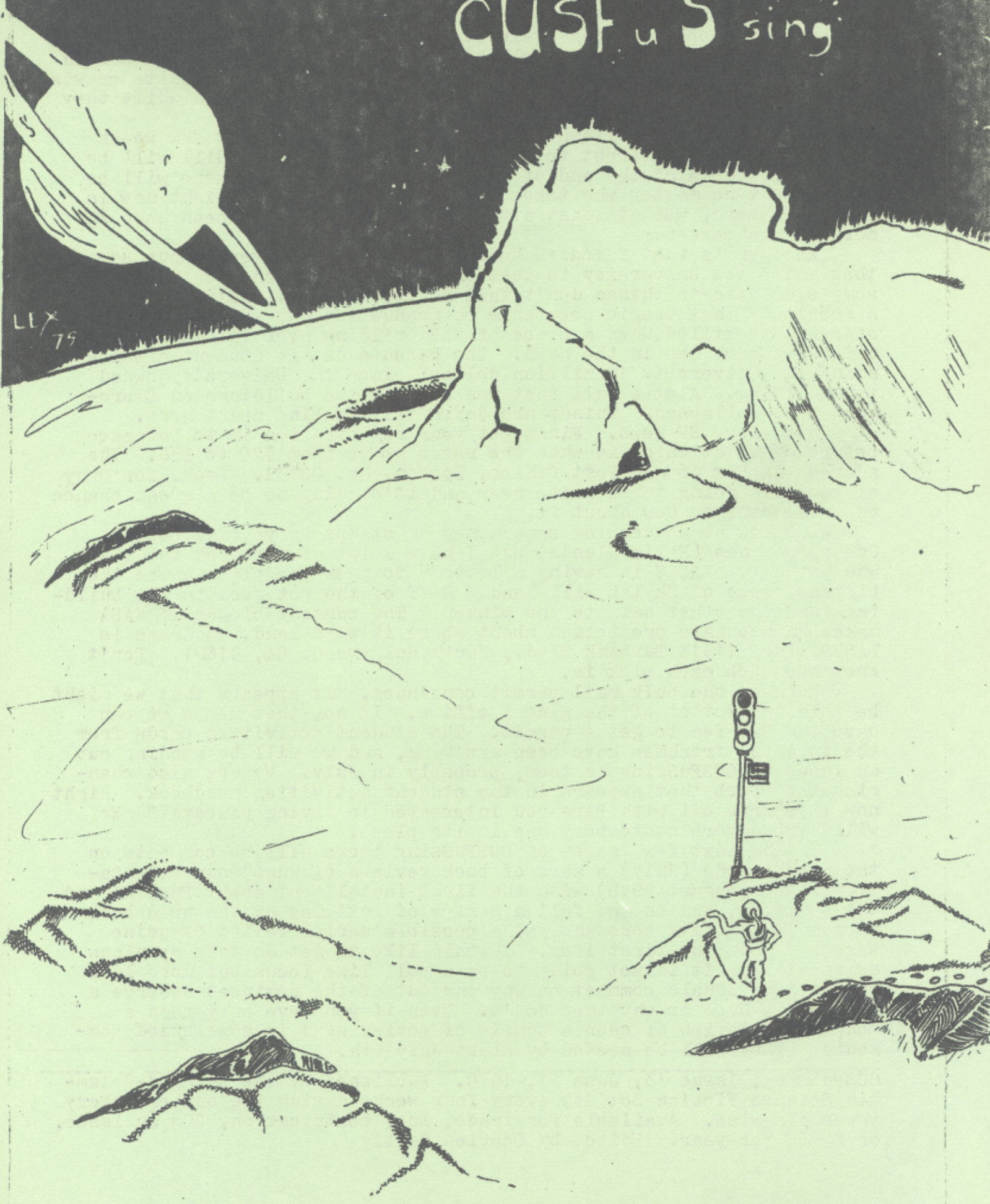


CUSFu S singi



LEX
79

I hope you are having a good summer wherever you happen to be. Except for that month of rain awhile back, the weather here has been fine. Many people sunning themselves out on Fernald lawn. The elevators haven't been working well here in John Jay and there have been times where I have had to walk up the 13 stories. Jay is quite crowded with many students just using this place for cheap housing while they visit New York City on their vacation.

