTING DETAILS GUFF uses the Australian preferential ballot system, which guarantees an automatic run-off and a majority win. You rank the candidates in the order in which you wish to place them. If the leading first-place candidate does not get a majority of the total votes cast the first-place votes of the lowest-ranking candidate are dropped and the second-place votes on those ballots are then counted. The process goes on until one candidate has a majority. It is therefore important to vote for second and third place on your ballot. It is also a waste of time to put any candidate in more than one place.

HOLD OVER FUNDS This choice, similar to "No Award" in BSFA and Hugo Award balloting, gives the voter the chance to vote for no GUFF trip, should the candidates not appeal to them or if they feel that GUFF should slow down the frequency of its trips.

DONATIONS GUFF needs continuous donations of money and material to be auctioned in order to exist. If you are ineligible to vote or don't feel qualified to vote, why not donate anyway? Just as important as donations is publicity -- in fanzines, letters, convention booklets, and by word of mouth -- to increase voter participation and fandom's overall interest in and awareness of GUFF.

THE CANDIDATES Each candidate has promised, barring acts of God, to travel to the 1987 Worldcon (Conspiracy '87), in Brighton U.K., if elected, has posted a bond of \$10-00 and has provided signed nominations and a platform, which is reproduced overleaf, along with the ballot form.

DEADLINE Votes must reach the administrators by 31st January 1987.

Send ballots and donations to:

EUROPE:- Eve Harvey  
43 Harrow Rd  
Carshalton  
Surrey  
SM5 3QH  
U.K.

AUSTRALIA:- Justin Ackroyd  
G.P.O. Box 2708X  
Melbourne  
Vict 3001  
AUSTRALIA

Reproduction of this form is encouraged (urged, even) provided that the text is reprinted verbatim. Anyone reproducing it should substitute their own name(s) below.

This version produced by Marc Ortlieb and the Peppermint Frog Press.



GUFF 1986/7 CANDIDATES' PLATFORMS

VALMA BROWN I want to shout at Dave Langford and go to dinner as requested by Hazel Langford. I want to meet all those beaut British fans I missed at Aussiecon, see the ones I did meet and meet all the ones that Maggie wouldn't let out. I have a soft spot for British accents and because of this weakness Leigh Edmonds will be accompanying me to make sure I come back. I have been involved in fandom since 1971. I am currently a co-editor of 'Fuck the Tories' and co-publisher and boss of 'The Notional'. I like conventions, fans and parties where I can talk to people. I love talking to people.

Nominators: Hazel Langford, Joseph Nicholas, Marilyn Pride, Yvonne Rousseau and Grant Stone.

IRWIN HIRSH Unbearded, and hatless at conventions, Irwin nevertheless possesses all the qualities to be a worthy fan fund winner and a fine administrator. In 9 years he has published 100+ fanzines, including SIKANDER, THYME (with Andrew Brown), and for 6 apas and has been a member of 3 convention committees, including the running of a Worldcon film program. His other interests include films, music, fine art, sports, fine food, and making good use of metropolitan transit systems as a way of discovering cities. A freelance assistant film editor, Irwin would like to be Australia's Steven Spielberg when he grows up.

Nominators: John Foyster, Carey Handfield, Dave Langford, Marc Ortlieb and Arthur Thomson.

JEAN WEBER Having discovered fandom at AUSSIECON I, I have been publishing WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE since 1980. I am an enthusiastic apahack and book reviewer, an organiser of conventions until I learned better, have been Editor of ANZAPA for two years, and am suspected of a prurient interest in other people's personal relationships. I'm well-known for my feminist views, my (lack of) taste in rum, and my dislike of large groups (so why do I enjoy conventions?). How much of the above is true? Bring me to CONSPIRACY in 1987 and find out -- if you dare. (Trip report within one year.)

Nominators: Sally Beasley, Leanne Frahm, Joy Hibbert, Cath Ortlieb and Sue Thomason

=====

I vote for:- (List 1,2,3 etc)

( ) Valma Brown	( ) Hold over funds	I enclose . . . . . as a donation to GUFF. (Make cheques etc. payable to Eve Harvey or Justin Ackroyd, not to GUFF)
( ) Irwin Hirsh	( ) . . . . .	
( ) Jean Weber	(Write in)	

Signature . . . . . If you think your name might not be known to the administrators and that your vote might thus be disqualified, please give the name and address of a fan or group to whom you are known.

NAME & ADDRESS . . . . .

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## VISIONS: A SCIENCE FANTASY FILM FESTIVAL

*VISIONS is a Science Fiction and Fantasy film festival currently being planned for late this year or early next. We hope to make it an annual event where SF/F fandom can come together to enjoy quality genre offerings - rare old movies, obscure cult classics as well as masterpieces of the last decades will be on show. We hope to have a program as diverse as possible under the best possible conditions - a quality cinema and a receptive and imaginative audience.*

*This is where you come in. To find out exactly what the fans want (programming, venues, etc) we'd like to ask you to complete this Film Questionnaire and return it to PO BOX 25 BELMORE 2192 NSW. If you have any further comments or suggestions please include them in your reply - we'd appreciate as much feedback and support as possible.*



# SCIENCE-FICTION FILM QUESTIONNAIRE

HOW MANY FILMS WOULD YOU SEE IN A MONTH? .....

