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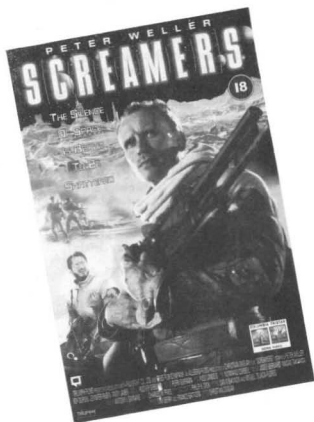
New Worlds
at fifty

SF In Academia

SF On The High Street

Who The Hell Is
Gary Dalkin?

the book
the film
the lecture



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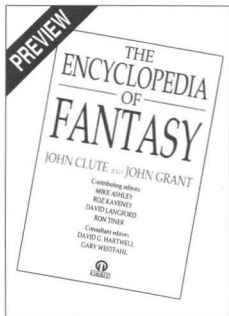
Issue 123

January / February 1997

John Costello

on

Crash



Arvon Courses . . Star Trek: First Contact . . Fanzines . . BSFA News & Accounts . . Books . . Letters

matrix

the news magazine of the

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British Science Fiction Association

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Friday 28 February 1997

← Editor
all uncredited text,
artwork, and
photography

← Media

← Photography

← Design / Production

← Next Deadline

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jan / feb 1997



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1997 TAFF RACE OFF

The 1997 TAFF race has been cancelled, by mutual agreement of the two current TAFF administrators, Dan Steffan and Martin Tudor. Thus there will be no American delegate to Eastercon in 1997. Both administrators believe that "the cancellation will be a beneficial break for TAFF and will [give] the fund the time needed to resolve recent problems of finance and PR". A race is definitely planned for 1998.

Steffan said that the main factors in the decision to postpone were the existence of only one full-fledged candidate and the lack of time; it was only marginally affected by the recent "financial malfeasance" on the UK side. "The lack of a second (and preferably a third) candidate made it impossible to properly conduct any kind of legitimate competition". The candidate was Luke McGuff from Seattle, whose nominators were Joseph Nicholas, Pam Wells, Lucy Huntzinger, Jeanne Bowman and Jeanne Gomoll. The situation was discussed with McGuff and he agreed to withdraw his name from consideration, while expressing his support for TAFF's growth and recovery. "He then promised to definitely stand for TAFF in the future, providing that the TAFF administrators then promised not to hold him to his promise. We promised." McGuff is active in convention and fanzine circles in America, and is "exactly the sort of fan that

TAFF hopes to expose to fandom's wider audience".

Steffan continued: "It goes without saying that the problems in Britain and the subsequent secrecy that surrounded them have been bad for TAFF's reputation. The impact of it all has already generated a lot of hard feelings between fandom and the fund, as well as between the two branches of TAFF itself. We deeply regret this and hope to use the next year to repair as much of this damage as we possibly can. The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund is about unity and co-operation and anything we have done to dampen that unity is directly contrary to our aims and intentions."

Extracts from TAFFboy by Dan Steffan, available for an SAE or IRC from 3804 South 9th Street, Arlington, Virginia, USA.

Luke McGuff, can be contacted at Box 31848, Seattle, WA 98103, USA.

Carl Sagan Dies

Carl Sagan, the astronomer, writer and science populariser, died of leukemia on 20 December aged 62. Sagan first came to the attention of readers with his ground-breaking 1966 book *Intelligent Life in the Universe*, written with the Soviet astronomer L. S. Shklovski, a realistic but imaginative account of the possibilities of alien life. Many more populist books followed: *The Cosmic Connection* (1973), *The Dragons of Eden* (1978) – a Pulitzer Prize-winner about the evolution of human intelligence, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space* (1994), and most recently *The Demon Haunted World* (1996). In the 80s he did much to publicise the dangers of nuclear winter, writing the technical and influential *Nuclear Winter*.

He wrote and presented the dazzling TV series *Cosmos* in 1980, a popular introduction to astronomy, and entered if proper with his 1985 novel *Contact*, which included a message from the creator encoded far into the digits of π .

