

# The Force of FANTASY

The dreams and nightmares of fantasy, science fiction and occult writers and enthusiasts are being played out in the movie houses of America. *Superman*, *The Body Snatchers*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*, *The Last Wave*, *WaterShip Down*, *Omens I and II* Never before has so much "unreality" been committed to film. And more is coming — A *Superman* sequel is 70% in the can and a *Star Trek* movie due out for next Christmas. A few years ago all my college buddy

Stuart wanted to do was watch science fiction and fantasy movies, read comic books, and write scenarios for comic books he hoped would one day be published. Stuart's father, a practical man, scoffed at what he regarded as Stuart's childish ambitions and compelled him to go to law school. "You will never make a living at writing comic book trash," the old man said.

I lost touch with Stuart — last I heard he was about to finish law school. But now comic book writers are amassing fortunes and lawyers collecting unemployment. I

sometimes wonder if Stuart's old man isn't saying, "Stuart, what ever prompted you to give up writing comic book scripts? There's real money in it these days. Why don't you try another one?"

Gandalf's Den, a fantasy and sci-fi book and paraphernalia store in the Atrium, has been in business for a little over two years. Profits have been rising steadily. Why all this interest in sci-fi and fantasy? Is this a movement to be taken seriously? Or is it just a childish fad?

Kate Wilhelm, award winning science fiction writer and wife of the legendary science fiction writer/editor, Damon Knight, lives in Eugene. Her novel, *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang*, won a Hugo award for best sci-fi novel of 1975 and *The Planners*, won a Nebula Award for best short story of 1968. She is the second woman to win a Hugo. Each summer she helps conduct a writing workshop at Michigan State.

Wilhelm's ideas on the growth of science fiction/fantasy mirror the grassroot as well as the professional viewpoint.

H&N: Why are sci-fi and fantasy themes so prevalent in the mass media today?

KW: (Science fiction) is being taught at the university and the high school level today. Even elementary readers have science fiction. And that's all new, that wasn't done until the past ten years.

One of the things is that the kids who were reading science fiction twenty years ago are teaching now. They liked it, they still like it, and the idea that it was being put down by academics was rather galling to them. Now they're academics and they're gonna teach it. And they find social values, literary values in it, things that no one ever saw before.

H&N: The priorities of science fiction and standard fiction have to be different, don't they?

KW: You see, this I deny absolutely as would almost any...

H&N: But the future is an added ingredient...

KW: Well, if you write a novel about the mining towns of West Virginia that novel has an added ingredient of West Virginia, ecology, and the mines, an ingredient which is totally foreign to most people...

H&N: But when compared to the mainstream best-sellers...

KW: Look at the books that made a lot of money 25 years ago and you won't recognize names or titles...

Some of the science fiction books from the year one are still being read. Jules Verne and Wells have never gone out. Some of the earliest Heinliens are still being read by each new generation that comes along.

H&N: Which science fiction writers influenced you?

KW: When I started reading science fiction it was for about a solid two year period in the 50s. I was old, I was in my twenties, a housewife. I had read everything the library had. I wasn't a writer yet.

I had always liked reading philosophy and the idea of writing fiction using the ideas I had stewed about from philosophy was very intriguing to me. And I read everybody without any sense of criticalness at all.

After that two year period I became extremely critical and when I began re-reading some of the same things, I couldn't... I found they were badly written. Some of them still held up, but for the most part I was disappointed. Now the people I like to read are Tom Dish, Ursula LeGuin, and Gene Wolfe.

H&N: What's the trend in sci-fi and fantasy now?

KW: More and more Supermen... *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Conan*. For five years sword-and-sorcery has been pretty big, but I don't think of that as science fiction.

H&N: Why do you think people liked *Star Wars*, for the effects?

KW: Oh sure. It was the visualization of comic books the kids had read.

H&N: Did you see *Superman*?

KW: Yeah.

H&N: Same thing?

KW: More so... the things you've talked about so far, *Superman* and *Star Wars*, they're mindless... I could never get into comic books.

H&N: Do you think then that the need to reach out for other worlds through fiction, to escape, is unhealthy?

KW: I don't think it's unhealthy. I do think that if you become so immersed in anything that you can no longer cope with reality it's unhealthy. But that point is far off for most of these people.

Some people read only science fiction or only fantasy or mysteries and I think that's unfortunate... there's a lot of excitement to be had in reading, but not for those people who are so limited.

Young people need heroes. They need to be able to look up to somebody but I don't think it lasts. When I was very young I read *Tarzan*. My brothers were reading *Tarzan* and I read *Tarzan* too. *Tarzan* was the golden "robot" who swings through the trees and that's all there was to it for *Tarzan*. But he stood for so much more than that psychologically for young people, he gave them a chance at vicariously experiencing all sorts of adventures...