HOW OFTEN DO YOU GO TO ENCORE CINEMAS eg. VALHALLA, DAVES, WALKER STREET, ETC.?

WHAT TYPE OF FILM DO YOU PREFER? SCIENCE FICTION ☐

FANTASY ☐

HORROR ☐

WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO THESE FILMS? (PLEASE NUMBER IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE)

SPECIAL EFFECTS ..... THE DIRECTORS ..... THE ACTORS .....

CULT FLICK ..... MAKE-UP ..... VIOLENCE ..... MUSIC .....

BOOK ADAPTION ..... DRAMA ..... COMEDY ..... UNIQUENESS .....

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO SEE A GENRE FILM FESTIVAL? .....

FOR HOW LONG SHOULD IT GO? WEEKEND: EVENINGS .....

24 HOUR .....

A WEEK: EVENINGS .....

LONG WEEKEND: DAYS .....

EVENINGS .....

24 HOUR .....

WHERE SHOULD IT BE HELD? CITY ..... INNER CITY SUBURBS .....

WESTERN SUBURBS .....

IN ORDER TO FIND OUT WHAT TYPE OF FILM YOU WOULD WANT TO SEE, PLEASE NUMBER THE MOVIES BELOW IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE.

ALIEN (1979) .....

THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN (1971) .....

THE BEDSITTING ROOM (1968) .....

CASINO ROYALE (T.V.M.1956) .....

DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (1951) .....

ERASERHEAD (1978) .....

LADYHAWK (1985) .....

THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT (1958) .....

NOSFERATU (1922) .....

NOSFERATU (1979) .....

ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW (1975) .....

THE TERMINATOR (1984) .....

WHO? (1974) .....

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN GOING ON OUR MAILING LIST?

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

POSTCODE.....



# THEY'RE ALL WINNERS

A review of the DITMAR NOMINATIONS:

BEST AUSTRALIAN SHORT SCIENCE FICTION 1985

by Bruce Gillespie

I've just read these stories again, and I'm feeling all sort of choked up with patriotic emotion. These stories are a lot better than any equivalent list of best short fiction from America, and they might even give a 'best of British' (i.e., best of Interzone) list a run for its money. Too bad that nobody outside Australia has read these stories - except those people who bought copies of Urban Fantasies and Strange Attractors, sources of these stories, at Aussiecon 11. Some odd omissions here: Yvonne Rousseau's Mr Lockwood's Narrative (Strange Attractors), which everybody was going to nominate; stories from Omega; the only real fantasy story from Landscape with Landscape, The Battle of Acosta Nu. But apart from that, I like the list. I won't mind who wins... but I have my preferences:

★★★★★ *The Twist of Fate*, by David Grigg (Urban Fantasies)

This is my choice for the best sf story of 1985 - best sf story from any country. It's a mystery story. An explosion destroys much of Carlton and Melbourne University. What were they making in the Solomon Research Institute? Stephen Tang sets out to find the answer, wending his way through streets packed with humanity, the refugees from a world three-quarters destroyed by the Chaos forty years before. Tang finds a woman who knows the Answer, knows all the answers, but his careful questioning and her reluctant confession don't do either of them any good. Grigg's special skill is to make the mcguffin, the very special Klein flask, into a main part of the story, and at the same time to reveal the humanity of the main characters. Place, time, people, and wonderful scientific notions are juggled and balanced perfectly. One question: where are all the other Grigg stories we've been waiting for for years?

★★★★★ *Glass Reptile Breakout*, by Russell Blackford (Strange Attractors/Omega)

A good story, obscured in places by arch, melodramatic over-writing. Two observers from a Royal Commission attend a StKilda disco to find out the truth about a bizarre combination of rock music, lights, and biofeedback that heals people. One of the observers detects blasphemy; the other, scientific impossibility. A third observer knows how it's done, and provides the scary twist to an otherwise goshwow-scientific-marvel exposé. A vivid, irritating story.

★★★★★ *Montage*, by Lucy Sussex (Urban Fantasies)

Like most of these stories, *Montage* is a fetching combination of interesting characters, scientific mystery, and sociological look-where-it-will-all-lead-to horror story. In particular, *Montage* is the kind of deceptively simple, yet actually complex story that American sf scribes have forgotten how to write. A scientist returns to a beach where an explosion took place some years before. A not-very-clever resident kid takes a film of the same beach. Somebody doesn't want either person to see what the film reveals. Lucy Sussex wastes not a word and places not a false sentence.

★★★★★ *The Fittest*, by George Turner (Urban Fantasies)

This is George Turner's best science fiction story or novel so far. Since he has won several Ditmars already, George should consider himself a favourite to win this year's award. His future Melbourne resembles David Grigg's in many ways, although it might tell you something about the difference between Grigg and Turner as people that Turner's overcrowded future city is divided geographically between haves (Swells) and have-nots (Swills), while Grigg's have-nots squat on the footpaths and parks beside buildings that house the haves. In George's future world, the ice-caps are also melting, slowly engulfing StKilda and, eventually, even Balwyn Heights. George tells the story of a family that descends from being Swells to being Swills, and of two brothers who claw their way back to the top of a fragile society. At first reading, I thought that *The Fittest* sounded a bit anti-poor. On second reading, I realised how carefully Turner had shown the fates of nearly all of us in his future, bankrupt world. George Turner plumps for environment over genetics; the whole of his society becomes an unwilling experiment in rapid social change. Dark stuff, but there's no reason why it shouldn't come true.



