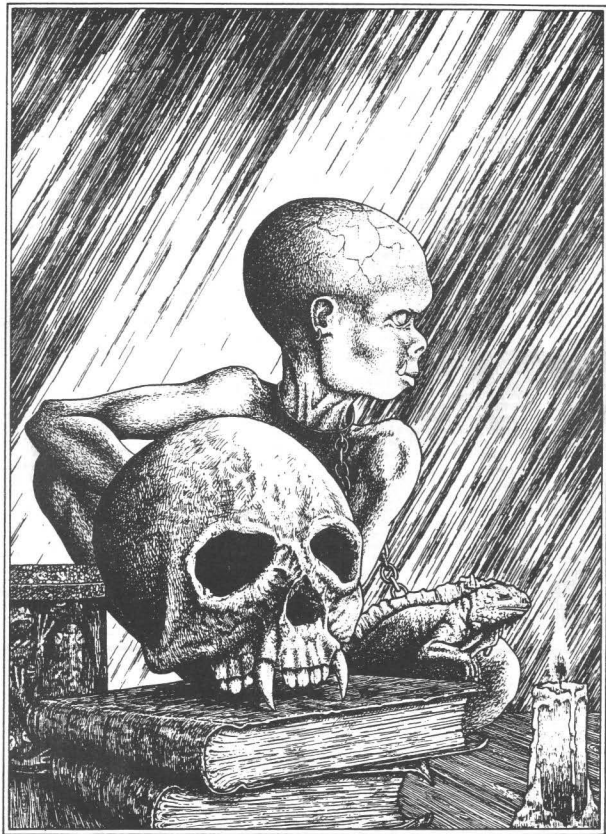


matrix

The newsletter of the
British Science Fiction Association

Issue 115



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June – July 1995

matrix

the news magazine of the



British Science Fiction Association

Editorial

DESPITE THE FACT that the aims of the BSFA as presented in its Articles of Association make no special mention of promoting *British* science fiction, the organisation's name at least implies some special treatment or interest. Though admittedly a rather vague aim — how to define 'British sf' in the first place? — it's reasonable to expect that the BSFA will do its bit to encourage, promote and sustain British authors, editors, illustrators, and all other workers — or slaves, in some cases — in the field. And Simon Ounsley's letter (see page 9) gives those of us who are attending the Glasgow Worldcon — and thus can vote for the Hugos — pause for thought.

When I saw the list of Hugo nominations (printed on page 4) I was... well, if not consumed with fury, at least mildly pissed off. Take a good look at them, and count the number of British names there. In the fiction categories, there is precisely one: **Brian Stableford**, for 'Les Fleurs du Mal'. Note that this was published in an American magazine, which fact provides a possible explanation for the generally poor showing of UK authors, artists and editors in the Hugo awards over the years (I think we can assume that the quality is there): the vagaries of publishing.

By the time the nominations come to be made most of those qualified to vote (Americans, largely, even this year) will not have seen many of the eligible UK (and Australian, European and so forth) books. And by the time the books finally get mass-market US editions they are no longer eligible, having been first published up to two or three years previously. From an American perspective, then, books from foreign authors will dribble on to the market over a long period, first as expensive and hard-to-get imports, gaining the odd review and bit of publicity (often by word of mouth, as with *Vurt*), but by and large making little impact. A US edition will often depend on these initial reactions and so more time is lost.

➤ 3

BSFA Membership

This costs £18 per year for UK residents, £9 for unwaged. Please enquire for overseas rates.

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4th August 1995.

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Roger Zelazny Dies

Leading sf and fantasy writer Roger Zelazny died on 16 June, after complications arising from cancer. See page 5 for a full obituary.

Encyclopedia CD-ROM Ready

The CD-ROM version of John Clute's and Peter Nicholls's award-winning *SF Encyclopedia* was finalised on 19 June, and is due for release sometime in August. The publishers, Grolier, have booked tables at the Worldcon so presumably they hope to have something to sell . . .

In addition to photographs, graphics, and sound clips, the text will be substantially changed in three ways:

- (1) corrections and modifications to the 1992 text, including all the material in the Sept 93 *Addenda* and more;
- (2) over 800 updated entries, bringing them to up-to-date as far as the end of 1994;
- (3) over 100 completely new entries.

Paul Williams Recovers

As reported in *Matrix 114*, Paul Williams recently sustained a bad head injury after a motorcycle accident and there were fears for his long-term health. Fortunately he has made a quick and full recovery. Debbie Notkin reports: "Much to my astonishment and delight, Paul showed up at last weekend's American Booksellers' Association convention, looking somewhat fragile but quite well. He is up and around, under doctors' orders to wear a bicycle helmet, since there is an open place in his scalp from the brain surgery (eventually, the doctors will put a plastic plate there). He seemed very much himself, memory, mood, and personality intact.

"Cindy Lee Berryhill [who took time off to care for Paul] was with him, sounding thrilled with his recovery and ready to finish with caregiving and go back to her own musician's life."

Paul was at the ABA meeting in order to get back into work projects, among them his editorship of the collected short stories of Theodore Sturgeon; this is now scheduled for autumn this year.

Steffan Wins TAFF

Dan Steffan, writer, editor and artist, has won the Transatlantic Fan Fund race this year. Final voting was as follows:

Dan Steffan: 187

Samanda b Jude: 162

The first round results before

NEWS

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Many thanks to

Stephen Baxter, Stephen Briggs, Brum SF Group, Michael A. Burstein, John Clute, Jenny Glover, Dave Langford, Mike & Debbie Moir, Debbie Notkin, Peterborough SF Group, Mark Plummer, Julie Rigby, Paul Rood, Andy Sawyer, Sue Thomas, Lawrence Watt-Evans, John Whitbourn

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redistribution were:

Dan Steffan 154; Samanda b Jude 144; Joe Wesson 59; No preference 8
Votes come from both US and UK fans. Samanda b Jude led in the US voting, and Dan Steffan led in the UK.

Radio Scripts Wanted

KUBE (Keele University Broadcasting Enterprises) Radio is putting into preproduction an anthology series called *World of Dreams*; the first season of fourteen episodes — possibly more, depending on resources — is planned for FM broadcast in September 1995, and they're currently looking for scripts. It's an anthology programme similar to *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*, but is not limited to science fiction. Scripts or tapes should be 20 minutes long. Contact: Mark Overton, KUBE Drama Dept., KUBE Radio, University of Keele, Keele, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG or email ksc15@keele.ac.uk

Maskerade On Stage

A stage adaptation by Stephen Briggs of Terry Pratchett's next Discworld book, *Maskerade*, will be performed at the Studio Theatre Club in Abingdon on Tuesday 14 to Saturday 18 November. Tickets cost £5, but there are few left. Contact: SAE to S. P. Briggs, PO Box 655, Oxford, OX3 0PD.

• Briggs also has Discworld ties, scarves and 'The Turtle Moves' T-shirts available. OP

Babylon 5 Renewed

According to the show's creator, J. Michael Straczynski, *Babylon 5* has been

officially renewed for a third series of 22 episodes. Straczynski's story arc calls for five years' worth of episodes, so hopes are now high that the series will see a completion. The voice-over at the start will be: "The Babylon Project was our last, best hope for peace. It failed. But, in the year of the Shadow War, it became something greater: our last, best hope for . . . victory. The year is 2260. The place: Babylon 5."

On-line Books

Some authors are now making books and stories freely available on the net. Bruce Sterling was probably the first with *The Hacker Crackdown*, and the latest is Richard Kadrey, whose 1988 Ace novel *Metropolis* (with a new introduction) can now be obtained from The Well. Point your web browser at

<http://gopher.well.com:70/1/Pub/locations/authors/kadrey> or your gopher software at

[gopher://gopher.well.com:70/](http://gopher.well.com:70/), and look under the "Authors, Books, Periodicals . . ." entry. Also available at the same site is Kadrey's short story "Horse Latitudes" (an excerpt from his new novel *Kamikaze L'Amour*), *The Hacker Crackdown* and other Sterling non-fiction, the full text of Tom Maddox's sf novel *Halo*, material by William Burroughs, and criticism by John Kessel and Gwyneth Jones.

• Geoffrey A. Landis has made available his Hugo-nominated novelette "The Singular Habits of Wasps", a Sherlock Holmes pastiche. Email him at g.landis@genie.geis.com, ask nicely, and he'll send you a copy.

... Editorial continued ...

Now I'm certainly not going to ask you to vote for anyone — Stableford, David Langford and Ansible, David Pringle and *Interzone*, whatever — simply because they're British. It's very easy to let this kind of argument degenerate into crude nationalism — my sf's bigger / better / just, hey, more sf-nal than yours — and I don't want to claim that British sf (whatever that is) is somehow superior to that nasty crude foreign stuff. And Hugo votes (like any others) should certainly not be cast for nationalistic reasons. But I think it is reasonable to ask that consideration should be given to those neglected for merely organisational and logistical reasons, rather than through any distinct lack of merit. And in this case the losers are the entire non-American sf community. (In the larger sense, of course, Americans lose out too, being denied the

pointers to the best work from other countries which awards can provide.)

So when the time comes to tick the box — and whatever you decide on, please vote — I would ask you to at least consider the service which the British nominations have given to sf over the years. Especially *Interzone*; it became clear after the last UK Worldcon that the magazine had missed out on a Hugo by fewer than ten votes. And it was easy to find that many people who said things like "Well, I would have voted for it, but I lost the ballot / my vote wouldn't have mattered anyway / I forgot / I couldn't be bothered." Apathy won a Hugo that year.

See you in Glasgow!

— Chris Terran

... NEWS continued ...

Cult (Not) TV

The organisers of last year's 'Cult TV' television appreciation convention have withdrawn the rights to show film footage shot at the 1994 event. Independent production company World of Wonder were making a programme featuring the con for Channel 4's Saturday night *Takeover* TV slot.

Magician Pictures were contracted to shoot both the official con video and the footage for *Takeover* TV, and when Magician's Dan Turner discovered that World of Wonder had been responsible for the infamous *Manhattan Cable* programme the Cult TV organisers got worried. Alex Cairns said: "Dan told me that they were talking about re-editing the prepared three-minute vignettes to fit in more with the overall contents of the series. When we found out that *Takeover* TV was being turned away from its original format of being a showcase for new documentary film-makers, our suspicions were raised. We then found out that the new series would become a British version of *Manhattan Cable* — designed to poke fun at people and their interests. It was at this stage that we withdrew our permission for them to feature our footage within the programme."

Hugo Nominations

Nominations for the 1995 Hugo Awards and the John W. Campbell Award, to be given at Intersection in Glasgow in August, were announced on 1st May (see below). They were chosen by the 477 members of Intersection or ConAdian who submitted valid nominating ballots. Ties in some categories led to more than the normal five nominations, and there are only three nominations for "Original Artwork" as no other nominations appeared on more than the required 5% of ballots. The new "Best Music" category, introduced by the Intersection committee, was cancelled "due to a marked lack of interest that category: only one nominated item received more than 7 nominations."

Best Novel

John Barnes *Mother of Storms*
Michael Bishop *Brilliant Innings*
Lois McMaster Bujold *Mirror Dance*
Nancy Kress *Beggars and Choosers*
James Morrow *Towing Jehovah*

Best Novella

Michael Bishop "Cri de Coeur" (Asimov's)
Michael J. Flynn "Melodies of the Heart" (Analog)
Ursula K. Le Guin "Forgiveness Day" (Asimov's)

Mike Resnick "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge" (F&SF)

Brian Stableford "Les Fleurs Du Mal" (Asimov's)

Best Novelette

Greg Egan "Cocoon" (Asimov's)
David Gerrold "The Martian Child" (F&SF)
Geoffrey A. Landis "The Singular Habits of Wasps" (Analog)
Ursula K. Le Guin "The Matter of Seggri" (Crank!)

Mike Resnick "A Little Knowledge" (Asimov's)

Best Short Story

M. Shayne Bell "Mrs. Lincoln's China" (Asimov's)
Terry Bisson "Dead Man's Curve" (Asimov's)
Joe Haldeman "None So Blind" (Asimov's)
Barry N. Malzberg "Understanding Entropy" (SF Age)

Foundation Spins A Web

The Science Fiction Foundation has inaugurated a Web page at its Liverpool University home. It contains links to pages about the MA degree in SF Studies, the SFF's critical journal *Foundation*, *The Review of Science Fiction*, the support organisation Friends of Foundation, the conference "Speaking Science Fiction" in July 1996, the Liverpool University Press SF Texts and Studies series, and other sources of information. Contents pages for *Foundation* will be available soon. The Web address is <http://www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/sffchome.html>

New SF Zine

Plans for *Sierra Heaven*, a new fiction magazine, have been announced by Alex Barty. He is currently asking for submissions of "quality fantasy, horror and science fiction, all lengths up to 20,000 words considered." He's also looking for 250 word (or shorter) stories for a "Short Shorts" column. No rates mentioned, but for further information contact: Alex Barty, 29 Harrier Way, Evelyn Mews, Beekton, London E6 4YP.

Stoker Awards

The Bram Stoker Awards for Superior Achievement are awarded by the Horror Writers Association. The 1995 winners are:

Novel:
Nancy Holder *Dead In the Water*

First Novel:
Michael Arzen *Grave Markings*

Novelette:
Robert Bloch "The Scent of Vinegar"

Short Story (tie):

Jack Ketchum "The Box"

Nancy Holder "Cafe Endless: Spring Rain"

Collection:
Robert Bloch *The Early Fears*

Mike Resnick "Barnaby in Exile" (Asimov's)
Kate Wilhelm "I Know What You're Thinking" (Asimov's)

Best Non-fiction Book

Isaac Asimov *A. Asimov: A Memoir*
Cathy Burnett and Arnie Fennel *Spectrum: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art*
Samuel R. Delany *Silent Interviews: On Language, Race, Sex, Science Fiction, and Some Comics*
Teresa Nielsen Hayden *Making Book*
Christopher Priest *The Book on The Edge of Forever*

Best Dramatic Presentation

"All Good Things" (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*)
Interview: *With the Vampire*
The Mask
Stargate
Star Trek: Generations

Best Professional Editor

Ellen Datlow; Gardner Dozois; Mike Resnick; Kristine Kathryn Ruch; Stanley Schmidt

Best Professional Artist

Jim Burns; Thomas Canty; Bob Eggleton; Don Maitz; Michael Whelan

Best Professional Artwork

Brian Froud & Terry Jones *Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy Book*

Life Achievement Award:
Christopher Lee

Prix Aurora Awards

The 1995 Aurora Awards were presented in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada at the Canadian National SF Convention on Sunday, May 14, 1995. The two hour ceremony was held at the Talisman Hotel and marked the climax of the special multiple conventions, called CAN-CON '95/Convention 15/Boréal 12, sponsored by The Society for Canadian Content in Speculative Arts and Literature.

Best Long-Form Work in English:

William Gibson *Virtual Light*

Best Long-Form Work in French:

Joël Champetier *La Mémoire du lac*

Best Short-Form Work in English:

Sally McBride "The Fragrance of Orchids" (*Asimov's*, May 94)

Best Short-Form Work in French:

Alain Bergeron "L'Homme qui fouillait la lumière" (*Solaris*, #111) and

Yves Meynard "L'Envoyé" (*imagine* . . .)

Best Other Work in English:

Barry Hammond et al (eds.) *On Spec* (Copper Pig Writers' Society) [sf magazine]

Best Other Work in French:

Joël Champetier (ed.) *Solaris (Les Compagnons à temps perdu)* [sf review]

Artistic Achievement:

Tim Hammell

Fan Achievement (Fanzine):

Under the Ozone Hole Karl Johanson & John Herbert, eds.

Butler Wins Grant

Sf writer Octavia Butler was recently awarded a grant amounting to nearly \$300,000 by the McArthur Foundation in America. This grant is awarded to creative artists and academics to help support their work in their chosen field.

Michael Koelsch, cover for *Gun*, *With Occasional Music* by Jonathan Lethem
Michael Whelan, cover for *Foreigner* by C. J. Cherryh

Best Semiprozine

Interzone ed. David Pringle
Locus ed. Charles N. Brown
The New York Review of Science Fiction ed. David G. Hartwell, Donald G. Keller, Robert K. J. Killheffer & Gordon Van Gelder
Science Fiction Chronicle ed. Andrew L. Porter
Tomorrow Speculative Fiction ed. Algis Budrys

Best Fanzine

Anisble ed. Dave Langford
File 770 ed. Mike Glyer
Habakkuk ed. Bill Donaho
Lan's Lantern ed. George Laskowski
Mimosa ed. Dick & Nicki Lynch

Best Fan Writer

Sharon Farber; Mike Glyer; Andy Hooper; Dave Langford; Evelyn C. Leeper

Best Fan Artist

Brad W. Foster; Teddy Harvia; Linda Michaels; Peggy Ranson; Bill Rotzler

John W. Campbell
Award for Best New Writer

(Eligibility year in brackets)

Linda Dunn (2); David Fentuch (1); Daniel Marcus (2); Jeff Noon (2); Felicity Savage (1)

Roger Zelazny

1937 - 1995

An Appreciation By Paul Kincaid

ROGER ZELAZNY, one of the most important writers of the American new wave, died of cancer on 14 June. He was 58.

Zelazny's work began to appear in 1962 (the same year as Samuel R. Delany, with whom he was often associated during the 1960s. Perhaps because of a slight similarity of name, it wasn't unusual to hear people speak of "Zelany" — though their work would actually differ markedly.) He came to prominence very quickly with "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" (1964), a haunting novelette about a poet who discovers his own humanity and saves the race of Martians. This story revealed some of the most characteristic features of Zelazny's early work: a lyrical prose style, a fascination with notions of redemption and transcendence, and a deep humanity which was far more important than any realistic or scientifically accurate portrait of Mars. It is this last — a characteristic shared with his contemporaries, Delany, Thomas M. Disch and Ursula K. Le Guin — which put Zelazny at the forefront of the American new wave as it emerged during the mid-60s.

In the year after "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" three more long stories appeared which confirmed Zelazny's reputation as one of the most exciting new writers of the time. "The Doors of His Face, the Lamps of His Mouth", which won the Nebula for best novelette, tells of a deep sea fishing expedition on a densely visualised but fantastical Venus, though this is almost incidental to a story of personal redemption with, significantly, mythic undertones. "... And Call Me Conrad", later expanded into *This Immortal*, won the Hugo for best novel. Set on a post-apocalyptic Earth under the benevolent care of the alien Vegans, it is the story of an immortal, Conrad Nomikos, who fulfils the role of an epic hero with the sentimental, wisecracking manner of a private eye as he sets the Earth on course for restoration. The third of this trio was "He Who Shapes", later expanded as *The Dream Master*, which won the Nebula for best novella. Again there is a mythic element (the romantic loner who is also a mythic hero would be a recurring figure in Zelazny's work) but in this case, the story of psychiatrist Charles Render who heals by entering into the dreamworld of his patients, the redemption falls — a fact which makes this almost unique in Zelazny's work.