As a planetary scientist he was involved with the design and instrumentation of a number of space probes, including the Viking landers in 1976, Mariner, Galileo, Pioneer (on which he was also responsible for the famous plaque intended for alien eyes), and Voyager (the disc of recordings).

His populist approach – particularly in *Cosmos* – sometimes earned him the scorn of fellow scientists, as did, in the early days, his promotion of the possibility of extraterrestrial life. But he was unrepentant, maintaining that educating the public, both to the wonders and dangers of science, was a responsibility that scientists must live up to. — Chris Terran

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FANTASY

JOHN CLUTE AND JOHN GRANT

Contributing editors
MIKE ASHLEY
ROZ KAVENEY
DAVID LANGFORD
RON TINER

Consultant editors
DAVID G. HARTWELL
GARY WESTFAHL



JOHN CLUTE and John Grant's mammoth and much-anticipated *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, the sibling volume to the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, will be published by Orbit on 3 April 1997 at a price of £45. The ISBN is 1 85723 368 9. The two books are similarly designed and matching in size (246x189mm), so reserve shelf-space now. The book will be launched shortly before the publication date at Eastercon in Liverpool, and copies will be available there.

The *EoF* has 992 pages, compared with the *EoS*'s 1370. There are over 4,000 entries (the *EoS* has over 4,300) and over 1 million words (over 1.3 million). Clute wrote about 400,000 words and Grant about 250,000, including most of the cinema entries. Mike Ashley contributed about 200,000 words (Arthurian entries, supernatural fiction, magazines and anthologies), Dave Langford about 80,000 (many of the 'motif' and author entries), Ron Tiner about 60,000 (comics, graphic novels, illustration), Brian Stableford about 50,000, Roz Kaveney about 25,000 and Bill Cotter (mostly responsible for the television entries) about 20,000. There are many other contributors. Like the *EoS*, the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* has no illustrations or photographs. There are cross-references to the *EoS* where appropriate.

The introduction notes that "fantasy is a field of literature radically different from science fiction. [...] Unlike sf, it is a literature which is remarkably hard to define". They do of course try, the rough definition offered is "a fantasy text is a self-coherent narrative which, when set in our reality, tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it (C PERCEPTION); when set in an OTHERWORLD or SECONDARY WORLD, that otherworld will be impossible, but stories set there will be possible in the otherworld's terms. An associated point [...] is that at the core of fantasy is STORY". Brian ATTEBERY's description of fantasy as a "fuzzy set" is also used. They see the major difference between sf and fantasy as being that "if tales are written and read on the presumption that they are possible – if perhaps not yet."

The entry on FANTASY elaborates, taking a page to explain the terms used in the definition – text, self-coherent, story, perceive as impossible – and adumbrates a description of the typical fantasy text, which "may be described as the story of an earned passage from BONDAGE – via a central RECOGNITION of what has been revealed and of what is about to happen, and which may involve a profound METAMORPHOSIS of protagonist or world (or both) – into the EUCATASTROPHE, where marriages may occur, just governance fertilise the barren LAND, and there is a HEALING". There are problems with this, as Clute recognises, particularly with the implied resolution (usually to a happy ending; as he notes, "magic fantasy exists, but is uncommon"). "GENRE FANTASY, which dominates the marketplace, is normally structured so as to defer completion indefinitely [...], and it is for this reason, too, that our definition must give leeway to texts which have so little fantasy in them."

A feature of the book is the large number of 'motif' entries, which term the editors reluctantly prefer over the *EoS*'s 'themes'. Some of them (like ANCESTRAL MEMORIES and COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE) were known terms; some (like PERCEPTION and REALITY) were existing terms but with implications for fantasy that had not occurred to us before; and some (like CROSSBATH and POLDER AND WAINSCOT) were tools of literary analysis which we had found it necessary to create. Other intriguing motifs are QUIABLE, TWICE-TOLD, THINNING, AMNESIA, LEARNS BETTER, LABYRINTHS, MASKS, PARODY, ACCURSED WANDERERS, BAD PLACE, RECOGNITION, WRONGNESS amongst many many others.