A couple of news items have come up during the last few weeks that might be of interest to some of you. President McGill will be leaving Columbia at the end of July 1980. Definitely there will be improvement no matter who takes over. The frontrunner right now is Provost Sovern, who at least attended Columbia and has been here for most of his career.

Another is that farcades have been placed all over campus so that while the University is testing the buildings on Broadway and some side streets things don't fall on pedestrians. All this is a result of that tragic occurrence on graduation day when a Barnard student was killed when a piece of the building over TAKOME broke off and struck her in the head. The parents of the student are now suing the University 10 million dollars since the University owned the building. Also a wall that was between two buildings on Claremont Ave. collapsed. Things are definitely falling apart here.

On to some SF news. First get your registration in to Noreascon before July 1st which is when the rates go up from \$20 to \$30. The address is Box 46 MIT Post Office, Boston, Ma. 02139. Look, for many of you it's going to be quite near and it's going to be a great chance to see a con, so how about it.

Also how about sending some money or stamps to ye olde editor. One person has (Hello Glenda) but I have a lot of names on the list who haven't. LASFS is having a lottery to pick the place where the biggest piece of Skylab will land. Half of the pot goes to the building fund the other half to the winner. The contest closes if NASA makes an accurate prediction about where it will land. Address is LASFS, Inc. 11513 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood, CA, 91601. Don't know how much each pick is.

Work on the bulk mail permit continues. It appears that we might be able to use that of the Alumni office. If so, that means we can save the \$40 fee to get a permit. The student activities cards from the incoming freshmen have been arriving, and we will be sending out an issue of CUSFuSSing to them, probably in July. We are also changing the blurb that appears in the student activities handbook. Right now it starts off with "Are you interested in flying saucers?" We will have a more contemporary one in its place.

In the next few issues of CUSFuSSing there will be comments on the Hugo Awards (July) a mass of book reviews (August) our orientation issue (August 29th) with the first installment about England and the Worldcon, and in the fall a series of articles on the used book stores in the five boroughs and a possible serial called "Fanzine Wars". About the first item. I would like to get as many opinions as possible. It is not going to be a poll like Locus but more like having individuals comment on why one out of the nominees deserve a vote for a Hugo or why they don't. Even if you have only read a couple of stories or seen a couple of movies send in some brief comments. They will be needed by about July 6th.

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Z QUIZ #4 by Ben Fulves



Below are the first lines from famous science fiction stories. You are to identify the stories from which they were taken.

(1)

Many nights Fiorello Bodani would awaken to hear the rockets sighing in the dark sky. There were fireworks the very first night, things that you should be afraid of perhaps, for they might remind you of other more horrible things, but these were beautiful, rockets that ascended into the ancient soft air of Mexico and shook the stars apart in blue and white fragments. The first concussion cut the rocket up the side with a giant can opener. Fire exploded over the summer night lawns.

(2)

Captain Hart stood in the door of the rocket, "Why don't they come," he said. The city waited twenty thousand years.

(3)

The cooling afternoon rain had come over the valley, touching the corn in the tilled mountain fields, tapping on the dry grass roof of the hut. The electrical fireflies were hovering over mother's dark hair to light her path. He listened to the dry-grass rustle of the old witches' voices beneath his window. Their eyes were fire and their breath flamed out the witches' mouths as they bent to probe the cauldron with greasy stick and bony finger. "George, I wish you'd look at the nursery." The rain continued.

(4)

When they heard the news they came out of the restaurants, and cafes, and hotels and looked at the sky. They walked slowly down the street at about ten in the evening, talking calmly. "What would you do if this were the last night of the world?" Oh it was to be so jolly!