There is a tremendous need for fantasy. Through fantasy people can work out so many psychological problems of growing up, adjusting to the world, accepting themselves...

H&N: When I was a teenager I read science fiction exclusively...

KW: A lot of people do. And if they don't quit doing that, then I think they've stayed their growth of maturity. Emotionally they become frozen.

Let me just say this about fantasy and realism in fiction, because I'm afraid a lot of people are afraid their children will be distorted if they just read fantasy.

People are afraid their children won't become mature, they won't accept responsibility and behave in a grown-up way, if they don't read realistic fiction. And the realistic fiction is, "How to cope with the younger sister who is prettier than you are," or, "How to cope with an older brother who is making more money than you are although you're only fourteen and he's nineteen and has a job." This is realism.

People have all kinds of faults and all kinds of virtues. And in *Superman*, *Tarzan*, it's very clearly shown that those characters are completely virtuous. They represent the virtuous side of any person. The villain is a true villain. And this allows a growing mind to accept virtue and villainy and see them for what they are.

In realistic fiction when you mix the two together it's much harder for the developing mind to accept a good person can be evil, too.

Later on they should read everything. In fantasy and science fiction you gravitate away from the mindless adventure to things that have more meaning.

H&N: In *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* you wrote about an ecological disaster. Do you believe that this is going to occur?

KW: I don't believe that what I wrote is going to happen, although I do think we are headed for some form of ecological breakdown. I was using this simply as a speculative device to let me explore people

in different situations. And I think this is what most people writing science fiction do.

Science fiction is the only fiction that's trying to cope with the problems that we have on this earth today. I don't think most fiction is anywhere near it. I think general fiction is more escapism in that regard than science fiction. Who else is looking at questions like, "What if they do begin cloning?"

There are so few forums that present the reality behind so many of the changes in technology. We're just presented with that technology and there are so few forums that tell us what this technology means, these are the implications.

H&N: H.G. Wells thought pure science was "The Answer" to our problems. Do you think the field of sci-fi is behind one answer now?

KW: I think the big trend is away from science and technology, *Superman* certainly was away from science and technology. *Star Wars* was.

H&N: Even though *Star Wars* had those robots?

KW: Oh, absolutely, because what saved the day in *Star Wars* was not technology, or science, or robots, it was The Force, which was mystical. Most people are disillusioned by science and technology. I am not writing off science, but I think science has been allowed to run wild...

I don't think this whole generation of scientists has had any ethical or moral training to speak of and yet they are allowed to work with DNA, RNA, they're allowed to work with all kinds of chemical bacterial warfare agents. Who puts the lid on it?...

Somebody has to take the responsibility to tell the scientists no, you can't research this area, because we don't know what the implications mean. Some people say that's anti-scientist because pure research never did any harm — "it isn't the gun, it's the person who kills" kind of idea — and I say nonsense. We do have to have somebody say no, and I don't know who it is. One start, a very small start, was done in Great Britain when the scientists themselves established a body to make rules and regulations about DNA research. Because no one seems to have the power to do it, (put the lid on research) the population at large has this general feeling that they're going to turn their backs on pure science and have The Force save us, have

the aliens save us, as in *Close Encounters*. H&N: You've said in the course of this interview that people are not willing now to give up what they have. Do you think this attitude has anything to do with the revival of science fiction... they're examining possibilities.

KW: A lot of idealistic people have come along in the past ten years... Some of these people have become so cynical because they so desperately wanted to see changes happen that their only recourse seemed to be cynicism.

