

alien worlds

Contact Man

by Harry Harrison

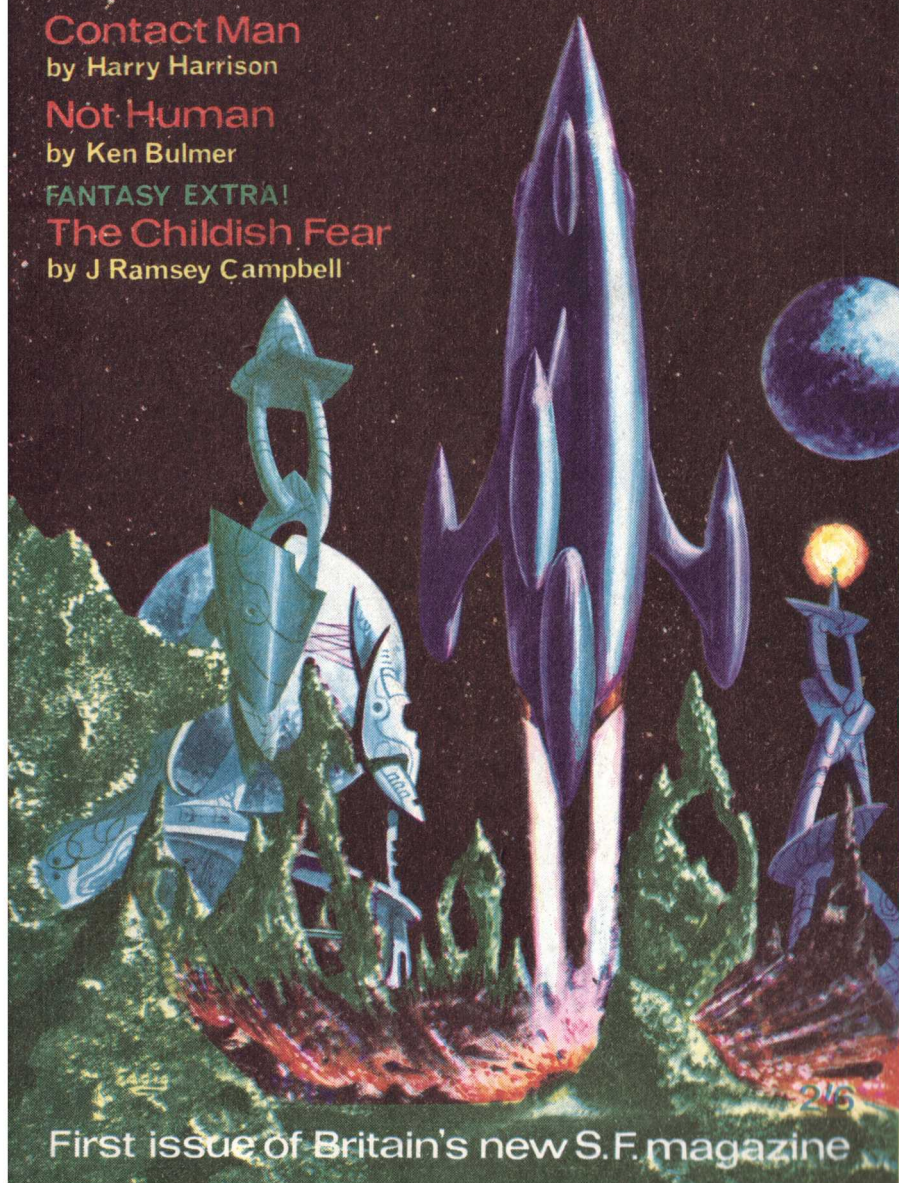
Not Human

by Ken Bulmer

FANTASY EXTRA!

The Childish Fear

by J Ramsey Campbell



First issue of Britain's new S.F. magazine

alien worlds

NO.1

EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS: Charles Partington and Harry Nadler, 800A Oxford Road, Manchester 13, Lancashire.
EDITORIAL ADDRESS: 8 SOUTH MESNEFIELD ROAD, LOWER
KERBAL, SALFORD 7, LANCASHIRE. ENGLAND.

All correspondence to be sent to editorial address.

- CONTENTS -

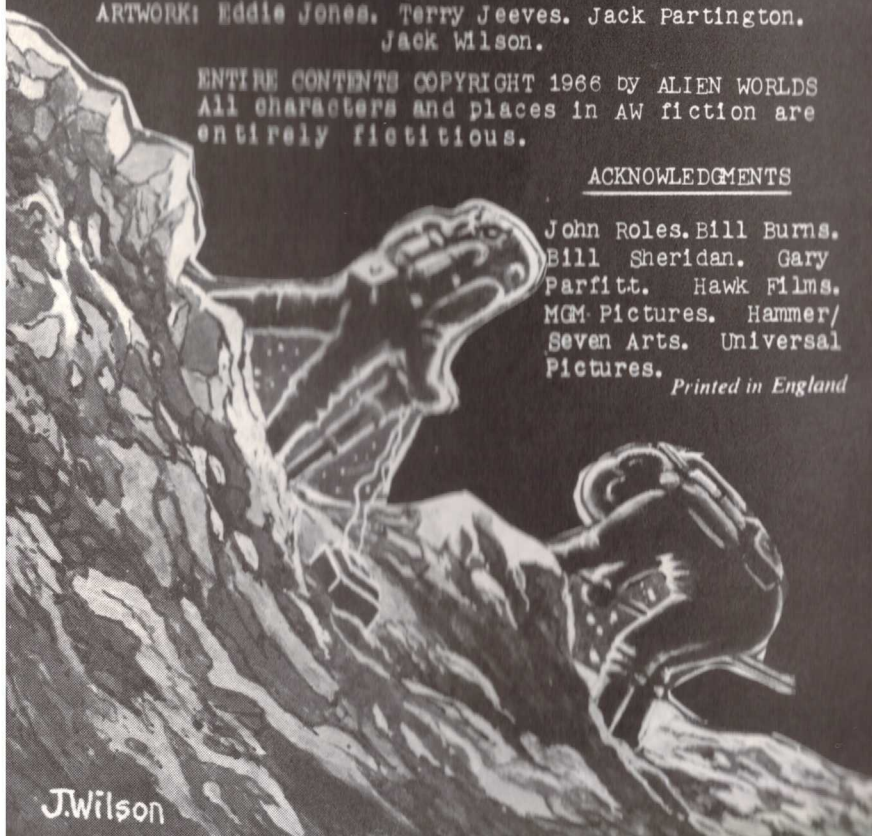
CONTACT MAN <i>Harry Harrison</i> 4	FLASH <i>Allan Asherman</i>18
NOT HUMAN <i>Kenneth Bulmer</i>29	THE BOOK COLUMN <i>Ken Slater</i>15
THE CHILDISH FEAR <i>J Ramsey Campbell</i>46	2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY....61
	ONE MILLION YEARS B.C...43

ARTWORK: Eddie Jones. Terry Jeeves. Jack Partington.
Jack Wilson.

ENTIRE CONTENTS COPYRIGHT 1966 by ALIEN WORLDS
All characters and places in AW fiction are
entirely fictitious.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

John Roles. Bill Burns.
Bill Sheridan. Gary
Parfitt. Hawk Films.
MGM Pictures. Hammer/
Seven Arts. Universal
Pictures. *Printed in England*



THE LAUNCHING PAD

TO THE EXPLOSION of science fiction in this last decade, we have decided to add yet another ripple. Introducing a new magazine to readers who may have had their appetites dulled, and trying to then stimulate their possibly flagging imagination, or as some people would have it - their sense of wonder - might appear to be an impossible task. But surely this is an ideal worth attempting? For too long now SF magazines have suffered a singular dead, expressionless appearance. True, the contents, culled from the cream of British and American authors, can (and in some cases still do) conjure up tremendously exciting word pictures. In no other field except SF is it possible to exercise so free a range of stimulating ideas. Whether it be disguised under the name of Speculative Fiction, or cloaked in the garb of some other meaningful phrase, Science Fiction should be the most exciting medium of communication available today.

We can already anticipate some of your possible replies to the visual side of ALIEN WORLDS: "Science fiction should be read; not looked at!" Yet we stress again that most SF magazines printed in Britain or the USA are dull to look at. Apart from the almost universal four colour cover, all the current magazines are content with pages of type and occasional black and white illustrations, many of which leave much to be desired.

When almost every other type of magazine from the women's glossy weeklies to 'build up' encyclopedias employ full colour to add sparkle and life to their pages, surely science fiction stands to gain most with its unlimited boundaries and the talent available today.

Compare us to the present SF magazines, and if you find ALIEN WORLDS really does have something new to offer then we have achieved something and maybe gained a reader.

The one thing we defy anyone to say in all honesty is that ALIEN WORLDS is a dull magazine. That's something we will never be!

Charles Partington and Harry Nadler



CONTACT MAN

by
Harry Harrison



ART by EDDIE JONES

"YOU WILL LEAVE the air lock and you will look for trouble," the Captain said. "You are carrying enough armament to start a small war-- and that is just what you are expected to do. Get out there and stir things up..."

"How about my stirring up your guts to begin with, Cap," Chesney said, swinging up the laseray with a lightning motion in spite of his heavy pressure suit. He centered it on the Captain's midriff and squeezed the trigger. The gun clicked loudly.

"Save your combatative spirit for the outside," the Captain said coldly. "What happens then is up to you. There is no food and a very limited supply of water in your suit. You will stay out there until you have done the job correctly. You must satisfy me for I, and I alone, will be your judge. If you do a bad job or no job I'll just leave you out there to die and rot in that armored suit. Just think that you're wearing a ready-made tomb, and that I'm the only man who can get you out of it. Satisfy me, Chesney."

Chesney cursed him loudly and fluently, but the Captain didn't bother to listen.

"Put him out," the Captain said, and two ratings grabbed Chesney's arms and rushed him into the open air lock.

c 1966 by Harry Harrison

"You're asking me to commit suicide," Chesney said as the lock began to close. "Who gave you the right to kill me?"

"You did, Chesney, when you rebelled against the Admiral-Emperor. And the courts gave it to me when they judged you guilty of treason and sentenced you to death. It was your choice to volunteer for this work instead of accepting the death penalty..."

Chesney stopped listening. The inner lock was almost closed-- but there was still enough of a gap to roll a grenade through! He groped at his right hip where there was a satchel of grenades-- labeled thoughtfully with the red cross of death-- but it was locked tight and he could not open it. The inner lock thudded home and was secured and, with grinding slowness the outer lock began to open. The Captain's voice sounded from the speaker inside his helmet and he could neither silence it nor escape it.

"These are my orders. You will leave the ship at once. You will follow a course of 32 on the radiocompass repeater on your wrist. You will quickly come to a village of the natives of this planet. You will do your best to destroy that village. I will be watching and listening and I warn you, it had better be your best."

As soon as the opening was wide enough, Chesney hurled himself through it, the weight of his armor and equipment crashing him heavily to the ground. Yet it was a controlled fall, because as he hit he was diving forward, rolling and twisting so that when he came to his feet again he was facing back towards the ship and-- once again-- squeezing futilely on the laseray's trigger. The mechanism of the incredibly powerful weapon emitted a mocking click. The unceasing voice drummed in his ears.

"... get in there and shoot up anything that looks interesting, and the more interesting it looks the more you're going to shoot it up. The natives of this filthy piece of rock appear to be harmless primitives, but we've run into that before."

As the outer lock closed and sealed shut the laseray came to life in his hands and his helmet opaqued automatically as the burning beam of laser light sprang out. It tore a gaping, burning trench

in the ground and he pulled up on the gun so that the actinic fury seared up the side of the spaceship and splashed from the control room ports high above the ground. The voice rang in his helmet with cold fury.

"How stupid a man are you Chesney? Can you imagine for an instant that we would arm you with anything that could possibly harm this ship? Inside the ship, yes, that is why we activate your armory by remote after you have left. But this spacer is armored to withstand anything short of an H-bomb. Fool! You try my patience and I am tempted to blast you where you stand. I won't. I want this mission done. But I tell you-- and this is truth, not warning-- that you are halfway to failure now. If you do a fair job I will leave you here. If you do a good job I will leave you here. If you do a most excellent job I might possibly consider taking you back aboard. Now move!"

A man cannot argue with facts, only with other people. Chesney had discovered that many years earlier. The Captain was a fact of life and death, or rather death and death, he recognized that now. Spinning about he put his back to the ship and tried to forget about it. With a quick and sweeping motion he checked that the cover on the grenade satchel was unlocked, his knife free in its leg sheath, that all of his armory of violence was in operating order. Looking at the repeater compass he turned about until the needle touched 32, then triggered his jetpack. It roared to life, the harness kicked him under the arms, and he was airborne.

He had to alter course occasionally to avoid the weird structures that littered the landscape, but he barely glanced at them, keeping his attention focused ahead. The Captain had said that-- for all their artificial look-- they were a natural phenomenon, and he took the Captain at his word. At least in this. The Captain would not lie about anything that affected his survival.

A valley opened ahead filled with the beehive-like structures that had been described to him, the village. Almost automatically he dropped lower to

take cover and the hated voice roared in his ears.