— Chris Terran

snippings... news... gleanings... rumours... cuttings...

INSUBSTANTIAL The small press of magazine *Substance*, edited by Paul and Clare Beardsley, will cease publication with its fourth issue. Unused subscriptions will be returned. Paul is not, however, he's doing reviews for *SFX* and is currently working on a Dr Who novel.

• Chris Reed's *Back Brain Recluse* will also cease regular publication with its twenty-third issue. It will instead become an irregular anthology.

ARTY TEXTURE The idiosyncratic director Peter Greenaway is planning to make an sf film. Greenaway - who made his name with the Channel 4 financed *The Draughtsman's Contract* and cemented his unfairly arty reputation with *A Zed and Two Noughts* and *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* - can't command large budgets so he's thinking of using the bizarre urban landscape of Cuba for location work. Speaking from a film festival in Havana, where *Drowning by Numbers* has just been premiered 9 years after its making, he was struck by the strangeness of the city's 1930s art deco urban architecture being used by families as living space; he described the effect as 'real magic realism'. Greenaway's films also made the reputation of Michael Nyman, who scored most of them and went on to popular success with his soundtrack for *The Piano*.

HORRIBLE IMAGININGS is a new magazine devoted to the life and work of Fritz Leiber. Editor John Howard says: "We aim to cover all aspects of his life and work, from his influential and award-winning stories of supernatural horror, such as *On the Leber of Darkness*, and his science fiction, such as *The Big Time*, to the tales of *Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser*. *Horrible Imaginings* hopes to do for Leiber what *Ghosts & Scholars* does for M. R. James." The magazine will publish articles, notes and annotations, reviews and bibliographical data, as well as fiction in the Leiber Tradition; contributions are actively encouraged. The Consultant Editor is Rosemary Parlane.

The first issue is scheduled to appear in summer 1997 at a price of £3.50 (\$6 inc. p&p (cheques payable to John Howard), and both contributions and orders are being taken now.

Contact: John Howard, 100 Teignmouth Road, Bournemouth, B29 7AY. Tel: 0121 471 4420

YOUR MOVE ... According to Private Eye and Ansible, BSFA Council member Malcolm Edwards is now both UK HarperCollins-Trade Division boss and deputy managing director, after a 'mighty eye battle' with HC rival Norman Profit, who after various threatened (Profit's) and actual (Malcolm's) resignations has mysteriously been granted equal status with Profit.

• Tim Holman, jointly responsible for Orbit's work on the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, is now Editorial Director at Orbit.

APPEARANCES Storm Constantine will appear at the Leicester Writers' Club on 6 Feb, talking about the fantasy novel. Admission is £3 (£2 unattended); venue is Room 16, Leicester College of Adult Education, 7-9pm. Contact: Leicester Writers' Club, Leicester College of Adult Education, Wellington Street, Leicester. Tel: 0116 270 0374

ASK ME ANOTHER After successfully running sf quizzes for some years, at Novacon and elsewhere, Vernon Brown is running out of questions and needs help. It doesn't matter what type of sf you read, or whether you consider yourself a beginner or an expert in any area because he needs all types and levels of questions. He's also modifying the rules slightly so that submitting questions won't prevent you entering.

Contact: Vernon Brown, 106 Green Lanes, Wydye Green, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5JH

THE WILD CANADIAN BOY And finally ... the special Christmas edition of Dave Langford's *Ansible* gave us Tom Holt's quite splendid lyrics to 'The Wild Canadian Boy', a paean of something-or-other to a certain well-known sf critic. Can't think who he means, but here are a few choice stanzas; perhaps you can work it out.

By Sol's effing splendour and by Luna's silver beams

He tabulated wonder and anatomized our dreams

By phyle and genus and such types that botanists employ

He pressed and died them in his book, that wild Canadian boy

And when the work was over and the mighty task was done

He looked around him, yawned and said 'I'll write another one'

And on his quest he pattered forth, like Ulysses from Troy

He never had a moment's rest, that wild Canadian boy

So now the second volume goes galumphing through the press:

It may not be quite perfect but it's awesome nonetheless.