(5)

Saul Williams awoke to the still morning. He had smoked a pack of cigarettes in two hours.

Answers will be published in CUSFUSsing #13

Two Reviews of Alien

by John Cho

Of the many plots that can be thought up for a first encounter with an alien being, there are probably about half a dozen or so that can come to mind very quickly (i.e. humans go to planet and invade race that is less intelligent than they are and visa versa. You get the idea.). There are probably more, but they can usually find their roots in the original six ideas. Granted, after one has run through all these ideas with added subplots and what not (especially the what not!), there is very little room for improvement. The search for a new idea gets harder, and the combination of

the subplots with a main story has to be uniquely and dramatically put forth.

After a 3 hour and 45 minute wait, a \$4.50 ticket price, and about 15 or so games of backgammon later, the crowd which included yours truly, entered for the last showing on the premiere night for Alien. So there I was, sitting in one of the best seats of the house, staring at a 40 foot screen waiting to have my mind blown by phenomenal special effects and an unusual story in the realm of science fiction.

The first scene is a depiction of space as one pans around and over a planet to get the diamond ring effect. Shades of 2001: A Space Odyssey you say. In fact, it is. The music in the first opening sequence has a very strong overtone of "Atmospheres" from 2001. Now, along comes the Nostromo, an interstellar cargo ship that appears to look more like an interstellar oil tanker, which roars by the cameras (Gee, I always thought that sound couldn't travel through space's vacuum!). Next, the scene flashes into the ship and scans various parts of it such as the lower decks, living areas, the command center, and finally the hibernation quarters where the sleeping crew while away the time in suspended animation.

It would be a dull film, so let's wake up the crew! Mother, the ship's computer, wakes up the crew who sleepily arouse expecting to see their own sun with a convoy of tugboat spaceships ready to guide the Nostromo and cargo to a safe harbor. But what would the story be without a complication? Of course, they are not anywhere near their sun, but are veering off to a planet which seemingly is producing an alien signal. Wow, could this be another form of life trying to signal the Nostromo for help? Or could it be a trap of some sort? But, what the hell--go down and investigate. Anyway, it is in their contract, so down they go.

Now what does one find on a planet with practically a Jovian atmosphere but a space wreck? After all, it really isn't much of a resort spot with high winds resembling hurricanes. Explore the wreck you say. Alright--in we go to explore the wreck. Meanwhile, back on the ship, Mother has decoded part of the signal and says that it is a warning. The second in command, Ripley, wants science officer Ash to recall the exploration crew of commander Dallas, navigator Lambert and Kane. Unfortunately, communications breaks down just before the decoding leaving the exploratory crew to face the unknown without this knowledge. Back in the alien ship, the crew is surveying the architecture of the craft which incidently looks like the interior of a whale minus the internal organs. Really!

One of the more adventurous, Kane, decides to go down one part of the ship to explore. Lo! What is this, but a blue sheet of light covering what looks like hundreds of cocoons, What to do next but to look at it closer. Gee, by golly, wow; something inside looks like it's moving. The top opens up so let's look inside. Golly, that looks awful. It appears to look like the human brain minus the skull, pulsating. AUUUGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!! It has attacked Kane! Quick, get him back for medical attention. Lambert is crying almost to a state of drowning in her spacesuit. Dallas is screaming to Ripley to open the inner doors so that Kane can be looked after in the medical center. Ripley says she can't because of the ruling isolation rule. Finally Ash overrules her judgement because he is the science officer.

Into the medical facilities and place Kane on the table. Gosh, that looks like an awful thing that is stuck to his face after we had to saw off his space helmet. Well, what is it you ask. It looks like a cross between a horseshoe crab and a human hand with a little bit of rearranging and adding. What to do next, but get off the planet, head for home while trying to get "it" off Kane's face without killing

Kane. Miraculously, the thing comes off (after a little bit of fooling around with "it" and "it" with Kane), dies, and Kane comes out alive. Paraphrasing Kane, "Am I hungry!" So on to the celebration dinner. The whole crew is elated that Kane is alive--then all of a sudden.... Now you wouldn't want me to give away the next part, do you?