"Stay high. Go in fast. Hit like lightning. Hit like the wrath of hell. That is the way you will do it."

"I wish I were doing it to you," he shouted as he arced high and dropped with his laseray flaming.

It speared through the dwellings as though they were paper, tearing and rending and collapsing them into smoking rubble. The natives poured out like ants from a disturbed nest and the flaring death cut through their ranks just as easily. As he dropped down he saw how they fell and died, kicking their many slate-grey limbs.

"They're just aborigines," he raged, though he never ceased firing. "They are helpless, simple and stupid-- look there. Those, the ones I just burned, they were armed with stone knives and rock hammers. This is murder, worse, senseless slaughter."

Yet, even while he shouted he landed and fired about him in a circle, cutting down all who attacked. And attack they did, in a furious, helpless mob. Running into the burning arms of destruction.

"Yes, they do look simple," the calm voice spoke into his ears, "but we've seen that ruse before. Keep doing your work. Stop if you dare, for a second only, and I will judge you as having failed."

Chesney's voice cursed the slaughter, while his body worked industriously to wreak it.

"Killers, we're all killers," he screeched and burnt down a group that had been attacking behind the tissue-paper defenses of crude shields.

"We sow death and one day our race will reap the harvest," he shouted as he incinerated a large building and all who had sheltered within in.

"I'll not be a part of this-- a race that does this deserves to be blotted from the universe," he gasped as he found an open lane of fire and killed hundreds.

The laseray died abruptly and a red light blinked on inside his helmet indicating that the weapon was overheating and the safeties had switched it off. But at the instant the light appeared he had slung the

weapon and hurled two grenades, triggering the jetpack at the same time. He was aloft as they exploded, dropping others in a trail of death as he went.

"Turn to heading 87," the Captain said, "Wake things up over there."

"The buildings look skimpy there, the bigger more important looking ones are in the other direction..."

"You act, I think," the voice roared. "I am intelligence, you are animal. Go!" But Chesney was already on his way and the voice continued, slightly pacified. "Thoughts have patterns, as do all things. If the pattern here is misdirection and those creatures aren't as simple as they seem, then there will be more misdirection. We examine the unimportant."

"A waste of life, a waste of everything-- even these grenades," Chesney said as he rained explosive death on the constructions below. A single grenade for each hovel, disintegrating them, for they were designed to be used against stronger structures. "What way is this to make contact with a new world, a new race?"

"The way we have chosen and the way we must go on," the ruthless voice said. "The human race is now at war with the entire galaxy. When a new planet is found-- such as this one-- its inhabitants can be only subjects or enemies. There are no neutrals in this battle. We have not time-- nor do we have the inclination-- to be sociable. Therefore this simple means of contact with only one man's life at stake, a worthless life like yours. You kill and keep killing. If the natives of this ugly planet are as simple as they look you will kill enough to prove it, and they will become the newest subject race to serve the Admiral-Emperor. They will quickly breed back the individuals you have slaughtered, but will never breed out the memory of our wrath. We will remind them occasionally. They will serve us well."

"Let me stop then. Enslave them. Let me cease killing".

"No. I am not satisfied. They die too easily. If this is an advanced race we must wage war on them

quickly, local and destructive war before they unite with our enemies. Move on. Destroy."

"There are few buildings. It is hard to find a target", Chesney said, soaring high and aiming each grenade well. The constructions were few, and widely scattered.

"Yet this area is flat and appears as well located as the others," the Captain mused- "why the barrenness unless to mislead us?"

"You suspect deceit and treachery because you are deceitful and treacherous," Chesney shouted.

"Of course," the Captain's voice spoke calmly "that is why I have been chosen for this work. Go. The building there, the isolated one at a bearing of 27 on your repeater. Blow it up, then place a second grenade exactly in the centre of the first grenade's crater, then land."

"It's dangerous," Chesney said as he sank through the yellow haze of smoke into the newly blasted pit. "The dirt is crumbling. I could be trapped here."

"I do not care. Do as directed. Kick your right toe deep into the soft earth, until it is buried. It contains a delicate seismograph. Now plant your feet firmly and balance yourself well. *Do not move your feet again until you have permission.* I am unlocking the clamps on the instrument. It is now functional. If you move you will destroy it and I will kill you. Did I tell you the suit contains a lethal device that I control?" The Captain's laugh was completely humorless, and Chesney cursed him in a weary monotone.

"Now we are ready," the Captain said. "Unslung your grenade launcher-- *slowly, fool!* Concussion grenade, contact fuse, range one kilometre. Fire."

Chesney did, and as the missile screamed up from the crater a hissing crowd of aliens poured over the edge. Chesney could dimly hear their sibilant screams through his armored suit. "I am under attack," he said.

"Do not move or defend yourself," the Captain ordered. A rapid series of clicks echoed inside the suit. "I have sealed and disarmed your weapons so they cannot turn them against you."

A distant thud sounded as the aliens attacked.

slate-grey flesh plastered itself against his transparent faceplate and orange teeth clattered on its surface. Stone weapons beat at his armor. He shrank down inside the suit, but did not move.

"This close... they repel me," he said. "They are... loathsome, incredibly so..."

"Do not move, the seismic echoes arrive and the computer is processing them." A moment's silence, then: "Oh, good, very, very good!" There was a trace of emotion, almost joy in the Captain's voice. "Your laseray!" he shouted. "It is activated. Turn it on the crater wall, your suit will not be affected by the reflected radiation."

But the aliens were seared, charred, destroyed in a moment. They melted from sight leaving only carbon imprints on the suit as memory of their existence.

"Jetpack, course 19," the Captain ordered, and Chesney rose clear of the ground and raced above it. "Be ready to cut off... now! Land here. Place and disarm your atomic device."

His chest pack whirred and deposited a heavy, shining grey ovoid in his hands. He knelt and put it carefully down before him, settling it into an impression he scraped in the sandy ground. Slowly, steadily, he turned the black knob on the top, then pulled out the knob and the oily strand of black wire attached to it. He felt a click and a steady hum through his fingertips and he shivered.

"Leave," the voice commanded, and he was airborne at maximum lift with the harness tearing a pleasing pain into his armpits as he was carried away from the egg of death.

"Course 35," the voice directed. "There is a high bank at the river there that you will shelter behind. There-- descend now. Set your jets at cancel-G. Stay in the blast shadow of the bank. Do not touch the ground, the ground wave will be strong here. Good. Face away from the atomic device. Opaque your helmet. Raise your arm before your faceplate. Close your eyes. Are you ready?"

"Ready..."

But before the last syllable left his lips the

world exploded and he was aware of the scream of universe-filling flame despite his dark barriers. The ground heaved, the tortured atmosphere boiled, great waves churned and fought in the water below.

"Be ready," the voice directed, "the fireball is almost by. Now-- *blast!* Cross ground zero at maximum speed, your suit is radiation proof. Look at the crater at all times, this will direct the camera in your suit."

Chesney was on his way before the order was complete. Above him the rising flame-cloud boiled and below was the glowing mouth of hell. He passed between the two and the temperature in his suit rose instantly until the metal burned where it touched his body, and he shrank from this and from the flood of invisible radiation he knew was hurtling towards him. Through pain and fear some portion of obedience or terrible curiosity kept his eyes turned towards the crater below. Through the crackle of static the Captain's voice trickled in.

"Something big down there, large and bulky. Natural perhaps, but we will see now."

All was blackness through the opaqued helmet, except for the glowing core of fire below. Was there some kind of form to it, some linear structure there beneath the ground?"

"I was right!" the Captain roared. "We are under attack, strong attack. Wonderful! Energy weapons of immense strength. I am taking off..."

"Don't abandon me!" Chesney shouted as something exploded against his leg and pain tore through him. "They are firing on me too."

"Course 145," the Captain said. "Blast at maximum power for six seconds, then ground. This ship will land at the same time with the airlock open. We will stay grounded for exactly two seconds, no longer. We will leave whether you are in the lock or not. I am being very generous."

Chesney did not answer because it took all of his strength to stay conscious despite the pain in his wounded body, blood ran down his chin from his teeth sunk deep into his lower lip, and all of his fading consciousness was focused on his radiocompass repeater and his chronometer.

At the end of the sixth second he cut the blast and hit the ground rolling end over end until the thick foliage slowed and stopped. He did not struggle to free himself but triggered his laseray and burned himself free.

The spacer was dropping, almost on top of him, the smoke of its jets engulfing him. Before it touched he was jumping towards it, plunging headfirst into the waiting black opening of the open air lock.

It was a very close thing. He was in the air, in the lock when the ship took off and the floor came up and smashed him at last into the blissful no-pain of unconsciousness.

"They were very obstinate," the Captain said. "They kept fighting too long and the battle was becoming wasteful. So we had to drop a planet-buster and the planet is still afire. A waste."

"Do you care?" Chesney asked, his voice muffled by the brace that held his broken jaw. Antipain drugs canceled his awareness of most of his burned and broken body, wrapped heavily with bandages. His bloodstream also contained many anti-radiation drugs since the Captain had lied a little about the radiation proofing of his suit.

"Do I care?" the Captain thought for a moment. "I really don't know if I do any more. When one does the work, one becomes the work. The human animal is very adaptable. Once, like you, I cared, but that was a very long time ago."

The drugs could not cancel all the pain, and pain made Chesney aware of himself and he forgot the planet, now aflame, and its grey-skinned inhabitants, all dead.

"What happens to me now?" he asked.

The Captain pointed to the floor. "When you survived you were automatically enrolled for life in the Space Navy of the Admiral-Emperor and will serve on a ship like this."

"I'll not be one of the hopeless creatures you have below decks..."

"Of course not. Having survived you will now be in control of one of these contact vessels. Congratulations, Captain." There was icy laughter in his voice.

"You lie!"

"I do not. If you survive ten missions you will be promoted to a higher position that is not quite as dangerous."

"That means..." Chesney had to marshall his thoughts against the pain and drugs. "... that means that you too, not too long ago, were a contact man like myself?"

"Exactly. Seven missions ago. We are the same."

Chesney was shocked by the thought. "Can this mean that there is no hope of end to this tyranny. That all men are destined to die or join the battle?"

"It does," the Captain said, and sighed ponderously. "I was sad for many days when I first realised it and I had my gun in my hand to kill myself, but I did not feel like dying just yet. You and I are the same and all mankind is doomed and there is nothing else to do. We keep destroying or we will be destroyed. Welcome."

"No!"

"Too late to say that. You chose when you left the ship and killed rather than be killed. Most men do."

"What happened? Why all this-- all this?"

"No one will ever know. All of the past has been rewritten and all history is a lie. I have seen peaceful races, that we have enslaved of course, and I like to think that mankind was also peaceful at one time as well. Somehow, somewhere, sometime, violence was chosen as the answer to all problems. The violent man, the military men took charge, and once in charge they stayed in charge. They will never relinquish their power."

"I am tired," Chesney said, his head falling forward.

"Have a drink with me first, then we will put you back in your bunk. The first time out is tiring."

They raised their glasses and the Captain said, "Death to the enemy."

"We cannot say that," the other Captain said.

"Because ~~we~~ are the enemy."

"Of course,"

They drank the toast anyway.

the end

Ken Slater's

BOOK column

First off, let me say that this is a review column, and I do not intend to enter the blood-bespattered field of literary criticism. The ranks of the l.c. are already overfilled - largely with folk who I feel have little right to be there; the 'book review' section is but scantily manned. I'll enlarge on this at some later date, but put simply, a reviewer should tell you the essential data; title, author or editor, publisher, number of pages, and the price. He may then add any other pertinent information that he may have, such as 'the previous four titles in this series were...' or 'this book originally appeared under the title...' He should give you his own reaction to the book; say whether or not he liked it and try to give some reasons without being deeply Freudian or whatever. Unless he is a very competent grammarian (I'm not) he should with-hold comment on the author's usage of English (a rather fluid and/or nebulous language at best) except in very extraordinary circumstances. The usage by David Ingrey in 'PIG ON A LEAD'; by William Burroughs; or by Alfred Bester in 'THE DEMOLISHED MAN' call for comment, obviously. The odd split infinitive, misused adverb, and so forth should be ignored unless they get in the way of the reader's possible enjoyment.

Bearing in mind the fact that I have a leaning towards the old school of fiction writing, where the story starts here, travels around and about, and comes to a reasonably conclusive ending at a certain point (after the man has got the girl, the spy has gotten safe home or been captured - depending on whether he is theirs or ours, and so on), that I can read with almost equal enjoyment the writing of Ted Sturgeon and Professor Tolkien, the fairy stories of Dornford Yates and Nicolas Stuart Grey, the satire of Harry Harrison and the satire of Stanton A. Coblenz (although I'll admit the latter to be a little slow today) and you may have some idea of whether or not you'll like the books I mention.