\*\*\*\*\* *The Lipton Village Society*, by Lucy Sussex (Strange Attractors)

This is the only elliptical story in the bunch. Again it's a mystery story, but no solution is given. What is the Lipton Village Society, the members of whom meet in the same house where the narrator rents a room? And where is the Lipton Viillage? The story is so suggestive of stray patterns, only barely glimpsed, that I wish it had been a much bigger, more ambitious, more agonised story. That's merely a grump; this is elegant story-telling, well worth reading.

\*\*\*\*\* *The Bullet That Grows in the Gun*, by Terry Dowling (Urban Fantasies)

Last on the list, but surely a hot tip for winner, especially as Terry Dowling is the only non-Melbourne writer on the list. Dowling combines two good ghost stories, mixes them with exactly the right touch of traditional story-telling, and produces two nice climaxes. None of which would matter, of course, if he hadn't started with a deliciously crazy idea: that in science, as in art, 'form follows function'. Do houses grow their own ghosts? Left alone for fifteen years, will a gun grow its own bullet? If so, who will it kill? Like the other stories on the Ditmar nomination list, it makes most overseas sf and fantasy stories look amateurish.

Nothing but praises for this bunch. Whatever the result, it's okay by me. I support *The Twist of Fate* just a bit ahead of *The Fittest* and *The Bullet That Grows in the Gun*; I tip *The Bullet...* on geographical grounds. The real winners here are editors David King and Russell Blackford (for Urban Fantasies, Ebony Books) and Damien Broderick (for Strange Attractors, Hale & Ironmonger).

Bruce Gillespie.

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THEY'RE (NEARLY) ALL WINNERS

A brief discussion of the DITMAR NOMINATIONS:

BEST INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION 1985

and BEST AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION (NOVEL) 1985

by Roger Weddall

The problem with discussing the longer works of science fiction this year is much the same as that encountered when talking about the shorter fiction. Whether because of the fact that most of the books on the International SF list are several years old, or maybe just by accident, most of these novels are quite good, and choosing between them is difficult.

Taking the Australian SF (Novel) category first, the problem here is partially what can be said to be science fiction. If you're talking about simple quality of writing then *Illy whacker*, by Peter Carey, should probably walk away with the Ditmar - but it will concern many people that it is only by the most devious of arguments a work of science fiction, and many people will vote against it for that reason: quite rightly. For much the same reason, there are different categories of award for Short and Long Fiction, or if you like Best Film (at the Oscars) and Best Documentary.

The question of what deserves to be eligible for a science fiction book award becomes trickier when confronted with something such as *Landscape with Landscape*, by Gerald Murnane. In the story *The Battle of Acosta Nu*, in the book, there are Australians living in Paraguay; the rest of the book has as much of the fantastic about it as, say, as a Franz Kafka novel. *Landscape with Landscape* is an entertaining series of stories that read well enough to deserve my first place vote, but, as with *Illywhacker*, I can see a lot of people shaking their heads and asking why this got on the list, and not voting for it - especially when there is a book such as *The Changelings of Chaan* to vote for.

David Lake, to be kind, hasn't been known as one of the most startlingly innovative or refreshing writers of our time, but this book has me thinking I should check back on his his most recently previous couple of books to see if they're as good as this is. *The Changelings of Chaan* is a simple, children's fantasy, although there's



nothing simple about doing one of these well. A young English boy living with his mother in Chaan is introduced slowly to the native culture of the land, and becomes involved in an intrigue to win back the long lost crown of the Chaanish kingdom. It's all gripping stuff, but written in a style that is very easy to read while being colourful besides. The Changelings of Chaan is certainly of Ditmar-winning quality.

Then there's The Transing Syndrome, by Kurt von Trajan. There's something to be said for this sort of book - it's slickly written, fast-paced; it doesn't worry too much about the details, it just aims for the effect - but having come to the end of it the reader is left with the taste of alphabet soup in the mouth. Too many loose ends, with no real sense that the author's doing anything more than trying one whizz-bang idea after another, to see if they'll help move the plot along; it's all a bit of a shambles. The Transing Syndrome can't avoid being compared to 1984, and it suffers badly in the comparison; at the very end of the novel we are even left uncertain as to whether he really was being persecuted by the authorities or whether it was just some sort of dream he had... not very inspiring stuff.

Still, that leaves the Ditmar voter with two real choices, one of which is only marginally sf; for this reason, it seems reasonable to assume that The Changelings of Chaan will win.

If the problem with the Australian books is largely one of what constitutes science fiction, the problem with the International category for sf is one of what belongs on the ballot of a contemporary award. Both Peace and The Devil in a Forest are about ten years old, and their place on a ballot for the best sf of 1985 is necessarily much in question, all of Grant Stone's excellent arguments aside.