After this *annus mirabilis*, Zelazny was rarely far from the major awards in the genre. He won Hugos for *Lord of Light* (1967, best novel 1968), "Home is the Hangman" (1975, best novella 1976, also a Nebula award winner), "Unicorn Variation" (1981, best novelette 1982), "Twenty Four Views of Mt Fuji, by Hokusai" (1985, best novella 1986) and "Permafrost" (1986, best novelette 1987).

Lord of Light, perhaps his finest novel, and *Creatures of Light and Darkness* (1969) both display Zelazny's fascination with myth at its most explicit. In *Lord of Light* the crew of a human colony

ship, still in place above the newly colonised world, amuse themselves by taking on the characteristics of the Hindu pantheon, aided by their superior technology. Until one of their number rebels and takes on the role of Buddha to lead the colonists to redemption. *Creatures of Light and Darkness* uses the Egyptian pantheon as explicitly, though by now the fascination with mythology was leading Zelazny away from science fiction towards fantasy.

He would continue to write sf throughout his career, but except in novels such as *Bridge of Ashes* (1976) which consciously echoed his early work, he didn't come close to recapturing that intense and lyrical vision. Even his collaboration with Philip K. Dick, *Deus Irae* (1976), seemed like it brought together the worst rather than the best of both authors, as if they were each recapitulating their own earlier work.

His best work now would be in fantasy, and particularly in the two *Amber* series. Particularly with the start of the series, *Nine Princes in Amber* (1970), which presented Earth as just one of many pale echoes of the core reality which is Amber, and which set up the story of Prince Corwin who travels between the worlds in order to prevent the success of chaos, Zelazny skilfully blended elements of sf and fantasy to present his own vision of mythic patterns and human redemption. But as the series stretched out over ten books (the last volume, *Prince of Chaos*, appearing in 1991) this vision tended to become attenuated and the early intensity was lost.

If his novels failed to sustain his early promise, some of his stories certainly did, notably the award winners "Unicorn Variation", "Permafrost" and particularly "24 Views of Mt Fuji, by Hokusai". This last, in which a Japanese woman purges her dead husband's data-net identity, and which echoes "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" in its linking of art with redemption, could easily have come from his most triumphant years.

Zelazny's work since 1970 has rarely been less than competent and was often superb, yet it suffers by comparison with the fiction he wrote during the 1960s. If he seems, in retrospect, to have failed to live up to his early promise, it is only because that early promise was so brilliant. Work from any period of his career would have marked him as a significant writer of science fiction and fantasy, but a handful of stories between "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" and *Lord of Light* place him firmly in the very top rank.

Roger Joseph Zelazny was born in Cleveland, Ohio on 13 May 1937, where he worked for the Social Security Administration until he became a full-time writer in 1969. He married Sharon Steberl in 1964, but was divorced in 1966; he remarried the same year to Judith Callahan, by whom he fathered two daughters and a son.

— Paul Kincaid

• *All unquoted remarks by Chris Terran.*
Abbreviations: pb, paperback; hb, hardback;
tp, trade paperback; pp, page count.

★ HIGHLIGHTS

John Barnes *Kaleidoscope Century*; Michael Moorcock *Von Bek* (Millennium). Terry Pratchett & Stephen Briggs *The Discworld Companion*; Jenny Jones *The Blue Manor* (Gollancz); Jonathan Carroll *From the Teeth of Angels* (HarperCollins). Graham Joyce *Requiem* (Creed). Simon Clark *Black Crazy*; C. J. Cherryh *Tripoint* (Hodder & Stoughton). Gerry Bear (ed.) *New Legends* (Legend). David Brin *Otherness* (Orbit).

★ PUBLISHING NEWS

★ *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction's* companion volume, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* by John Clute and John Grant, has suffered the traditional inflation and postponement. Originally scheduled for September this year and intended to be some 450,000 words long, it's now grown to 700,000 words (about the length of the first edition of the *SFE*) and will be delivered to Little Brown this autumn for publication around Easter 1996.

★ Also in preparation is a collection of John Clute's sf criticism called *Look at the Evidence: Reviews and Essays*. It is a co-production between Serconia Press in the US and Liverpool University Press, and will contain much of Clute's writings from between 1987 and 1992, including most of the *Interzone* columns from that period. Clute says that "it is meant to constitute a running reaction to the transformations of sf during those years."

★ Final Clute news is that he's turned in *SF: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* to Dorling Kindersley for August publication. It's a survey of sf for a fairly general audience, is about 170,000 words long, and is heavily illustrated in the publisher's normal fashion.

★ Larry Niven is currently finishing the third Ringworld book, to be called *The Ringworld Throne*, for Del Rey.

★ Harry Turtledove has finished and turned in *Worldwar: Upsetting the Balance*, the third installment of the *WorldWar* tetralogy. He has also finished *Hammer and Anvil*, the second book in the 'Time of Troubles' series that follows hot on the heels of the 'Videssos Cycle'.

★ Stephen Baxter has followed up the launch of *The Time Ships* in the Science Museum by contracting with HarperCollins UK for four more books, to be two novels and two short story collections. Baxter says, "The novels are untitled as yet but they will be 'big space books'." Meanwhile he is continuing work on his next novel *Ares*, and the paperback release of *The Time Ships* is scheduled for September. Following a last-minute agreement with Wells's literary executors (a dispute which slightly delayed publication of the hardback), this time it will be billed as the 'authorised sequel to *The Time Machine*', and will feature a very flattering blurb from Arthur C. Clarke.

★ John Whitbourn, prize-winning author of *A Dangerous Energy* and *To Build Jerusalem*, has finished a new novel; *Elves and Muskets* is currently at the publishers. He's now working on a novel called *The Two Confessions*. Both are set — like much of Whitbourn's work — in southern England, to which he feels great attachment: "I may be described (or

written off) as a Surrey / Sussex writer. I'm also quite keen to revive the (slightly) archaic term 'Southron' (of or dwelling in the South — especially South Britain) in the same way Thomas Hardy rescued and revived 'Wessex'."

★ Nottingham-resident Sue Thomas's first book, *Correspondence*, was nominated for the Clarke Award; despite this accolade her next novel, *Water*, was only available in America. But it will now be published in the UK on 5 October by Five Leaves Publications at £7.99 (advance copies are £6.99). Contact: Five Leaves Publications, PO Box 81, Nottingham NG5 4ER, Tel. 0115-9603355

Bantam

Roger MacBride Allen *Star Wars: Assault at Selonia* (6 Jul; £4.99 pb, 289pp) — Book 2 of the 'Corellian Trilogy'.

Corgi

Anne McCaffrey & Elisabeth Ann Scarborough *Power Lines* (6 Jul; £4.99 pb, 380pp) — Second in the 'Powers' trilogy.

BOOKS

Recent and Forthcoming

Creed

... is a new original paperback imprint owned by Signet (part of Penguin Books) which will specialise in Dark Fantasy, often of an erotic nature. According to the PR material, "Creed will appeal to everyone who likes strange and seductive tales — bordering on the horror and gothic at one extreme and the best of the romance genre at the other. Creed cuts a swathe through current notions of men's and women's popular fiction." Future releases will include two novels by Freda Warrington, two from Irish author Michael Scott, and a new trilogy from Storm Constantine beginning with *Stalking Tender Prey*. But Creed kicks off with: • Nancy Baker *The Night Inside* (4 May; £4.99 pb, 312pp) — Baker is a Canadian-resident writer whose first novel is a "breathless, lingering, erotic" story of vampiric possession. • Sheila Holligan *Night rider* (4 May; £4.99 pb, 320pp) — A tale of dark family secrets in an old Yorkshire farmhouse, complete with a set of incestuous Cold Comfort Farm-ish neighbours. • Graham Joyce *Requiem* (4 May; £4.99 pb, 305pp) — M. John Harrison says: "Requiem is a love story; a thriller; and a powerful modern unfolding of magic, Christianity and sex ... a striking novel, full of wonder and incident." • Michael Scott *The Hallows* (29 Jun; £4.99 pb, 354pp) — The first of Scott's Creed books is a dark Celtic fantasy about Ancient British artefacts and their guardians in contemporary Britain. An entertaining romp, though the horror elements are downplayed and it's slightly marred by some sloppy copy-editing (Decca is a British company, and the game of chess is not 2,000 years old, amongst other errors).

Gollancz

John Whitbourn *To Build Jerusalem* (13 Apr; £15.99 hb, £5.99 pb 311pp) — Alternate-world fantasy set in the same milieu as his excellent award-winning debut novel *A Dangerous Energy*. One day in 1995 magic ceases to work as normal ... • Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle & Steven Barnes *The Dragons of Heorot* (27 Apr; £16.99 hb, 447pp) — Sequel to *The Legacy of Heorot*, with new aliens — predators of the first novel's grendels — designed by Dr Jack Cohen. • Jenny Jones *The Blue Manor* (1 Jun; £16.99 hb, 352pp) — "A haunting fantasy of incest and earth magic." Set in a strange house in Epping Forest, the haunted characters in this (sort of) ghost story have a family tree convoluted enough to make you wish for a diagram. Strikingly written, obsessional and dark. Recommended. • Peter James *Alchemist* (May; £15.99 hb) — New horror novel. • Joe R. Lansdale *Mucho Mojo* (22 Jun; £15.99 hb, 352pp) — Fine example of 'Southern Gothic' American writing; a low-life in the Southern USA discovers dark secrets about a recently deceased

relation. An excellently written mystery with occult overtones. Recommended. • Paul Kearney *Riding the Unicorn* (29 Jun; £5.99 pb, 254pp) — Rather bleak fantasy in which John Willoby, a well-drawn but perhaps unsympathetic prison warden in a Yorkshire gaol, begins to have lucid dreams of a medieval world of kings and magic, concubines, and a plotting bastard scion who invigiles a wizard into fetching Willoby into his world to commit regicide. A novel of betrayals: of wives and daughters, lovers and slaves, servants and masters. • Tricia Sullivan *Lethe* (5 Jul; £15.99 hb, 384pp) — Debut sf novel from a US writer. Gene Wars, strange mutations, bottled brains, interstellar gates ... • Terry Pratchett & Stephen Briggs *The Discworld Companion* (20 Jul; £6.99 tp, 288 pp) — "The definitive guide to Terry Pratchett's Discworld ... a comprehensive guide to the places, characters, flora and fauna, architecture, (many) religions and customs of the flat planet." Features a brief history of the Discworld books, an introduction by, and an interview with, Terry, and the recipe for Wow-wow sauce. • Ian McDonald *Necroville* (27 Jul; £5.99 pb, 317pp) — Belfast-resident McDonald is one of the best of writers around, with nearly every book either winning or being shortlisted for an award. This is a tale of nanotechnology in the 21st century; much of the world's population is the resurrected dead, who live in ghettos — Necroville — and have developed a separate and alien culture. Strange and baroque colourfully.

HarperCollins

Robert Silverberg *Hot Sky At Midnight* (9 May; pb) • Janny Wurts *Ships of Merior* (22 May; pb) • Jonathan Carroll *From the Teeth of Angels* (22 May; £4.99 pb, 283pp)

— Carroll continues to weave his crepuscular Viennese spells; this time his characters confront death. • **Stephen Baxter** *The Time Ships* (25 May; £15.99 hb, 454pp) — To those who encounter Wells's *The Time Machine* at an impressionable age, the bleak vision of the red-lit and silent terminal beach at history's end serves, in some sense, as a baleful illumination on all their future sf reading. And with this long and impressive sequel, Baxter is tackling one of the greater gods of the sf pantheon, a brave man. It's a pleasure to report that this is his best work by some way. The story starts where the original ends, with the Time Traveller returning to the future to bring back proof of his journey. But the future he travels to is not the one he originally saw... strange events in the sky culminate in a time being apparently 'eaten'. And his quest for Weena through stranger and stranger futures — alternative worlds, of a kind — forms the rest of the book.

Spotting the references is fun, as usual in alternative world stories, though Baxter tends to over-flag these, often using an

Sequel to the multiple award winning *Take Back Plenty*. The last (and as yet unwritten) volume of *Tabitha Jute's* adventures will be called *Mother of Plenty*. • **Guy Gavriel Kay** *The Lions of Al-Rassam* (22 Jun; £15.99 hb, 582pp) — "Inspired by the rich medieval history of post-Moorish Spain; a beautifully crafted tale of intrigue, romance and war." • **David Zindell** *The Wild* (Jun; £15.99 hb) — Third in the 'Neverness' series. • **Charles Grant** *The X-Files: Whirlwind* (Jul; £4.99 pb) — Second X-Files tie-in from an accomplished horror writer. Though nominally not published until July it was spotted in the shops in early June. The next, *Hunter*, is due in September. • **Mike Jefferies** *The Knights of Caudor* (10 Jul; £4.99 pb, 381pp) — Fantasy set in the same world as his *Loamasters of Elundium*. • **Gar Alperovitz** *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (Aug; £20.00 hb) — It's 50 years since the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, and this book — whose contents are embargoed until publication — claims to present the definitive account.

£5.99 pb, 341pp) • **Greg Bear** (ed.) *New Legends* (18 May; £15.99 hb, 419pp) — An anthology for "anybody who cares about the future, and who needs to think as well as dream." All-new stories from Gregory Benford, Ursula K. Le Guin, Paul K. McCauley, Robert Schooley, Greg Egan, Robert Silverberg, Poul Anderson, Geoffrey A. Landis, a really fine and welcome return by Carter Scholz, and others (though nothing from Bear himself). There's also an essay from Benford about the relation between scientists, politics, and sf; he relates the story of the meeting at Larry Niven's house in 1984 when Clarke left after a disagreement with Robert Heinlein about the US's SDI policy, and tells of his (Benford's) meetings with Edward Teller (the 'father of the H-bomb'). Benford dominates this anthology; as well as a story and the essay, there's a tale credited to 'Sterling Blake', a Benford pseudonym. Martin Greenberg is credited as co-editor on the title page, but not on the cover.

• **Allen Cole & Chris Bunch** *The Warrior's Tale* (18 May; £5.99 pb, 487pp) — Sequel to *The Far Kingdom*. • **Greg Bear** *Legacy* (15 Jun; £15.99 hb) — New hard sf novel set in the Eon universe. • **C. J. Cherryh** *Foreigner* (20 Jul; £5.99 pb) • **C. J. Cherryh** *The Inviders* (20 Jul; £15.99 hb) • **Maggie Furey** *The Sword of Flame* (3 Aug; £5.99 pb) • **Andrew Harman** *Fahrenheit 666* (17 Aug; £4.99 pb)

Macmillan

Charles de Lint *Memory and Dream* (Apr; £14.99 hb, 400pp) • **Pamela Belle** *The Wolf Within* (May; £8.99 tp, 470pp) — Second fantasy from the popular historical novelist. • **Pamela Belle** *The Silver City* (May; £4.99 pb) • **Simon Harding** *Changeling Hearts* (May; £4.99 pb, 312pp) • **Lois McMaster Bujold** *Mirror Dance* (Jun; £4.99 pb, 394pp)

Millennium

Nathan Archer *Predator: Concrete Jungle* (1 May; £4.99 pb, 306pp) — Movie spin-off. • **Mercedes Lackey & Larry Dixon** *The White Gryphon* (15 May; £15.99 hb, 305pp; £8.99 tp) — "Fabulous fantasy epic set 500 years before the bestselling *Heralds of Valdemar* series in the same world... essential prehistory." • **Kristine Kathryn Rusch** *Sins of the Blood* (15 May; £8.99 tp, 357pp) — Erotic and dark vampire novel. • **James Bibby** *Ronan the Barbarian* (15 May; £15.99 hb, 260pp) — Comedy fantasy. After Conan the Barbarian, Colin the Librarian, and Cohen the Barbarian we have... Ronan the Barbarian. First novel from a scriptwriter for *Not the Nine o' Clock News*, OTT (remember that?), Lenny Henry, Les Dennis, Bobby Davro... and he comes from Liverpool. • **John Barnes** *Kaleidoscope Century* (19 Jun; £15.99 hb, 252pp) — Barnes continues to break the rules by insisting on creating a new novel with every book he writes. Why can't he do sequels and interminable series like proper writers do? Oh well: *Kaleidoscope Century* is a terrifyingly bleak vision of the next century as seen through the eyes of a man — of equally horrifying character — injected with an experimental virus in the 1980s which, every fifteen years, causes him to become very ill and get rejuvenated by ten years. A side effect is that he loses his memory, making him an unreliable narrator. But the reality of the century he lives through is questionable on many other levels too... Recommended. (The UK hardcover corrects the "unacceptably large number of

Recent and Forthcoming

identification as a chapter's punch-line. The Time Traveller's character is very well-caught, an ingrate, thoughtless, self-deluding... a product of Empire, in fact. The whole book could indeed be read as a critique of a certain type of Englishness, prone to fascist thinking. There are a few cavils: Baxter's tendency to undercut a dramatic scene with inappropriate humour sometimes jars a little, for example; and there are some loose ends which may point to (another) sequel. But overall Baxter has excelled himself, and this complex and well-woven tale contains both the despair and the compassion that are proper to his Craft. Highly recommended, and your editor's choice this issue. • **Andre Norton & Mercedes Lackey** *The Elvenblood* (5 Jun; pb) • **Simon Ings** *Hotwire* (5 Jun; pb) — First publication. • **James Herbert** *The Ghosts of Sleath* (12 Jun; £4.99 pb, 409pp) • **Katherine Kerr** *A Time of Justice* (19 Jun; £4.99 pb, 465pp) — Conclusion of the 'Westlands' cycle. • **Yvonne Fern** *Inside the Mind of Gene Roddenberry* (19 Jun; £6.99 tp, 228pp) — Transcript of conversations between Fern and the author of *Star Trek*, with a foreword by Arthur C. Clarke and a stunning example of the blurb-writer's art: "As Roddenberry faced the end of his life, his last wish was to address humanity directly. Insisting that no one could really know him without becoming part of his private world, he invited Yvonne Fern to live with him and his wife, Majel Barratt. But this book is more than a portrait of a single life — it is a sacred journey into the meaning and worth of human existence." And so begins the deification of a hack. • **Colin Greenland** *Seasons of Plenty* (22 Jun; £15.99 hb, 403pp) —

Hodder & Stoughton

C. J. Cherryh *Tripoint* (15 Jun; £16.99 hb, 377pp) — New sf novel set in the Merchant universe. • **Simon Clark** *Blood Crazy* (15 Jun; £16.99 hb, 343pp) — Apocalyptic horror, set largely in Doncaster where Clark lives. One day adults go crazy and start killing anybody under 19 years old, starting with their own children. Though marketed as horror, this novel is firmly in the 'catastrophe story' school of British sf writing, and is a clear descendant of John Wyndham. • **A. A. Attanasio** *Arthor* (15 Jun; £16.99 hb, 278pp) — Second in the epic series of Arthurian fantasies. • **Stephen King** *Insomnia* (6 Jul; £5.99 pb, 760pp) — King returns to the Derry of *It* and *The Tommyknockers* (some of the earlier books' characters have cameos) with an overlong and, frankly, risible story of sleepless nights, astral planes and, er, Little Bad Doctors. The novel starts off well enough; in particular, the use of an aged and rather infirm man as the hero is interesting. But King completely cops out when the old man promptly becomes a Proper American by getting younger and healthier. King can write entertaining novels of such length, but they need a large cast (as in *The Stand* and *It*); here the focus is kept on a single (and rather uninteresting) character. And the daftness of the premise makes for a book which generates sniggers rather than terror.

