

S C A N S I O N

Number 27.

Week Ending 19th. Feb. 1955.

science fiction weekly newsletter and
unofficial voice of the Sydney Science
Fiction Group.

With the FOURTH AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION only a month away, the tempo of science fiction fan activity in Sydney is building up furiously. The organizers' preparations are well up to schedule, and a number of enquiries from science fiction readers who have not previously been in touch with a fan organization have been received. The 18-19-20th. of March will be a great occasion to renew old acquaintances and to make new ones amongst people who share your interest in science fiction. If you have not joined up yet, you'll make the job of the Committee on the actual Convention days much lighter if you pay your ten shillings to the Secretary, Arthur Haddon, P.O. Box 56, Redfern, N.S.W., well before the Nineteenth of next month.

So far entries received for the Short Story Contest and Art Work Contest have been few, though of a high standard. I know there are more entries in preparation, so -- how about hurrying them along you fellows? Also, speaking of deadlines, space is still being held for Booster Ads in the Convention Souvenir Booklet. All individuals and groups interested in science fiction are invited to advertise, the rates being, as quoted in previous publications, 25/- per full page, 14/- per half page, and 7/6 per quarter. Line artwork can be included at double the above rates. The absolute deadline is Monday February 28th., by which time material should have reached me at the address shown at the bottom of this paper.

RECENT READING: The December '54 ASTOUNDING provides some very interesting reading. Raymond F. Jones' lead short novel THE SCHOOL is better than anything he has written in the last couple of years, and is one of the few science fiction stories published recently that has been really thought out. Its subject and its approach are not startlingly new, but the way the story of America's technical leaders resigning one by one to go back to school is told, and the ideas that seem to develop so naturally as the story unfolds make it a real pleasure to read. Seldom have the mental and physical sciences been treated so well in one story. For once all the other stories in the issue are also worth reading.

The December GALAXY provides two items of interest. SKULKING PERMIT by Sheckley, is a pleasing story of a militaristic Earth re-discovering one of its colonies, and COLLECTOR'S ITEM by Evelyn E. Smith, is a fairly successful effort at science fiction humour. The general standard of writing in the issue is, as is usual with GALAXY, better than in the corresponding ASTOUNDING, but, as is also usual with GALAXY, a lot of the material is so trivial as to be quite unworth writing or reading about.

THRILLING WONDER STORIES, a quarterly these days, has put together a considerably improved collection of material with its Winter 1954 issue. You may remember that the Fall number was rather regrettable. NAME YOUR PLEASURE by James E. Gunn, nearly forty pulp pages of good science fiction, is a delight to today's reader, jaded by the amount of rubbish he must wade through to come across something like this. Though far from free of technical faults, and not thought out as well as it could have been, the story has ideas, vigour, and an atmosphere at times reminiscent of Evan Hunter's MALICE IN WONDERLAND, and at others of GRAVY PLANET. Most of the supporting items are insignificant, but many readers will enjoy Margaret St. Clair's slightly risqué fantasy, CRESCENDO.

While reviews are in order, I shall make brief mention of the film INVADERS FROM MARS, showing as the supporting feature at Hoyts PLAZA and in the suburbs. The story is routine, but does manage to build up a certain amount of suspense, and though the picture as a whole is far from good, there is little in it that is downright silly, which is a change from the usual.

SYDNEY S-F FAN NEWS We are glad to learn from a publication entitled SYDNEY NEWSLETTER -- whose mailing list apparently does not include us -- that the Futurian Society of Sydney is meeting with some success in its efforts to set its house in order, balance its books, and regain the goodwill of Sydney's science fiction fans.

At their meeting on the 13th. of this month, there was, we learn, considerable discussion of a list of persons understood by many to be "banned" from the room at Darlinghurst which the Futurians occupy on Monday and Thursday nights. This list coincided approximately with a published list of the Committee of the FOURTH AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION. The upshot of the discussion was a ruling from the Chair, occupied at this time by a Mr. South, that there had never been a "banned list" officially in force.

From this distance, the Society seems to be in the process of disowning a series of actions by its Director, Mr. Stone, who it will be remembered, published a circular headed NO SYDNEY CONVENTION FOR 1955, and who is generally considered to have been responsible for instigating the unofficial "banned list", now repudiated by the Society, and for splitting the Sydney S-F fan group by his unparalleled rudeness, and by his threatening to eject the North Shore Futurian Society's library from the club-room while he was Clubroom Manager. The Society at that time repudiated his action against the North Shore Futurian Society, but took no action to curb him, or to repair the damage done by his childishness. We read now that when the Society resolved that there was no banned list, "Mr. Stone refused to comment."

It is to be hoped that the generally constructive tone of the Futurian Society's newsletter indicates a genuine desire to improve relations between the two groups of people in this city who are, after all, devoted to the same purpose. The Bridge Club rooms have always been open to visitors from the Futurian Society, and now the Society is following our lead and taking the same attitude, Sydney fandom generally should benefit, and particularly the CONVENTION should be more of a success than if the lessening of hostile feelings had not taken place.

It is unlikely that the two groups will again merge, at least in the near future, and indeed as they have developed strong and distinctly different viewpoints, it is probably undesirable that they should, but let us hope that a cordial and co-operative relationship can be developed between them. P."Bluey" Glick suggested at the Futurian meeting that the Futurian Society should attempt to recruit members from the Sydney Science Fiction Group at the Bridge Club. We have no objection to this being done, as long as our members aren't badgered by "high pressure" sales tactics. I hope the F.S.S. will not object to us advertising our activities similarly in their room. The F.S.S. circular says "only people drunk or acting offensively will be refused admittance". We can safely say our own attitude is the same. To what extent the F.S.S. will pursue the policy of goodwill their publication seems to indicate is taking shape, we shall see at the Convention.

The Convention will, we hope, not be marred by discord. Last year, when the Con was run by the Futurian Society, we of the Sydney Science Fiction Group took pains to restrict all show of difference to the Business Session, the proper forum for the politics of fandom, and we trust that the F.S.S., now "in opposition" as it were, will do the same. The rest of the Con is to enjoy. Editor-Publisher D.Nicholson, 24 Warren Rd., Double Bay, NSW.