Disregarding such questions, there are great problems still for the voter, because of the generally excellent quality of the books on this year's list, and the great differences in the types of book there.

Yvonne Rousseau, in the last issue of Thyme, argued persuasively that The Compass Rose be considered as a single body of work (for it is after all a collection of short stories), as something more than the sum of its parts. Given the validity of that argument, how is one then to compare it to something such as Peace, a beautiful and beautifully written novel if ever there was one in sf - or fantasy.

Or how then to compare either of these to something as light and flippant as John Sladek's Tik Tok? To say that it hasn't as much to it as either of the former doesn't have much to do with the fact that it is a marvellously dark and funny book that is as flawless as it is vicious. It's like trying to compare 'The Man Who Fell To Earth' with 'Flash Gordon', or either of those with a Marx Brothers' movie.

I mention the Marx Brothers because reading Free Live Free, another Wolfe novel on this year's ballot, reminded me in parts of nothing so much as a tightly scripted piece of Groucho-Chico dialogue. It's a hilarious book but one that has interesting characters that you follow around town as they wander with various degrees of aimlessness because you want to. Wolfe shows you their lives, or shares their lives with you, and you end up caring about them and what they do. Free Live Free is a deceptively simple book (although what's new about Gene Wolfe being deceptive), with a terribly messy, unconvincing ending (which is to say, no real ending at all), but it's a beauty of a book that is alternately compelling and hilarious.

So there you have it: a Marx Brother's movie (plus Real People as its characters); a vicious, dark farce; a thoughtful collection - or rather arrangement - of stories; and Peace, which I don't know how to do justice to but which I think is (shudder) Good. I have not properly read The Devil In A Forest, so you'll have to refer to Dennis Callegari's review elsewhere in this issue for a first hand opinion of it; many people have spoken highly of it. The other, last book on the list is Elleander Morning, by Jerry Yulsman, a book that Playboy has described as "brilliant", presumably because it contains such scenes as the one where a dirty old man deflowers two young girls of twelve - oh, all in the nicest possible way, you understand. Yeah, sure you do. This is trash. Like Dallas and Dynasty: trash.







Nice to hear from you, Giulia. Still on the subject of Tasmania, if not Tasmanians, Robyn & Torbjörn von Strokirch have now moved into their new house out in the pleasant rural sticks, a huge twenty minutes' drive from the city centre of Hobart. Their postal address remains the same, however. Just in case anyone skimming this hasn't noticed that we're no longer on the subject of Constitutional Matters...

Changes of Address (and other stories...)

QLD.:

Not all the news we print is happy. In the first issue of Fuck The Tories - a general fanzine edited by, amongst others, Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown - there was an article of a few pages length by Leanne Frahm in which she told of her experiences during Aussiecon 11. To be succinct, one might say that the 1985 World SF Convention was not, for Leanne, a serendipitous event. Now, some few months later (in response to a letter of ours) Leanne has written to us, and we find we are the bearers of bad news...

'Dear Roger,

I found (probably to your eternal embarrassment) your letter of the 6th extremely touching and kind. More so because we have done little in the past except smile and say hello and exchange produce - me, money, you, Thyme. So in return for all your kind thoughts, I owe you an explanation.

'I have pulled out of fandom, as much as you can officially resign from an organisation like that. I've resigned from ANZAPA, and also, as you've noticed, dropped my subscriptions as they have/will come due. It's unfortunate that this decision has come so close after Aussiecon, and will probably look to most people like a fit of pique, but that's not the whole story.

'I don't know if you've gathered that my husband runs his own (very little) business. We've been employing office workers for the last three years to free me for writing - previously I had done the office work, which was pretty much full time. Now the business has a very competent woman in it, but needs another, and with the way business is generally, we can't afford wages. So I'm in it again. Only part-time, till we see how things go, but there goes 16 working hours, and I had to do a lot of reordering of priorities.

'My affair has always been a sort of anguished one. It's the distance. Everything by letter, by apazine, no immediate feedback. One ecstatic week at a con a year, no chance to join in the fun of parties and meetings and get-togethers, and the frustration of reading about these things. In other words, I decided that my effort in staying active didn't give me the return I needed from this relationship. So rather than giving up writing, offering the kids up for adoption, or divorcing my husband, I gave up fandom.

'To be absolutely honest, if Aussiecon had been happier for me, I probably would have tried hard for a while, but the result would be the same. I have to live in the real world, and the real world isn't kind to fantasies like fandom. (But no, never the CWA!)

'So... I'm pleased - and humbled - yes, humbled, that you've continued to send me Thyme. Of course I enjoy it. And you never know - a nice win of half-a-million in Lotto would solve all our problems, and I'd be back again like a flash.

*Regards, Leanne*

Well, Leanne, if you only could have seen me when I read that last bit of your letter.... I don't mind your finding my letter touching, or kind, but I certainly find it extremely embarrassing to think that anyone could possibly feel humbled by my sending them copies of Thyme, regardless of the circumstances. All I can say now is



that I hope you don't mind seeing your letter here in print [it wasn't DNQ or anything like that]. Although I'm sure you wouldn't be expecting to see it here, there are only about a million people (okay, so make it 600) who would otherwise be wondering where you've got to or what you're doing.