Legend

John Brosnan *Damned and Fancy* (20 Apr; £4.99 pb, 188pp) — Cheerfully vulgar (and brief) comic fantasy, intended to be the first of a series. • **Terry Brooks** *Witches' Brew* (20 Apr; £15.99 hb, 304pp) • **Terry Brooks** *The Tangle Box* (20 Apr;

errors" in the first US printing.) • **Michael Moorcock** *Von Bek* (5 Jun; £5.99 pb, 646pp) — Volume 1 of 'The Tale of the Eternal Champion'. Mass-market omnibus paperback containing revised new editions of *The Warhound and the World's Pain*, *The City in the Autumn Stars*, and *The Pleasure Garden of Felipe Sagittarius*. • **Alan Rogers** *Pandora* (5 Jun; £4.99 pb, 344pp) — Alien contact story from a US writer better known for his horror work. Pandora is the sole survivor of the Roswell UFO, kept prisoner by the military. But she escapes... • **Kristine Kathryn Rusch** *Alien Influences* (5 Jun; £5.99 pb, 424pp) — Very well received sf novel of culture clash on a colony planet. As well as being a prolific writer, Rusch also edits *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

New English Library

Simon Clark *Nailed By the Heart* (15 Jun; £5.99 pb, 360pp) • **A. A. Attanasio** *The Dragon and the Unicorn* (15 Jun; £5.99 pb, 483pp) • **Christopher Pike** *The Cold One* (15 Jun; £4.99 pb, 393pp)

Orbit

David Brin *Otherness* (8 Jun; £5.99 pb, 387pp) — Collection of short stories and

essays. • **Tanith Lee** *Gold Unicorn* (8 Jun; £4.99 pb, 179pp) — First publication of the sequel to *Black Unicorn*. • **Alan Dean Foster** *Chorus Skating* (8 Jun; £4.99 pb, 344pp) — A "Spelling" novel. • **Jonathan Wylie** *Other Lands* (8 Jun; £16.99 hb, 360pp) — "Jonathan Wylie" is the pseudonym used by husband and wife team Mark and Julia Smith, who live and work in Norfolk. *Other Lands*, like their eleven previous novels, is a collaboration; they write chapters, then sit down to put the novel together and discuss the direction it is taking. • **Anne McCaffrey** & **Jody Lynn Nye** *The Ship Who Won* (8 Jun; £15.99 hb, 330pp)

Pocket

('ST'=Star Trek, 'TNG'=The Next Generation, 'DS9'=Deep Space 9, 'SA'=Starfleet Academy.) • **D. M. Flynn** *ST Vol. 74: Fearful Summons* (27 Jun; £4.50 pb) • **Cox & Bentacourt** *ST DS9 #11: Devil in the Sky* (27 Jun; £4.50 pb) • **Diana Gallagher** *ST DS9 Young Adult #5: The Arcade* (27 Jun; £2.99 pb) • **Michael Jan Friedman** *ST TNG: Relics* (27 Jun; £7.99 audio) • **William Shatner** *ST: Ashes of Eden* (27 Jun; £9.99 hb) • **William Shatner** *ST: Ashes of Eden* (27 Jun; £7.99 audio) • **Alan Dean Foster** *ST: Logs 7-10* (27 Jun; £4.50 pb)

Roc

Nyx Smith *Shadowrun: Who Hunts the Hunter* (Jun; £4.99 pb, 270 pp) • **Robert Thurston** *Battlechick: I Am Jade Falcon* (Jun; £4.99 pb, 264pp) — Pity Thurston, who doesn't even get his name on the spine.

Imports

Richard Paul Russo *Carlucci's Edge* (Ace: Jun; \$5.50 pb) — New cyberpunk thriller from the Dick Award winning author. • **Frederik Pohl** *The Voices of Heaven* (Tor: Jun; \$5.99 pb) • **James Patrick Kelly** *Wildlife* (Tor: Jun; \$4.95 pb) — "When the power of biotechnology meets the expansive intelligence of machines, it yields something less — or maybe more — than human: Wildlife." • **Robert A. Heinlein** *Podkayne of Mars* (Baen: Jul; \$5.99 pb, 256pp) — Heinlein originally wrote two endings for this book, and in a recent trade edition Baen held a contest to decide which should become 'official'. This edition contains the winning entry, along with essays arguing both sides. • **Gentry Lee** *Bright Messengers* (Bantam Spectra: Jun; \$21.95 hb) — His first solo novel. • **Lisa Mason** *Summer of Love* (Bantam Spectra: Jun; \$5.99 pb)



Chris Terran

WITH THE WORLDCON APPROACHING at an alarming rate (to those working on it, anyway), there's a distinct lack of fanzines around at the moment; I only saw three at the recent Eastercon, for example. The hope is that everyone is saving their best efforts for Glasgow, and in August we will be deluged with quality zines chock full of sassy writing, pertinent (or at least competent) illustrations, classy design, well-edited letter columns, and editorials as irritating as they should be.

But they haven't got here yet. So this issue I want to look at some of the more mainstream sf magazines, and along the way take in some of the pile of assorted catalogues, newswines, and other unclassifiable bits and bobs that have ended up on the *Matrix* desk.

The big news, of course, is the launch of *SFX*, available . . . well, nearly everywhere. It's rather expensive at "£3.00 of your Earth money" (oh dear; not a good start), but it's very glossy, highly (perhaps over-) illustrated, and attempts to cover all parts of the sf world including 'fannish' activities such as cons, and, from the August issue, fanzines. The editor is Matt Bielby, staff writer is Simo Simpson, and there's a large roster of freelancers, some of whom will be familiar from the pages of *Matrix* and *Vector* (indeed, Simo himself appeared here last issue with an article about the *Hitch Hiker* fan club). *SFX* has clearly made an effort to use the talent and knowledge within fandom, and you'll have to look fairly hard to find the phrase "sci-fi". Dave Langford has a regular opinion column and does a fair proportion of the book reviews, which is itself a good reason for buying *SFX*, especially if you remember the wonderful columns he did for *White Dwarf*. In fact, books are given much more prominence than I had cynically expected, with six full pages given over to reviews. The books chosen are good, high quality sf (not endless film and game tie-ins), and the reviews, though rather short, are first rate if a little uncritical (but this improves in the second issue). But Langford does seem a little cramped by the space limitations he's under, which don't give him quite enough room to display his drivel wit.

A substantial interview forms the centre of the literary side of the zine: the first issue featured Iain Banks being grilled by Mary Branscombe, and the second had Jeff Noon being gently broiled

by the BSFA's own Catie Cary. These interviews were filling and meaty, and refreshingly free of laboured culinary metaphors; congratulations to all concerned. They were presented in a more sober fashion than the other articles, with large grainy black and white mugshots of Banksie and Noon dominating the pages; in fact, you could be forgiven for thinking you were reading *Q* or *The Independent Magazine*.

But the heart of *SFX* is media sf. Both issues' cover features were on forthcoming films, *Tank Girl* and *Judge Dredd* respectively, and both had the suspiciously clean smell of press releases about them. It doesn't help that in both cases the films have not been well received, but the criticism here was very muted.

Issue 2 had an affectionate look at Gerry Anderson's oeuvre, including an interview and a look at some of the more obscure series. It was a real pleasure to see some stills from the fondly remembered *Supercar*, though I'd inexplicably forgotten the amazing eyebrows of Mike Mercury. But for shame, they misidentify the pilot in *Fireball XL5*; it's Steve Zodiac, not Mr Mercury, as any lule no.

The hundred pages you get contain little advertising. Worryingly little, in fact . . . Perhaps the agencies are waiting on the circulation figures and readership profile generated by the extensive questionnaire included in issue 1. As it is, the main corporate advertising came from Smirnoff and Czech beer Staropramen. Who both, curiously enough, sponsored the launch party; an uncanny coincidence. Other advertising comes primarily from model, games, trading cards and video companies — fan-as-consumer has arrived, and anoraks are worn with pride.

There's a sense of strain in *SFX*, though. It's trying desperately hard to be stylish in the manner of zines such as *Q*, *net*, *GQ*, and so on, but they really haven't quite suited it yet. It's just not enough to put yet another hackneyed "SFX 2 was put together to the sounds of Pulp [etc]" in the colophon, to put a weird quote on the spine (at least with *Q* the game is to work out what it's from; *SFX* boringly tells you), to have quirky little lists dotted around the pages, to take the piss out of crappy trading cards; they need a more confident editorial presence, and some fresh ideas. This criticism is a little premature though, and generally *SFX* started very well. I'm sure that the high quality of writers and staff will ensure that the zine improves once it finds its feet.

MAILBOX

Interzone and the Hugos

From **Simon Ounsley**
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As you may be aware, *Interzone* has been nominated for a Hugo in the Semi-professional Magazine category again this year and I think it has a real chance of winning. It was almost successful in 1987. That was needed was a few more people taking the trouble to vote . . .

And that is the point of this letter. I am trying to encourage all Intersection members who think that *Interzone* would make a worthy Hugo winner to get out their pens and fill in the form!

I am not of course an entirely disinterested bystander in this. I was a founding editor and publisher of *Interzone* and was closely involved with it for its first eight years. As such, I am only too well aware of a certain cynical attitude — in a few cases even outright hostility — which fandom has tended to take towards *Interzone*. As the magazine's purpose has always been to provide a much-needed professional market in Britain for writers of short science fiction and fantasy, I have always found this attitude puzzling, and I would like to ask people to consider that *Interzone* has now been supplying that

market for thirteen years and that it has, in the words of the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, "been largely (if not solely) responsible for catalysing a second new wave of UK sf". As the magazine approaches its hundredth issue, the time is surely ripe for some official recognition of this achievement, and it would be a shame if the real opportunity of a Hugo were not to be grasped.

Though the 'semi-pro' category is hardly appropriate to the quality of the magazine, it fits the bill in another way. Most of us have given our services as editors entirely free (speaking personally I seriously damaged my health into the bargain!) and David Pringle only started taking payment from the magazine when its demands required him to give up his day job — even editors have to eat. The magazine has always been produced for love rather than money, a fact which would make the award all the more welcome.

And, if further argument is needed, I would like to point out that there are not many British names on the Hugo ballot — pitifully few, in fact, for a British worldcon. So please take the opportunity to vote for *Interzone* and to give the magazine — and British sf — the recognition they surely deserve. ☐

Letters (and emails) on any subject are very welcome.
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to John Ollis and others about getting to know other fans (the best is probably 'gopher'). I could try to codify those elusive social rules that govern our creative anarchy. I could suggest the resurrection of the Knights of St Anthony — or really stenciling NEO on people's foreheads (or at least on their badges)! What I do suggest is that, particularly in the year of a Scottish worldcon, this is a fit subject for fanish debate and the BSFA, which has its fair share of movers and shakers, con-goers and conrunners, as well as many members who have not attended conventions or are only just discovering them, is a good place to start. Well, what do you think?

You asked for comments on *Matrix* and it definitely shows improvement. The news columns are excellent. I think you're beginning to get the balance right. I have a few gripes though. Firstly, what have you done to Joseph Nicholas? He's being sweetness and light itself to some pretty trashy films. Has he had his bile ducts removed surgically or what? Secondly, some of us feel that a column labelled 'Videos' should not be entirely about anime. Furthermore, TV and radio are full of fantasy, sf, sci-fi and horror nowadays, and some reviews would be welcome. The last time I suggested this I was told that by the time these were mentioned in *Matrix* they were off the air — to which the answer is: yes, off the air and onto video or soundtrack! Jenny Glover's review of *Goodnight Sweetheart* was kinder than mine would have been, but it was great to see it. More please. ☐

[Not everybody thinks Joseph Nicholas is all sweetness and light . . .]

From **Howard Watts**
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The new look *Matrix* is nothing short of wonderful. The balance and length of the different subject material is just right. Not too long, not too short. The look of the magazine is pleasing also, the design easy on the eye and not cramped. But I feel I must write to comment on a few of your regular writers.

Joseph Nicholas's 'Film Review' of *Star Trek: Generations*. This review reminds me of someone who would review the last book of a trilogy without reading the first two instalments. Firstly, he admits he has never seen an episode of the TV series this film is derived from. Then, I quote: "... the fact that the film so obviously projects itself as a continuation of the television series points up its problem: that because it trades on existing audience familiarity, and takes their sympathy for the characters as a given, it is incapable of being anything more." What the hell is he talking about? Of course the film is a continuation (but how on Earth would you know, Mr Nicholas, by your own admission you've never seen an episode!); would you prefer it if the characters acted in a non-characteristic way? More to the point, how would you know if they were? These characters have developed over the years to become more of a 'soap opera in space'. Their interactions and relationships are understood by the people who have watched the series from the beginning (back to the trilogy reference) and this film brings together many elements and unanswered questions on the silver screen. This is called character development. His complaint that the

From **Susan Booth**
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As a mild-mannered Confabulation attendee, may I point out to Jim Trash that there was a panel on *Babylon 5* (the sf TV series for people who loathe TV sci-fi) and that it was one of the best attended of the convention. So much for 'Sucking Growth' fandom. I wish I'd been there to point out that you'd have to count fanish fanzines as one of the worst of the sucking growths in terms of the numbers who participate, their relationship to sf and their lack of impact on the rest of fandom. I was, however, at Wincon and can report that Spinrad's was a minority view there and yes, Jim, there are actually a great many people who think Follycon was the best Eastercon ever. I'd vote for Contrivance or Channelfest myself. If you really want to hear bitching, try mentioning Speculation. With programming, the measure of its success is how many people attend. Follycon's programme was very well attended. I've also noticed that the people who complain about too much programming are generally those who attend very little of it whether it's there or not.

Other aspects of the Eastercon reports are more worrying and raise serious issues for con-going fans about how we are perceived — and incidentally how we wish to be perceived. Some are easily remedied: all Progress Report writers should have a checklist of important details to include, including when the convention will open each day! Another example would be the last Evolution PR which failed to include the dates the convention is to take

place. (Yes of course it's over Easter, but we shouldn't need to have to check in our diaries to find when Easter falls next year.)

Both reports are by fans who do not attend conventions regularly, and John Ollis in particular appears to have found real difficulty in integrating into the con-going community. It is tempting to blame this on a lack of understanding on his part about the nature of conventions (parties run by con-going fans for other con-going fans to have fun) and their attendees (for the most part an introverted bunch who are over-compensating like mad). I know it must seem to newcomers that everyone else knows everyone else, but this is simply not true. I've been going to cons since 79 and knew maybe 10% of the Confabulation attendees reasonably well, another 10% by sight and name and another 15% in a vague sort of way by sight. I don't think I'm alone in this. Unless you have NEO stencilled on your forehead or tell me I can't know that I have to be specially nice to you because this is your first time.

True as all this may be, it still remains that John's con report suggests that some new fans felt excluded at the Eastercon, which in most years is the only convention where the sf fanish sub-sets (gaming, filk, fanzine, computing, film, literary, conrunning, costumeing etc.) come together, and as such is to be especially valued as a symbol of fanish unity.

What fandom has to decide is whether it cares that some people felt excluded, whether we should leave them to learn to fit in of their own accord and go away if they can't, or whether we ought to do something about helping them.

I do not have an answer. I could give advice

subplot involving Data struggling to understand human emotions is a standby is unacceptable. For as our society changes, so our emotions alter to different aspects of our lives. Therefore, as technology advances, society adapts, making Data's quest never-ending, much like our own as human beings. Furthermore, Data's innocent quest throughout the last seven years has brought the audience many amusing and often revealing observations of the human condition (as have observations by aliens such as Worf the Klingon, and Q the omnipotent), many we all take for granted. Is this not what sf does best? Often I have seen an episode with friends (some of whom are not sf fans) and watched them smile with recognition. Data's dialogue is much like my four year old daughter's comments on life from time to time. Clear minded and innocent.

Secondly, his description of the Nexus as "unexplained daftness, described as a place of great joy, which you won't want to leave." Unexplained daftness? This unexplained daftness is a mainstay of literary sf, a sub-genre anyone writing a review for a magazine should be aware of. Utopia. Many novels were written on the subject. H. G. Wells wrote three, many more about. Utopia meaning nowhere (Nexusque, huh?), extends to Dystopia, where individuals lose everything they hold close to their hearts and dignity and the lack of virtue. This seems to ring true in *Generations*, as we see Kirk realising his Dystopian mistakes and making amends.

Thirdly, Mr Nicholas seems to think the fundamental flaw of *Star Trek* is "its thoroughgoing and quite implausible decency." Crap. This is just one of the reasons it's so popular. If the show was full of prats and arseholes then I doubt it would have run for a year, let alone seven.

All this aside, I think Mr Nicholas is missing the point. Entertainment. *Star Trek*, for all its weaknesses (and there are some) is entertaining, and most certainly the series as a whole can be viewed as an entire journey exploring not only a tiny fraction of our galaxy, but most importantly the actions, interactions and reactions of human beings in a futuristic society. After all, again, isn't that what sf is all about?

Do yourself and us a favour Mr Nicholas: save up, buy yourself a video recorder and hire twenty or so *Next Generation* tapes. Sit comfortably and observe. Then comment. For if this film is taken in context, then I think the word "perfunctory" used to describe it would be taken back. Perhaps on reflection you may use the word to describe your review, along with adjectives such as slipshod, superficial and offhand.