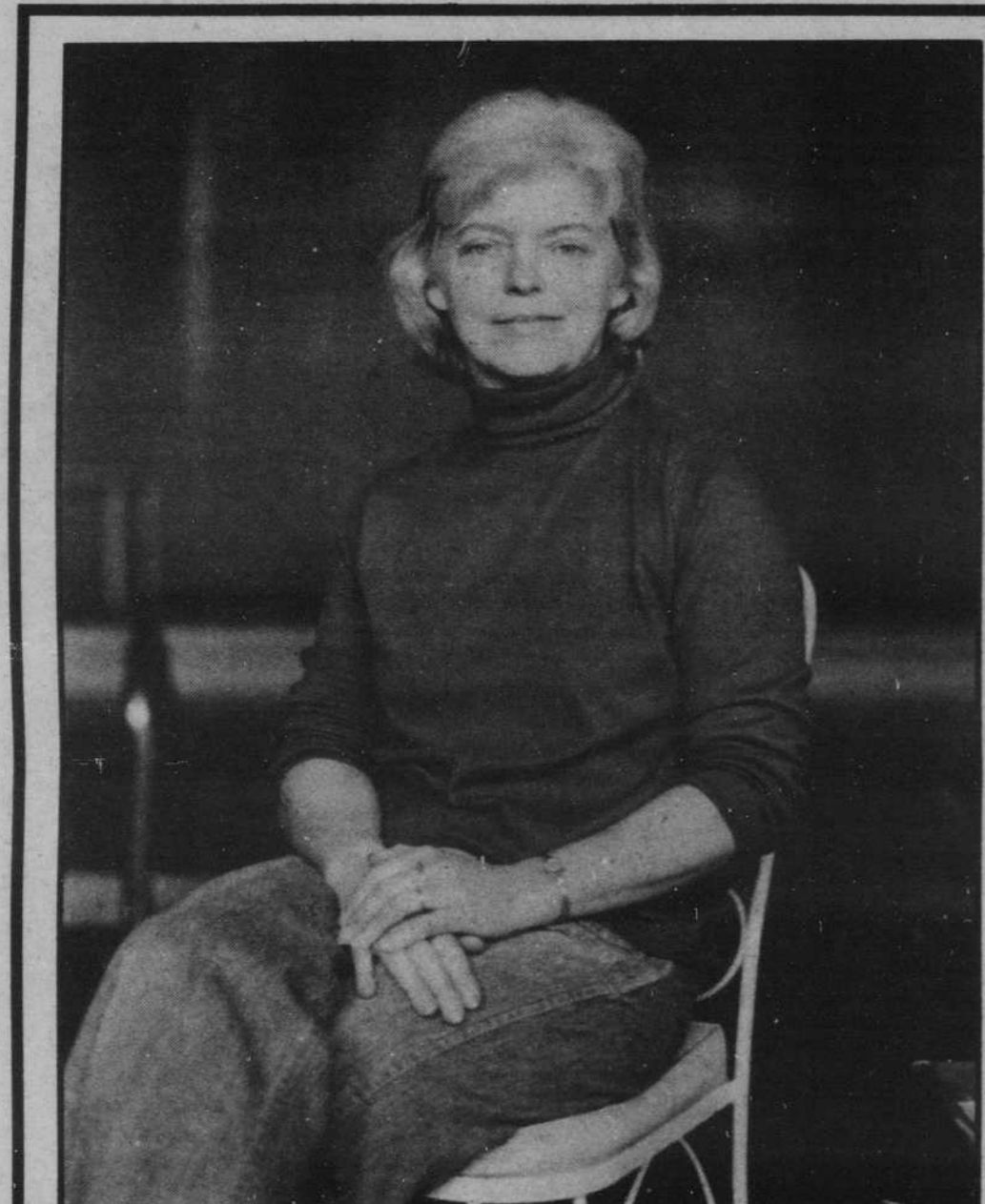
But a lot of them are still very idealistic.

They're still hopeful that their activities and their longings will bring about change and they're working for it.

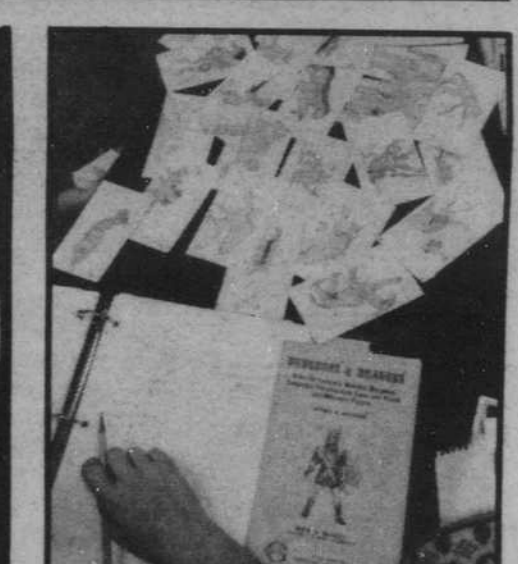
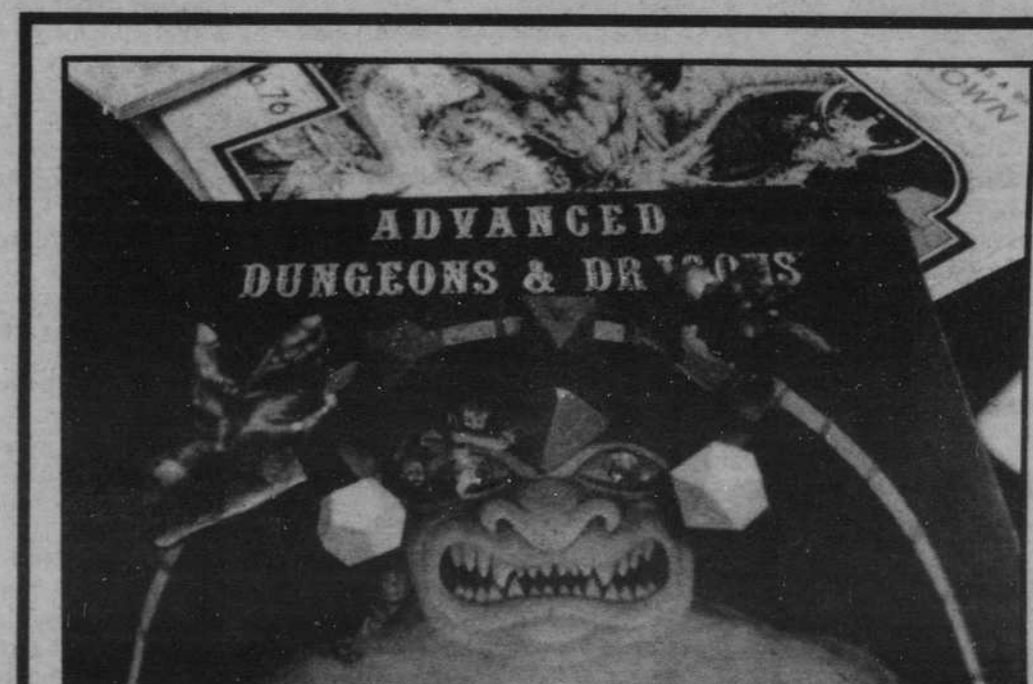
These (are the people who) are reading science fiction... they're examining possibilities.