If it makes you feel any better, Leanne, the problems of distance are not yours alone. Fellow banana-bender Russell Parker wrote to us on the very subject, also expressing indignation at the fact we printed his short-short note in Thyme #50....

'Dear Peter and Roger...

tickled I was not to open Thyme #50 and discover my note in print and your nifty little rebuff [on why one should want to do more than just send us money in exchange for copies of Thyme]. Fair enough, I thought, but I rather also wished you'd realised I was speaking with tongue solidly in cheek. Since I've been involved in fandom (as nebulous as that association may be from time to time) for nigh on five years, I should certainly be familiar with the reasons why fanzines should be locced.'

[Ah, yes, and now you know a good way to get people to loc your fanzine - by printing their comments about how they're not going to loc it. We admit it was sneaky, Russell, but you have to admit it did work!]

'That I haven't been a prodigious letter writer to your publication I hope can be justified as follows:

1. 'I don't write much anyway, so I don't know too many of the people regularly referred to in Thyme all that well. Maybe now I've got a typewriter and taught myself to type (albeit rather slowly) that situation will improve.
2. 'Living in the wilds of Brisbane, I have no day to day contact with any other fans, and hence no news (except for one recent snippet that is still in the planning stage [and about which] it would be premature to let you know about). [Oh? Yes? Do tell.]
3. 'I don't really read much sf anymore, a trend that seems to be widespread if Bruce's TMR letters are representative. And not reading much, I can't comment on what I don't read.'

Russell goes on to comment on the Ditmar Awards, and the question of whether they should be a reflection of reality, or the current legal stance on publishing rights:

'The annual Ditmar debate starts up again in earnest, with me as usual not having heard of some of the contestants and wondering how some of the categories can ever be thought of as representative of the previous year's best. This year[']s standard of contestants] does seem better than most except for the Best International Fiction category, which is confused to say the least. Gene Wolfe is certainly a great writer and is one of my favourites, but to have three titles nominated, especially when two of them are not even new releases, does seem odd. It hardly seems like an award for current writings but rather an old favourites poll, and as such must make us look unprofessional and anachronistic in the eyes of overseas fans. It's not helped much by the ongoing dearth of decent new writers, which is probably why a lot of people are not reading much new.

'Things Australian are looking good with two of my most liked novels in Illywhacker and Landscape with Landscape appearing, as well as a stronger showing in the zines with TMR, the Notional, and Marc Ortlieb booting along Tigger to Q36 proportions. With the resurgence of ASFR things can only get better.'

Let's interrupt Russell's remarks to hear what Irwin Hirsh had to say on the subject. Irwin began by thanking us:

'for being the first to break the news of Sikander's Ditmar nomination, and for the congrats [you wrote] on the mailing wrapper. The news came at



just the right time, as I'd been feeling down on my fanzine. The deadline for the next issue passed by about three weeks ago and of the three articles I was expecting the only one that arrived I've sent back for a rewrite.

'Despite me sending a note a week before and a week after the deadline I still haven't heard from the other two, even though in one case it was a rewrite of an article [originally] submitted to issue number eleven. What's a fan to do?

[Believe us, Irwin we know exactly how you feel!]

'I'd have to agree with you about whether the various fanzines should be on the ballot. Tigger was totally subsidised by the largest event of our fannish history, while Thyme and The Notional are subsidised by a large number of subscriptions. I can't be sure, without discussing it with you and Peter and Leigh and Valma, but I imagine most people on your mailing lists only get all issues if they subscribe. I know that is the only way I get all issues. While it can't be said to be the belief of the Ditmar electorate, I don't think this makes these magazines [into] fanzines. I'm not sure what the they are, but while they may be produced for love - they aren't published to make money - they aren't exactly distributed for love. Crank comes out monthly and I get all issues in an all-for-all trade.'

[What you seem to be saying here is that the fanzine status of a publication is somehow determined by its financial state and who gets to read it for free (we have some "BNF"s on our mailing list, too, I'm sure). I personally think that questions like that one are a bit irrelevant and end up revealing little more than who's financially secure and who isn't.

[Both Tigger and The Metaphysical Review have quite explicit policies of only being available for contributions or trades because subscriptions never come anywhere near covering the costs of production, anyway, and coping with the "I sent you money and I haven't got issue #550 yet" is more hassle than it's worth. Grudgingly both accept that filthy, unclean stuff - money - perhaps to make people feel better about not being able to contribute much else.

[But still there are limits - production costs have to be covered from somewhere. Bruce has plans even now to cut down his mailing list quite drastically to get back to being able to do the sort of zine he can afford to produce. He admits this means cutting off people he'd never dreamed he'd have to. Marc puts a page limit on each issue of Tigger for much the same reason - costs have to be controlled somehow.

[Leigh Edmonds, on the other hand, has recently left his job to go back to study, so he sees the question of income as pretty important. He has said that he can only afford to publish if his fanzine can pay for itself. It's doubtful that it does, even so; why should his eligibility be in question simply because he feels himself a little poorer than what he's accustomed to.