This is the first 45 minutes or so of Alien. It had a promising beginning with the help of special effects, but it grinded down to a let's-get-rid-of-the-alien syndrome. I'm not rooting for the alien, but the inconsistencies of the plot line made it a bit ridiculous. Of course, there were the high points in the movie, such as the acting; then, there were the real low points, like waiting for something to happen. One real low point which was incidently in the middle of the climax was the question of Jones, the Nostromo's cat. Now what is the obsession that the crew had over the cat--even when they were just about to be annihilated by a roving alien. For those who have seen the movie, you know what I mean. In fact, one woman in the audience was so upset about that one scene that she practically yelled, "I'm a woman and I'm outraged. No woman would do anything like that! I feel degraded!"

Movies like this remind me of other movies like It Came From Outer Space and Day of the Triffids. You know the kind--creature(s) stalks about and kills any living human around. The differences between them and the creature of Alien is 1) a bit more in intelligence--this creature actually knew about the place he was in just as the humans who had been on it for a long time, and 2) you couldn't liquidate it too easily. The creature is similar to Coeurl of Black Destroyer by Van Vogt, but a bit more up front about its hostility to humans. The crew, acting like any other red blooded humans, fights for self preservation and the human race. And there is the plot of the story.

Of course, there are the subplots along the way such as what is Ash hiding? There are also the scientific problems which abound. A few examples: Ash's device for tracking the creature would be useless; why use liquid fuel propulsion when you could use something like an atomic drive or anti-gravity (they have artificial gravity on the ship) last, but not least is the space used for the interior. Is it that they need all that room to frantically run around in as the creature is chasing them? Dramatically, it's nice, but spacecrafts generally are worse in interior room than Jay singles.

Yet, there is a saving grace which I will reiterate--the acting. The cast has done a good job with exceptional performances by Signourney Weaver as Ripley and a very good showing by Ian Holm as Ash and Yaphet Kotto as Parker. The rest of the crew is played well, but very quickly fall into formulaic readings before their final minutes.

The special effects were good, but they are now passe. A seemingly huge ship passing diagonally across the screen. The flashing and beeping controls of computers and other devices to tell us that they are working. I guess after getting my eyes knocked out by hyperdrive in Star Wars, phaser and laser fire by Star Trek, 1999, Star Wars and Galactica to name a few, I hoped to see something new in the way of special effects. There were none, so I would have to say that my expectations let me down. After all, when you have seen futuristic weaponry blazing heroes across enemy lines to capture or blow up an entire base, or spaceships that hop from one part of the universe to another, the mundane travels of a cargo ship being taken over by a powerful alien doesn't seem to excite the mind as much.

Alien by Dani Eder

I went to see Alien the other night. It was the best horror movie I've ever seen. You thought a movie with a title like that just had to be about first contact or something, right? . . . Wrong! It's 1950's B horror film time, folks. The movie is about an interstellar ore freighter on its way back to earth. The computer picks up a signal of unknown origin and wakes up the hibernating crew. They have stopped at the planet where the signals are coming from. The crew goes down to the surface and finds what looks like a wrecked alien ship. They investigate and discover a multitude of 'eggs'. One of them hatches in a way that makes half the audience scream and the other half reassuringly hold them. Up to this point the film was credible science fiction, but from then on it degenerates into first rate horror. One thing that shocked me was the \$5 admission. I'm going to wait until it comes to the cheap theatres before I see it again.

I won't spoil your fun by describing the various nasty, horrible things the creature (now that it's a horror film, I can't call it an alien, can I?) does on its growing up, but it has things like blood that can eat floor plates away, a combination metal-organic physiology, and a face only a mother could love. In order to support the plot, there are lots of dark corridors; and a scheme by the big, bad, company that owns the ship to bring back the alien alive, with the crew being expendable. If you know horror movies you'll probably guess who will survive.