Denis Dobson's latest offerings are INTERSTELLAR 2.5 by John Rankine (183pp, 18/-) and NEW WRITINGS IN SF 8 edited by John Carnell (188pp, 16/-). The novel opens with the good ship Interstellar 2.5 semi-crash landed on the little known planet Pleorus. The vessel isn't actually damaged, but it has insufficient fuel to make a take-off. The crew of twelve men and three women appear to be stuck. But one of the executive has an idea - on any world there is the optimum spot for take-off; the highest plateau and so forth. Recalculation reveals that if they can move the ship some 4,000 miles south, over land and sea, a take-off with enough margin could be made.... and this they decide to do. Now, just the action of moving the ship in three parts, by a team of fifteen people (or fourteen by the time they start - the environment has killed one member before the convoy gets into motion, aided by one powered suit and one utility tractor would be an epic story on its own. But Mr Rankine is inclined to underplay the effort and action here; he introduces an element of mystery - some members of the team seem to be developing telepathic faculties or links with each other; these wax and wane. Some of the crew members are subject to erratic impulses leading to accidents; a small group is against the effort to escape from the world; the travellers are subjected to attacks by semi-civilised creatures, and by savage beasts - all under some group control it would seem... Deaths occur, and the survivors plug on... I enjoyed it, but I fear that it was perhaps a little too obvious. And I think that the various themes - the sex life of the crew; the trials and tribulations of the journey; the apparent alien interference; - were apt to get in each others way to some extent. But it is Mr Rankine's first novel full length, and I did enjoy it - I didn't have to put it down and find something else to relax with..... Now the collection is something else.

This is the sort of thing that is intended for you to pick up and relax with... six stories and a short foreword, the latter by John Carnell giving you a fair idea of what is to follow. I do not recommend that you read it at a sitting; short stories are never

best in such circumstances; they should fill in the gaps between drinks, meals, or something... The first gap is between trains; Colin Kapp's UNORTHODOX ENGINEERS are no longer concerned with locomotion, they are faced with a problem of something that someone put down and which no-one can shift. Whilst I found the final solution a little difficult to accept, the path leading up to it was very easy to tread. Gerald W. Page contributes a story titled 'SPACEMEN LIVE FOREVER'; the solution to the long voyage problem, give your crew almost eternal life (subject to some faults - like death by accident). And if you have a crew of two and a colonist passenger ship, and one gets killed....? THE FINAL SOLUTION by R.W. Mackelworth I did not really care for; but one can't like everything... a master race (Terran?) meets an even more Masterful Master Race - leader worship carried to the ultimate in a society that adulates physical endurance. COMPUTER'S MATE by John Rackham I enjoyed - the old basic plot of 'little man makes good', the twist where the much hated crew member saves the ship; the reader sympathises with the m.h.c.m. because the rest of the crew are too damn big-headed to be likeable - even when the m.h.c.m. is not a likeable character. Putting this over well is an art and a skill, and John Rackham does it nicely. Oh, yes the story is space exploration and the ending is a bit gimmicked. But not too much so. 'TRYST' by John Baxter is somewhat downbeat, poetical, item - the communications and supply service of the galaxy is failing, and John sends his hero to discover why. Like any knight of chivalry, the hero finds a maiden to be rescued... We get the upswing and a touch of humour (not too much) in SYNTH by Keith Roberts. Can a man commit adultery with a robot - a synthetic woman? Mr Roberts has demonstrated a knack for coming to grips with some of our treasured shibboleths, and turning them so we can see 'em from the rear. Not blatantly, but very dexterously. On the whole, one of John Carnell's best presentations, I think, although perhaps a little lacking in the touch of 'space-opera' (the physical sciences side) which I think is essential to a rounded collection. I suppose that Colin Kapp's story supplies that, although... anyway recommended.

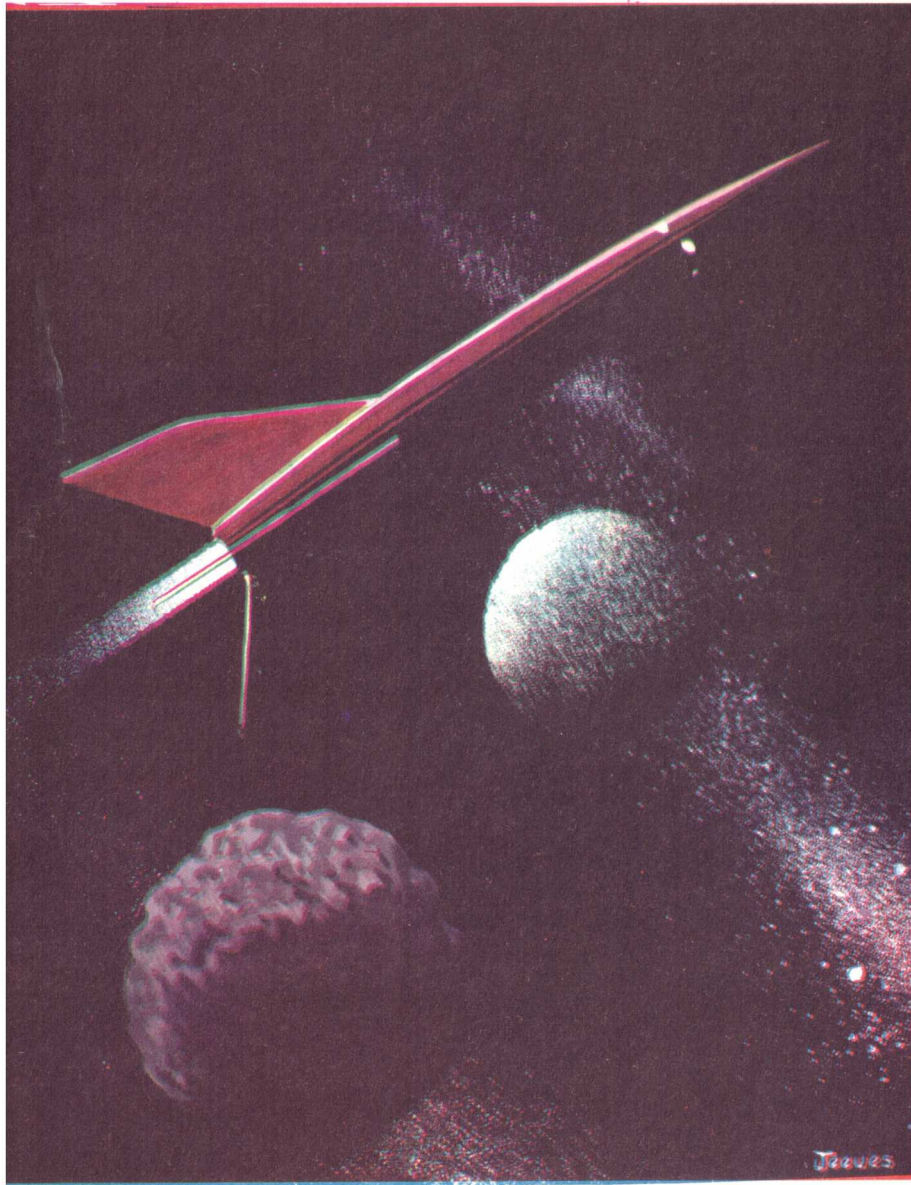
Allan
Asherman

Flash

The phenomenon which is spreading throughout the world today is not, by any means, unique in cinematic history. A similar movement sprung up in the 1930's prompted, perhaps, by world-wide tension such as is present today. The productions of that era were however, largely different from those which are being made today. The characters were then taken literally, never questioned and more important, never satirized in their own productions. Although some of these efforts may seem ridiculous to us today, they were not intended to be so at the time of their original release. In 1936, Universal Pictures released a thirteen chapter serial which did not seem ridiculous then, and is revered today as the epitome of that era; a legacy to be treasured. It starred an olympic swimming champion named Larry "Buster" Crabbe and is known as... *FLASH GORDON*

Innumerable thrills were supplied for those faithful fans who returned to neighborhood theatres week after week to learn how their hero Flash and his friends would escape from the previous perils, and become involved in new ones. The chapter titles of *FLASH GORDON* serve to indicate the tempo of this masterpiece of cinematic art...

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1: PLANET OF PERIL | 7: SHATTERING DOOM |
| 2: TUNNEL OF TERROR | 8: TOURNAMENT OF DEATH |
| 3: CAPTURED BY SHARKMEN | 9: FIGHTING THE FIRE-DRAGON |
| 4: BATTLING THE SEA-BEAST | 10: THE UNSEEN PERIL |
| 5: THE DESTROYING RAY | 11: IN THE CLAWS OF THE TIGRO |
| 6: FLAMING TORTURE | 12: TRAPPED BY THE TURRET |
| 13: ROCKETING TO EARTH | |



Terry Jeeves

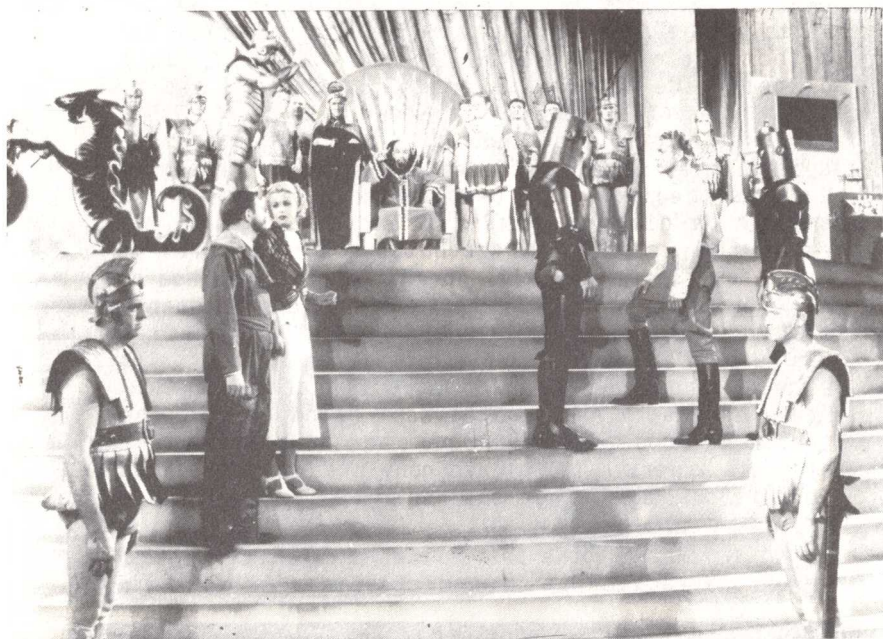


As the story begins, Earth is panic-ridden due to the unexplainable presence of an interplanetary body which is hurtling toward our own Earth. Professor Gordon, a famous astronomer, receives word that his son 'Flash,' a star polo player at college, is speeding to his side to be with him as the end of our world comes. The scene now switches to a rickety aeroplane which is wracked by high-speed, icy winds. (These winds are the result of the interplanetary body disturbing Earth's gravity-field.) At Flash's side in this craft is a young woman who is extremely disturbed by the turbulence. Flash is boyish, blonde, wavy-haired and ruggedly handsome while the girl is girlish, blonde wavy-haired and delicately beautiful. It is inevitable that they should be attracted toward each other. The pilot, at this point, announces that the craft is about to crash, and it would be advisable for all aboard to parachute to safety. The young woman is petrified at this announcement, and Flash sees he will have to save her. He grabs her, leaps out of the door, and the two are wafted down to

earth by the same parachute. They are unharmed, and as both recover from the initial shock of their descent, she notices an odd aircraft in a nearby clearing. Flash remarks it looks like a spaceship ("rocketship"), and suddenly a bearded gentleman, appearing extremely agitated, happens on the scene. He asks the two young people what they are doing spying on his experiments, and Flash characteristically replies "Parachutes aren't particular where they set you down!" The Doctor informs them of his identity; Doctor Alexis Zarkov (Frank Shannon). (In the comic-strip of this time, Zarkov's first name was Hugo. 'Alexis' is derived from the name of Alex Raymond, who drew 'Flash Gordon' in that era.) Upon learning that Flash is Professor Gordon's son, the Doctor assumes that the young man has been sent to stop his experiments. Flash convinces Zarkov of his good faith, and Zarkov explains the reason for his experiments.

It is the Doctor's belief that the planet "rushing up on us is inhabited, and also intensely radio-





active." It is Zarkov's hope to reach the planet in his rocketship, and enlist the aid of its inhabitants in veering that body away from the Earth. In a fit of maltemperment, Zarkov explains "For hours I have waited for my assistant; but he has turned coward. I need a man to come with me. Will you go?" Again in character, Flash answers "Alright, Doc, I'll bet on a long-shot with you!" At this time, Flash and Zarkov both realise that the young girl with them must be taken to a place of safety. When Zarkov reminds Flash that "No place of safety remains on the Earth," Flash refuses to go unless she is taken with them. The girl insists, Zarkov relents, and the three travellers leave on adventures such as men have never experienced.

The young girl is Dale Arden (played by innocent, nasal-voiced Jean Rogers in a unique style) who is destined to become a regular member of the Flash Gordon party, Flash's first love, and an important source of symbolism in the serial.

Upon arriving on the planet Mongo, the party is menaced by giant lizards, and then saved by a mysterious craft which spreys deadly chemicals on the attacking monsters. After a brief introduction, their rescuers state that the Earth people are to be taken before Ming, Emperor of the Universe' (portrayed in a superbly villainous style by Charles Middleton). To the accompaniment of powerful background music, the three Earth people board the strange craft and are flown to the city of Ming.