[So what of Thyme? It is true that most people who receive Thyme in Australia do so because they are subscribers, but what we put in the colophon about interesting letters and old boots is not a joke - the fact is that people can kid us into giving them issues for nothing if they do it with a bit of style.

[There are enough people who have done this and who continue to do this, and we play along with the joke because sometimes it is fun. And there are those people who we want to give issues to and will regardless of what they do or don't do.

[I don't think we have to justify the idiosyncratic decisions we make about who gets Thyme and why. You yourself have received some free issues because of what you've done with Sikander. I'm sorry if you feel put out by having to pay for the occasional issue also. I can't comment on Ted White's and Rob Hansen's ideas about trading with Crank, but I think even they would consider that receiving trades is a privilege rather than a right.



[Back to more mundane issues, yes I agree that Thyme and The Notional are different from other fanzines. Newszines, by their very definition, have a currency that is rare in other zines or types of zines, and people tend to want to read them because of the information they may contain, rather than because of any innate virtue they may otherwise have. And containing news as they do, people unthinkingly reckon the zine itself to be interesting when in fact it is the news that attracts them. I remember Mike Glycer getting a little upset when I made this comment about his newszine, File 770, but I hope now that it's clear that I include Thyme, The Notional, Tigger (as it was last year) and, yes, even Ansible in this remark he won't be so put out.]

[I think that anyone who thinks that popularity awards such as the Ditmars are a measure of anything to do with literary quality is deluding themselves.]

'In any event [continues Irwin] The Metaphysical Review is the best, er, 'fanzine' on the ballot [agreed]. It sets the highest goals and meets them admirably. A fanzine which should be there is Rataplan, but I guess people forgot about it once Leigh announced he wasn't publishing it any more, and the reasons why.'

Irwin Hirsh.

[Good God. I'd entirely forgotten about Rataplan, until you mentioned it. You're certainly right about it belonging on the ballot!]

[But thank goodness that in the middle of all this strife, all this confusion and uncertainty, we have someone who has retained their sense of priorities, someone to remind us of the things in this life that really matter: Angus Caffrey writes:]

'Sod the Ditmars, Sod the two year bids, Sod the Constitution. They aren't important. Masquerades are important. Why aren't there rules for Masquerades? For instance:

- 1) a) Anyone who uses coloured lights or filters, or suggests the use of such, will be locked in a small closet for the duration of the Masquerade. Coloured lights projected onto coloured costumes destroys both effects.
  - b) No-one will be allowed to operate the lighting setup unless they know what they are doing. Any Committee that allows unrehearsed, inexperienced lighting operators to work independently of one another, plunging the stage into darkness or letting off gratuitous stobes at any inappropriate times (and there aren't any appropriate times for stobes) will be forced to eat a full sized replica of the Enterprise bridge.
  - c) The sound system will be tested beforehand. Musical cues will be logged, Speakers will be placed where they are effective microphones and leads put in place. [We'll dispense with a full list of Angus's torments for offenders, unless they are particularly imaginative - you get the general idea....]
- 2) All assistance for the Masquerade, and the Masquerade itself, shall start on time. The Master of Ceremonies, the judges, the gophers, the lighting and sound operators, the getters-on and getters-off - they'll all be contacted days ahead, and will know what to do and when to do it. They will know the order of the costumers, who is in the parade and who is not. There will never be an occasion where the MC will make a twit of themselves by announcing something that was cancelled the day before. The doors will open at the advertised time. Many costumes are hot and uncomfortable, and make-up deteriorates rapidly. Any Committee that allows a delay in the start of a Masquerade will be encased in Lewis Morley's least manoueverable costume and left in the sun for eight hours. [Good one?]

'Now all this seems to make common sense. Despite this, the last three or four convention Masquerades have gone over like a farting contest in a diving bell. Why is it that the wealth of talent in fandom cannot cope with an event that wouldn't challenge a bright schoolkid? But this is getting out of hand. See you in Perth?

*Angus*

[See you in Perth.]



Back to Russell, then (this is still the QLD. section of the Changes of Address, don't you know), who has his own comments on the matter of High Art. He liked the artwork in recent issues of Thyme, 'except for the awfully crass Mike McGann 'E.T.' on the back cover of #49.' On that subject, skipping from Brisbane around the globe to Thyme's European HQ, expat/current TAFF candidate Judith Hanna observes: 'The Mike McGann Bad Art on the back of T49 shows very embarrassingly when the zine is folded and stapled. Will the Post Office do us for sending obscene matter through the post, Joseph worries. We wouldn't mind being done for something with a bit of artistic merit, perhaps, but not for the sake of a McGann gaucherie with overblown boobs, please!'

And while we're on the subject of good taste, Elaine Clark writes, from Cairns: 'I'm writing to ask the Paul Darrow fans among you if they'd be willing to support a local "good cause" and at the same time, grant our favourite actor immortality, Aussie-style. Here are the details:-

A major fossil deposit dating from 13 to 15 million years ago has been located on the Riversleigh Station near Camooweal in north-western Queensland.