Story by William Kogut  
Photos by Erich Boekelheide and Steve Dykes

The cover photograph was reprinted from "Beauty and the Beast," copyright 1978 by Chris Achilleos.




"Science fiction is the only fiction that's trying to cope with the problems that we have on this earth today... I think general fiction is more escapism in that regard than science fiction."



Science fiction and fantasy paraphernalia — games, books and movies — has multiplied like clones in recent years. And who can save us from the invasion? After all, The Force is on their side.

NOW



## THE MEAN GREEN

**Mickey's Malt Liquor**  
When just a beer isn't enough

©1978 G. HEILEMAN BREWING CO., INC., LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN AND OTHER CITIES

**ORDER DIRECT from this AD**  
At Last! The Perfect Defense for Men Against All Kinds of Danger!

**SHRIEK ALARM**  
It's the Personal Protection...  
Saves Off Attacks! Summons Help! Sound Can Be Heard For Blocks!  
Carry it with you wherever you go! It's the perfect defense for men against all kinds of danger! It's the perfect defense for men against all kinds of danger! It's the perfect defense for men against all kinds of danger!

Reg. 4.95   1 only   2   3 or more  
\$4.45   \$3.95   \$3.45

add \$1c for handling and postage to:  
SEVEN SEAS IMPORTS, PO BOX 10222  
EUGENE, OREGON 97401

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ APT \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Allow 2 weeks for delivery US

**OREGON DAILY EMERALD**  
Thursday, January 18, 1979

Annual Veterinarians  
Low Cost  
**RABIES CLINIC**  
Saturday, Jan. 20;  
1-5 PM  
at all participating Lane  
County Veterinary  
Hospitals  
Cost: \$5.00

**OREGON DAILY EMERALD**  
Oregon Daily Emerald

## HAIR TODAY

**NATURAL HAIR DESIGN FOR WOMEN & MEN**

**DRY CUT**  
designed for your hair and you. For those on a tight schedule.  
**\$6.50**

**WET HAIRCUT AND STYLE**  
designed for you and your hair for easy care and the air-waved style. A completed style to go anywhere.  
**\$9.00**

**COMPLETE STYLE**  
includes shampoo, moisturizing conditioner, blow dry and hair cut designed for you. A completed easy care style.  
**\$12.00**

Remember: we carry the finest of professional hair care products for your use.

Downstairs in the EMU   40 E. 10th Ave.   561 E. 13th Ave.  
close to the Recreation Center   Downtown   Across from Max's  
687-1347   484-1200   485-4422

## ME, TAKE ANOTHER EXAM? ARE YOU CRAZY?!

Q. The Navy Officer Qualification Test (NOQT) is a piece of cake, right?  
A. Not necessarily.

If you're majoring in engineering or another technical area we would expect you to do better on the test than an Inner Mongolian Cultural Arts major, but you won't hear us telling anyone that the test is easy. The NOQT is an aptitude exam dealing with number and letter comparison, instrument interpretation, word analogy, practical judgement, mathematical reasoning, and mechanical comprehension involving gears, levers, pulleys, fluids, etc. For those interested in an aviation program there is an extra section dealing with aircraft orientation. The Navy Officer Information Team will be administering the exam Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, Jan. 22 - 24, 1979; 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. - see the representative in Erb Memorial Union. Tests will be scored immediately and an Officer will be available to discuss your results and the various programs you may want to consider. Taking the exam in no way obligates you to the Navy, but it just might tell you something about yourself. Come in and give it a shot — you might even pass!