Ming lives in an extremely lavish palace, which, like Mongo (the small planet's name) is a curious mixture of super-scientific civilizations and almost medieval characteristics. 'Ming', aptly dubbed 'Ming the Merciless' by his people, is a bald-pated, Oriental looking monarch who rules with an iron hand, with cold reasoning replacing any trace of emotion he might have shown. When Ming first sees Dale he is overcome with a sense of beauty such as he has never seen. When he tries to stroke Dale's blonde hair Flash stops him. Breaking away from his guards, he shouts "Take your slimy hands off of her!" At this

point, Ming, not a man to be trifled with, orders Flash to be thrown into an arena filled with animal-men.

Like Dale, Flash has not gone unnoticed. Princess Aura (Priscilla Lawson) feels an intense liking for this 'blonde giant' of an Earthman, and proceeds to beg her father Ming to spare him for her. Ming refuses, even after Flash affords him some enjoyment by killing the animal-men. He orders his guards to throw Flash into the 'Pit' but before this order can be carried out, Flash finds Aura at his side in the arena, brandishing a ray-gun.

Ming orders the 'Pit' opened, and we see Flash and Aura plunging down a dark abyss. This is the end of chapter one.

Flash, Dale and Doctor Zarkov needed every possible assistance to escape Ming's evil clutches, and stop Mongo from hurtling to Earth. (The latter was cleverly accomplished by Zarkov, who suggested to Ming that he conquer Earth instead of destroying it; a clever device to save our world.) Fortunately there were friendly cultures on Mongo as well as merciless ones. It's interesting to note that every friendly person who became Flash's ally fought him at sometime during the serial.

Prince Thun (James Pierce, a former screen 'Tarzan' and the husband of Edgar Rice Burroughs' daughter, portrayed Thun as an enigmatic character sometimes bordering upon the simplest of the simple.) was the leader of Mongo's Lion Men. The Lion Men had profuse manes of hair, low voices, muscular bodies and tremendous cunning. They were the only race on Mongo who had openly dared to oppose Ming. Their vehicles were shaped like giant 'spinning tops,' and were aptly referred to as 'Gyroships.' In chapter two, the Lion Men invade Ming's palace, and Flash fights them to save the lives of Dale and Zarkov. Thun, thinking Flash to be an ally of Ming, dives his Gyroship at Flash's rocketcraft, and the two vehicles plunge toward the ground locked in a death-hold. Both Flash and Thun are unhurt by the crash, and proceed to duel after recovering from the shocks of

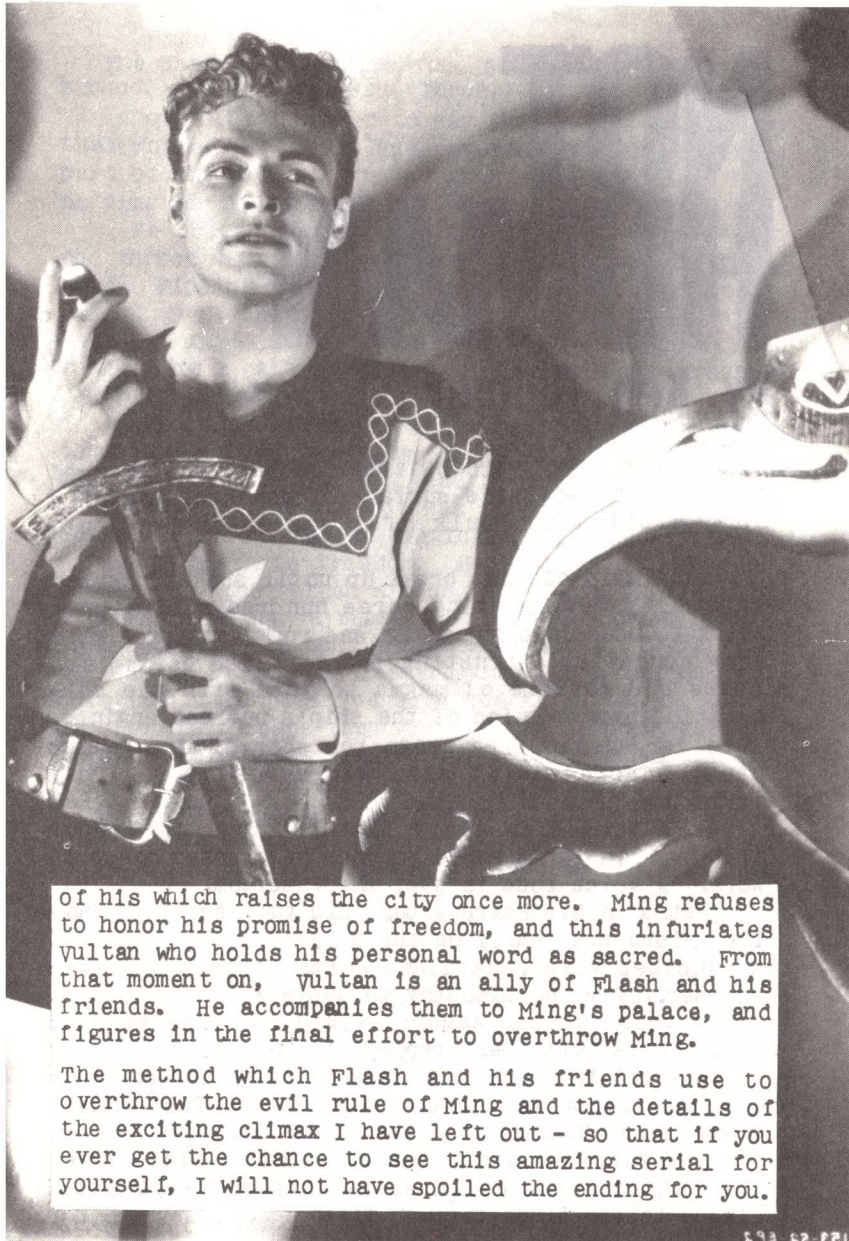


the crash landing. When Flash wins the duel, Thun expects a quick death. Instead Flash spares his life and the Prince realises the rugged man with the golden hair is no ally of Ming. Flash informs Thun of the circumstances which bound him to fight his new friend, and Thun immediately promises to aid Flash in rescuing his friends from Ming's grasp. Prince Thun makes frequent appearances throughout the serial, plays an important role in many adventures, and is instrumental in ending Ming's rule of Mongo in the serial's climax.

As Flash and Dale are sinking into the city of Kala, King of the Sharkmen, one of the numerous villains under Ming's command, an intruder confronts Zarkov in Ming's radioroom. He is Prince Barin (played in plump, fighting style by Richard Alexander,) who is the rightful heir to Mongo's throne. It has been Barin's wish, ever since learning of Zarkov's arrival, to enlist the help of this scient-

ific genius, and his fighting friend, in combating Ming's terror-filled rule. Barin promises to save Flash and Dale if Zarkov agrees that the Earthmen will back Barin's campaign to oust Ming. This is exactly what Zarkov and Flash have been trying to do, and the alliance is speedily agreed to. Later, in the serial's chapter eight, Flash is tricked into fighting a duel with Mongo's mighty 'Masked Swordsman,' who turns out to be Barin in disguise. The Prince has been tricked into fighting the duel by Ming, and when Flash remarks that he might have killed his friend, Barin wishes that he had. The reason...? Barin has always been in love with Princess Aura, who has always taken him for granted and laughed at his appearance. Flash pledges to help Barin win Aura, and the misunderstanding is cleared up.

King vultan (John Lipson) is the winged monarch of the 'Hawkmen,' Mongo's proudest race, who live in 'Sky City.' This city, which provides one of the most amazing special-effects in the entire production, is held aloft by atomic rays generated by an 'Atom-Furnace' tended by slaves of vultan. (If nationalistic comparisons are to be assigned, vultan and his people are certainly Germanic. Resembling characters straight from a Wagnerian opera, their emblem even resembles the German Eagle.) When Flash, Dale, Zarkov, Thun and Barin arrive in Sky City, they are imprisoned by vultan who puts the men, with the exception of Zarkov, into the Atom-Furnace room. He also desires to wed Dale. (Ming, also coveting Dale, explains to his Lieutenant that "vultan will undoubtedly compel the girl to marry him; it's a habit of his!") Flash leads a rebellion of the furnace room prisoners, then is tortured and almost killed by vultan. At Dale's pleading, he spares Flash, and Zarkov cures him in a revitalizing chamber which bathes Flash in its healing rays. When Ming comes to sky city and demands that Flash and Dale be given over to him, Zarkov creates an explosion which threatens to send the city crashing into the ground. In return for a promise of liberty for Flash and his friends, Zarkov operates an invention



of his which raises the city once more. Ming refuses to honor his promise of freedom, and this infuriates Yultan who holds his personal word as sacred. From that moment on, Yultan is an ally of Flash and his friends. He accompanies them to Ming's palace, and figures in the final effort to overthrow Ming.

The method which Flash and his friends use to overthrow the evil rule of Ming and the details of the exciting climax I have left out - so that if you ever get the chance to see this amazing serial for yourself, I will not have spoiled the ending for you.

NOT HUMAN

by Ken Bulmer

FORTY THREE SECONDS after Johnny Dent stepped onto the inhospitable surface of Nomokrel the mile long million ton bulk of a spaceship fell full on him.

The ship did not break up until she struck the ground. Armour plating three hundred millimetres thick rounded into the earth and rock, gouging a mile long concavity, thrusting the tortured earth into gouts and gobbets of magma to join with the coruscating pyrotechnics of the ship's nuclear engines. In a gargantuan fire storm the ship died. Johnny Dent, underneath it all, was thrust fifty feet into the ground.

He banged an angry fist through the armour plating. In three rapid punches he cleared space to work. A voice rode in over the intercom.

"Petra to all Petra group. Did you see that? Man! The Reldan are really on the ball!"

Another voice, hard and curt: "She's a Reldan cruiser. I've no sympathy to waste."

A third voice, eager: "This is Petra Four. I think Petra Three was trapped underneath -"

Dent cut in quickly. "This is Petra Three. Yeah-I'm underneath the ship. About fifty feet underground. Am coming out. Any Reldan around?"

He ripped a section of the armour plate free. The jagged edges could slice through beryl-steel like a toledo blade through flesh.

The hard voice, Petra Two, said: "No. No kruds around. We'll cover you, Three."

Dent didn't bother to say thanks. For one thing they worked as a team and covering one another was part of the drill. For another, Gregor Govinda had no time for niceties of that sort.

He braced himself against the body-shaped pit and thrust with his legs. Metal curled away from his head. Ripping fingers and battering fists cleared a way through the alien ship's vitals. He levered himself up, smashing viciously at obstructions, tunnelling a path of destruction within the greater destruction around.

"Snap it up, Three!" Petra One, Butch Kowalski, sounded his usual bluff impatient self. "We're three minutes behind schedule already. Get with it, man."

The quickest way out was through the shattered cruiser. Like a ferret digging after a rabbit, Dent ravaged a path to freedom. He spotted a number of dead kruds, the Reldan aliens, as always, giving him a queasy feeling, a sense of sickness that a living form could assume that blasphemous shape. Still and all, as he kicked the last bulkhead down and emerged onto the riven plain beneath the alien sun of Nomo, despite their shape they were living thinking beings.

Libby Solovaya's light eager voice sounded: "There he is! There's Three!"

"Hi, Four," said Dent, pushing a stray gun turret out of his way. He gave it a last kick for good measure and stepped briskly out towards his comrades. They waited for him in the radiation shadow of a hill, vagrant gleams of light from the burning wreckage glancing in that alien Nomo sunshine.

"This ship must have been one of the screening force trying to balk us." Butch Kowalski's voice over the intercom and filtered by electronics still sounded thick and vengeful and gleeful. "Another good krud."

That was the familiar reaction. The only good krud is a dead one.

"Where's Five?" demanded Dent, scanning his lenses around in a three sixty degree sweep. All he

could see apart from the long twisted ravagement of the smashed cruiser were low rounded hills, dust, craters, the slicing gashes of crust-thick ravines.

"This is Five," sang out the chirpy voice of Peewee King. "I'm over on the other side of the wreck. Did she come down! You disappeared like a flea under a thumb, Three."

"Yeah," said Dent. He could still remember the sensation of a million tons of spaceship falling on his neck. His pickups beeped a warning. His auto radar coupled in and as the metallic sound-emitting dot sprang up over the eastern horizon he had already flung himself forward to join the others in the shadows of the hill.

"Enemy aircraft!" Kowalski, as one, spoke in times of emergency or action, as now, and the others left the channels clear for him. "No action! He's probably a creep sent to investigate the wreck."

The fact that the Terrans had heard the aircraft before they spotted it indicated its subsonic state; probably an investigation creep, at that. Still.....

Dent checked his control board. The action was as automatic a reflex as a man with a body clearing his nose. Everything all systems go. If trouble was to come this early on the mission his entombment by an alien cruiser had not affected his battleworthiness.

Just what happened over on the other side of the wreck no one ever knew. They had had hair-fine trigger training. They had exercised their bodies until they could handle them as well as their own. Perhaps Peewee King was careless; perhaps his body malfunctioned. Whatever it was it didn't matter any more for Peewee.....