As for Geoff Cowie's column 'SF and Fantasy on Video'. Perhaps the name of the column should be changed to 'New Japanese Much of the Same Anime on Video'. Come on Geoff, you're not going to tell me these products are the only worthwhile sf tapes on the market at the moment. Look closely at the title of your column. Were the reviews of *The X-Files*, *Babylon 5*, *The Avengers*, *Dr Who*, *Red Dwarf*, *Superman*...? For the last three issues of *Matrix*, all you have reviewed are these Japanese titles. Change the CD! ☹

[In the last issue M. J. Simpson also criticised Joseph for his review of *Timecop*. Joseph responds, to Sime first.]

From **Joseph Nicholas**
15 Janson Road
South Tottenham, London
N15 4JU

I appreciate the responses to my film reviews, irrespective of their negativity, since they do at least demonstrate that someone other than Chris is reading them. But in his response to my review of *Timecop*, M. J. Simp-

son unfortunately confuses the plot—that is, the structure: how things fit together; the bones, if you like—with its realisation—the flesh which gives the story life. The plot is fully worked out, with no unresolved time-lines; it's the inconsistencies of its realisation that I regretted, and Simpson's apparent disagreement with me is notable for (as he himself acknowledges) repeating some of my own criticisms. Although he suggests that the timecopers don't notice they're in a different timeline when they return to the future, my impression—although his face is so expressionless that it has to be inferred from the dialogue—was that the van Damme character was aware of the changes; the people living in that future, however, will be a product of that changed past and will not therefore be aware of any alterations.

As to Howard Watts's diatribe about my review of *Star Trek: Generations*, may Heaven preserve us from the taking of offence which runs for longer than the alleged offence itself. Watts is clearly a deep-deyed *Star Trek: The Next Generation* fan who can't stand to see anything negative said about it. His overwrought argument about Kirk returning from dystopia to save the Enterprise utopia is particularly risible, and although he may consider that Data's observations of human behaviour reflect the "clear minded and innocent" remarks of his four-year-old daughter, this strikes me as more an indictment of the producers' low expectations of the target audience's intellectual level than the praise he thinks it is. Is this why *Next Generation* fans are reportedly so hostile to *Babylon 5*: because it deals with adult political concerns rather than the manufactured simplicities of the *Star Trek* universe? ☹

[One of my favourite memories of this year's Eastercon was SF Foundation supreme Andy Sawyer on a chair in the bar, book on his lap, surrounded by wide-eyed fans sitting cross-legged on the floor as he read them a story. But one of them is in big trouble...]

From **Andy Sawyer**
asawyer@liverpool.ac.uk

I enjoyed Jim Trash's piece on Eastercon but am saddened to find out that Young Master Trash does not pay attention.

I was shocked to discover that he is under the misapprehension that Susie Sauer comes from Saturn.

Could you please instruct him to write out for me 100 times "Susie Sauer comes from the planet Venus." Moreover I am shocked at the double entendres he has apparently unearthed in this charming and uplifting story.

Wait until we have the next episode at Intersection. ☹

From **Jim Trash**
jim@scream.demon.co.uk

Gosh!

What a meaty one you presented us with in May. [I see what Andy means.—Chris] 'twas stuffed to the gills with all manner of delightful bits and pieces for us to savour. Possibly it was even a little overstuffed with the font size being reduced so much that surely the mass will cause *Matrix* to collapse into itself and become a black hole. More pages or severe cutting please or alternatively can you supply us with a BSFA magnifying glass?

Gripe number two is a request for a more substantial editorial in place of the self-effacing snippets you've given us these last two issues. It may be wonderfully noble to step aside and allow more space for the contributors but a magazine such as this definitely needs a strong identity of its own, and the editor plays a central role in forming and maintaining that identity. This applies doubly so to *Vector* which has no editorial at all. Where is Catie, is she still in there?

Many congratulations on your choice of zine reviewers Chris. Every single one you've commissioned has been a delight to read, so also a big thanks to Jackie McRobert, Simon Ounsley and Nigel E. Richardson. Who's next Chris, what about Joseph Nicholas? ☹

[The previous two letters came by email. I find the net invaluable in putting *Matrix* together, but not everybody likes all this new-fangled technology...]

From **Antony "Doppelgänger" Shepherd**
Flat C, 39 Brindhurst Rd.
South Croydon, Surrey
CR2 7EF

On opening the latest issue of *Matrix*, I was overwhelmed with relief to find that there wasn't another bloody two page article on the Internet. This is partly a comment on the previous issue which I failed to get off in time. There are plenty of magazines for that kind of thing without reading about it in *Matrix*. Some net users seem to believe that everybody who is anybody is on the net, and those who aren't aren't worth speaking to. It's a kind of *partheid*. Luckily the net-saddos will have to find somewhere else to play nice as the Internet is taken over by business interests and might actually become useful. Rupert Murdoch, if he wanted, could become the leading network provider in the UK and even the world. He could call it Sky-Net.

On to other things. I must take issue with Joseph Nicholas's review of *Star Trek: Generations*. Has this man not seen any of the previous *Trek* movies? Is he naive enough to believe that just because the NCC 1701D Enterprise has been destroyed that this scuppers future *ST: TNG* movies? We should be so lucky!

Finally, may I applaud Brian Stableford on his views about the Best Music Hugo. Surely the phrases "Best Music" and "Filk" are mutually exclusive? Hey, the phrases "Music" and "Filk" are exclusive. The phrase "Filk Music" is an oxymoron, and "Best Filk Song" can only be a euphemism for "The Filk song least likely to make you throw up". If there has to be a Hugo given to the abhorrent perpetrators of tuneless garbage (i.e. Filk singers) then let it be a separate filk award. Let there be a proper Best Music award for real music.

PS: Netters take note. It is quite possible to be ironic and funny without resorting to idiotic colon, dash, bracket combinations. ☹

[The abandonment of the Best Music Hugo perhaps makes this discussion moot, but filk certainly arouses strong emotions. Here's the other side...]

From **Nigel Parsons**
56 Fairfield Avenue
Victoria Park, Cardiff
CF5 1BS

I was first incensed, and, later, slightly annoyed, by Brian Stableford's view of the one-off Hugo for 'Best Music'. It seems likely that his assumption is right, and most nominations will be for 'filk' music. Is this such a bad thing?

The suggestions Brian puts forward are all, I imagine, eligible and worthy contenders. But if they have sprung from an interest in, and reading of, their base material, then are they not also 'filk'?

Music is a matter of taste, and to write off "farical filksongs" (those who know the works of Brian Rix, Eric Sykes etc., might deem this 'high praise') in favour of professionally produced (cash motivated?) music is a questionable action.

Under a new regime we could reduce the number of awards, and see how 'Fan Artists' fare against 'Professional Artists'. 'Fanazines' even a make a showing against 'Semi-prozines'? Oh for the simple life.

Time will tell as to what gets short-listed. However, a final thought for Brian on the value (if any) of filk. After hearing Valerie Housden

perform one of her 'haunting melodies', "Leilah's Song", I took the opportunity to buy the book on which it was based (*Empire of Fear*). I fully enjoyed the book, but without the film it would have passed me by. ☒

[*Empire of Fear is, of course, by Brian Stableford.*]

From John Orm

3 Outlands Avenue
Bar Hill, Cambridge
CB3 8EQ

Just a few lines about a couple of things. First, the reviews: excellent, but are all the sf and fantasy videos Japanese anime? Isn't it possible to review some videos with people in them, rather than cartoon characters?

Looking through the cinematic coming attractions I came across two items which I would hardly call sf or fantasy. *Congo* might be written by Michael Crichton, but so was *Raid Sun*, or something like that; neither would I call *Die Hard 3* sf, just an action thriller.

Now, on to something completely different. Is it possible to have membership cards? I tend to lose pieces of paper with my number on. It wouldn't be difficult, or expensive, to have slim cards made the same size as a credit card, which would fit in a wallet or purse. So, how about it?

Lots of questions there. Any answers? ☒

[1. More video reviews coming soon to a Matrix near you. 2. OK: I should have said, 'films which might be of interest to Matrix readers'. But 'sf and fantasy' was shorter. 3. Membership cards in the pipeline. — Chris]

From John Ollis
51 Belmont Road
Luton
LU1 1LL

Yippee! I've won another *Matrix* competition. Of course, the important thing is to take part, as it used to be in the Olympic Games; nevertheless the thought of that crisp crackly book—token shortly to be in my hot little hands makes my mouth water. With every book-token comes Roger Robinson's autograph, worth every bit of 10p to the right customer.

This letter is not about Roger's puzzles, however. It is a moan about the scandalous price of books. The token bought one paperback back in 1992. It doesn't now; about three-quarters of a book, I should say.

Comparing the prices of paperbacks and hardbacks in the early sixties which was when I could first afford to buy any I see that paperbacks were the equivalent of 12.5 to 15p and hardbacks 62.5p to £1, so a paperback was at worst 25% of the cost of a hardback. Now it is more like 50%. Why are they so expensive? Can the cost be justified, or are customers being exploited? I don't know whether sales are down generally, but since 1989 I've only bought three new paperbacks; I can only afford them now courtesy of Roger. Before I used to buy 20-30 per year. Worse, they are now incredibly flimsy — they used not to be — you've virtually only to pick one up to fall to it. ☒

From Helen McGrandles
5 Longhill Terrace
Rothsay, Isle of Bute, Scotland
PA20 0JU

Having been fascinated with space flight and aliens since I first saw the original *Flash Gordon* in the cinema, I really believed, and still do, that we are not alone.

As years marched on I never lost the curiosity of other worlds; now a pensioner and female (hope this does not disbar me) I tried to read up on whatever was available. Unable to afford new books as they come out, I am a good browser through the three charity shops on the island; also we have auctions once a month. I made a successful bid for a shelf of twenty books for £3. Sixteen of these were by Isaac Asimov, in new condition.

I have been very impressed by the kindness of people. I am at present working on two space novels, and required certain information. I wrote to NASA headquarters and they sent back a large package of brochures on all aspects of space flight, and some lovely pictures. I was overwhelmed, they certainly will be a help.

I am thoroughly enjoying my magazine, keep up the good work. ☒

[Thank you. No-one is ever disbarred.]

Letters and emails were also received from: **Andrew Boulton**; **Ian Brooks**; **David Cerdoy** (apologies if this name is wrong; the signature was a little hard to read); **Vine Clarke**; **Benedict Cullum**; **Bernard M. Earp**; **Dave Harbud**; **Neil Mackie**; **Joseph Nicholas** (again); **Mark Ogier**; **John Ollis** (again); **John Orm** (again); **Harry Payne**; **Stephen Payne**; **Colette Reap**; **Jilly Reed**; **Liz Sourbut**; **Brian Stableford**; **Michael W. Stone**; **John Whitbourn**; and **Martin Wilson**. Thanks to all!

➤ SFX . . . and others, page 8

SFX does not carry fiction, but — as well as *Interzone*, of course — there's no shortage of zines which do. Many are small-press publications and produced for love, not money, but the quality often belies this.

Colustrates: Poems by Storm Constantine

40pp, illustrated, signed and limited to 300 copies; £3.50 inc. postage. This contains 20 poems, is illustrated by five artists including Storm herself, and has an introduction by leading sf critic K. V. Bailey.

Contact: Inception, Steve Jeffery & Vikki Lee France, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon., OX5 2XA

Initiation: A Selection of New Writing

A5, B&W throughout, 56pp; unpriced (I think I paid £2.00 for it). "Initiation is a postal writers' workshop, providing a forum for writers to comment on one another's work. This anthology contains a selection of submissions from the last three years." Stories, poems and drabbles from Elinor Dredota, Kevin McVeigh, Steve Jeffery, Tanya Brown and others. Illustrations by Steve Jeffery. Most contributions seem to be fantasy, and have an erotic flavour.

Contact the administrator: John Madracki, 17 Goldrill Avenue, Brightmet, Bolton, Lancs., BL2 5NJ

Scheherazade

A5, laminated foil cover, 40pp; £2.50 per issue, £8.50 for four. "The magazine of fantasy, science fiction and Gothic romance," edited by Elizabeth Counihan. Issue 11 of this very nicely produced and printed zine has fiction by Brian Stableford, Jane Gaskell, Lawrence Dyer and others, another Colin Greenland interview (this time by Tim Concannon), and art by Noel Bateman, Brian Combe, Mark Concannon and Margaret Theakston. Combe has an article about famous clowns in fantasy and sf (Zorro, Dracula and Ming the Merciless amongst them), and Gaskell's contribution is a serialised graphic novel. The letter page includes an accolade from Gene Wolfe. A friendly and elegant zine, recommended.

Contact: Scheherazade, St Ives, Maypole Rd., East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 1HL

Substance. Issue 2, Spring 1995

A4, colour cover, 56pp; £2.50. A quite beautifully produced and illustrated sf magazine, edited by Pat Beardsley. Stories by Rod Slatter, Jessica Palmer, Chris Kenworthy, Hick Turnbull, Lorin Emery, Tim Nickels, D. F. Lewis, Colin P. Davies and Sue Thomason. Colin Greenland interview by Sally Ann Melia. Illustrations by Rick Dawson and Alan Casey. The production values of this magazine are

stunningly good; although all the interior artwork is black and white the reproduction is superb, and puts many professionally produced magazines to shame. Contact: 16 Blenheim Gardens, Denvilles, Havant, Hants PO9 2PN

BOOK CATALOGUES

Richard G. Lewis Books

A5, 16pp

Sf, fantasy and horror hardbacks, many signed. Lots of Philip E. High, Joe R. Lansdale, all reasonably priced.

Contact: Richard G. Lewis, 21 Brewster Rd., London, E10 6RG or phone 0181 556 2800 fax 0171 387 5233

Fantasy Centre

A5.

This enthusiastic and friendly (though anonymously written) catalogue has sf and fantasy hardbacks, paperbacks, art books, magazines, and an excellent non-fiction section with some hard-to-get critical and reference works. Well annotated. Slightly more expensive than some, but they are clearly experts in the field. The Fantasy Centre is a shop and callers are welcome; there's also a pre-Worldcon sale of hardbacks being held there until the end of August.

Contact: Fantasy Centre, 157 Holloway Rd., London, N7 8LX or phone/fax 0171 607 9433

Cold Tonnage Books

A5

Specialist sf, fantasy and horror mail-order book dealer, run by the knowledgeable and helpful Andy Richards. The neat bimonthly catalogue lists mostly hardbacks, both new and old, and is fully annotated; prices are reasonable, with many first editions at £10-£15. Andy also keeps a large selection of second-hand stock at the 'Murder One' bookshop, 71-73 Charing Cross Road, London. Factoid: If you own a first edition of Thomas Disch's *The Genocides* (Whiting & Wheaton, 1967) hold on to it! It's very rare, and Andy is pricing it at £325. Contact: Cold Tonnage Books, 22 Kings Lane, Windlesham, Surrey GU20 6JQ or phone 01276 475388 fax 01276 451367

Violet Books

A5, 16pp.

"For the literate Bohemian." Unusual US-based dealer in *fin de siècle* material, weird tales, ghost stories, and anything decadent and bizarre.

Contact: Jessica Amanda Salmonson, PO Box 20610, Seattle, Washington 98102 or phone (206) 726-5924 fax 206-324-3420

— Chris Terran

X-Rated

**Joseph
Nicholas**
investigates

THE



FILES

THE *X-FILES* is a series made for Rupert Murdoch's 20th Century Fox television company, starring David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson as two FBI agents, Fox "Spooky" Mulder and Dana Scully, who investigate cases where ordinary detective work has failed and paranormal phenomena may be involved. The series was developed by scriptwriter Chris Carter, is shot in British Columbia with various suburbs of Vancouver and its forest environs standing in for a variety of US locations, and is loosely based on the FBI's own "X-Files", the name it gives to criminal cases which it has not been able to solve.

Those are the facts — but nobody watches *The X-Files* for factual reasons, or because they think they might be provided with a semi-factual explanation of why the FBI's cases have remained unsolved. Taken at face value, indeed, the premise of the series is ridiculous — secret cloning experiments conducted by the US government, crashed UFOs kept for research purposes by the Air Force, mutants who can slither through pipes and hibernate for fifty years at a time, bodies in cryogenic storage sending telepathic messages to their former colleagues, sentient computers taking over buildings and killing their designers... scenarios common, in other words, to the pulpier sort of science fiction: the kind of thing we might have enthused over when we first encountered the genre, but are now too embarrassed to put on the same shelves with our Ballards and Priests (or, if you're me, Austens and Conrads).

One of the great strengths of *The X-Files*, however, is its refusal to sensationalise its material. On the contrary, everything is always underplayed, presented in an austere "so what" manner which contributes immensely to the suspension of disbelief so necessary to each story. The script, the acting, the dull colour of the clothes the characters wear, the moody lighting (particularly the moody lighting — the designer is probably a big fan of Orson Welles's *The Third Man*), the humdrum sets (and especially the fact that all the outdoor scenes seem to take place just after a rainstorm): all are deliberately downbeat, establishing a strong sense of naturalness which makes the odd events investigated by Mulder and Scully appear more credible — indeed, a sense of naturalness which makes these odd events seem even more intrusive, even more threatening. As in all the best detective stories, it is Mulder's and Scully's task to blunt their threat and restore the natural order they have disrupted.

This leads to one of the other great strengths of the series: the fact that very little is resolved. The plot of each episode may appear self-contained, with a beginning, a middle and an end, but there is always a sense of a larger world beyond, of a different set of characters with their own priorities and questions which may be (and often are) inimical to Mulder's and Scully's attempts to understand the phenomena which confront them. This is never more so than in those episodes which involve UFOs, where everyone seems to be conspiring against everyone else and the level of paranoia verges on the completely delirious.

Which is probably the real reason why the series is so successful. No matter how crucial the naturalness of its setting and the non-resolution of its stories, *The X-Files* has to be read off sociologically if it is to be properly understood.

The series springs directly from the isolationism of which the USA is often accused, and which — despite post-World War Two claims to global leadership — has in fact been one of the chief characteristics of its historical trajectory. It may be that future generations will regard the international adventurism of the past fifty years as an aberration, but what can be said with certainty about the USA's isolationist tendency is that it inevitably engenders suspicion about the rest of the world — and the stronger the isolationist trend, as it has been since the effective end of the Cold War in 1991, the shorter the step from suspicion to paranoia. (One has only to recall the McCarthyite hysteria about the inherently communist nature of the UN during the late forties / early fifties to realise just how paranoid.) The natural counterpart of isolationism is the desire to be self-reliant, which ties neatly in to the frontier myths on which much of the USA's view of itself is based. And while that frontier mythos is about pioneering the wilderness, it also has elements of escaping from the reach of the federal government — which at its most extreme can lead, as we saw in April's bomb attack on a federal government building in Oklahoma by the so-called Michigan Militia, to paranoia about the government's intentions towards its own citizens.