From an SF point of view the film had its good points. The now familiar big spaceship passing overhead scene was nice. The main ship takes SF movies further away from the aerodynamic V-2s of yesterday. It looks most like an oil refinery that has been uprooted and sent into space. Especially good was the planetary landing sequence. If you like rockets taking off and landing, I recommend you see it at a theatre with Dolby sound. The film also introduced a new look in spacecraft interiors.

Remember how the Millenium Falcon looked lived in? Well, this ship is downright grungy. The control room has all sorts of things left loose to blow around, and it has a very cluttered and crowded arrangement of equipment. Even though the spaces are larger than the Falcon, they feel more cramped. It (probably intentionally) resembles a tramp steamer. They even have a scene where the two engineers are standing 'belowdecks' in their dirty teeshirts; grumbling about their small share of the profits while venting steam from some piece of machinery. Technically, the visual effects meet the new standards set by recent films (SW, CE3K), especially on the planet surface. The movie does explore some ground in audio effects. It is probably the loudest film ever made. At one point you really get the impression that the sounds are coming from elsewhere than behind the screen.

If you have a strong stomach for gore and ugly, and you don't mind too much that the plot doesn't make too much sense, go see it. Once.

Another report about Disclave by Susan Kahn

Instead of writing about Disclave, which has already been done, I thought I would write about an aspect that could not have been mentioned before...

Cam Nyhen and her friend Helen had made Colonial Warrior costumes to wear at Disclave. The two of them met three other people dressed as warriors, another as a Cylon, and a fifth as Darth Vader (so much for originality. Helen had to leave on Saturday so the next day I

wore her costume...well only the top; all my pants were blue and who brings boots to Washington D.C. in May? Despite all my skepticism, it was a lot of fun.

Cam's brother's friend had made them two blasters out of water guns that were used a lot, after all they did shoot water. Unfortunately unarmed people kept getting in the way (or we were hiding behind them).

It wasn't so bad walking around Disclave dressed like we had just walked off the Battlestar Ponderosa, but we had to go see Battlestar Galactica dressed this way.

Imagine, if you can...five Colonial Warriors in a compact car followed VERY closely by Darth Vader, a Cylon and two other people in another car...some people did notice. We all got out at the movie theatre and then we all started shooting at the Cylon who fell down and due to certain comments started shaking with laughter. Her costume was really excellent. The Cylon's really big problem was that in a costume such as hers, ti gets very hot and she had to sit through the entire movie dressed that way. If you remember the ads, Battlestar Galactica (the movie) is in Sensurround, therefore a thoroughly insulated Cylon not only shines from the light from the screen, she also tends to shake (but she sat through the movie anyway). We all separated to watch the movie and then surrounded the Cylon and escorted her out of the movie theatre. But it didn't stop at that...

It seems that the Cylon from Universal Studios was to come before the next showing of the movie, and dressed as we were...who could leave without seeing him...

Since it was getting near dinner time, we decided to get something to eat while waiting for the Cylon. There was a Big Boy restaurant near the movie so we walked over there. A restaurant has got to be the strangest place for people dressed as we were. When we walked in, the entire restaurant turned around and stared at us! VERY EMBARRASSING but I guess we asked for it.

After a very quick snack we returned to hide in the movie theatre to await the Cylon's arrival. There was a balcony over the lobby so we hid there, hoping not to be observed. Of course we were noticed. Some little boys came up and asked why all the Warriors were girls and the inevitable question...Where are Starbuck and Apollo? Darth Vader was told that he was with the wrong movie etc. We just told them that Starbuck and Apollo were on a secret mission. The Cylon finally arrived and we all marched down the stairs to surprise him, led by Darth Vader. We met a really big, official Cylon. It was a really fantastic costume and our Cylon came quite close to matching it (if only she had had a few more thousand dollars).