And some may mutter 'Oh my God,' but most shout 'Attaboy'

If only 'cos they aren't offend the wild Canadian boy

(Full text in *Ansible* 11/3; available for an SAE from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU)

New Worlds At Fifty Paul Kincaid reports

In 1946, demobbed from the army, a group of fans who used to meet at the White Horse pub in London decided to revive their pre-war fanzine, *Nowo Terne*. But this time it would be a professional magazine to rival the Americans.

The consortium, which included people like Arthur C. Clarke and John Wyndham, and with John Cernell as editor, launched *New Worlds*. It got off to a shaky start, but eventually came to compete with the best in the world. Under Cernell its writers were as varied as E. C. Tubb, John Rankine, Brian Aldiss and J. G. Ballard, but it was in 1964, when a young Michael Moorcock took the helm, that it came to international prominence. Encouraging a stable of British writers that included Aldiss and Ballard, Barrington Bayley and D. M. Thomas, M. John Harrison and Josephine Saxton, *New Worlds* welcomed experiment and became the focus for what would be known as the New Wave. Experiment courts controversy and failure, and there were examples of both - Norman Spinrad's *Bug Jack Barron* occasioned a question to be asked in Parliament about the magazine's Arts Council grant - and as a result it was never as financially stable as it should have been. Publishers changed, the magazine collapsed, was revived as a quarterly anthology, fizzled out, was revived again, again died, again was reborn - most recently as an anthology series edited by David Garnett and published by Gollancz. And again it disappeared. But through it all, it has never quite died.

On 20th November 1996, Michael Moorcock

hosted a party at the Murder One bookshop on Charing Cross Road to celebrate *New Worlds*'s 50th birthday. Many of the people who have been involved with *New Worlds* over the years were present, including Moorcock, Garnett, Aldiss, Langdon Jones, Michael Butterworth, Colin Greenland, Graham Charnock, Maxim Jabupowski, Andrea Dworkin and others. Ceremony was kept to a minimum - the only speech was a succinct instruction from Moorcock to "Drink up", a suggestion enthusiastically welcomed by the writers, critics, editors and publishers in attendance.

Also available at the party was a special 'Fiftieth Anniversary Issue' of *New Worlds* edited by Moorcock and in the A4 format that seems to have been most popular with collectors and readers over the years. The list of contributors demonstrated the ability to change direction which has always been one of the features of the magazine: Peter Ackroyd, Libby Houston, Aldiss, Moorcock, Jack Trevor Story, Andrea Dworkin, Iain Sinclair and Harvey Jacobs.

Earlier the same evening, just a little way along the Charing Cross Road at Forbidden Planet, HarperCollins hosted a party to launch Stephen Baxter's new novel, *Voyage*. Those present included Malcolm Edwards and Jane Johnson of HarperCollins, David Pringle of *Interzone* and writers Robert Holdstock, Paul McAuley, Eric Brown, David Garnett and others, many of whom went on to bolster the numbers at the *New Worlds* bash.

— Paul Kincaid

Tales Of The Legion

Sandman Productions is a group of artists dedicated to making sf, cyberpunk and gothic horror films on a low budget, all of whom operate on a deferred-payment basis. Their current production is *Tales of the Legion*, an sf anthology series in six parts based around the 'Terrestrial Legionnaires', the universal military organisation of the future; a group of legionnaires relate their stories to relieve the boredom and strain of war. As well as promising a stylish approach to sf while remaining 'true to traditional storytelling methods', Sandman hopes to provide a 'deep exploration of the human condition.'

The pilot episode - "Waiting Room" - is finished, and concerns a dysfunctional trio of legionnaires sent to map a desolate planet, only to fall foul of a psychotic computer that is even more lonely than they are, and is willing to do anything to keep their company. The second episode, "What Butler Saw", is currently in production. Sandman are now looking for backers to complete the series, including the Sci-Fi Channel; if this falls through direct-to-video marketing will be attempted, containing the first two episodes bound by a linking story.