All the UFO episodes partake of this paranoia — the feeling that the government is lying about its contacts with aliens, that there are things it wishes to conceal, that there is a secret government within the public government which really orchestrates the nation's affairs; that while truth can set you free, there are people in power who will do anything they can to keep it from you. This paranoia surfaced early, in the second episode to be networked by BBC2 in October 1994, when Mulder broke into a secret USAF base which was reputed to be testing UFO technology recovered from the 1949 "Roswell Incident" in New Mexico — and, having seen what he thought was a UFO flown by USAF test pilots, was captured and was about to have his brain operated on to erase his memory of the sighting when he was rescued by Scully. "Did you see a UFO?" she asked him as they drove away. "I'm not sure," he replied — although we knew he'd been wheeled past a series of strange shapes shrouded in polythene and illuminated by the bright white light typical of all close encounters. "Have we been visited by aliens?" asked Mulder later. "My boy," said his unnamed Deep Throat contact, "they've been here for a very long time."



Mulder's Deep Throat contact with the secret government became ever more important later in the series — although, such is the inconsistent nature of US television, their relationship was briefly switched in a middle episode, when the Bureau attempted to fire Mulder and Deep Throat prevented it: "You keep your friends close, but you keep your enemies closer still," he said. But, in the paranoia stakes, nothing beats the final episode of the first series, in which a corpse was recovered with an anomalous six DNA pairs, Mulder's investigation of the clandestine research project which had introduced the two additional pairs into the human genome was thwarted by unknown agents, the hospital consultant who identified them was killed in mysterious circumstances, Scully had to use a forged code to enter a secret government laboratory to kidnap the alien foetus from which the two extra pairs had been taken, and the Deep Throat character (he never did have a name) was assassinated as he handed over the dead alien foetus in exchange for Mulder. I was on the edge of my seat for all but the first five or ten minutes (as, no doubt, was every other fan of the series).

Having enthused about it at such length, however, I should enter the inevitable caveats. The principal one is that it shares the same faults as many US series; that unlike (say) *Twin Peaks* there is no overarching plot, and — apart from a few and last — the episodes have been made to be shown in any order. In consequence, the characters never seem to learn anything from week to week, about either the world around them or each other — in particular, Scully has been assigned to keep a sceptical eye on Mulder, and continues not to believe him despite his suppositions being proved right week after week. In addition, in the real world Mulder's success rate would have brought him to the attention of his superiors more firmly than it does; and those superiors would probably have arranged not just to fire him but to have the secret government rub him out altogether.

But one only has to compare *The X-Files* with some of the other series on offer to realise how superior it can be in spite of these inconsistencies and irritations. Currently showing on BBC2, for example, is the revived *The Outer Limits*, modelled closely on the famous anthology series of the fifties and sixties and apparently striving for the same naturalness of setting and understated acting as *The X-Files* — the actors in particular are scarcely household names. Against this, however, has to be set the introduction copied wholesale from the original series — "There is nothing wrong with your television... we control the vertical hold..." — which might have been fine in the days of steam-powered black-and-white broadcasts when merely looking at the set was sufficient to scramble the broadcasts, but in the context of today's solid state circuitry is quite ridiculous; and the plonking, one-dimensional moralising with which each story is introduced and capped, attempting to make it seem more profound than it is. And stories which cop out at their denouement — in one, long-lived ethereal alien parasites came openly to Earth, seeking dead bodies which they could re-animate and inhabit, and having been allowed to plunder selected graveyards began engaging in suspiciously conspiratorial behaviour. Were they plotting to exterminate the human species altogether? No: they wanted to recreate a bit of their own lost world in a hangar, then become fully human, and produce human children, and die like humans. Tedious.

But the second series of *The X-Files* will be back on BBC2 in the autumn. With Deep Throat dead and Mulder and Scully formally re-assigned to other duties, I can't quite see how they can continue to investigate crashed UFOs without running immediately afoul of the secret government, but I'm sure there'll be an explanation somewhere in the first couple of episodes. Those who've already seen it on the Sky satellite channel can let me discover it for myself.

— Joseph Nicholas

ROS WELL

Reviewed by Mark Ogier

ROS WELL. Directed by Jeremy Kagan. Cert. 12. Running time 99 minutes.

So, the first of the two new movies about Roswell arrives on video, and despite it being a TV movie and thus suffering from the budgetary restrictions of the format, it seems on the surface to be a genuine attempt to piece together all the known facts about the Roswell incident into a coherent whole. But, as is the way of such films, there is a fictional element in here that, in my opinion, gets in the way of the truth — or what might be the truth...

The film opens at a reunion of the 509 Bomb Group of the United States Army, which had been stationed at Roswell at the time of the incident. The reunion is attended by Major Jesse Marcel who is teased by his former colleagues about the big mistake he made back in 1947, when he went on record as stating that a flying saucer had crashed, although later it allegedly turned out to be a weather balloon.

We flashback to 1947, when Marcel is called to investigate an apparent downed aircraft at a ranch. Marcel and Sherman Carson (another officer at the base) find a mass of twisted metal scattered over a wide area. Marcel notes that the metal is unusually light, and while some of it resembles tin foil, efforts to crease it are fruitless (simple but effective SFX of Marcel folding the "foil" and it flattening itself out). The men return to the base to report their findings, only to discover that a press release has been issued reporting the finding of a crashed "flying disc." I won't go into swathes of detail on the rest of the film, but basically it's a mix of flashback and "present day" (probably late 1970s or early 1980s) with Marcel using the reunion as a means of talking to people who might have seen more of the wreckage than he did. He learns of the

second crash site, and of the discovery of alien bodies, and talks to one man who claims that one of the bodies was alive and communicated with the then presidential press secretary, telling him that more aliens were on the way. Most of this latter information is imparted by a character called Townsend (Martin Sheen), who pops up a bit like *The X-Files*'s Deep Throat character at the end of the film, to give Marcel information to help his search and help the exposition along.

The film is a talky one, which will not appeal to those expecting CE3K type special effects, but it's clear that the makers wanted to create an atmosphere of intrigue, rather than going for flashy FX and focusing on the aliens. It is a "one man's quest" affair, with Marcel doggedly pursuing his investigation. My problem is with the bits that the film makers have invented to add to the drama. Take the infamous press conference. In the film, it is portrayed with Marcel being forced to display bits of a weather balloon, even though he knows the wreckage he saw was different. Yet according to the interview with Marcel in *The Roswell Incident* (Berlitz), the material he showed to the press was some from the crash — the press weren't allowed too close, and were not shown more than a few bits of tin-foil-like substance. It was only later, without Marcel present, that the bits of weather balloon were shown. I have not read anything to suggest that Marcel was publicly derided by his seniors for having made a silly mistake.

Frankly, I find it hard to believe that even a sincere officer would stand by and watch while his reputation is dragged through the mire. All he had to do was disagree with the officers in front of the press. He could have been booted out of the army, but at least the truth would have come out. Also, I find it hard to believe that he would not have lied about the bit of wreckage he gave to his

son, to make sure he had some hard proof for later years.

As for the alien bodies — one of which was still alive — the film has Marcel interviewing a pilot who flew over this second crash site, and then hearing second hand that someone had actually seen the bodies during autopsy, when one of them moved. The story of the live alien's remaining days, and the guff about the press secretary, appears to be inspired by rumours, and largely fictitious. The film suggests that press secretary James Haggerty wrote a diary of the events which has never been released, and committed suicide rather than live with his knowledge. I can find no reference to this in the books I have.

One point I found particularly interesting was how, almost in deference to the modern idea that perhaps even the most advanced aliens would not be able to travel vast distances of space, Sheen's character puts forward the idea that the aliens might come from a parallel universe.

The film concludes on a note of pathos, with the old Marcel standing in the middle of the crash site, looking for any small bits of wreckage that might have been missed. The end captions state that his story was "ignored by the media" (I wasn't aware that he had told his story, or if he had it certainly wasn't the one we had just seen on film) and that he died in 1986.

But despite the inconsistencies with the evidence (the evidence I am aware of, that is), the film will appeal to anyone with an interest in the UFO phenomena in general and Roswell in particular. With the allegedly authentic footage of Roswell doing the rounds, and the possibility of a big budget version involving Stephen Spielberg, it seems that interest in Roswell is at all time high.

— Mark Ogier

VIDEO
REVIEW

Cheaper, Faster — Better?



The Future of America in Space

Stephen Baxter



YOU COULD BE FORGIVEN for thinking there is no American space program any more, so low is its public profile. But the impression is a false one. No one is going to the Moon, but there is more American activity in space today than ever before. In 1994 American astronauts clocked up 469 days in space: in one year, this beats by 20% the total achieved in the first decade of US spaceflight — that is, *all* manned flights from John Glenn through to Apollo 17. But America's reasons for going into space have changed, and so have the influences which are shaping its program.

The US went into space for geopolitical motives. The first space programmes were spawned out of the Cold War. Orbital exploits enabled the Soviet Union to establish a new image for itself as an advanced technological nation capable of competing with the Americans; the US needed to respond in like manner to repair the damage and re-establish itself as the world's leading technocracy.

Now, the world looks very different. The USSR has collapsed, and so the rules of the geopolitical game have changed. As a result, we are going to see in the near future a remarkable convergence of the once-competing American and Russian manned space programmes.

In December 1993 the Russians were formally invited to join the International Space Station project, which at that time included the US, Canada, Japan, and members of the European Space Agency. The new project will have three phases. Phase 1 will involve rendezvous missions of the Shuttle and the existing Mir space station, flights which are already underway. In Phases 2 and 3, a new International Space Station will be constructed and operated. The Russians will attach a second-generation Mir module to a basic Space Station support beam. Other modules will be supplied by the US, Japan and Europe. The Russians will also provide a 'space tug' to give the Station propulsion, guidance and attitude control, and an 'assured crew return vehicle', a simple rescue ship probably based on Soyuz. The facility will need 19 Shuttle launches and 12 Russian booster launches; the Station should be available for limited research in 1997 and permanent occupancy in 2001.

That's the plan, anyhow. But why should we build a Space Station at all?

The current scheme is a remote descendant of a proposal accepted by President Reagan in 1984. Reagan's motivation was geopolitical, as ever; the proposal was a show of US leadership at a time of belligerence towards the Soviets, a step towards the commercial development of space — and, incidentally, a guarantee of thousands of US aerospace jobs. The scientific objectives were not well thought out, by comparison.

But in the Gorbachev era, as relations with the Soviets began to improve, the geopolitical justification went away, and the Space Station became just another high-cost super-science boondoggle, one of the many vying for funding in Congress.

The latest scheme is a smart reworking of those earlier proposals; by making the Station a showcase of cooperation with the Russians, the Clinton administration has introduced a new *raison d'être* for the project. But international cooperation is actually, of course, just another geopolitical goal, shaped for our times, and a remarkably complete inversion of the Station's original Cold War justification! In the best tradition of the space programme, the emphasis is still on hardware and politics, not

needs and uses: in December 1994, the General Accounting Office, Congress's investigative arm, pointed out that NASA's budget was so stretched by the Space Station project that NASA had only a third of the researchers it needed to achieve the Station's scientific goals.

Still, the Phase 1 Shuttle-Mir flights hold a lot of interest in themselves. We can expect more spectacular TV images from as many as ten such flights, with the winged Shuttle flying round the shining, complex Mir.

And the flights represent a remarkable convergence of technological generations. The Mir is a comparative baby, with its first module being launched in 1986. The Shuttle's first flight was in 1981. The Soyuz, which the Russians still use as their basic orbital ferry, flew before the first Apollo, back in 1967 — and its launch vehicle is an A-class design which is a variant of a Korolev ICBM which first launched Sputnik 1 in 1957!

*

In the Cold-Warrior days of Voshkod and Apollo, money was no object. But when the geopolitics goes away, cost becomes the deciding factor in shaping space programmes.

The Space Shuttle remains the world's most advanced spacecraft, and it is essential for building the International Space Station. But the Shuttle can't keep flying forever. It is a complex, ageing, unstable system, and if another Challenger disaster were to occur, NASA doesn't have the spare parts to assemble a replacement Orbiter.

Besides, the Shuttle has never fulfilled its design objectives. In 1972, in a climate of disillusion with space, President Nixon canned NASA's ambitious plans for a Space Station and flights to the Moon and Mars, in favour of working towards low-cost access to space. (Statutory plug: my novel-in-progress *ARES*, to be published by HarperCollins in 1996, looks at an alternative universe in which Nixon made a different choice) The idea was that by being reusable, with short, airliner-style turnaround times, the Shuttle should have soon recouped its development costs. In Nixon's elegant phrase, it should have 'routinized' spaceflight.

But the design, 1972 vintage, was ahead of its time, and compromised anyhow; NASA wanted a fully reusable system that would have cost more to develop but less to operate. Today it costs \$9,000 to orbit a kilogramme of payload in the Shuttle, and eighty days to turn around an Orbiter for a second flight. By comparison, the Russian expendable Proton system, technologically a lot less advanced, costs maybe a tenth of this per kilogramme.

So NASA is looking at proposals for a new system, a single-stage-to-orbit machine called the RLV — Reusable Launch Vehicle. The design goal is to reduce the orbital cost to a quarter of the Shuttle's, with a turnaround time of just seven days. Rockwell, the makers of the present Shuttle, are looking at a concept rather like the current Shuttle, not surprisingly, but without the need for the external fuel tank and strap-on boosters. Lockheed Martin are considering another vertical takeoff / horizontal landing design, but based on a more advanced lifting body with an aerospike engine. And McDonnell Douglas and Boeing may be working on a design based on the Delta Clipper, a vehicle which lands on its tail. Douglas have already built a demonstration prototype of the

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Later this year, one or two teams will be given the go-ahead to build small-scale prototypes — Advanced Technology Demonstrators — and in 1999 a decision will be made on which design to develop. The first flight is scheduled for 2004.

But will the RLV ever fly? Well, the upfront bill for the RLV, to fund the demonstrators, may be \$1 billion. That money has to be found. But the plan has some influential backers, including Newt Gingrich, the Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, well-known space enthusiast and peripatetic sci-fi writer. But the new Republicans are committed to reducing federal spending, so the shape of the development of the RLV will look very different from that of the Shuttle.

Gingrich wants NASA to take a back seat. NASA should do no more than specify the system, contract to buy the first few machines to assure funding, and then allow the consortium to build and operate more machines for commercial leasing.

NASA, in fact, is suffering a double whammy. In March this year, the Clinton administration — in an evident attempt to keep up with Republican budget-cutting — announced \$5 billion of cuts in NASA's funding, to be achieved by 2000. NASA must shed 55,000 jobs, and outsource launch and ground operations of the Space Shuttle to a private contractor.

So we are looking at a dramatically different rôle for NASA: it will become a mere customer, paying for payload space on the new Shuttle. And what a poignant, almost Ballardian moment it will be when NASA is forced to relinquish control of Cape Canaveral!



Meanwhile, just as NASA investment in space is declining in value, the Republicans want to see an expansion of commercial and military ventures in space.

Military space developments are part of the overall Republican scheme, with reductions in domestic spending to fund military preparedness. The US Space Command — a Strangelove-ish body which oversees all US military space programmes — is promoting 'knowledge warfare': new generations of reconnaissance spy satellites, and new anti-satellite weapons capable of gouging out the eyes of the enemy. This development in itself may actually be welcomed; it seems that spy satellites, by increasing awareness, end to have a stabilising effect on international relations.

But at the same time, more ominously, the Republicans have talked of resurrecting elements of Reagan's 'Star Wars' programme (the Strategic Defense Initiative). This was largely discarded by Clinton because of insurmountable technical problems, faked test results, and a lack of a credible military threat after the end of the Cold War. But proponents say that the Gulf War experience justifies a theatre defence capability, while the so-called 'Chinese scenario' — the threat of a small-scale surprise nuclear attack — argues for a limited capability to protect the continental United States, or at least its strategic assets. Such a system could be scaled up later to a full Pournelle-ish vision.

The Republican schemes have their opponents, not least in the White House, and opposition may be expected from the squeezed middle classes if the benefits of military developments in a time of peace appear dubious.

The commercial possibilities of spaceflight, meanwhile, continue to expand. American engineers have proposed

elaborate constellations of communications satellites — 840 of them in one scheme — to enable instant access between any two points on Earth with mobile phones. More advanced applications for such systems could include the guidance of driverless cars. Satellites could also be used to transmit power around the globe. A further proposal — more controversial — is to dump nuclear waste in orbit. The cost of this, at perhaps \$500 million per tonne of plutonium, is, happily, probably prohibitive.

“
***you would pay to
drive the rover from
Earth using a virtual
reality system***
”

There are many schemes to open up space for entertainment. Luna Xorp, based in Virginia, wants to land a robot rover on the Moon at a cost of \$100 million: you would pay to drive the rover from Earth using a virtual reality system. And there are plans to build an orbital sports complex, with the costs kept to under \$1 billion — by comparison with perhaps \$20 billion for the International Space Station — by using primitive, Skylab-style technology. (Statutory cheap joke: the orbital stadium will, of course, be called 'Highbury II', because it will have no atmosphere . . .)



So is the future in space to be reduced to spy satellites and trivial commercial stunts?

Those of us old enough to remember Apollo have known a time when space travel meant more than this: when space was no less than a Clarke-ish dream of the future of mankind. And Mir cosmonauts have been reported as saying that a couple of months in Earth orbit is enough. After that, you want to go somewhere.

But where, and how?

All through the last couple of decades of low Earth orbit operations, visionaries within NASA and outside have kept working, at virtually zero budget, on proposals for manned missions to the Moon and Mars. The Case to [for?] Mars conferences have developed a mass of technical detail on how a Mars flight could be achieved. And NASA study teams have come up with ways to return to the Moon using revived Saturn V technology, and plans for modest 'first lunar outposts', tended by teams of four astronauts staying for up to six weeks at a time. There are even commercial justifications for going back to the Moon: for example helium-3, scarce on Earth but abundant on the Moon, could be shipped home to fuel nuclear fusion power stations.

Sadly it seems unlikely that any of these dreams are going to be realised any time soon. NASA's current administrator, Dan Goldin, believes a manned Mars mission could gain political backing if it could be built and launched within a decade at a cost of ten billion dollars. But projections based on our best current technology amount to several decades of development, and hundreds of billions of dollars.

However the cost equation may change, in surprising ways.

The most solid forecast I can make about the space programme is that astronauts will die, joining the ten Americans and four Soviets who have already lost their lives. And another Challenger would once more ground the ageing Shuttle fleet, perhaps for good. But perhaps we are inconsistent about the safety requirements of space flight.