In return for a donation of between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to the Vertebrate Palaeontology Research Fund of the University of New South Wales, sponsors can name one of the fossils that have been found. The funds are used to continue the work of exploring the fossil-bearing plateau, cleaning the recovered fossils and cataloguing the new mammal species discovered.

Now I thought, while Paul's working for his Oscar, what about naming a fossil after him? He'd then have another reason to pay this country of ours a visit, besides coming to see US, of course! (By the way, there's no implication, intended or otherwise, that he's an old fossil!)

So here's my question:

Are there between 600 and 1,000 of us willing to contribute \$5 each to honor Paul Darrow and help the continuing discovery of our country's treasures?

Our donation would be acknowledged in the paper describing the animal named for him and Paul would receive an attractive certificate which includes a picture, reconstruction and discussion of the significance of his namesake.

Your donations would be tax deductible - the University would provide individual receipts for \$5 or more once the collection was finalised. In the meantime, a special account called the Paul Darrow Fossil-Naming Fund will be opened with the SGIO Building Society in Cairns Boland Centre and your donation would be held there till we reached the target.

I look forward to hearing from any of your readers who'd like to help with this project. Please reply to Box 5800 CMC, Cairns 4870.

*Elaine Clark*

Thank you, Elaine. (Paul Darrow, of course, was one of the principals in the 'Blakes 7' television series.) Onto more mundane matters now, with a (late) change of mailing address for Tim Reddan, who may be contacted now at P.O.Box 162, Toowong 4066. □□□



# THE GNUS OF NAVARONE



Perth: Two short notices: Craig & Julia Hilton are now at 72/375 Stirling Hwy, Claremont 6010. (An unfortunate note: Julia, training as a nurse, will be in Port Hedland during Swancon XI, over Easter.) The other news is that Kevin McCaw and Shelley Johnson became engaged on the 22nd of September; the couple plan to marry in September, 1987.

Stockholm: Lottie Eriksson and Ahrvid Engholm "förlovat sig" ("became engaged" to you) on New Year's Eve. The couple first met at Swecon in 1982. ["Underbar!"]

The U.K.: Several CoAs here, of varying degrees of newness: Lillian Edwards: 1 Braehead Road, Thorntonhall, Glasgow G74 5AQ; Christina Lake: First Floor Flat, 47 Whiteladies Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2LS; Chris Priest: 78 High Street, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5AQ; and Martin Tudor: 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands B66 4SH. And let's sneak in a yank: Bob Tucker: 2516-H East Washington, Bloomington, IL 61701, U.S.A. It's funny to compare postcodes of different countries, isn't it....

Melbourne: Ruth & Andrew Murphy have moved to 11 Hopkins Street, Dandenong 3175, and the 'phone number is 793 1706. if anyone knows where Alf Katz & family have shifted to (they've bought a house... Somewhere) then you're very clever indeed and could you please tell us so we can tell everyone else? Ta.

In another recent move John Newman and friend Jan (and son Ben) have moved from their separate places, which they individually own, to rented accommodation, a flat in East StKilda. They will in turn be renting out both their places. Does this make sense? In any case, the new address is 11a Prentice Street, East St Kilda 3183. □□□ On a more relaxed note, there is news of an amateur theatrical group that has been going for some three years now, but which many people will not have heard about, at least until the recent Galactic Tours convention. The 'Starforce Theatre Group' is open for one and all to join in, and they meet every Friday evening, 7:30 - 9:30, and Saturdays 2-4pm, at St Stephen's Uniting Church, Balaclava Rd, Caulfield. As said, they've been going for about three years, and usually finish up the year having put on three proper plays or so, and are interested to hear from potential new members. Just drop in for a look, or you can ring Helena Russell on 534 6700 for more details. Sounds like fun. □□□ Another way of enjoying yourself around Melbourne is to turn up to the monthly Nova Mob meetings. The Nova Mob usually meets on the first Wednesday of every month, either first for a wine and dine at the 'Rose & Crown' Bistro, Bay Street, Port Melbourne, starting from around 6pm or earlier [as Bruce Gillespie has been heard to observe, "this is the real fun of the evening"], or you can just turn up at Russell & Jenny Blackford's place, 198 Nott St., Port Melbourne, starting at 8pm. It's a completely informal group comprising of whoever turns up on the night to discuss whatever they feel like talking about, under the pretext of discussing science fiction. April's meeting will, exceptionally, be held on the second Wednesday of the month, the 9th of April. It was felt that many people who would be interested in attending would still be on their way back from the National SF Convention, held the week earlier, in Perth. The topic under discussion this month will be 'Australian SF between (World) conventions', and Sean McMullen will be leading that discussion. Oh, speaking of whom, Sean would like people to note that although he is living with girlfriend Trish at 35 Foam Street, Elwood, he'd like all mail for him to be addressed to GPO Box 2653X, Melbourne 3001. □□□ Steve Roylance writes in to tell us about some of the recent goings on of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Melbourne Chapter...

'On the morning of the First of March at the extraordinary hour of 7:30 am - a very extraordinary hour that I have rarely experienced on a Saturday - the Shire of Stormhold (Melbourne Chapter of the SCA) started to gather for an Elizabethan Breakfast on the lawns of Trinity College, Melbourne University.