Contact: Sandman Productions, 15 Argyle Street, Mossley, Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire, OL5 0HG

NBA Collapse Hits Publishers' Profits

The collapse of the Net Book Agreement has had a significant impact on many publishers' profits, as shown in their results for the year 1995/1996. Though sf and fantasy publishing only forms a part of most publishers' activities, the bad figures are bound to have an effect on the number of books issued next year and the advances paid to authors. Sf and fantasy can expect to bear their share of the cut. The main publishers of genre material are shown in the table, where the only real exception to the gloomy profit figures is Little, Brown. As is clear, a general increase in sales was not reflected in increased profits; the heavy lead-item discounting which followed the collapse of the NBA was blamed for this.

PUBLISHER	Genre imprints	SALES £m	% change	PRETAX PROFIT £m	% change
Cassell	Gollancz, Vista	23.2	2.4	0.736	-11.0
HarperCollins	Voyager	565.0	-17.0	34.0	-38.0
Hodder	Headline, NEL	88.8	10.1	5.7	-30.0
Little, Brown	Orbit	32.0	18.5	2.26	70.2
Orion	Millennium	26.9	14.1	0.803	-21.0
Penguin	Roc, Viking	369.0	-0.8	33.6	-16.0
Transworld	Corgi, Bantam	56.0	6.9	8.22	13.9

Geoff Ryman's Net Work

253

or tube theatre

<http://www.ryman-novel.com>

a novel for the Internet
about London Underground
in seven cars and a crash

Following hot on the heels of Stephen Baxter's *Irina* (reviewed last issue), Geoff Ryman has written a large interactive novel for the Internet. Released on 20 January, it's called *253 or Tube Theatre: a novel for the Internet in seven cars and a crash*, and concerns the interlinked lives of 253 passengers on a tube train on the London Underground. Each is described in 253 words, and the links between them – often unknown to the characters themselves – only become apparent after 'reading' the text. Those who stay on the train until the Elephant and Castle die.

Geoff Ryman, a Canadian by birth though now resident in London, is the author of *The Unconquered Country*, *The Child Garden* (which won the BSFA Award, the Arthur C. Clarke Award and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award), and most recently *Was*. But as well being a highly respected writer he's an Internet professional: he's New Media Manager at the Central Office of Information, and works with a team designing high-profile Web sites for government departments in the UK. He says: "253 tries to develop the Web in other ways than graphics and advanced coding. It's a very simple site. That way users who can't or don't want to download graphics are included." Ryman has instead gone for literary quality.

"What I wanted to do was use the Web to explore modern London through its people. All kinds of things are happening inside and outside the characters, all at the same time. Some of them fall in love, some of them want to die, two of them get into a fight, some of them are plain eccentric."

"The novel is meant to be ironic. A man sitting on the train has just told his wife he's leaving her for another woman. Two cars along, the other woman is making up her mind to end the relationship. Hyperlinks make that kind of irony very easy. The art is to keep it subtle – and to keep the sense of fun."

You can find 253 at <http://www.ryman-novel.com>

His Master's Voice

The Science Fiction Oral History Association is a non-profit organisation founded in 1977 for the purpose of preserving sf's heritage, in the form of audio and video tape recordings. The US-based organisation – whose funds are mostly derived from membership dues – has sought out and duplicated valuable recordings, engineered the recording of interviews with sf professionals and fans, and established three depository sites for archive material, at Eastern New Mexico University, Michigan State University, and the University of Kansas. It is now searching for more sites both inside and outside the US. SFOHA has also sponsored programme event at conventions, bringing together participants whose personal experience spans the history of modern sf from the 1920s to the present day, and regularly records programme items at conventions large and small.