The aircraft nosed down. Dent saw a flare of flame from the nose, a lambent cerise circle from which a lemon yellow line of disrupted energy speared with concentrated needle-force. Megawatts of power had been pumped into that slough-beam. They saw Peewee, they saw Five, bounding like a springbuck to the shelter of the wreck. They saw the lemonyellow slough-beam hit him.

"That won't hurt him - " gasped Four.

Five's body collapsed, metal parts sparking as

they fractured, toughened metal hands that could rip an armoured spaceship apart flinging wide in helpless confusion. His head shot upwards trailing circuits and fire control equipment. His four legs began to peddle to the four points of the compass.

"That shouldn't happen - " breathed one of the Petra group.

They all heard Peewee's last faint words: "Taking cover in the wreck - what! - no - no!...

"There was more than a slough beam in that weapon." Kowalski's heavy voice carried venom.

A slough beam turned human flesh and blood and bones into a puddle of green slime. Their metal bodies ought to have resisted - should resist - could resist. Something new and ugly had been added to the Terran Reldan war..

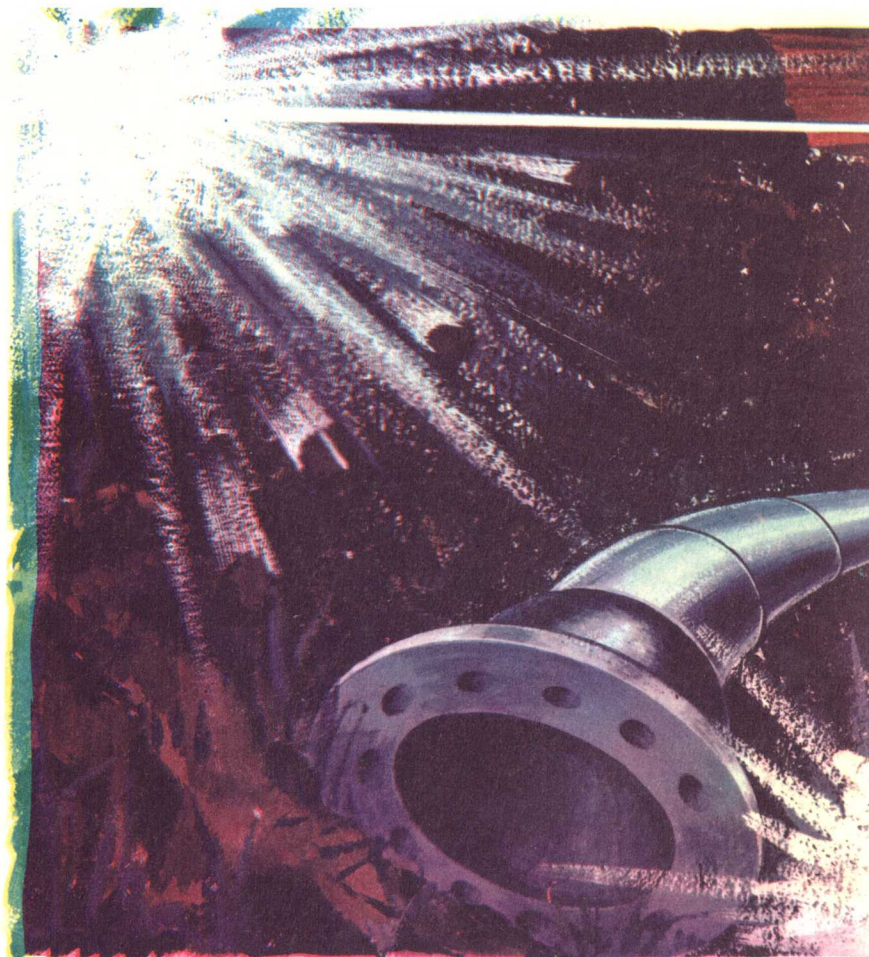
"We're here to do a job." Gregor Govinda's acid tones bit over the intercom. You quickly learned to read emotion and all the other lost signs of physical humanity from a solo voice.. "Let's get with it."

No one objected. Kowalski was one; but there was no leader. They were a team, briefed for a job, and each one would do what he had to do. They let the aircraft settle by the wreck and they deluged it with crunch-beams and watched with satisfaction as it disrupted into primal atoms.

"That Terran energy discharge will be picked up on Reldan detectors. So they know we're here now." One sounded annoyed. "We tried to move in undetected. So now we know they know - "

They moved out on four metal legs each, pounding over the cracked ground like racehorses, covering obstacles that would have stopped a tracked vehicle cold, moving at better than four hundred miles an hour.

"I don't like that new weapon." Dent spoke over the intercom and so all could hear; but he knew he was really speaking to Four, to Libby. "It takes so much energy to form a weapons beam that the big boys can dish it out and because they are big they have to take it. Our smallness has been one of our best safety factors - It takes some shooting with radar baffled to hit a man-sized object with a needle beam."



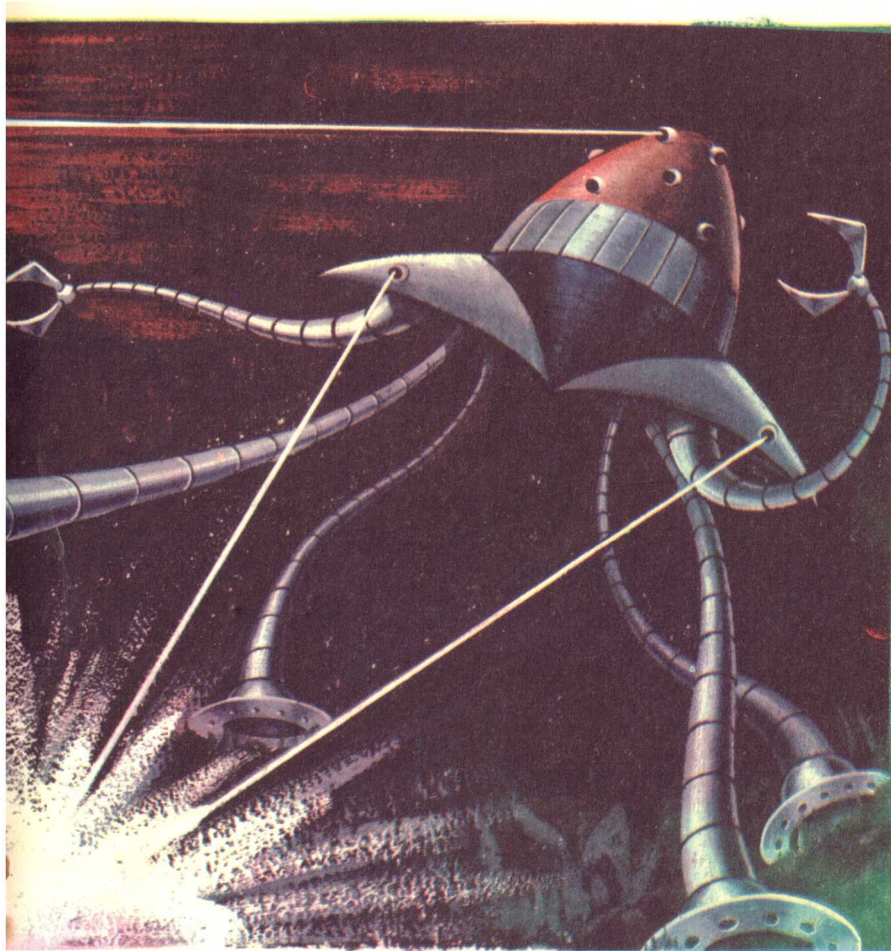
"They hit Five and cracked him wide open."

"There's the main bunker ahead. From now on it's all go go go."

"Kruks ahead! Dozens of 'em."

"Hit 'em! Hard!"

A force screen shielded the whole area ahead. Their radiation meters had been indicating levels of radioactivity so far into the red danger area that you could have fried eggs with it, radiation so intense that anything unshielded would have been irredeemably doomed. That atomic activity resulted from the scores of unavailing weapons centred on this



Jack Partington.

target by darting Space Navy raiders. The logistics boys must have been tearing their hair at the number of hydrogen and lithium and sub-cobalt bombs dropped here.

Nothing had cracked this control bunker for the whole of the Reldan forces in the stellar Achilles sector. So a commando group had had to be sent in. This was the commando group, the Petra team, and already they had lost a man.

From the side of the force-screen-protected concrete bunkers a machine cannon began to wink. Each shell as it landed exploded with mini-nuclear

force, something like half a thousand megaton weight, tearing the surface of the planet into disrupted fragments, heat and blast ravaging outwards in overlapping and destructive shells. Dent made his mechanical body lean into the blast and ploughed on.

After the first three or four shots a direct hit with one of those was a matter of sheer luck.

Throughout the roaring chaos the bunker and its shielding remained static. Dent triggered a long blast and whiffed into nothingness a screeching group of Reldan in front.

They were using tracked tank-like vehicles and he took a quick cool aim at each. He had plenty of power in his nuclear reactor, situated down where a stomach would normally be, but he did not wish to drain his resources too quickly.

"Keep going!" screeched Kowalski. His own lock-on radar would keep him focussed onto the location of the others and they tagged along. Kowalski might be One; but he was just as expendable as the next man.

A lump of ground the size of a football pitch lifted off in front of Dent. It skated over his head. He didn't watch it fall but let go a long blast at where it had come from. Just how many kruds died in the holocaust of that ruthless fire he did not know. But their concealed weapon would never be fired in this man's war.

Always, with the prickle of fear jabbing his brain he kept looking for the cerise circle and the lambent needle of lemon yellow fire. A new weapon - and they had no defence.....

"Maybe it's too big for hand use," he said, and realised he had vocalised the thought over the intercom.

The others knew what he meant without a second thought.

"Maybe," said Two, Gregor Govinda. "But if you see one - duck."

That was a joke. Their heads contained fire control equipment, scanning and radar equipment. Their brains were buried deep within their chests,

shielded, safeguarded, in the logical place. That was all there was of a man in his armoured and mechanical body here on Nomokrel, a brain. Just a brain and its associated life-sustaining equipment; blood circulation, aeration; only a brain connected to metal arms and legs, to electronic circuits, to radar eyes and ears, sonics, radiation sniffers, magnetic anomaly detectors, all the scientific wizardry that made of a man's brain a single fighting entity.

"Behind you, Three!"

Dent whirled.

A screw-thread snouted from the ruptured ground. He snapped a burst, saw fire stream bluey along an armoured hull, knew his beam wouldn't cut through that defence. He dropped flat. He stepped up the power, snapped infra-reds across, saw the mole drop over and begin to crunch towards him. His second burst skated in electric sparkles from that toughened metallic hide.

Four, Libby Solovaya, appeared like a raging demon through the smoke and dust and dancing radiation motes, her body-mounted weapons spouting.

"Git orf, Libby!" Dent shouted. "Leave the krud to me!"

She did not reply, turned, disappeared from optical view in a shower of pyrotechnics.

Dent saw his chance. He waited until the mole loomed over him. Then he leaped, caught the protuberance around a gun muzzle, broke that off, shoved a hand weapon through the orifice and pumped a full charge in. The mole went careening on but no live hands were now at the controls.

A shuddering mental glimpse came of the obscene Reldans retching and coughing and then dissolving into purple puddles in that iron coffin. The very sight of a Reldan made a man retch. And yet... and yet.....

Kowalski had primed the bottom edge of the shield. He shouted thinly: "Primer going up!"

Forces beyond the control of a sun going nova wrenched at the force field. It ballooned gigantic,

colour rippled and pulsed over its sheening surface - then it burst.

On a tide of victory the Terrans swept through.

Four guarded their back, spraying lethal bursts of fire that brewed up charging Reldan tanks and whiffed half protected aliens into their constituent atoms.

The noise levels came down so that their pick-ups recorded for a micro-second the bedlam before cutting out again on reduced power. Sound above a certain number of decibels could prove as potent a weapon as beams of raw energy. The Terrans pushed on between concrete walls.

Here in the outer underground defence ring the Reldans would no longer relish using nuclear weapons. That those very nuclear devices had already proved of no avail against the Terran's armoured mechanical bodies would not have stopped the aliens from going on and on trying. The Reldans, like the Solterrans, did not give up easily.

The four grotesque metal figures, each now on two legs, paraded down the concrete corridor, their hands empty of weapons, the metal fingers spread wide to react instantly to the first stimuli. A weapon, a blasting charge, a battering punch to open up a door, a grab at a projecting corner the better to assist the antigrav mechs in a lunging thrust upwards, whatever the controlling brain directed would bring an instant response. Kowalski kicked open a side door, boasted the room beyond, grunted a thick: "Okay, push on." They stalked past, ready for what might lie ahead.

In these unreal moments of calm before the final act, Johnny Dent could not stop himself from thinking back to the first time he had seen one of the mechanical bodies.

The accident had robbed him of the use of his legs. He'd been a fool to pull a stunt like that; going in singlehanded to drag old Fatso Rawlings from the shattered scout, and the Reldans had sprayed them with fire. He'd got Fatso out but he'd busted himself up. The medics had patched him up and, through channels, as an ex-navy man, he'd found his way - in his antigrav chair - into Bull Salford's

office.