'The fare for breakfast was strawberry tarts, egg and bacon tarts, porridge with fruit and nuts, boiled eggs round as a ball, light ale, and bread with cheese, jams and ham.

'By 9, over thirty people were present, including two from Canberra, for games as well as breakfast. The games were jingles (blind man's bluff) and tierce (tag) and there were demonstrations of swashbuckling, which is 16th Century fencing.

'An enjoyable time for everybody, and by noon all had left.'

[The question in our minds, of course, is: where did they go, after they had left? In his new fanzine Cockalorum 1.1, Kim Huett is writing of the peace and quiet following the serving up of dinner at his place, a peace and quiet which...]

'...was not to last as just as we were finishing [dinner] there came a knock at the door and in walked five Melbourne SCA members caliming to have gone out for hamburgers and ended up in Canberra.'

[Kim now requests that anybody from Melbourne about to go out for hamburgers ring him first, just in case... but back to Steve's summary of SCA events & news.]

On 5 April there will be a tournament and melees, followed by a feast and revel - for information contact: Christine MacIntosh .. 898 6521,  
or Samanthe Urmonas ..... 846 1259.

Regular meetings of the Shire of Stormhold are:  
Fighter Practice and gathering - 3pm, Sundays, by the Aths Track at Melbourne Uni..  
Arts & Sciences meeting - 8pm, Thursdays, at the Carlton Community Centre, upstairs.  
 For further information on the SCA, ring Damien Brennan, at home, on 387 5002.

... and so, with a sigh of relief (I don't really know why, because we haven't even started on the printing of the bloody thing yet) and with a glance at the wallet, we come to the close of another issue of Thyme. We hope you enjoyed it. If so, there's not just the two of us to thank, but a long list of people who took time and made some effort to have this issue come out the way it has. People such as Giulia, Leanne, Russell, Steve, Bruce, Dennis, Irwin, Angus, Judith, Joseph, Elaine, Craig, Matjaž, Nancy, Cath and Marc. Quite a list, isn't it. Credits for artwork go specifically as follows...

Craig Hilton .. cover, p.16. Dennis Callegari .. p.2. Matjaž Smidt .. p.3.  
[230119031986] We thought we'd finish off with some bedtime reading - take it away, D.C.

The Devil In A Forest by Gene Wolfe

reviewed by Dennis Calllegari

As far back as 1970, Gene Wolfe was recognised as one of the best sf short story writers around; such examples of his work as *The Eyeflash Miracles*, *Seven American Nights*, the stories collected in *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* and the permutations on *The Island of Doctor Death* spring to mind.

His reputation as a writer of novels, however, was not made until the publication of the first volume of his Book of the New Sun. Indeed, before the publication of that book, Wolfe had only had three novels published: Operation Ares (1970), Peace (1975) and The Devil in a Forest (1976).

These three early novels show signs of the short-story-writer's tentative approach to longer fiction. With Wolfe, this tentativeness tended to manifest itself in the episodic nature of the storylines.

In Peace that structure, more often than not, suits the author's purpose - a tour through someone's life is likely to be episodic - but in The Devil in a Forest it does not.

But let's start at the beginning. The setting, so the afterword at the back of my copy of The Devil in a Forest tells me, is the mediaeval world as hinted at in the carol "Good King Wenceslas" - good setting, I suppose, if the background is drawn in properly.



Surprisingly, because I've always thought of Wolfe as a writer who takes particular care to sit his characters properly in their environment, the background of TDIAF is near enough to non-existent. Sure, everyone walks around in homespun, and the weapons they carry are clubs and swords and knives, but their concerns seem very little different from our own, and their culture is portrayed very sketchily.

Too sketchily. TDIAF could have been considerably improved if Wolfe had included several legends and stories such as those he used to such good effect in The Book of the New Sun.

Or he could have made reference to something, anything, that actually takes place outside the forest of the title. The village he describes in the book hangs in some featureless limbo.

I referred earlier to the episodic nature of TDIAF. An episodic narrative is not necessarily a bad thing, provided some effort is made to link the episodes. Wolfe does it well in both Peace and The Book of the New Sun - he uses a method of cross-referencing his episodes. The narrative may travel from situation A to action B to conversation C... to ending Z; but also, dinner party M reminds you of duel E with a quick aside to boat journey G. You get the idea.

In TDIAF the story moves briskly enough, but without at any stage making you stop to consider what is happening. The plot of how a mediaeval village is terrified, in turn, by: Wat the highwayman; the evil of the supposed witch Mother Cloot; the greed of the villagers; the king's foresters; and the worshippers of the Barrow Man: is a good one, and told as it is, through the eyes of the adolescent Mark does provide, in the main, considerable entertainment. But Wolfe could have done a lot better.

Conclusion: good work, but a minor work.

One further thing. I'm not sure how TDIAF is eligible for a Ditmar - it's not a fantasy at all. The only fantastic element I was able to discover (maybe) was in Chapter 9, where Mark (maybe) has a precognitive dream about the Barrow Man.

Dennis Callegari.

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