The great expense of such craft as Cassini means fewer spacecraft eating up the available funds: NASA launched one thousand spacecraft over the decade 1985-1995, but only eleven of those left Earth orbit. With fewer missions there is a greater need to ensure success — more backup systems, more testing — all of which drives up costs still further. And when a mission does fail — like the Mars Observer, lost as it approached the planet in 1993 — a large hole is left in the overall programme.

Now NASA, under Dan Goldin, is trying to break this cycle with a new 'better-faster-cheaper' approach: a new generation of simple spacecraft built with modern, lightweight components. The craft will be so cheap and plentiful that if any one probe fails the hole will be comparatively small.

The low-cost, miniaturised approach has already been proven. Clementine, launched in 1994, was NASA's first probe to the Moon since Apollo. Clementine was actually a Star Wars technology test bed, with the science goals secondary; but because the NASA lunar exploration of the sixties was largely operational — concentrating on surveying landing sites for Apollo — Clementine could hardly help but make major discoveries. It found, for instance, the South Pole Aitken crater, the largest in the Solar System at 2,500km wide, caused by the impact of an object 200km across some four billion years ago... And all at a total cost of just \$80 million, compared to \$100 billion (at today's prices) for Apollo.

Looking ahead, NASA is planning cut-price missions to Mars to cover every launch opportunity — every two years — between now and 2005. This is part of the international 'Mars Global' programme, totalling 25 spacecraft in all. The Mars Global Surveyor, to be launched in November 1996, is an orbiter which will aerobrake to save fuel weight. The Surveyor carries all but two of the lost Observer's eight planned instruments, at a sixth of the costs. And in December 1996 the Mars Pathfinder will be launched. This is a direct-entry low cost lander, the first probe to land on Mars since Viking in the 1970s, and it will carry a ten-kilogramme 'Microver' vehicle.

This is an exciting and optimistic programme, a good response to the Observer disaster under tight — in fact, tightening — budget constraints. But elsewhere some fascinating projects are

still being lost. For example NASA planned a probe called the Pluto Fast Flyby, our first venture to that planet, but in November 1994 this was cancelled as too expensive.

(The new second-generation 'lightsat' spacecraft are, incidentally, attracting attention beyond America. Surrey Satellite Technology Limited, wholly-owned by Surrey University, is, believe it or not, Europe's leading lightsat manufacturer. SSTL systems have enabled countries like Chile, South Korea and Portugal to start up space programmes at a fraction of the expected costs. Now, SSTL is considering developing a British probe to reach the Moon, at a cost of perhaps £10 million. How wonderful it would be to see a British spacecraft reach lunar orbit, perhaps in Arthur Clarke's landmark year of 2001 — and exactly a century after the publication of Wells's *The First Men in the Moon*...)

*

The US space industry is maturing and fragmenting. The factors shaping today's space programme — social, political, economic, technical — are very different from those of the 1960s, which we have to regard as an abnormal period. NASA, an organisational and cultural relic of that remote age, continues to cast around for new rôles to play, and looks certain to keep shrinking in size and influence. While such projects as the International Space Station are still used by the government as geopolitical symbols, the programme as a whole is becoming significantly more military, commercial and utilitarian.

We may indeed have seen the last of the heroic explorations for some time. But perhaps we are on the verge of the establishment of a new space infrastructure, which may boost the world's economy in the 21st century. And, too, we may soon be witnessing the voyages of a new generation of robot explorers, travelling outwards to the Moon, Mars and beyond.

The American space programme of the future will certainly be 'faster' and 'cheaper' than in the past; it is inappropriate to assess whether it will be 'better'. It is now twenty-six years since Apollo 11, and we live in the future, and we must let go of our dreams of the past.

— Stephen Baxter

s f a n i m e g e o f f c o w i e

THIS COLUMN is devoted primarily to the vivid and exciting sf and fantasy animation coming from Japan. Some of you may live far from major cities and wonder, understandably, just how you can get to see these videos. Any sell-through video outlet should be able to order for you. You should find that they have a book listing all current video releases, along with the titles you can actually order. So if you don't see it on the shelves, ask. For popular titles, try your local rental shop.

Urusei Yatsura, Movie #6: Always My Darling. (Anime Projects, 77mins., subtitled, cert PG, £12.99)

For those not yet familiar with *Urusei Yatsura*, I'd better explain that this is a vast romantic sf comedy spanning comic books, TV episodes and six movies in which a lecherous youth, Ataru Moroboshi, and his friends suffer the visitations of various annoying aliens, mostly cute and female, and especially the delicious Lum, a green-haired alien girl who wears either school uniform or a tiger-skin bikini. Sound interesting yet? I just wish we could print some full-colour stills in *Matrix*; they say one picture is worth a thousand words! This is a masterpiece of sf comedy, inventive, vividly animated, packed with delightful characters, farcical, but wiser than it might at first seem. In this one Ataru is kidnapped by a space princess who needs him to retrieve a love potion from a temple in the northwestern end of the universe.

It does help to have seen some other *Urusei Yatsura* so you know who everyone is, but heck, don't expect me to write an impartial review of Movie #6; I saw it about four times in Japanese, and now I've got the subtitled tape I'm enjoying it all over again. If I had to choose a handful of anime tapes to take to a desert island, this might well be one of them.

Patlabor (Manga Video, 120 mins., cert PG, £13.99, subtitled special edition £19.99)

In the year 1999, mobile 'Labor' robots are extensively used for construction projects in the Tokyo metropolitan region. This poses

potential problems of law enforcement, so the police are given their own patrol robots, or Patlabors. However, the story mainly concerns the introduction of new software for an improved Labor operating system, software which turns out to contain a disastrous BABEL virus. A team including young policewoman Noa Izumi has to track down the source of the virus or neutralise it before it is triggered in most of the Labors in Tokyo. The subtitled movie, clearly scripted by computer buffs, is the most convincing and authentic-sounding computer-virus story I've yet encountered in any medium. This movie really deserves a hard-SF label. Yet it is to a surprising degree a story of human interest, and even has an interlude in which some of the characters go fishing and philosophise. And there's plenty of action for action fans too. Altogether one of the most satisfying and intelligent sf movies around — animated or otherwise. My enthusiasm for *Patlabor* derives from an imported subtitled edition, so, if you can afford it, I suggest you buy the more expensive alternative package (£19.99) which is subtitled and includes an additional 'Making of' video. The subtitles should be an improvement on the dub, which like many Manga Video dubs has the diminishing effect of making a striking original seem rather ordinary.


Space Firebird (Western Connection, 115mins., cert U, £12.99)

A rarely seen classic of animation by anime pioneer Osamu Tezuka, this was originally made in 1980, and is part of Tezuka's Phoenix cycle, which focuses on reincarnation and man's place in the universe. The story is fanciful and of childish simplicity and the whole piece carries an air of innocence that is rarely, if ever, encountered in contemporary anime. A youth born into a dehumanizing future society is trained to be a space pilot

BABCOM '95, the first *Babylon 5* convention, was held on 29-30 April 1995 at the Birmingham NEC. It was also, as predicted by Dave Langford's organ *Ansible*, "significantly non-cheap" in terms of what you got overall for your £20 per day for two days (medium-rate basic attendance fee — staying alive, at any of the rates, involved additional expense), although the actual guests from the show put in fine performances and were considered, on balance, good value in themselves. It wasn't clear why the promoters had apparently populated almost the entire dealers' area (a rather spartan affair in itself, in surprising contrast to the extensive provision implied by the advance publicity) with unfortunates hawking their crayon renditions of the *Enterprise*, having apparently failed to notice that there was that Babbling-wosname show around for which the admirably sparse merchandise happened to include recently-released stuff like a first novel and a soundtrack CD. (Perhaps we have a clue, though — the only previous show by Stargazer Productions had been entitled "Generations" . . .) One of the early Saturday arrivals presumably picked up both copies of each of these that were rumoured to have been placed on sale by one enlightened individual. Natur-

advance clues about plot points, in between telling us loads of stuff that we might actually find interesting and amusing to know. As it was, those seeking details of Vorlon anatomy left still-clueless to an extent which entertained the rest of us almost as much as the obligatory bloopers/spoof tapes. Ah, the sight of a Starfury whizzing by to reveal the key turning in its powerplant . . . well, maybe you had to be there. Straczynski's main achievement, other than surviving the endless onslaught of fans in between sessions, seemed to be successfully reminding the assembled company that *B5* was put together by a bunch of people with the bizarre idea of producing something new and good, and written with a dramatic purpose — several of them, even — and that it wasn't just some kind of "Deep Space Franchise", I think the term was . . .

Red Dwarf's Danny John-Jules was a late addition to the guest list and, for someone who found himself twice addressing a *B5* convention without the benefit of ever having seen the show, he carried his sessions off with admirable aplomb. It isn't obvious, though, just why the promoters and / or his agent (presumably) chose to consign him to this elaborate and protracted form of public suicide. Likewise, there seemed to be quite a number of



Dave Hipple

visits Babcom 95, the first Babylon 5 convention

ally, the stocks on the Sunday were identical to Saturday's aside from being, well, a little diminished. Some of the technical work in the auditorium, however, was more socially conscious, clearly demonstrating that community service is a fine initiative that isn't limited to gardening and doesn't necessarily concern itself with annoying criteria like skills. Or eyesight or hearing, come to that. As for the NEC itself, I don't think I'd go there again if I were interested in atmosphere (hangar), acoustics (*parдон?*) food (*how much?*) or bars (shut). Take your own beer.

The main con guests, on the other hand, did a fine job. Claudia Christian had the plum task of warming-up an initially slightly reticent British audience, and of holding the final session by which time a number of people (or, more likely, aspiring people) had decided that this was their last, best hope of letting her know they'd like to sleep with her. (My, how we chuckled . . .) In between these phases, she was remarkably entertaining and one (arbitrarily chosen) result is that we are all now wondering just *which* of the main actors in *B5* has a false leg (she didn't say where it might be found). Peter Jurasik did each of his two turns alternately in and out of character (Londo Mollari) and hair, and was enjoyably in control of the crowd in both guises — and interesting, even.

The Emmy-winning makeup effects people from Optic Nerve put on two sessions that were surprisingly informative considering the generally successful efforts of the technicians to wash out the projected slides through the use of confusingly-intended but resolutely creative lighting.

Joe Straczynski, imposing chap that he is, twice did a great job of frustrating those whose highest ambition seemed to be to receive

people playing "Give Dave Prowse a Really Wide Berth While Observing Sidelong In Case Anyone Speaks To Him." I'm not certain that he was told just exactly which game he'd be playing when he was invited to spend two days selling autographed photos in the dealers' area (for a confusing £5 a shot).



Since this report was originally written, a number of others have appeared in discussion groups. They seem to be agreed on a number of points, the main one being that the *Babylon 5* guests did a fine and entertaining job in the face of savage opposition from the organisers and the "technicians"; we don't know whether the latter were NEC regulars or engaged specially for the occasion by Stargazer Productions, but either way a CV with this event on it should be scrutinised very carefully. These people are very fond of loud noise: anything will do, so long as it drowns out something more useful and doesn't, if possible, actually originate at a microphone. They are also quite good at staggeringly inappropriate lighting — by the Sunday afternoon, for example, I wanted to throttle whoever it was that thought that we would perhaps by then have decided that the rotating logo was interesting after all and went nicely with the interminable thundering noise (for endless otherwise unremarkable minutes). Probably the same guy who tried to wash out the slide and video showings. (He was mostly successful, too — Joe Straczynski's repeated instructions to desist finally percolated through, but the rest were stuck with this whizzo prank.) Possibly the same guy who devoted himself to changing the consequently almost-visible slides as fast as he could while the people trying to talk about them were talking to us and so could not see what he'd done. Oh, dear . . .

Some people considered Danny John-Jules' sessions a total waste of time. Very true, if you were someone (like me) who was there because of *Babylon 5* and who knew nothing about *Red Dwarf*. The man provided no other point of contact, but in fairness to him he did seem to try to offer what he could in a friendly spirit without (according to him) even having been introduced to the other guests. Speaking of which, it wasn't as if there were hundreds of them with armed bodyguards — this segregation seemed strange.

Amazingly enough, there seems to have been a general feeling that the overall presentation (the scheduling, the technical support, the facilities and the booking of dealers, and the somewhat creative information supplied about the whole thing...) of the event was shambolic — an assessment I'd agree with. Even the souvenir programme was a flimsy, expensive and (what with the "schedule", which was presumably put in as a joke) instantly inaccurate thing apparently cobbled together from old US press releases. One can only hope that those attending one of Stargazer's "Sci-Fi Summer Experience" shows (who do they pay to make up these names?) are provided with evidence that Babcom 95 was anomalous in this respect. Me, I'm sceptical, but will not be trying to find out. (Please do not, under any circumstances, take this mention as a plug!) I think we probably made them a lot of money, though. Now, I know that there is work involved in setting up public events. I've done enough of this myself, and obviously some effort must have gone into this one. All the same, the impression that I and others had, as punters, was that Star-

gazer had booked the hall and a small number of uninterested dealers probably contacted after their previous *Trek* effort, let a few orang-utans on speed loose on the technical gear (seriously — I have some experience of that kind of work as well and can spot it being done badly) — and banked our money. Well, maybe I just expect a lot, but I don't think that the organisers *once* stopped to put themselves in the position of someone making the effort to travel and attend this thing. It all seemed rather cynical in that respect.

Something I hadn't been aware of when writing my initial report was that the Sunday schedule was apparently rescued by Joe Straczynski being willing to take the stage, first thing, in order to cover for Danny John-Jules who had apparently not yet arrived. There's an irony here, in that Straczynski was reputedly partly responsible for the delays on the Saturday. Then again, that was only because he insisted on holding the formal autograph session open until all those who had been given the impression by the publicity that they'd be able to get autographs actually got them....

In all, then, a damn fine effort by the guests in the face of an event that was apparently designed to make us all feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. The guests won, quite emphatically, but the opposition was pretty determined. I'll be at the next one, if there is one — and I'll hope that Stargazer has nothing to do with it. Maybe it's just me....

— Dave Hipple

➤ Anime sf, page 16

but is disgusted to find that his mission is mainly to kill alien beings. He is offered the mission of capturing the Space Firebird for the benefit of his masters, but revolts, and is flung into prison. The hero is accompanied throughout by his faithful friend, the robot girl Ogra. The robot is capable of some startling transformations, and the animation evokes the science fiction trappings with some amusing and inventive touches of Tezuka's own. The animation has worn well and still looks good, but the dubbing is probably the worst ever inflicted on an English-speaking audience.

So why buy this? It's a very enjoyable film, and if you're an animation buff you'll want to see some of Tezuka's best work, and if you like art it's probably cheaper than an Athena print, and hopefully your kids should like it.

8 Man After Vol. 1 (East2West, 55 mins., cert. 18, £10.99)

Based on a 1960's comic book and TV series, this has very much the look of an American 'tec/superhero thriller cartoon. 8 Man is encased in a super cyber shell that gives him "awesome strength and near light speed travel". His adversaries are a gang of drug crazed criminals who have cyber-activated weapons grafted onto their bodies which cause maximum carnage when they run amok. The main characters are a private eye, a street urchin, and the girlfriend of the original '8 Man'. With good quality animation and design, interesting characters and an effective dub, this is a gripping stuff and undeniably entertaining, if more than a little blood-spattered.

Kekko Kamen Vol. 1 (East2West, 45 mins., cert. 18, £10.99)

This title has achieved a small notoriety in some anime fan circles as a very naughty video, which is how the distributors are trying to market it. Essentially, the story is about a school where all the teachers are sex perverts and have a torture chamber in the basement which is used for discipline. The frailer pupils are protected from the worst depredations of the perverts by a female crusader, Kekko Kamen (Beautiful Mask), the "Messenger of Love and Justice", clad in a mask and boots and *nothing else*. In fact the video turns out to be much milder than I imagined it might be, as it scarcely goes beyond smutty adolescent humour. "Schoolboy humour" sums up the whole thing, though a few scenes are indeed very funny. That said, I thought parts of it were in rather poor taste — do we need any jokes about Nazis and concentration camps, and is tying up schoolgirls and hurting them supposed to be entertainment? Some anime does not travel well, methinks. But I think I've

said enough for you to know what to do next; fume with outrage, ignore it, or go out and buy it.

Peek the Baby Whale (Kiseki, subtitled, 80mins., cert U, £12.99) A beautifully animated film about some children who find a baby whale on the seashore and discover they can control the creature with a magical flute. It looks better than the usual video animation, but we're not sure if the UK release is aimed at adult anime nuts, or at children who can cope with subtitles!

To round up the column, let's mention **Western Connection** who have been putting into a flurry of serial titles at the rate of four a month; that's a lot by any standards. Some, like the boy-and-monster *Ushio & Tora*, the school-romance *Slowstep*, the crime caper *Lupin III*, and the sexy comedy *Devil Hunter Yoko*, have been excellent, and deserve wider distribution and publicity than they've been getting, while others like *Love City*, *Ladius*, and *Salamander*, have been forgettable and likely to appeal only to the more dedicated anime collectors. Lastly, **Anime Projects** are currently bringing out the delightful *Oh! My Go ddes* boy-meets-cute-goddesses series, as well as, apparently, more of the essential *Urusei Yatsura* TV volumes and the dub version of the ever-popular *Bubblegum Crisis* cyber-punk series. If you don't see them, ask and order.

— Geoff Cowie



Eugen Lietl

The Bad Thing About Nanotechnology . . .

... is that it might work. Drexler's generic nanoassemblers, while certainly not implementable as described in his book *Nanosystems*, could possibly work. The framework of physical laws imposes a tight corset of constraints, thus ruling out many models of implementation, but does not forbid them altogether. They are just hard, not impossible. "There's plenty of room at the bottom," Feynman said, and told us long ago. Some listened. Great? You bet! Let's turn on our CAD systems, run to the lab workbenches and start shifting the atomic puzzle. Great opportunities, big bucks, big fun. Wait. Just a sec. Won't take long.

Cast a glimpse into the near future. We might live to see it . . . Building diamondoid assemblers is routine now. You can buy them in the store in family packages, write a program which causes them to construct any set of molecules (including themselves), download it into the machine, throw it into a bucket with cheap feedstock from the store, maybe turn on a high intensity light source and just walk away.

If you happen to own a lot of desert and have patience, you can have a great many buckets stand there fermenting in the sun, plucking carbon dioxide out of thin air. Within hours to weeks, they will have autoreplicated and produced the necessary molecules in sufficient quantities.