In order to do all this the SFOHA needs help. People are needed to record events at conventions, conduct interviews, assist in reviewing and cataloguing recordings, make contact with fans and professionals who can share their knowledge of sf and fan history, help duplicate and distribute tapes, or simply show their support by becoming members. 'Regular' membership for a year costs \$5, and the 'Special' – which includes a T-shirt bearing the organisation's logo – costs \$20 a year.

Contact: SFOHA, c/o Jean Lynn Barnard, 1810 Charlton, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, USA
Email: sfoha@cyberspace.org



Scribble, Scribble, Scribble

- Following on from its World Fantasy Award, Christopher Priest's *The Prestige* will finally get US paperback publication from Tor, who won the 'spiritual auction'.
- Tor will also be issuing Fritz Leiber's unpublished *The Dealings of Daniel Kesserich: A Study of the Mass-Insanity at Smithville*. An unknown Leiber manuscript has also been found, dating from 1936 and his correspondence with H. P. Lovecraft.
- And Tor has commissioned BSFA Award winner Brian Stableford to expand his Analog novella 'Inherit the Earth' into a novel. It'll be called *The Inheritors of Earth*.
- New from indefatigable poet Steve Sneddy is *Star-Spangled Shadows: Poetry in American Fanzines – The 1930s to 1960s*. Sneddy says it's "the first ever detailed overview of a fascinating time in genre poetry when top pros and editors like Blish, Knight, Kornbluth, Loomis, Pohl and Wolheim published their poetry in fanzines, and Lovecraft's work got its opportunity to become a cult." There's an A-Z of people and publications, an examination of the historical context including pulps and filk (sf songs), and extracts from poems and editorials of the time. It costs £15 inc. p&p (cheques payable to 'S. Sneddy') from Hilltop Press, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8PB.
- Stan Nicholls has been commissioned by Bantam Books to write a novelisation of the Columbia Pictures TV series *Dark Skies*, an aliens-killed-Kennedy-chase thriller so far unseen in the UK. It should be published in America in May 1997.
- American sf novelist Michael P. Kube-McDowell – pen-name of Michael Paul McDowell – plays guitar, keyboards and viola in the folk-rock group The Black Book Band, who last year released a live CD. It's called *First Contact* and is on Dodeka Records; it should be available through specialist importers.

Forever War Film?

Boss Films has bought the movie rights to Joe Haldeman's classic *The Forever War* for \$365,000. Very timely, with the *Starship Troopers* film due out this year; *Forever War*, published in 1974 and drawing on Haldeman's experiences in Vietnam (he was severely wounded there and won a Purple Heart), is widely seen as a rebuttal of the Heinlein book's militaristic philosophy.

A film of Robert A. Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* is definitely going ahead; a contract has been signed.

Best Sellers of 1996

The 'Bookwatch' top 15 paperback bestsellers in the UK in 1996 included only three titles of genre interest. Tom Clancy's *Executive Orders* (HarperCollins, £17.99) was 14th with 58,401 copies; Jane Goldman's *The X-Files Book of the Unexplained* (Simon & Schuster, £16.99) was 15th with 54,223; and Terry Pratchett's *Hogfather* (Gollancz, £15.99) came 11th with 69,092. The Pratchett figure is deceptive – it was only published in November. There was no sf, fantasy or horror titles in the top 15 paperbacks.

Publisher Dies

Liz Knights, publisher at Gollancz, died of cancer in mid-November at the age of 41. St editor Jo Fletcher said: "Liz was bright, committed, funny, supportive and an entirely wonderful person, loved by her colleagues, her authors and anyone who knew her. As a publisher, she combined flair, perspicacity, enthusiasm and determination. She leaves a husband, Ian Craig, and three stepchildren. She will be very deeply missed."

1996 was a tragic year for Gollancz, with the death of sf editor Richard Evans in May and now the loss of another major figure. Our sympathies to all at the company.