The story had been laid on the line and his eyes had been opened to a lot of Terrestrial history he hadn't realised existed.

"We started off on a number of parallel tracks," Bull told him, smiling that confidential smile. "Open heart surgery, spare parts stored in the bank and grafted on when necessary, plastic arteries and plastic joints. We could dolly up the human body real swell."

"But you can't patch me up."

"No, Johnny. We can't perform miracles - yet."

"So what's the good news?"

"We went on to the other tack," Bull said, ignoring Dent's question. "We were using exoskeletons, limbs strapped to metal supports and powered by external sources. Then we improved spacesuits and made them auto-powered. D'you see the obvious end product?"

They'd stood to watch - Bull had, Dent craned from his anti-grav chair - as the mechanical body was wheeled in.

"A complete mechanical body, nuclear-powered, fitted with everything a man will need." Bull had been enthusiastic.

"If you have all that instrumentation," Dent said cautiously, "I don't see much room for a man in there."

Salford shook his head. "No, Johnny. Not a man. All we put in there is a man's brain. That's all that is necessary - obviously."

"But -!"

"That's right."

"Why don't you use robots?"

"We can - and do. But a robot cannot do what a man can do in the sort of situation the assignments we have for you will lead."

"Me -?"

"A robot is an attempt at creating a man. In a certain situation it can act like a man, and with its superior strength and aptitudes can win out. But here we have a machine that can do all that a robot can do - but with a man's brain in overall command!

There's a computer in there that's better than a robot's brain - which can only be a specialised computer. This way we get the best of all worlds."

"Me - ?"

"Look at it, Johnny."

Dent looked. Metal, gleaming and sheening under the lights, the mechanical body looked sleek and smooth, tough and yet with rounded shoulders and smooth lines that would ease it through jagged holes and rents in a ship. The four legs conferred high speed and stability, the spare pair of arms a reserve if one pair was lopped off. Oh, yes, Johnny Dent admired that metal body very much.

"You, Johnny. If you'll volunteer."

So they'd taken his brain out and dumped it into its saline tank, powered the blood and aeration circulation systems with his own private nuclear source, enclosed all that in a supremely tough cylinder and dropped it down into the chest cavity of his new body. His body. Sure, they'd put his own old battered carcass back into cold-storage and if he came out of this little lot alive he could have his brain replaced in that bone-dome. If he came out alive he could become a flesh and blood human being again.

They'd introduced him to the others of the Petra group; people whose bodies had failed them and who had volunteered to use artificial bodies in the grim stellar struggle against the aliens of Reldan. The small headquarters planet of Nomokrell had looked to be a good starting point. So - here they were, fighting their way into the heart of the defence complex and already Peewee King had had his.

Even Libby Solovaya, Petra Four, who'd been born a disfigured, malformed monstrosity, had had to think long and searchingly before she'd swapped her own travesty of a body for the new mechanical marvel. But she had, and she was here...

The Navy had fought them through the outer defences surrounding Nomokrell at a high cost in ships and men. One Reldan cruiser shot down had fallen on Johnny Dent. But they'd fought on - and they'd lost Peewee - and they'd go on fighting

through until they reached the heart of this command complex and blew it up, or until they were all dead. It was that kind of war.

Faucets sprouted along the sides of the corridor. Even as acids deluged in searing streams, Kowalski said: "They were expecting commando raids, then." The acid spouted into a river that gushed and rushed, fuming, past and over them.

Dent checked his meters automatically. The acid had no effect on his metal body. Flesh and blood, of course.....

Much of their insignificance-rendered immunity had been negated in the corridors and Dent felt a wash of relief as Two shattered the wall and roof ahead, opening out an area of darkness in which, guided by infra reds, they could fan out.

"Must be getting close."

"The kruds don't like this one little bit."

A weapon lashed lethally from the darkness. Sparkles coruscated along toughened metal. Dent triggered a short burst, using his optics, seeing his radar plot a scrambled nest of confusion. His pickups filtered in an undertone of shrieks and broken-bone grinding.

"Last ditch defence coming up."

"All I want to do is kill kruds." The cold merciless voice of Govinda meant more than it said.

Dent wondered what agony that shattered body represented. Truly, Doctor Salford picked his men well.

The floor tilted. Dust and debris pitched in a choking cloud all to one side. Small multi-legged robots flitted through like vampires, to be caught and smashed by the Terran's weapons. The holocaust drove deeper beneath the alien ground.

"Filthy kruds - "

"Behind you, Libby!"

Dent picked off a tracked weapon that snouted out from infra-red illuminated darkness. The weapon spat once. Two of Libby's legs vanished. The lemon-yellow beam died into ochre rust as Dent caught it; but the hideous reminder of their vulnerability remained.

"We must be near enough by now!"

"Right through to the heart!" Butch Kowalski lumbered ahead, kicked down armoured plating, opened up an area where Reldan screamed and ran, where alien artifacts spelled out the alien headquarters complex.

"We're here!"

Back to back the four Solterranean mechanical bodies spouted a fury of fire, washing the place clean. Dent saw aliens dying and he shuddered. This, then, was the end product of a scientific miracle that could give men new artificial bodies?

The job they had come through hell to do remained essentially a lone-line black-and-white operation. They were here to destroy the central brain controlling all Reldan operations in the Achilles stellar sector. Killing kruds must be viewed merely a byproduct of that central task.

"There it is!" Kowalski's brutal eagerness hounded them forward.

Encased in multifarious armour plating and force shields the alien brain pulsed lividly, sparking power and forceful dominance, a symbolic centre of alien evil, to be squashed and crushed and blown up - so went the drill. Dent stared with a revulsion that possessed him against a last despairing question. Govinda and Kowalski did not hesitate.

They smashed forward, cutting, blasting, destroying, biting venomously through protection after protection, demoniacally demolishing anything in their path.

They reached the brain.

Supersonics and hypersonics keened shrilly. Light pulsed with frantic desperation. Debris whirled through the alien air. Dust puffed and sensors picked up the stink of burning insulation, boiling oil, slagging metal, all the hellish framework to modern warfare.

They shucked the devices clamped to their backs and stacked them ready. Reldan flitted like white spectres on the periphery of their lights. The whole scene reminded Dent of a witches' cavern with the boiling pot and the fumes and the dark and devious perversions.

Govinda yelled as one of his arms vanished in lemon-yellow fire. Kowalski blatted a stream of return fire. Reldan gibbered and died. Libby lost her remaining two legs and her body crashed sickeningly to the rocky ground.

"Libby " yelled Dent.

"Hell!" Kowalski, as One, had no need to make the decision; that had lain intrinsically as a part of their fate from the beginning.

"Go on!" Libby spoke with a frantic vehemence born not of fear for herself - the threshold of ordinary fear had been passed long ago - but out of fearful apprehension that the mission would prove a failure because of her.

They left Libby lying where she had fallen still spouting ; flame and defiance at the aliens. They battered their way back and out and their pickups recorded the shattering demise of the alien brain. They bounded across the scorched plain, firing, dodging, three mechanical men with living brains, their mission a success and their rescue problematical.

At the D.Z. they waited, hunkered down, firing at anything approaching too near. Nuclear devices proliferated around them and their shields and armouring rode out the storms of matter in annihilation.

"You really hate the Reldan, don't you, Gregor." Dent had to speak.

"Hate them? Of course. They're alien monstrosities and they mean to wipe Earth out of the Galaxy."

"But - you have a possessive hatred for them - "

Kowalski broke in with thick viciousness. "We hate them. Look at the obscene things! They're not human!"

Dent looked at his companions, at their metal arms and metal legs, their mechanical bodies and their nuclear powered muscles.

"No," he said softly. "They're not human."

"I know what you're getting at, Johnny." Kowalski's voice held now a graver tone. "Some people hate killing. It isn't pleasant. There's no kick in it for a normal man. But the Reldan refuse to talk

to us. We tried. God knows we tried. But if it is to be a straight fight between alien and Terran then I see no shame in fighting them to the end, in killing every last one of them."

"If," said Govinda wearily. "If two cultures refuse to work together, and only one can ever remain in the Galaxy then no amount of reasoning can convince me that we of Earth should not be that favoured race."

"You can't lean over backwards all the time - not when your wife and kids wait in the background to be killed off by hostiles. It isn't nice; but it's logical."

The rescue ship ploughed down to pick them up. They would leave this devastated planet and go on to other fights and victories.

"Anyway," said Govinda, clinching the argument.

"These filthy aliens aren't human beings."

Mechanical arms and legs boosted by nuclear power lifted them aboard ship.

"No," said Johnny Dent, Petra Two, again. He flexed his metal arms, reaching with metal fingers for the ladder. "No. Not human."

ORDER THE NEXT aw NOW!

from the editorial address

name: _____

address: _____

inc 2'9 post

1 MILLION YEARS BC





"ONE MILLION YEARS B.C." tells a story of life on earth at that time when gigantic dinosaurs, huge flying reptiles and enormous sea monsters fought an eternal battle for life. The earth itself was still bubbling and boiling and the primitive people who lived on it were savages fighting themselves as well as the monsters and the elements. The story centers around Tumak (John Richardson) who wandering alone across this primitive world, encounters huge dinosaurs, giant lizards and even ape-like Gorilla people before arriving at something he never knew existed before - the sea. There he meets up with the girl Loana (Raquel Welch), and his troubles begin.

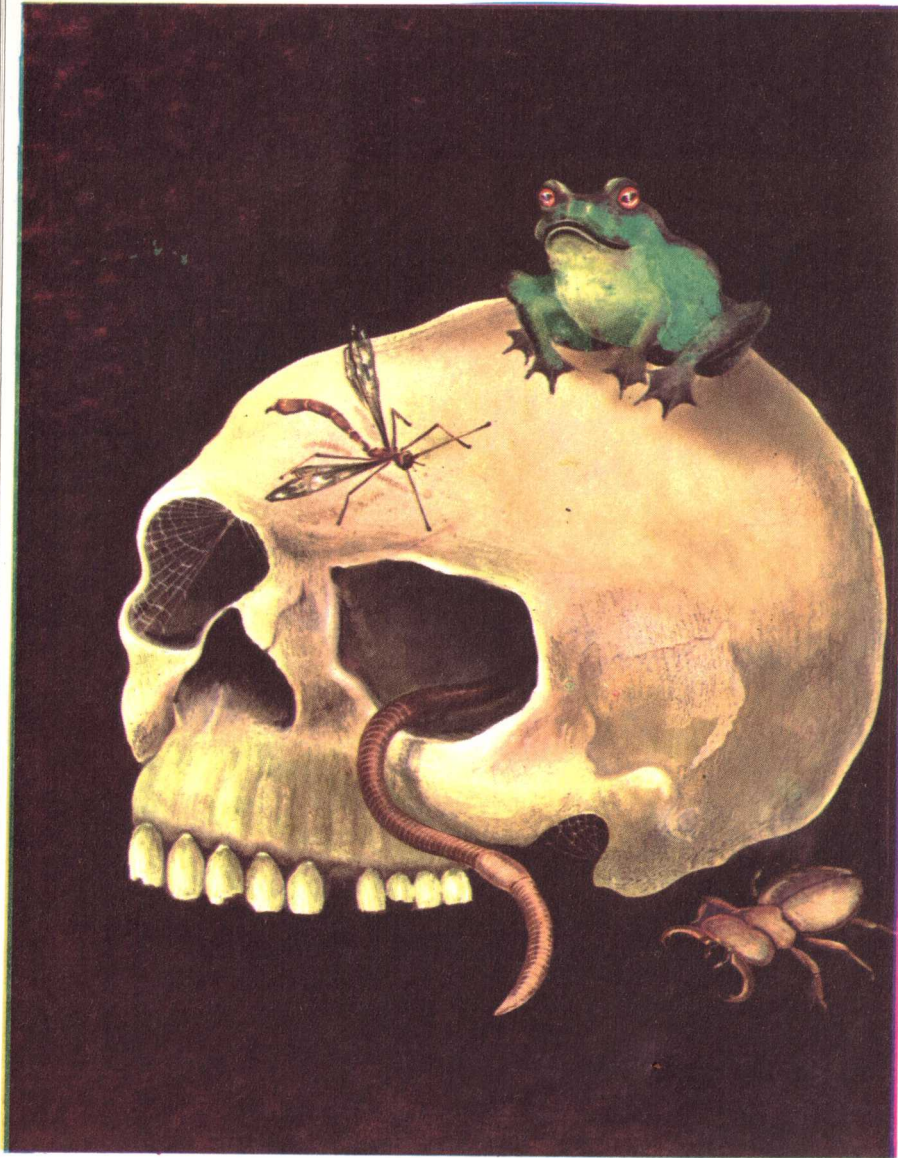
"ONE MILLION YEARS B.C." is a Hammer/Seven Arts Production in Giant Panamation and colour, produced and scripted by Micheal Carreras, directed by Don Chaffey with Special Visual Effects by Ray Harry-Hausen. Starring John Richardson and Raquel Welch, and featuring Percy Herbert, Robert Brown, Martine Beswick, Jean Wladon and Lisa Thomas, the film is for release in the United Kingdom through Warner-Pathe and the rest of the world through 20th Century-Fox.