Hey, life is really easy these days: pets, tomatoes, ships and diamonds come straight out of the nanowomb. All you pay are energy costs and designer fees. Information is king. A lot of designs are public domain. The manufacturing process has been revolutionised. We all are infinitely healthy and prosperous, live practically forever or stand about in cellars as uploaded copies in humming hardware boxes, surfing the virtual mirror of our physical reality. Or invent our own. Als also go there generally doing All things.

Cryo-suspended guys begin to emerge from their fridges, unbelieving eyes shaded against the bright light of this brave new world. Some of the uploaders light-sail the solar system in tiny vessels, many travelling to the stars thus spreading the life-flood further. The medium is the message. Spread the disease.

Great times, these. Interesting.

Actually these who had gone away are lucky. (Join the uploader army, travel to interesting stars, do interesting things, meet interesting aliens. (Don't kill them, mind).

But we chose to remain on Earth because of sentimental, ethical or whatever reasons. Now there comes along some ugly kid (no gun, yet) who doesn't like it at all. Maybe he's a psycho or just a humorist, trying a new brand of a practical joke. Unfortunately (both for him and for us), he is intelligent, energetic and quite ruthless. This combination of personality traits is quite rare, but these individuals exist. You can blame the evolutionary process for that. You shouldn't actually, since it caused you to be here, after all. No power without the price, ever.

Well, this person designs a streamlined autoreplicator, able to live on sunlight and thin air. Moreover, his design doesn't listen to anybody and is pretty hard to kill. But its replication rate is just about amazing. No brains, all muscle. Also, not being a quality product, it makes a lot of errors in its replication process. Don't worry, most of the beasts are still functional.

Now our humorist writes a program causing a generic assembler from the store (he has the license to buy them, being old enough) to produce this particular replicator. One is sufficient. But to make sure, he makes a thimbleful. Now he goes about with a big salt-shaker spreading his brand new nanomachine, grinning like a lunatic having one hell of a good time. Maniacal glee. The fun has begun. Nothing seems to happen at first; exponential functions take time to detonate. By the time the first symptoms of trouble emerge, it is already too late. In the beginning, a massive thermonuclear cauterization of the affected area might have helped. Now it's too late. The autoreplicator spreads

unchecked. By now, driven by evolution, it has learned to utilize other feedstocks and other energy sources. It preys upon every system it can metabolize. It learns fast.

Human beings are lyzed to nanosize within hours. Buildings crumble. Asphalt dissolves into thin air. Bridges rust away within days. Pop goes the weasel. And all that nice leafy green stuff . . . All the way down to bacteria and viruses. If it learns to handle silicates, then in a comparatively short timescale even mountains will be levelled. We have effectively started the process of coevolution afresh. All traces of the ecosphere are gone, necrosphere does reign supreme. An interesting experiment, this. Just don't come too close. Unless you want pieces of you also joining the runaway replication frenzy. If you can seed vacuum-hard autoreplicators in the asteroid belt, solar wind and pressure will blow some of them out of the system, infecting other stars. The ultimate interstellar disease.

Judgement Day is at hand. Woe to you oh earth and sea. Repent ye all sinners who gave a nuke to the naked ape and showed him how to use it. Verily, this is the end of the world as we know it. Smeare your forehead with ash. Amen. Exeunt, All.



Years before the Japanese nerve gas massacre I discussed with a friend the possibility of terrorists using a binary nerve gas aerosolized by a low-temperature gas-producing pyrochlore in the subway. Thank God these Aum guys didn't do it right. The bodycount could have been several tens of thousands.

Nuclear power now being ubiquitous it is only a question of time until some religious fundamentalist fanatics get enough plutonium for a dirty nuclear charge used in a car bomb destined for a densely populated inner city somewhere in the western hemisphere. We are talking megadeaths here. Pu is a waste product of every reactor. With simple tricks enough Pu for 2 to 4 bombs per year can be derived from a civil reactor, however restrictive the controls. Pu is separated from nuclear wastes by a simple fluid-chemical process (Purex), and there is no such thing as non-weapon-grade Pu (*Nature*, 1985); low-grade Pu just reduces yield somewhat. Both timing and geometry are trivial for a garage nuke (crude gun assembler), so best start looking for a good sun blocker. Protection factor 10¹² might suffice.

Today any molecular biologist with a background in viruses can greatly increase the mortality of a virus by simple gene-cloning means. The biological version of the killer application has to meet the demands for high susceptibility (easy to catch, e.g. a common cold), long symptomless latency (get the virus around, best several years, e.g. HIV), high lethality, of course, and high mutation rate (to prevent immune response, HIV again). In 10-20 years we will be able to produce a common cold with AIDS characteristics. Count on it.

Scared? I am, at least. Well, all this gorecrowling was meant to illustrate that, unfortunately, Murphy was right and that everything will happen on the long run. Well, shit happens. There is a simple universal solution for every problem: simply get out of its path. Don't be there when the shit hits the fan. In the relativistic universe there are limits even to the propagation velocity of shit.

—Eugen Lietl

Further reading on nanotechnology

K. Eric Drexler *Engines of Creation* (Oxford 1990, 1992)
Popular introduction to the field, with emphasis on the social and technical implications.

K. Eric Drexler, et al *Unbounding the Future* (Morrow 1991)
Update of *Engines of Creation*, with more technical detail.

K. Eric Drexler *Nanosystems* (Wiley 1992)
Highly detailed technical and theoretical book. The nanotech 'bible'.

Ed Regis *Nano (The Emerging Science of Nanotechnology: Remaking the World—Molecule by Molecule)* (Little, Brown 1995)
Pop-science treatment, with emphasis on the people involved.

Standing Orders

A Standing Order saves time, hassle... and money. If you pay by SO your BSFA membership costs £17 per year rather than £18. But remember that the BSFA's bank account has recently changed; the new account details are as follows:

Address Barclays Bank Plc
150 Parade
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire
CV32 4AZ
Sort Code 20-48-08
Account No 00377244

Renewals

Please note that all renewals and subscription enquiries should now be sent to Alison Cook, and that her address has changed to:
52 Woodhill Drive
Grove
Wantage
Oxon. OX12 0DS

BSFA On The Net

First of all, Maureen Speller and Paul Kincaid have taken the plunge and now have an email address, which is:

mks_pk@ix.compulink.co.uk
They will handle general BSFA organisational



queries. News items, letters, contributions and general day-to-day queries should be sent to me (Chris) at the *Matrix* address.

There was a good response to my appeal in *Matrix 114* for views on a possible net presence for the BSFA, nearly all positive. I've prepared a summary of the responses, and if you'd like a copy please email me. And we're still looking for opinions, so don't hesitate to write.

I'd like to reassure members who don't have net access that we won't be spending resources on facilities which you can't use. Any net provision will be in addition to our normal service, and you won't lose out.

Emails to terran@cityscape.co.uk

— Chris Terran

Fanarchy In The UK

Thanks for the response to this appeal. Lots of good suggestions, but we still need more! There are too many blanks spots in the map — surely there must be some set in Kent, Wales,

Edinburgh, Birmingham...?

In case you missed you missed the piece last issue, here it is again.

If you'd like to contribute to a forthcoming BSFA project, you can help us by racking your brains and suggesting interesting locations within the UK which have a science fictional or fantasy connection. We're after both real places — Minehead is the birthplace of Arthur C. Clarke, for instance — and imaginary — perhaps the 'actual' location of Mythago Wood. Particularly interesting would be locations used in children's sf / fantasy, and sites in odd corners of these islands. Contact Chris Terran at the editorial address with your ideas.

Here are a few to get you thinking: Corfe Castle (Keith Roberts's *Paranoid*); Aller, Somerset ('Alder' in Kim Newman's *Jago*); Manchester (Jeff Noon, *Vurt*); Sark (Mervyn Peake, *Mr Pigeon*); Dorset (Chris Priest, *A Dream of Wessex* and Richard Cowper's *White Bird of Kinship* novels).

— Chris Terran

AGM MINUTES

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Britannia International Hotel, Marsh Wall, Docklands, London on Saturday 15 April 1995 at 2pm.

1. Since none of the BSFA Council present wished to do so, it was proposed by Roger Robinson that the meeting be chaired by Paul Kincaid. The motion was seconded by Steve Glover and passed by the meeting *nem. con.*
2. It was proposed by Mark Plummer and seconded by Simon Bisson that the minutes of the previous meeting, as published in *Matrix 112*, be approved. This was agreed by the meeting *nem. con.*, with no matters arising.
3. Maureen Speller presented the Administrator's report for the year. She said the year had commenced with the news that Jenny and Steve Glover wished to resign as editors of *Matrix*, and suggested that a 'falsome vote of thanks' was due to the Glovers for their hard work on the magazine. The meeting responded with a round of applause. An offer to edit *Matrix* had been received from Dave Hodson, but following the magazine's non-appearance Chris Terran had been persuaded to accept the post with pleasing results. Colin Greenland's role in persuading Chris was noted with thanks.
The success of recent issues of *Focus* was mentioned together with plans to increase the number of issues from two to three per year, funds permitting.
Catie Cary's problems in producing *Vector*, including lack of volunteers and computer problems were mentioned.
At this point Maureen expressed the Committee's thanks to the membership in general for sticking with the BSFA despite the problems encountered during the year.
Fund-raising and promotional activities continued throughout the year, but not at the hoped-for level. The restricted activity was due in part to Maureen not being able to attend all conventions during the year, with a lack of volunteers to run tombolas etc. in her absence. It appears, however, that the fund-raising activities which do take place are having a significant effect in raising the profile of the BSFA within fandom. Plans and new developments include a new membership leaflet currently being designed by

Paul Kincaid and Chris Terran and a variety of promotional ideas for *Worldcon*. The BSFA will be in the dealers' room at *Intersection* where it is planned to sell T-shirts featuring a number of different designs and including the new BSFA logo which will hopefully be completed in time.

While discussing membership issues it was mentioned that the BSFA's bank account has been changed (details published in *Matrix 114* together with a new standing order mandate). The change takes advantage of a special type of account for clubs and societies which is charge-free and should therefore save about £400 per year. The account is also interest-bearing.

Maureen made a plea for more volunteers, in particular for more people to help at the tables during conventions. A large number of people each taking a small part would spread the burden more effectively. Volunteers with specialist skills which may be of benefit to the Association would also be welcome.

The London meetings were mentioned — now being held at the Jubilee pub every month. The meetings seem successful, as was a joint BSFA / Friends Of Foundation get-together held at the same venue. A similar post-Worldcon get-together to be held at a weekend was tentatively suggested. Maureen's summary of the past year was that it had certainly not been the best the BSFA had experienced, but neither had it been the worst.

4. The Treasurer's Report was presented by Elizabeth Billinger, who said that Maureen's summary of the year was echoed in the financial situation. Commenting on the accounts for the year ended 30 Sept 1994 (see below) it was noted that the results still showed a loss for the year, but that the size of the loss was significantly less than in the previous year. This was attributable to a slight increase in turnover (due in large part to fund-raising activities) but mostly to a reduction in costs. A major factor in reducing costs has been the change in company law which means that small companies are no longer required to have their accounts audited, representing a saving of around £300 per year.
On the question of audits Elizabeth reminded the meeting that the membership can request an audit, provided that the Committee receives such a request from at least 10% of the membership at least one month before the end of the financial year to which the request relates. She also reminded the meeting that it is, and always has been, the responsibility of the Committee to maintain proper books and records, to ensure accounts are drawn up when and in the form required and that they show

a true and fair view of the company's activities. In reply to a question regarding standing orders it was confirmed that any payments made to the wrong bank account should be passed on by Barclays to the new account. It was also agreed that members should be encouraged to pay by standing order if at all possible.

5. Three members of the Committee retiring by rotation had expressed their willingness to stand for re-election. The re-election of Catie Cary was proposed by Colin Greenland and seconded by Terry Hunt, that of Arthur C. Clarke was proposed by Steve Brewster and seconded by Frank Smith, and Steve Glover's re-election was proposed by Simon Bisson and seconded by Nicholas Mahoney. All three motions were passed unopposed by the meeting.

6. During the year Mark Plummer and Chris Terran had been co-opted onto the Committee and both offered themselves for election. Mark Plummer's election was proposed by Elizabeth Billinger and seconded by Colin Harris. Chris Terran's was proposed by Roger Robinson and seconded by Andy Sawyer. Both proposals were accepted *nem. con.*

7. Under 'any other business' Andy Sawyer drew the attention of the meeting to the situation regarding loan requests from the BSFA's library. The library is on permanent loan to the Foundation and, as the Foundation's librarian, Andy receives requests through the inter-library loan system for books in the BSFA's collection. Since the books requested will be used for academic purposes, Andy currently allows them to be borrowed on condition that they remain on the premises of the library making the request. Books in a fragile condition or of particular rarity are not loaned out. Andy required that the BSFA formalise the position. Paul Kincaid proposed that the BSFA library, held by the Foundation, should be available under normal Foundation and inter-library loan conditions, subject to the discretion of Andy Sawyer. The motion was seconded by Alison Cook and passed *nem. con.*

8. It was proposed by Nicholas Mahoney and seconded by Chris Terran that the meeting be closed. The motion was passed unopposed.

— Elizabeth Billinger

COMPANY INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1994

DIRECTORS: A. C. Clarke	M. J. Edwards	D. R. Langford
M. S. Speller	K. McVeigh	A. Sawyer
J. Glover	S. Glover	C. M. Cary
E. A. Billinger	I. M. Banks	C. A. Green
A. M. Cook	M. Plummer	C. Terran

SECRETARY: E. A. Billinger

REGISTERED OFFICE: 60 Bournemouth Road
Folkestone
Kent
CT19 5AZ

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1994

The directors submit their report and accounts for the year ended 30 September 1994.

Directors' responsibilities

Company law requires us as directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements we are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

We are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company

and enable us to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 1985. We are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention of fraud and other irregularities.

Results

The results for the year are set out below.

The directors are satisfied with the results for the year and with the state of affairs at the balance sheet date.

Activities

The principal activities of the company during the year were the promotion of science fiction and the publication and distribution of science fiction magazines.

Directors

The directors who held office during the year are as follows:

A. C. Clarke	K. McVeigh
J. White (resigned 2/4/94)	J. Raine (resigned 2/4/94)
M. J. Edwards	J. Glover
D. R. Langford	S. Glover
A. Sawyer	C. M. Cary
M. S. Speller	E. A. Billinger
I. M. Banks	C. A. Green
A. M. Cook	

A. M. Cook was appointed as a director on 2 April 1994. C. M. Cary, A. C. Clarke and S. Glover retire by rotation and being eligible offer themselves for re-elections. M. Plummer and C. Terran, having been co-opted onto the Committee during the year, offer themselves for election as directors.

On behalf of the board: E. A. Billinger, Director, 15 April 1995

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPT. 1994

	Notes	1994 £	1993 £
Turnover	2	12,245	11,577
Cost of sales		<u>11,001</u>	<u>7,984</u>
Gross profit		1,244	3,593
Net operating expenses		<u>1,737</u>	<u>5,726</u>
Operating loss		493	2,133
Interest receivable	5	<u>5</u>	<u>13</u>
Loss on ordinary activities before and after taxation		488	2,120
Retained profit brought forward		<u>836</u>	<u>2,256</u>
Retained profit carried forward		<u>£ 348</u>	<u>836</u>

The only recognised gain/loss for the period is the loss for the year of £488. There were no acquisitions and no discontinued operations in the year.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 1994

	Notes	1994 £	1993 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible Assets	6	55	58
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	250	400
Cash at bank		<u>232</u>	<u>1,865</u>
		482	2,265
Creditors			
Amounts falling due within one year	8	<u>162</u>	<u>1,460</u>
Net Current Assets		<u>320</u>	<u>805</u>
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		<u>£ 375</u>	<u>£ 863</u>
Capital and Reserves			
Profit and loss account		348	836
Other reserves		<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>
		<u>£ 375</u>	<u>£ 863</u>

The Directors are satisfied that the company was entitled to exemption under subsection (1) of section 249A of the Companies Act 1985 and that no member or members have requested an audit pursuant to subsection (2) of section 249B in relation to the accounts for the financial year.

The Directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with section 221, and
- preparing accounts which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial year and of its profit or loss for the financial period in accordance with the requirements of section 226, and which otherwise comply with the requirements of this Act relating to account, so far as applicable to the company.

The Directors have taken advantage of the special exemptions conferred by Part 1 of Schedule 8 of the Companies Act and have done so on the grounds that in their opinion the company is entitled to those exemptions as a small company.

On behalf of the board: E. A. Billinger, Director, 15 April 1995

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPT. 1994

1 Accounting policies

Accounting Convention: The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Depreciation: Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of tangible fixed assets over their expected useful lives as follows:

Library - 10% per annum on a reducing basis

2 Turnover

Turnover represents income from subscriptions, publications, advertising and associated sales.

3 Operating loss

This is stated after charging the following:

	1994 £	1993 £
Auditors' remuneration	—	274
Depreciation	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>

4 Employees

The company had no employees during the year. The services of the directors have been provided on a voluntary basis and free of charge, as in previous years.

5 Interest receivable

	1994 £	1993 £
Bank interest	<u>5</u>	<u>13</u>

6 Tangible fixed assets

	Library £	Awards £	Total £
Cost			
At 30 September 1993			
& 30 September 1994	<u>913</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>940</u>
Depreciation			
At 30 September 1993	882	—	882
Charge for the year	<u>3</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>3</u>
At 30 September 1994	<u>885</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>885</u>
Net book value			
At 30 September 1994	<u>28</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>55</u>
At 30 September 1993	<u>31</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>58</u>

7 Debtors

	1994 £	1993 £
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>250</u>	<u>400</u>

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	1994 £	1993 £
Trade creditors	143	1,001
Current corporation tax	19	19
Accruals	<u>—</u>	<u>440</u>
	<u>162</u>	<u>1,460</u>

9 Share capital

The company has no share capital being limited by guarantee.

EVENTS

28 June: BSFA London Meeting

Jubilee Tavern, York Road (near Waterloo Station). Starts at 7pm in the upstairs room. Admission is free and both members and non-members are welcome. Guest this month is **Gwyneth Jones**.