After a rather unusual (to say the least) afternoon we returned to Disclave...Proving that despite a complete lack of originality Battlestar Galactica was not dead yet...

However, in regard to the movie...if you want to laugh at the same things that you laughed at on TV but in sensurround, go ahead and pay for the movie...Its just as funny as it was on television and the sensurround just makes it a lot noisier (you have the right to disagree with any comments at all.) It is not worth the price of a movie ticket considering it is free on TV but its not that bad...

And finally folks, what all of you have been waiting for with bated breaths..... Book Reviews by Charles Seelig
The Book of Skulls by Robert Silverberg, Berkley, \$1.95, pp.200 3/79

This book and Dying Inside were published in the same year. They are however quite different in many respects. Since they were quite different they showed Silverberg's talent in two different ways. Skulls is definitely a book about people interacting with each other.

There are four main characters in The Book of Skulls. They are definitely full-fledged people, four dimensional since they change over the course of the book. In the book we are introduced to the characters by means of monologues running through their heads. The first of them introduce each of them and we also get to see how they view each other. The first part of the book is in Manhattan, a Manhattan that is a composite view of what Silverberg saw when he was there and also a very accurate description of what it was like in the early 70's. The four young men are traveling through Manhattan going towards Arizona. They are Ivy League, either from Harvard or Yale (probably Harvard) Each one of them is definitely an individual and really none of them is a stereotype since we get to see too much of them, their feelings, their past, and their hopes on this trip. One thing they feel the same about is their feelings toward women. They seem to only see females as creatures to have sex with and little else. None of them really have any multi-level relationship with women, though they can be very successful dealing with them on that one sexual level. Though this type of male can be found on Ivy League campuses (Columbia is no exception, you should have met a couple of my roommates from last year) they are probably not typical. Most of the relationships that I know of on this campus are multilevel and the participants form bonds on the basis of common interests and delight in being together, not on a primarily sexual level. Any females encountered in this book however, wherever they are, are treated this way. They are never elevated to the level of people but remain things.

Throughout the book the matter of life and death is discussed. The four men are traveling to Arizona to investigate the possibility that a group has discovered immortality and lived over the centuries. The problem is that a group is needed for this to happen and out of that group two must die so two others can reach that goal. So what keeps coming up during the trip across the U.S, and even at their destination is one of who should live and who should die. The author is asking the readers to give an opinion based on what we have found out about the characters during the novel. Enough is given so that we can determine why each person wants immortality, what he plans to do with it, and his qualifications based on his previous life. Even though there is a conclusion to this question at the end of the book, there is an even greater question answered, "WAS IT WORTH IT?". We do not find this out since very little happens to the survivors before the end of the novel. This unanswered question line is used in a couple of other Silverberg novels like The Masks of Time and it forces the reader to think after the book is finished.

The book is overall quite good, with real characters, a good background based on them, and a plot which lasts throughout the whole book. It's too bad that it really didn't get a fair chance at the Hugo or Nebula Awards the following year since Dying Inside was also nominated. Such is the price of excellence.

The Fourth "R" by George O. Smith

This novel has been recently reprinted by Dell Books and since I had reviewed Children of the Atom a couple of issues ago, I thought this would be a good book for a comparison.

On this book, the protagonist, Jimmy Holden, has had his mind developed by a machine his parents had invented to increase the mind's potential for learning. What the machine does is imprint a piece of information upon a memory track in the brain. By imprinting this deep enough it stays in the mind's memory and a person who is able to sort out information well can use this easily. The problem is that there is a friend who kills the parents and takes Jimmy into custody so he can gain control of the machine.

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There were no witnesses to the killing except for Jimmy Holden, and of course the problem becomes one of keeping the machine away from Paul Brennan and also how to keep away from him.

His solution is to run away, each time for a longer period until he is captured. Finally, he makes it work and is able to just disappear from sight. He takes the role of a hermit writer and hired a woman and her child to help keep up the house he lives in. He waits there working with the machine and trying to think of ways of getting revenge on Paul Brennan.