The Childish Fear

by J. Ramsey Campbell

Jack Partington



IN A WAY I suppose it began in Camside. That was where I was born, and perhaps when I was younger I realized things that I'd forgotten by the time I came to work in Brichester. Perhaps we're all aware of certain things when we're younger, and forget them later so as not to be ridiculed? After all, you and I - and everyone else - have lain awake at night and seen misshapen things peering out of the shadow. There used to be an ornament on the top of my bedroom wardrobe that cast an outline on the wall like a leering demon. I couldn't bear to look at it after dark, but during the day it was just an ornament - nothing more. Certainly not terrifying. It was only during the night that I used to think: *suppose that face comes down from the wall at me?* The night was the catalyst.

Well, maybe I was more imaginative than most. That's why I didn't care to join in the idiotic games the neighborhood children played, but instead wandered into the woods behind Camside. I could lie for hours in the grass there in summer, staring into the water, watching the streams and the river rush by, or further into the woods just peering into the stagnant pools and watching the pebble-ripples glitter. But I didn't like the frogs. I didn't mind the croaking that drifted out of the night through my window, but those unblinking things that pulsed at me in the grass were somehow horrible. I kept watching them, though - always ready to jump back if they moved.

That was my trouble; I was fascinated by those moist scuttling, hopping things in the woods. Particularly, I noticed, they'd collect in dark places - in the marshy ground among the trees, or under the flat stones that lay around in the woods. I used to get a horrible sort of thrill from turning those slabs over and watching the white things stir slowly and scatter into the darkness under the stone again; then I'd wait for days and return to throw the rock back onto its original side, and tremble back as the many-legged horrors hurried out of sight. It was a perverted pleasure, too. I knew I'd scream if one of thoses things scabbled onto me.

They repelled me, but I couldn't keep away from them.

This sort of thing happened all the time during the school holidays, and even during term time I tried to spend a half-hour watching the inhabitants of the dark woods. Then, I reached grammar school, homework began to pile up, and there was less spare time in the evenings. So I had to confine myself to looking at the woods from my bedroom window at night, and that was how I got to thinking about the crawling things from another angle. They had to stay away from the light, I thought - that was why they hid under the stones - but at night darkness covered everything. Suppose they crawled into the houses? Suppose armies of them were creeping through the grass down there? I couldn't keep the light on until morning, but I made sure the doors and windows were closed tight.

Meanwhile I was doing well at Ordinary Level, six passes, which would have been enough to get me a decent job had my guardian not been one of the biggest bastards I knew. In 1955 he died, I moved out of grammar school into the Ministry of Labour and leaving his house to the rats I found myself a flat on North Abbey Avenue. I didn't have a great amount of money to spend, and most of that went on books and beer.

Then, one day in 1960, someone got me interested in films. I occasionally visited a cinema, but usually I preferred to read. Anyway, this winter morning I walked into the office with my nose in 'Casting the Runes,' and Bill Henty - one of my friends there - glanced at it as he passed me on the way to the washroom, and remarked casually on the title.

"Yes, It's very good," I said, having lost the thread of the story. "Have you read it?"

"No, but I've seen the film," he answered.

"Excellent film."

"Didn't know there was one," I told him, not especially interested. "I can't recall seeing the title around."

"Oh, it isn't around under that title. The film's called 'Night of the Demon' - I believe it's coming

to the Capitol, and isn't that on your road?"

There was a cinema opposite my flat called the Capitol, a rather decrepit exterior which always had suggested to me one of those places where the audience take seats home for souvenirs. "Yes, the Capitol's just across from me," I confirmed.

"Well, I think it's on there next weekend. I would advise you to go and see it - it is most definitely recommended."

I hadn't finished reading the story, but when I got through with it I liked it very much and wondered about seeing the film version. The weekend came. Saturday night I'd intended to join a drinking party at the Queen's Arms on Bentley Road, but three of the party were in a car accident that afternoon, and the beer session was called off - out of sympathy, I suppose. So I was left in my room with nothing to do, staring out at the red neon Capitol and the procession of couples passing under it for 3/6, and before very long I slipped across the road with the wind slashing my ears and followed the rest out of the sleet into the cinema.

I was the only person in the front row of the circle, since I'm taller than most and could see over the too-high bar. The second feature came on and the audience (including myself) yawned, scratched and visited the ice-cream girl or the toilet. At the end of that there seemed to be a general rush in the stalls to get to other places. When the lights came up the stalls were about half as crowded as I had taken them to be in the dim light. Then the lights dimmed again, leaving a queue around the ice-cream tray, and the seats began to fill up again as the main film appeared.

I was very impressed, too. It brought screams from the stalls and a quickened pulse from me. I determined to see if I could track down any others like this. The curtains drew together and the scramble to beat the National Anthem began, mostly in the stalls. However, the Queen briefly blinked at us from behind the curtains and vanished with a baleful growl from the soundtrack.

I hurried downstairs to the toilet noticing that

already the stalls were almost empty, although they had seemed crowded. Two students from Brichester University were standing against the wall as I entered; presumably drawn to this district by Jacques Tourneur.

"How about that fellow next to you?" one remarked

"Yes, I know," said the other. "How could anyone fall asleep in a film like that - and I couldn't even hear him breathing!"

"Maybe he was dead - , of fright perhaps."

"Possibly," agreed the other, laughing. "He jumped up in the interval, anyway, and ran out somewhere - ran for it again at the end."

They moved toward the door, and I lost interest. Looking around, I thought how ignorant of human anatomy these amateur artists responsible for the surrounding murals must be - or perhaps this was their way of expressing their disgust for the female. Some of these outlined figures looked hardly human.

Next morning I made straight for Bill Henty's desk to agree about the previous night's film, and after that I quickly became addicted. Before, I hardly ever visited a cinema unless I'd made an appointment with someone who hadn't turned up; but now I wandered into the Brook Street - Cushing Avenue area at the center of Brichester twice a week to catch some film at one of the five cinemas there. Henty gave me some guidance; but it was against his warning that I caught a bus the week before Christmas to the Granada, to see Terence Fisher's 'Dracula.' I'd never been so terrified by a movie as I was that night. Wednesday night I visited Taylor Gardens to see it again.

Saturday night found me in a quandary. Either 'Dracula' for the third time or a

Saturday night found me in a quandary. Either 'Dracula' for the third time or a party at the Cock and Bottle down the road, and I couldn't decide which. But there were people at the party who I'd have liked to speak to over various matters and didn't normally see, and no doubt the film would turn up elsewhere. So I left about half-seven for the Cock and Bottle.

By the time I arrived the party had begun and four or five people were in the mood for buying acquaintances drinks, so I circulated around the bar a little and found someone who insisted on paying for my beer. Someone from the Customs who'd come to stay with friends in Camside was remarking about Ultimate Press books in the distance, and I struggled across the room to take this in.

" - pages of sheer obscenity," he was saying with a thick Lancashire accent as I approached. "I can tell you, it even shocked me. I mean, that's not art or anything - just damned filth -"

"Did you mention Ultimate Press?" I broke in.

"Yes, we had some of their things in the other day from Paris, in the middle of some other goods, and I was just talking about them.

"What did you do with them?"

"Threw them on the fire. I'm telling you, you wouldn't believe the sort of things that was in them!"

"But for God's sake," I protested, "how do you know how these scenes fitted in if you didn't read them right through? It's people like you who make sure there's no future for art at all!"

"Aren't they trying to print a different sort of book soon?" said Bill Henty, coming up behind me. I suspect he interrupted on purpose - he knew how I was if anybody started defending censorship.

"Don't know - what book is that?" said the Customs officer's original listener, probably also glad to turn the subject.

"Oh, it hasn't got a title," Henty informed us, "but it's a black magic symposium which has been banned for hundreds of years - the publishers in Jena originally refused to print it. I've read extracts from another book by this man Henricus Pott, and that was sick as hell - sort of thing Ultimate might well do."

"What's this other one about?" I asked, giving up the argument.

"Well, I'm not too sure. But there is one idea running through a lot of it that I know about - you know the way insects crawl into damp places and under stones? This man's idea - bit twisted, I know, but

still - his idea was that if dark places teem with insects like this - as they do! - mightn't it be reasonable to suppose that larger dark places might be inhabited by larger creatures?"

"What - giant slugs and things, you mean?" I put in.

"No, not necessarily - just larger... creatures. Things that'd keep to the darkness because it mightn't be pleasant for people to see them. Freaks, cripples, and worse, from what I can make out. They wouldn't do much - they might or might not be intelligent, but all they'd want would be to stay in the darkness. Only - they might venture out at night. But no, I don't think he meant insects."

"Somebody talking about insects?" a middle-aged man called, pushing through the crowd. "We've got ants at our place - the house is crawling with them. Anyone know what to do with the damn things?"

The month after Christmas was crowded with films to see, and I journeyed all over town to catch up on the Hammer films I'd missed. But I still hadn't seen 'Dracula' again. Bill Henty and I argued violently over that one - he'd found it rather cheap with only a couple of good moments. I retaliated by hating 'Them!' which he'd called a "damn good film" and which I thought was utter crap. The visitors at the other side of the counter frequently had to wait during office hours, as one of us was struck by a point in our respective favorite movies and cornered the other with "But surely you must have liked...?"

Then, in early February, "Dracula" reappeared; at the Capitol opposite me in fact.

"Well", I said that morning, "I'm off to Dracula again tonight."

"Best of luck," he replied, and didn't speak to me the rest of the day.

Of course, if I confined myself to a snack at the fish-and-chip cafe down the road from the cinema, I could make the six o'clock performance and sit the film round again till half-ten. And I did. Of course there had to be a staff shortage at the cafe, and even my worried glances between wall-clock and waitress weren't effective; but finally I escaped and

pounded up the road towards the cinema.

As I clattered up the steps a teenager with attendant mistress asked for two stall seats, was answered inaudibly to me, and wearily paid for entry into the balcony. The foyer walls were crowded with intimations of coming pleasures; but no time to examine these now, I thrust silver through the glass archway and had a ticket flicked back at me. I plunged up the stairs and into the darkened auditorium. "This film has been passed for exhibition when no child under 16 is present," remarked the screen. ("You mean there are children over sixteen?" an irate voice muttered behind me.)

The loudspeakers crashed and the camera tracked into the vault to closeup of a blood-spattered inscription, which brought defensive laughter from higher up the balcony but no reaction whatever from the stalls. Wait for fifteen minutes, I thought, then you'll react. Apart from a couple of gasps behind me, however, the terrible entry of Christopher Lee fell flat. I wondered if the customers in the stalls had seen the film before - but of course, at this early hour the cinema would be almost empty. Satisfied, I sat back to watch and await the nine o'clock performance's effect.

But during a lull in the cinematic action, with Peter Cushing and Michael Gough creeping around the grounds of a house, I realised that the stalls were not empty. Somebody (perhaps the attendants - it wouldn't be the first time these people had annoyed me) was whispering audibly down there. I couldn't catch the words, but that sibilance filtering through the soundtrack was enough to distract me. Occasionally there came a faint scuttling and thumping - couples coupling on the back row, conceivably. At a fade to black I leaned over the rail, but only dark forms were visible, and small too, from what I could see.

The lights glowed at last and the rumble of people who didn't want to see the ending first' began. Nobody I knew, however. A few tried to join me in the front row, muttered together and moved back, not wanting to risk a dislocated neck. The light withdrew

as the last party thudded down the steps, and *The Mummy* began. Several seconds later the curtains drew belatedly apart.

I've never seen such an unreceptive audience. They didn't scream, they didn't even laugh - though there was an intake of breath somewhere further up the balcony at the tongue-cutting scene. And somebody was whispering again in the stalls, more of them by the sound of it.

Well, I sat the main film through again, and enjoyed it-- but I'd have got pleasure from screams from the audience, which didn't occur. Afterward I lingered in the foyer to glance over the posters (*Quatermass II* was on its way, I noticed) and, out of curiosity, I watched the stalls exit to see what sort of people didn't react in any way to *Dracula*. But it looked as if the stalls had emptied before I'd reached the foyer, for the exit doors remained closed.

In the following week I went to the Superior in Binns Crescent to a double bill, the names of whose films I've fortunately forgotten. All I remember is seeing them because Bill Henty advised me against it. The next day the Magnet outside Camside closed down. On Saturday, passing the boarded-up front with its dead neon and peeling posters, for no reason I thought how little I'd like to be in the silence and darkness of that place. I thought of living among the rows of seats in blackness, feeling my way around dimly-glimpsed shapes, and abruptly I forced myself to think of something else.

Monday brought *Quatermass II* to the Capitol. I arrived in the interval at half-seven, and was immediately caught up in the unexpected twists of the plot. I was very impressed indeed. Then came *The Blob*, another Bill Henty recommendation, another load of rubbish. I yawned my way through it once the promising first scene was over. My spirits sank lower as Steve McQueen accepted a challenge to a backward car race, having no bearing whatsoever on the plot.

Then a girl screamed.