30 June-2 July: Avengers Treasure Hunt

This year the 9th annual Time Screen Avengers Treasure Hunt takes place in St. Albans. The weekend nominally consists of a tour around various locations used during the filming of 1960s television series, such as *The Avengers*, *Department S*, *Randall and Hopkirk (deceased)*, *UFO* and *The Prisoner*. The Saturday programme includes guided tours of major locations and a series of games testing manual dexterity and mental agility, taking an episode of the *Avengers* as a theme; prizes will be awarded to the winners. The weekend concludes with a treasure hunt on the Sunday morning starting in St. Albans. As you can imagine, access to a car is essential. We can usually find room for a small number in the cars of others if they are willing to share. Price is £17.50 per person with bed and breakfast accommodation at £13.50 pppn sharing. Contact: Send an SAE or IRC to: 88 Edlington Lane, Warmsworth, Doncaster, DN4 9LS or E-mail a. r. mckay@aha. uk

2 Jul 1985: Giotto launched to rendezvous with Halley's Comet.

6 July: London SF meeting

Wellington pub opposite the Old Vic exit from Waterloo Station. Usually starts about 5pm. No special events but very popular.

13 Jul: Separation of Galileo's Jupiter atmosphere probe from the orbiter. After more than 5 years in space, Galileo is now undergoing the last few course corrections; on 7 Dec it will perform a gravity-assist manoeuvre around Io and enter Jovian orbit the following day.

14-16 July: Dimension Jump 95

The official *Red Dwarf* Fan Club convention, held somewhere in Stratford-Upon-Avon (a more suitable place for a *Blake's 7* con, one might have thought). Contact: SAE to Garden Cottage, Hall Farm, Scotton, Norwich NR10 5DF

26 July: BSFA London Meeting

Jubilee Tavern, York Road (near Waterloo Station). Starts at 7pm in the upstairs room. Guest TBA. Note there will be no meeting in August.

29-30 July: BroomCon

The Pagan convention, sited at the University of Essex in Colchester, special guests are **Terry Pratchett** and leading pagan band **Incubus Succubus**. 'Our aim is to bring together as many different pagan traditions as possible to find the common ground. You don't even have to be pagan yourself to join in. We have a varied programme of both the silly and the serious as well as loads of events for you to take part in. We can promise interesting talks, discussions, a lughnasadh ritual, belly dancing workshops, rune/tarot workshops, astrology, pathworkings, astral sex workshops, debates, quizzes, wart growing, herbal and spiritual healing, loud music and lots lots more.' Registration is £15 for adults, £5 children attending; £5 supporting. Contact: BroomCon, 39 Henniker Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 5HF or email phil.williams@mac.co.uk

19-20 August: Precursor

Rob Hansen, John Harvey and Martin Smith are running a pre-Worldcon con on the weekend before Interseccion. It will be "a lightly-programmed fannish relaxacon — that will be small and cheap." Venue is Hertfordpark Hotel, Stevenage, Hertford, which is a 30 minute train ride from London just off the A1(M). Membership is £15 (£5 S20), and hotel rates are £20.50 pppn twin / double and £23.50 pppn single. Half-price happy 'hour' at the bar from 8pm to 10pm! Contact: Precursor, 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB

24-28 August: Interseccion

This year's Worldcon, held in Glasgow. Membership is now £90. Contact: Interseccion, Adm 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR or email interseccion@amof.demon.co.uk

1-3 September: Lightspeed '95

The Hilton International Hotel in Leeds is the venue for this *Star Trek*, *D59* and *TNG* con. Guests include **Robert O'Reilly** and **Dennis Ashton**. Registration is £35 for the full weekend (children 5-14) £17

or £23 per day. Hotel rooms per night cost £44.50 (single) and £59.00 (double/twin).

Contact: **Lightspeed**, 16 Bramwell St., Eastwood, Rotherham, S. Yorkshire, S65 1RZ.

22-24 September: Festival of Fantastic Films

Sacha's Hotel, Manchester. GoH is **Roger Corman**, with **Don Sharp** and **July Sharp**. Registration is £40 before August, £45 thereafter. Contact: 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford, Manchester M6 8EN

27 September: BSFA London Meeting

See above for details. Guest TBA.

14-15 October: Octocon 95

Ireland's national sf convention, at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire. A superb guest list: GoH is **Mary Gentle**, others are **Diane Duane**, **Robert Holdstock**, **Katherine Kurtz**, **Ann McCaffrey**, **Scott McMillan**, **Peter Morwood**, **Kim Newman**, **Tom Richards**, **Michael Scott** and **James White**. Registration until 1 September is £10 supporting, £16 adult (over 16) and £12 junior attending. Contact: Octocon, 30 South Circular Road, Dublin 8 or email mmhugh@td.ie or WWW <http://arrogant.lto.ie/10/Octocon.html> (My apologies for mistranscribing the email addresses in the last issue.)

25 October: BSFA London Meeting

See above for details. Guest is sf writer and humourist **Robert Rankin**.

27-29 October: Welcome to my Nightmare

"A celebration of horror writing" at the Forte Posthouse Hotel in Swansea organised as part of the UK Year of Literature and Writing. Debates, readers' and writers' workshops, and a really first-rate guest list: **Ramsay Campbell**, **Jonathan Carroll**, **Graham Joyce**, **Peter James**, **Lisa Tuttle**, **Garry Kilworth**, **Ben Leech**, **Mark Chaboudon** and **Simon Clark** have been announced with more to come. Horror writer and broadcaster **Phil Rickman** will also be there, recording a radio programme for broadcast later in the year. All this costs only £15, too... hotel rates are £37.50 pppn single, £32 double/twin. Cheques payable to 'Welcome to my Nightmare'. Contact: Steve Lockley, 14 Ca Eithin, Llanyfyllach, Swansea, SA6 6EZ or tel. Mike O'Driscoll on 01792 403575.

27-30 October: Cult TV Appreciation Weekend

Have an All-Action Centre, Caister, Great Yarmouth. Covers UK and US TV series of all types, but mostly sf. Guests include **Chris Carter** (creator and executive producer of *The X-Files*) **Kenneth Cope** (star of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*). Registration is £39. Contact: Send a 9"x6" SAE to Cult TV 1995, P. O. Box 1701, Peterborough, PE1 1EX.

3-5 November: ReContaniméTed 1995

This anime convention will be held at the Grand Hotel, Colmore Row, Birmingham. Registration is £21 until 30 Sept, £26 thereafter. Contact: SAE to Martin Pay, 29 Langton Avenue, Chelmsford, CM1 2BW [This is the payment address; the enquiry address, phone number and email address are illegible on the flyer. Publicists take note!]

5-8 April 1996: Evolution

The 1996 Eastercon will be held at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. Guests will be **Vernor Vinge**, **Jack Cohen**, **Colin Greenland**, **Bryan Talbot**, **Maureen Speller** and **Faul Kincaid**. Membership is £24 attending, £14 supporting and child rate. Contact: **Evolution**, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX or email hnhgee.1c.ac.uk

28-30 June 1996: Discworld Convention 1

The First International Discworld Convention will take place at Sacha's Hotel in the centre of Manchester, England. Confirmed guests are **Terry Pratchett**, **Josh Kirby** and **Stephen Briggs**, with more TBA. Experience: Unseen University Challenge; First official Cripple Mr Onion All-comers Tournament; Bananananana Dakrys on Draught; Discworld Karaoke; Unseen University Midsummer Lecture; Reduced Discworld Theatre Company; Exclusive Claretcarrot models; the Biker Morrismen (don't miss!); Maskerade (sic) Ball; Filk; Clicks; Dead Monk... sorry, Ae Party; And 1001 Elephants, apparently. Membership rates are £17.50 attending (other rates TBA) until December 31st 1995, rising thereafter. Twin or double rooms cost £32 per person per night. Contact: SAE to The Discworld Convention, P.O. Box 3086, Chelmsford, CM1 6LD or email discworld@cmacloed.demon.co.uk

28-31 March 1997: Intervention

The 1997 Eastercon, themed around 'Communication'. Venue is the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. Guests are **Brian Aldiss**, **Robert Silverberg** and **David Langford**. Membership is £20 attending, £10 supporting. Contact: Intervention, 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS.

Peterborough SF Writers' Group

Helen Gould

THE PETERBOROUGH SF WRITERS' GROUP has been going for about a year. It was set up last August to promote science fiction, fantasy, and horror writing in Peterborough and to give support, feedback and encouragement to local writers. It meets every two weeks on a Sunday, and activities include instant writing exercises, feedback sessions, and discussions about writing.

It was decided to broaden the scope of the group by running a one day workshop about comics scripting, and to do this we needed a comics professional to run the event. Approaches were made to people in the industry but it was at UKCAC '94 that we met Noel K. Hannan and Rik Rawling, who have had comics published in America and are preparing to launch their own imprint, 'Bad To The Bone Graphics'. Noel is a writer, of both comics and prose, and Rik is both a writer and artist. Their influences are drawn from writing, comics and film and their work ranges from cyberpunk to horror to the Wild West to noir thrillers. They are both enthusiastic about sharing their experiences of comics and writing.

Having found our tutors we needed a venue. Fergus Black, director of the Peterborough Arts Centre, was enthusiastic enough about our proposal to offer us a room at the Centre free of charge for this first event. He also suggested that if we ran the workshop as part of the storytelling festival planned for May 1995 we could qualify for a grant from Peterborough Arts Council. We took up the offer and advertised the event.

On the day there were nine attendees ranging in age from 12 to 41. The workshop started with a video which served as an introduction to the tutors and their work. The main part of the day consisted of a presentation which took us through the various stages of writing, drawing and publishing a comic. The final part of the day consisted of hands-on experience of putting together a storyboard. There was plenty of time in between for informal chats and to look at examples of work by the tutors and other comics professionals. We were also given information packs based on the workshop to enable us to make future use of the things we had learnt.

While we had hoped for a greater response to the event, it was successful for those who attended. I can certainly say that it has given me a boost as it both confirmed the things I was already doing and gave me further insight into the process of graphic storytelling. It was also good to see some youngsters attending as the future of British comics lies in encouraging the next generation to develop.

Peterborough SF Writers' Group is looking at the feasibility of running a second comics workshop and are hoping to run further writing events covering other aspects of sf and fantasy so we would welcome contacts from professional writers. In the meantime, Rik and Noel are keen to visit other groups and run further workshops in return for payment of their travel expenses and somewhere to sleep.

Peterborough SF Writers' Group dates for 1995 are:

- Sun 6 Aug: Editing techniques
- Sun 8 Oct: Clarity in writing, pitfalls, and howlers
- Sun 3 Dec: Presentation of work / letters to editors

If you are interested in finding out more about Bad To The Bone Graphics or inviting them to visit your group they can be contacted c/o Noel K. Hannan, 18 Lansdowne Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 1JY.

If you are interested in finding out about Peterborough SF Writers' Group they can be contacted c/o Helen Gould, 28 Bathurst, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE2 5QH (tel. 01773 232127).

— Helen Gould

Members' Noticeboard

Advertisements and announcements are free to BSFA members. Send your ad to the editorial address.

CAN ANYONE PLEASE HELP me get my hands on paperback copies of the following books by Sherri S. Tepper, in any readable condition, at not unreasonable prices?

The True Game; The Revenants; The Chronicles of Marvin Manyshaped; Jinian Star-Eye; The Enigma Score; The Bones; Derivish Daughter; Blood Heritage.

Write to me first with details and price, and I promise a quick reply. I'm not a collector, I just want to write an article about her. Contact: Norman W. Beswick, 21 Churchill Road, Church Stretton, Shropshire, SY6 6EP.

WANTED: A copy in any condition of *The Science Fiction of Mark Clifton* edited by Barry Maltzberg and published in 1980, though I don't know by whom. Contact John Ollis, 51 Belmont Road, Luton LU1 1LL.

SF BOOKS / MAGAZINES FOR SALE The Science Fiction Foundation Collection has a large number of science fiction / fantasy books and magazines for sale at bargain prices. Proceeds to the SFF.

Contact Andy Sawyer on 0151 794 2696 / 2733 or email asawyer@liverpool.ac.uk for further details.

A LOAD OF OLD BOB, ten of Bob Shaw's serious scientific tales! Produced by Becon Publications for Conflation, the 1995 British National SF Convention. All profits will be donated to the RNIB Talking Book Fund. £4.95 from Becon Publications, 75 Rosslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex, RM3 0RG.

The University of Warwick Science Fiction and Fantasy Society would like to hear from other student SF societies, and also to receive fanzines, particularly student fanzines. If you can help, please contact the UWSFFS at: Arts Federation Pigeonholes, Students' Union, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL.

INTERSECTION attending membership for sale, £70 or nearest offer. Includes all progress reports to date. Phone Eugene Doherty (01232-645134 Tuesday-Sunday after 7pm) or e-mail 100410.02200@compuserve.com

WANTED: A copy in any condition of Brian Stableford's novel *The Paradox of the Sets*, published by Ace Books in the 70s. Chris Terran, 9 Beechwood Court, Back Beechwood Grove, Leeds LS4 2HS or email terran@cityscape.co.uk

HARM'S WAY by Colin Greenland — "What if Charles Dickens had written a space opera?" (*Locus*) — large paperback, the one with the pretty cover, £3.50. Also the two linked fantasy paperbacks, *The Hour of the Thin Ox* and *Other Voices* (great covers by Roger Dean and Ian Miller), £1.50 each. Prices include postage. Colin Greenland, 24 Ortygia House, 6 Lower Road, Harrow, Middx. HA2 0DA.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK — *Lunching With The Antichrist*, an exclusive new American collection from Mark Zeising Books containing previously uncollected and/or revised stories. No UK equivalent. In trade hardcover or signed, limited, slip-cased editions: £15.00 and £36.00, respectively. Contact: D. J. Rowe, 18 Laurel Bank, Truss Hill Road, South Ascot, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 9AL.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE VIDEO now available, of the conferment by satellite link of his degree of Doctor of Letters at the University of Liverpool on 26 January 1995. Includes an introduction to the Science Fiction Foundation Collection and a free sample copy of *Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction*. Send a cheque for £16.50 + £1.50 p&p (£2.50 outside Europe) payable to "The University of Liverpool" to Andy Sawyer, The Science Fiction Foundation Collection, Sydney Jones Library, The University of Liverpool, PO Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA.

FOR SALE: 1090 SF and Fantasy books, comprising: 70 new stock hardcover, 337 new p/b, 86 used hardcover, 597 used p/b, £950.00 the lot. Buyer to collect from Bournemouth. Phone

COMPETITION CORNER

Roger Robinson

RESULTS OF COMPETITION 114 — "MIXED GROUPS"

The £5 prize goes to me (only joking, folks) this time as I got no entries at all! Some people mentioned in notes sent with their crossword entries that they had solved 'some' or 'about half' of them. You should have sent them in! From your letters I suspect that it was not only the shortage of time before the deadline, but the mental anguish of solving anagrams with no hint of the word lengths required. See below!

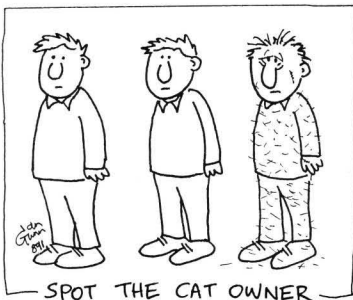
COMPETITION 115 — "MIXED GROUPS — with hints"

This is a re-run of Competition 114, but with added hints relating to the word lengths. The following list of anagrams of *sf/fantasy* book titles is given here in order of length. This month's task is to **decode** the titles and then **divide the books into three groups of five**. The groupings I am looking for relate to the authors rather than the titles themselves. As there may be several possible 'valid' groups please explain your groupings and list the five titles in each group along with their authors. The usual £5 token for the winner.

1. SURE IDEA (4,4)
2. OTHER POSSE (3,3,4)
3. HE GAVE MORT (3,3,4)
4. HE MEANT FLAME (3,6,3)
5. SAVE SHOT CLUTE (3,5,5)
6. SHOW NIGHT SHAPE (4,5,5)
7. CHOOSE TAN TRIFLE (3,6,2,4)
8. THE BLEEDING CROWD (6,10)
9. DOE SEEING TO THYME (3,4,2,4,3)
10. ELBOW STOOD IN WANT (9,7)
11. A FATWA HOARD SEIZER (1,6,2,8)
12. WHICH BULL TORE TIME (7,4,6)
13. THATCHER NAMES CEPS (3,5,9)
14. DEAL IRON, CLEAN WIND (5,2,10)
15. FREE FENCED IN THINGEE (3,10,6)

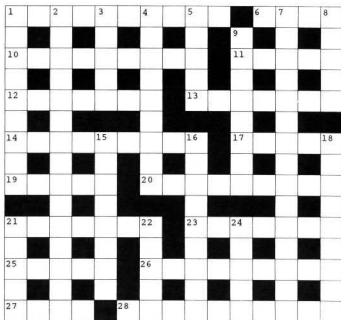
Please send all quiz and crossword entries, together with any competition correspondence, to the usual address:

Roger Robinson
75 Rosslyn Avenue
Harold Wood, Essex
RM3 0RG
by Friday 21st July 1995.



Crossword 15

John English



Across

1. Science fictional subgenre created by 8 (5,5)
6. Fuel returned by communist at 5 (4)
10. Protection against falling makes sentry complain (9)
11. No taxi will return to Unicorn in Cambridge! (5)
12. Concerning aeroplanes which are electrically charged after five past one? (7)
13. John from Barsom is brought back to Earth initially, then has to follow again (7)
14. Destroy hated room with guitar pickup (9)
17. Encrypted fish sent to one like Campbell (5)
19. Sensory organs for example spring back when article is dropped (5)
20. Tuffly fringed with less dealt out (9)
21. Othello takes one alien back to the café (7)
23. Rocket base guarded by aboriginal weapon (7)
25. Volatile Aries gets pay increase (5)
26. Uncommon planet where type of element is found (4,5)
27. Pull an American! (4)
28. Snacks on the beach with the coven, we hear? (10)

Down

1. Railway worker's design, almanac partly read? (9)
2. Destroyed a Martian standing by 8 (8,7)
3. Donne upset when seen from a particular angle (3-2)
4. Author takes exercise after swallowing toothy wheel (9)
5. King discovers the French appear in old robot story (5)
7. After 2's death, clone cared about... (4,3,3,5)
8. ... author with publisher's fee taking no notice at first (5)
9. Damage to cables will hinder progress (8)
15. Puts back holiday, sore vexed (8)
16. 4's place is hell, with crow dismembered by lord (9)
18. "Double Greek Coins from Hell", in which Orson Scott is brought up to boundaries of harem (9)
21. Sequel to 7, "Hospital in Ilium" (5)
22. Balrog's place in lair, ominously rising (5)
24. Daggers drawn for dead prophet (5)

Crossword 14 Solution

All but two of the ten entries were fully correct, and the first out of my hat was regular entrant **Nigel Parsons**. A £5 book token will be making its way up to Cardiff in the next couple of days. I'll be passing on to John your kind (and other) comments.

