

Fan Clubs — and Fans

ONE of the most amazing—and fascinating—offshoots of science fiction during the past twenty years has been the growth of numerous Clubs and Associations whose members devote much of their spare time and energy to popularising all the aspects of their favourite literature. Science fiction has its fans and fan groups just the same as professional sports teams, dance bands and singers, film stars, and all other forms of entertainment with a mass appeal. There are active groups not only in Great Britain, but in practically every country except the Asiatic continent (as far as we know).

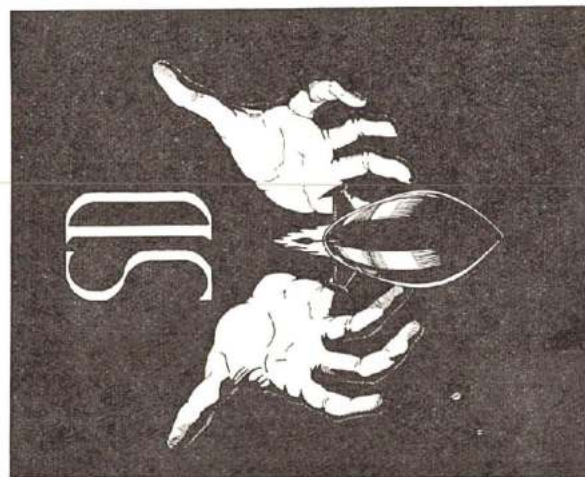
Science fiction is unique in so far as no other form of fiction can boast the same intense support given to it by its devotees, nor compare in terms of a world friendship which ignores the barriers of colour, class and creed, and even language.

What constitutes a "fan" and his activities, and how did the various groups arise?

Out of the slow growth of magazine science fiction in the early 1930's there gradually arose a desire amongst some readers, particularly in U.S.A., to discuss the more scientific aspects suggested in some of the stories. To encourage this form of "scientific" discussion the magazine publishers of those days included letter columns at the back of their magazines. While the criticisms were often caustic, they did begin to show a form of construction and helped the publisher to mould his magazine along the lines most generally liked.

It was but a short step to several readers in a large town or city getting together to discuss their favourite literature, form a regular meeting, then begin to correspond with other readers whose names appeared in the letter columns. As small groups began to form in America (and afterwards in Great Britain where the U.S. magazines were reaching the market many months later), a desire was born to produce some kind of monthly magazine devoted to individual club news and send it to other clubs. This idea was fostered by Hugo Gernsback, the enterprising publisher who had started

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Contents

FEBRUARY ---- MARCH 1932

EDITORIAL	WARRING THROUGH	... JOHN BATES	... 12
EDITORIAL	LOCAL EVENTS	... TIM WESS	... 13
EDITORIAL	ACID TEST	... R. J. CARRER	... 13
EDITORIAL	MOON RACE Part V	... LEWIS CONYER	... 13
EDITORIAL	R. P. PERSONALITIES	... G. QUINN	... 13
EDITORIAL	RECENTS FULL RESULTS	... SOMER HOSKIN	... 13
EDITORIAL	THE LATEST	... DAVID GARDNER	... 13
EDITORIAL	NAME AND THUMB	... KEN BLAKES	... 13
EDITORIAL	RECENTS	... LEWIS CONYER	... 13
EDITORIAL	SCIENCE TRIFTERS	... KEN BLAKES	... 13
EDITORIAL	IN EXPLANATION	... TIM WESS	... 13

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