That rather woke me up. Had I missed something

worthwhile on the screen? But no, McQueen was still acting moronically, and nothing terrifying had occurred. Then, as an altercation in the back circle became audible, I realised that perhaps the girl's boyfriend had explored too far. Whatever had upset her, she continued to argue hysterically, drowning the soundtrack.

The balcony doors swung open. "Will you be quiet there, please!" ordered the manager. But the girl had obviously had a pronounced shock; she went on babbling without answering him.

"Please keep quiet," the manager insisted, "or I'll have the film stopped. We can't have the audience disturbed by this commotion."

The girl's cries did not cease; and a few minutes later, to a chorus of protests from the balcony and a loud clattering from the stalls, the film flickered off and the lights went up. Looking back, I saw that the argumentative couple were standing in the aisle; apparently they had begun their clamor on reaching the end of the row. The manager and an attendant hurried down the stairs.

"Now, what's all the row about?" inquired the manager.

"Oh, it's nothing," the girl's companion replied uncomfortably. "She just put her hand on someone's ice-cream in the dark, that's all, and - well, she's rather nervy, and it upset her."

"I did not!" the girl cried. "I touched someone in the dark - but he's gone now..."

"I'm not sure I understand," interrupted the manager. "What do you mean, you touched someone in the dark?"

The girl was obviously becoming more hysterical. "We were on our way out," she gulped, "and I was going first - and someone was sitting between us and the aisle, so I said excuse me, but he didn't move. I thought he was asleep at first, so I asked him again, but nothing happened... So I put out my hand to shake him..."

"And then?" the manager had to be prompt.

"I couldn't see him in the dark except a vague

shape, but his head seemed to have dropped forward, and I touched him where his shoulder looked like it should be. And my hand slipped, and touched his neck - only he hadn't got a neck, and he hadn't got a head..."

"Come on," the young man said, "I'll take you home."

"Yes," she agreed breathlessly, "yes, let's get away from this horrible place - " and without another word to the manager they climbed the steps, she muttering what sounded like "all wet and slippery" as they passed through the exit.

The manager looked at the attendant; then he made a remark that struck me as very peculiar, "My God," he said, "*they're coming into the balcony now!*"

Thursday night *Suddenly Last Summer* arrived at the Odeon in central Brichester, and so did I. Though not a horror film, this terrified me as much as any I'd seen, and the rest of the audience seemed to agree. I leaned over the rail to discover if there were any acquaintances down there - and it hit me that practically nobody down there had gone out. Why, then, was the interval always the signal for the audience in the Capitol stalls to migrate? Well, I knew the audiences were different, but that didn't mean they had to act differently in the intervals. I'd noticed this before, but only now did I begin to wonder why it happened.

Friday I had a splitting headache, Saturday a cold had set in, and I spent the weekend and Monday catching up on some paperbacks. Tuesday I found out that Bill Henty hated Tennessee Williams. He wanted to know what the Capitol had to offer; I didn't remember (they were showing a season of horror films, I recalled, but the titles that night eluded me. As I turned away he called out.

"Damnation, I'd forgotten!" he said. "I wanted to go to that radio shop next to the Capitol - there's a torch there that's in the sale - but I won't be able to make it. Hell!"

"Well, that's all right," I replied (perhaps I could persuade him to like *Dracula*). "Give me the

money and I'll bring this torch in tomorrow if you can give me details."

He scribbled the details on the back of a form; and that night I pulled the form out with my bus fare and remembered his request. The bus stopped outside the wireless shop, just past the cinema - and that was how, standing on the platform, I caught sight of a poster: for one night only - *Invasion Of The Body-Snatchers* and *Suddenly Last Summer*. Hell I thought, jumped off the bus and hurried into the shop. The assistant squinted at the form; "Oh, I know - last one, too," he told me and insisted on unpacking the torch, demonstrating its efficiency, and wrapping it indifferently. It was just before six o'clock. I paid, fidgeted until the change arrived ran out and clattered into the foyer next door. "You're all right, it hasn't started yet," I was informed. Above the paybox a leering skull proclaimed that the management would not be responsible for deaths by fright during the night's performance. I rushed upstairs just as the lights began to dim.

Invasion was a splendid film, as good as my Val Guest favorite, but marred by one thing; the audience in the stalls. They were whispering again. The soundtrack was loud, luckily, and the film was so fascinating that I didn't unduly notice the whispers. The end came unexpectedly, but the lights didn't go up. There was a spate of switch-clicking behind me, but nothing happened. I heard the thud of people standing up in the stalls - and then they sat down again. For some reason, that worried me. They ran out every other night in the interval; why not tonight?

In a couple of minutes the balcony had filled up, and the second feature appeared on the screen. There were a few yawns from around me during the first scene, then interest began to rise - everywhere but in the stalls. Down there someone was as loquacious as ever, and the soundtrack was faint, so that I had to strain my ears. My face was getting hot. Suddenly I leaned over the rail and yelled "Shut up!" in

a voice that must have carried to the foyer. There was a startled silence below me then the whispering broke out afresh.

I'd had enough. I turned back toward the projectionist and shouted: "Are there no attendants in this bloody place?" Apparently there weren't, for nobody answered my call. To some eloquent glances from the upstairs audience, I stumped up the stairs and down into the foyer. The manager was talking to the paybox girl.

"Is it possible for you to keep the people in the stalls quiet?" I called from under the *circle* sign.

"Very possible, I'd say," he answered laughing, and pointed.

I couldn't imagine what he found to laugh at till I looked where he was pointing. The double doors at the far end of the foyer were closed, and hung with a sign: STALLS CLOSED - NO ADMITTANCE.

"It's the teenagers," the manager said. "They've been tearing up the seats - we've closed up the stalls, and we're only letting selected people upstairs. We may have to shut the place up for a few weeks for refitting, but if we do I'm getting a few more attendants. The audience upstairs are only just keeping us going.

"But there's someone in the stalls now," I interrupted.

"There isn't you know," he contradicted. "It's all locked up."

"But I can hear them talking," I insisted.

"I'm afraid you're wrong," he said. "It may be soundtrack noise - I know it crackles sometimes. That's probably what you can hear."

It wasn't, but I didn't feel like arguing. I returned to my seat and tried to concentrate; quite impossible with the voices down there. I yelled again: "Shut up, I said!" but the silence was shorter this time. I fumed, kicked something on the floor, and had an idea. Watching the screen, I felt about in the dark and came up with Bill Henty's torch. The film had reached one of its less important scenes. I leaned over the edge of the balcony and switched on the torch. The disk of light wavered over the seats, and reached a seated figure.

The man was asleep; his head leaned on his chest.

Then the figure looked up and turned round.

And I knew what that girl had touched in the dark. It had no head - it had eyes, but I won't say where they were located - it was white and terribly thin, and it had the wrong number of fingers, and there was no flesh on its arms and legs as it scuttled away sideways. And it was dressed in a man's suit and raincoat, but I've never tried to guess where it found them. Then the torch fell, and the manager and an attendant were barely in time to stop me following it.

The next few weeks I spent in hospital. Hardly anyone visited me - except Bill Henty, and he was more interested in his goddamn torch than what I'd seen down there in the dark. Anyway, there was only one visitor I wanted to see, and they finally brought him along.

"Do you remember that night a girl caused a row in your cinema?" I asked. He did. "Well, you said something to an attendant when she'd left - something like 'they're coming into the balcony now.' What did you mean by that?"

"Why, the teenagers," the manager replied. "They're always starting trouble in the stalls, and I thought they were trying it on upstairs."

"You're lying!" I cried. "You meant those things that live in the dark, and you know it!"

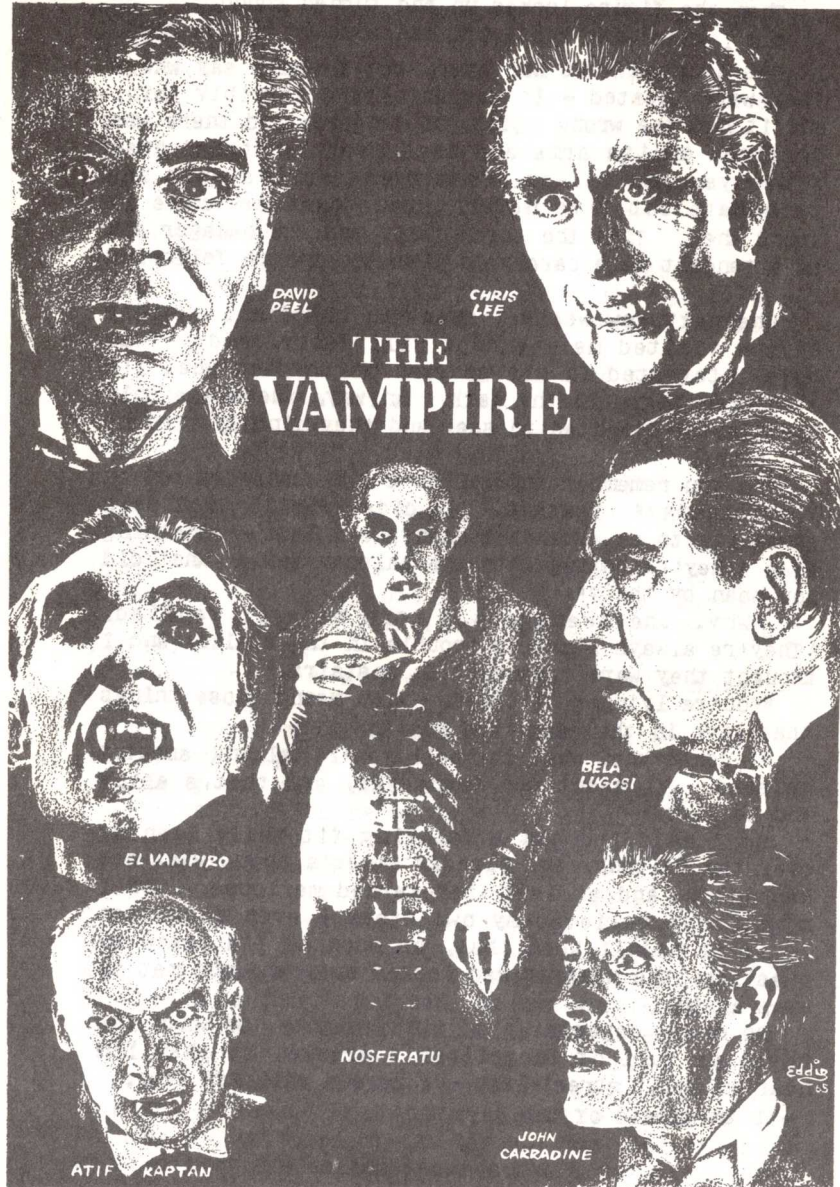
"I don't know what the hell you're talking about," he said. "I meant the teenagers, and that's all." And he left.

So I said I'd had a fainting fit while leaning over the balcony, and pleaded amnesia about what had happened; and at last they turned me loose. And I might have believed my own story - even forgotten - if it hadn't been that, as soon as I'd asked my question, the manager had looked away and not met my eyes again.

So now - especially on windy nights, or when the house is full of inexplicable creaks, or when I'm near an unlit street-lamp - I have a childish fear.

I am afraid of the dark.

Artwork from the Screen



*Stanley Kubrick
has begun
production for
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
in CINERAMA®
and Technicolor® of*

2001
**A SPACE
ODYSSEY**

2001: A Space Odyssey presents such a momentous challenge to the photographers covering the film that a number of top-flight artists have also been assigned to illustrate the mammoth sets that represent a peak in screen art and design construction. Eighteen major sets have been designed and constructed on which science fact - not fiction - is the





dominant key to all the futuristic designs. They cover dramatic scenes on Earth at the beginning of the twenty-first century; in a large space station; on Earth orbit and orbit lunar shuttles; on the Moon, and in an interplanetary spaceship bound for the outer solar system.

The latest esoteric-ingredient to be used in a studio make-up department is the seaweed now being specially imported from Japan for use by make-up artist Stuart Freeborn. An extract of the seaweed, mixed with fifteen other different chemicals, forms the basis of a secret formula devised for modelling masks of human faces needed for scenes in the film.

Accompanying Keir Dullea and Gary Lockwood on their billion mile journey to Saturn are other astronauts, seen in 'hibernation' during the journey. Their faces only are seen through the transparent covers of their hibernaculums, which 'preserve' them in an ageless condition until their arrival on another planet.



For the spacesuits used in the film, a special fabric consisting of a sheet of metal bonded to a sheet of nylon, was manufactured by the Dupont company in Wilmington, Delaware, using a secret process. It is as pliable as silk. Over the fabric of the silver suits go the bulky blue back and front space packs. Great white helmets top the suits, and the actors wearing them are equipped with bottles of compressed air, receiving it through small plastic tubes connected to their helmets. A system of magnetic induction is being used to enable the director-producer to make contact with his space-suited actors through their hermetically-sealed helmets. The actors wear containers clipped to their legs, with ear pieces hidden in their space-suit ear phones.

2001: A Space Odyssey by M.G.M. is scheduled for release early in 1967 and with Stanley Kubrick directing-producing and Arthur C. Clarke as co-author it looks like being the greatest SF film yet made.