But the problem is that he really never does. By the end of the book he has ingrained upon Brennan's mind a highly emotional response when he hears a certain word. That is all. Control of the machine has come under the power of a judge and he is not really in control of the process. At least in Children of the Atom the kids were essentially in charge. Here they were not. What might have been a more interesting idea was showing Jimmy trying to adjust to normal society without Brennan and having Brennan receive just punishment for his actions. Another problem, the book really isn't that long, but as many books are getting in the range where it costs more than a penny per page to buy, this is not unusual. At least the cover is well done.

Bander Snatch by Kevin O'Donnell, Jr., Bantam Books,
\$1.95, pp. 242, June 1979

This is the first novel by Kevin O'Donnell who has appeared many times in Analog and Galileo. It really isn't that bad, and certainly a good read if you're not trying to find anything serious or moving. It tells the story of a politician named Bander Snatch who runs a small segment of a slum which has been placed into Lake Erie. I call him a politician because of his actions, but he is essentially a gang leader but one who is in charge of the welfare of thousands of people.

It is the 22nd century and things outside aren't really that bad. Things inside the slum are, since killing is almost a random occupation and kids are recruited for jobs quite early. Space travel has developed and another Earth-like world full of telepaths has been found. The governments on earth are falling apart because of the bureaucracy. And they decide that having telepaths helping out to cut red tape isn't a bad idea. So who do you think they want?

But they want Bander Snatch to develop his telepathic abilities (which he does have and knows that at the moment they are slight) so he can do a better job. He is sent to the planet of the telepaths to survive if he can. There he must solve several puzzles, each continuing to increase his power. From there he gets back to Earth and in the finale must solve a problem on his own turf.

The telepathic world is an interesting device, well-constructed, showing what various creatures have to do to survive. The slum depicted sounds very close to the arrangement that possibly happens now or what could happen soon. Characters are done well also. A few are just spear-carriers but they do not predominate in the novel. The main character is definitely fleshed out and changes over the passage of time, essential to a good novel. So go out and buy it and enjoy yourself.

Guts by Byron Preiss, Illustrations by Gray Morrow and Michael Golden
Ace Books, \$1.75, pp.178

The whole concept of this novel is slightly unbelievable. What is someone could vibrate his neurons so that he can travel in time? What if you involve music of three generations? What if the government was helping out in an attempt to control the minds of youth through the use of music? What if...?

Combining all these elements gets you the novel, Guts. Guts is a member of a new communitiy. He is actually called Mark Gutstein, (I know) and is just your run-of-the-mill teenager. A friend of his is not though. He is a fan of music from the pass meaning thing before 1996. He is able to cover a horrendous plot by the government and helps to form an organization trying to deal with the problem.

He disappears and Mark becomes worried. He finds clues and runs to nearby Philadelphia to try and find help. He does. A daughter of the man who had been friends with Herbie, Mark's friend, meets him and through the aid of a third character get Mark to travel through time. Great stuff right.

A number of things do bother me about this book. One is the artwork. It is nowhere near the quality that I have come to expect from science fiction magazines. If the novel was a juvenile the art works makes sure of it. I would have rather seen many additional pages of text than having this bad artwork. Another is the time spent on this book. On the copyright page is an acknowledgement to people who helped to keep deadlines. But those deadlines must have been awful short since on the backcover New York is mentioned as the city in which Mark arrives in on his trip to the past. But he stays in or near Philadelphia all the time. The inside title illustration has one of the basic concepts of the novel correct, but the outside cover doesn't. Twice Jewish ancestry is mentioned but it seems not to affect the novel whatsoever. Also this is absolutley the first part of a series. There is no conclusion, no central quastions answered. Oh, well, at least I didn't buy this.

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Next issue July 10th
Let's have some
comments on the
Hugos. Please!

*Artwork on pg1 and pg3
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Artwork in issue 12
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