New Fantasy Zine

The recently launched *Victorian Tongue* is a magazine of 'Gothic Fantasy for the Millennium' supported by some of the best-known names in the genre. It's run by a collective composed of Storm Constantine, Clio Cordell, Graham Joyce, Brian Stableford and Freda Warrington; the editor is Eloise Cogio. 'Victorian Tongue' is a new concept in fanzines, conceived by Storm Constantine and Eloise Cogio, showcasing fiction of the dark and sensual that has been produced by writers drawn to the Gothic genre. It is already supported by a number of established fantasy and horror writers, who will contribute to the zine by providing editing services and article on the genre and their profession.

The magazine is keen to encourage writers as well as readers. "The editors are looking for good quality submissions of poetry, fiction, book reviews, related articles and artwork. All accepted, written fiction contributions will be given professional level editing and criticism." As VT is a non-profit-making collective there's no payment for material, but the attention of superlating writers should make up for that. *Victorian Tongue*, £1.80 inc. p&p (cheques payable to 'P. Kesterton') from 6 St. Leonard's Avenue, Stafford, ST17 4LT.

Many thanks to

John Bark, Paul Beardsley, Birmingham SF Group, Andrew M. Butler, Michael J. Cross, Steve Green, Steve Jeffery, Paul Kincaid, Dave Langford, Stan Nicholls, Chris O'Shea, Peterborough SF Club, Geoff Ryman, Andy Sawyer, Brian Stableford, Martin Tudor, Mark Valentine, and Julie Venner

recent & forthcoming books

Gollancz



Including Vista, Indigo

- Ursula K. Le Guin** *City of Illusions* (Vista: 5 Dec (R 1967); £4.99 pb, 192pp) — Early 'Hainish' novella.
- Arthur C. Clarke & Mike McQuay** *Richter 10* (Vista: 5 Dec (R 1996); £5.99 pb, 442pp) — Earthquake thriller. Clarke's only input was a 3-page movie outline, reprinted here as an addendum. McQuay did shortly after finishing the book.
- ★ **Gregory Benford** *Timescape* (Vista: 5 Dec (R 1980); £5.99 pb, 412pp) — Benford's best book, a time paradox story which is almost a homage to *Hoyle's The Black Cloud*, though better written. The story's still terrific. Benford's view of the English class system still rings false (it's all surface). 60s California still convinces. Well, he was there, but he was in the UK, too....
- Ian McDonald** *Chaga* (Vista: 5 Dec (R 1995); £5.99 pb)
- ★ **Gwyneth Jones** *Phoenix Gate* (● 16 Jan 97; £15.99 hb, 298pp) — Third in the 'Aelurian' sequence, following on from *White Queen* and *North Wind* and set in Paris 300 years after the aliens arrived. "There are worlds within worlds, in these last days of an alien empire on Earth."
- ★ **Philip Trewinnard** *The Pastor* (● 20 Feb 97; £16.99 hb, 352pp) — Trewinnard's 1996 book *The Burning* was a fine, character-driven low-key horror novel, and this concerns a woman's search for her twin sister, who's vanished into a 'a twilight world of fetishistic sado-masochism, where nothing and no one is quite what they seem. At the heart of it all is the Pastor, a mysterious man with a cult following, who holds some strange power over her.'
- Isaac Asimov** *Robot Dreams* (Vista: 20 Feb (R 1986); £5.99 pb)
- Isaac Asimov** *Robot Visions* (Vista: 20 Feb (R 1990); £5.99 pb)
- Stephen King** *Dark* **Simmons & George R. R. Martin** *Dark Visions* (Vista: 20 Feb; £5.99 pb)
- Arthur C. Clarke** *Imperial Earth* (Vista: 20 Feb (R 1975); £4.99 pb)
- Simon R. Green** *Deathstalker War* (Vista: 20 Mar (R 1995); £5.99 pb) — Reissue.
- Simon R. Green** *Deathstalker War* (Vista: ● 20 Mar; £5.99 pb, 576pp) — Third in the 'Deathstalker' series.
- Arthur C. Clarke** *The Fountains of Paradise* (Vista: 20 Mar (R 1979); £4.99 pb) — Reissue of Clarke's 'space elevator' book, set mostly in Tabor, a lightly disguised (and moved south a bit) Sri Lanka.
- Gregory Benford** *In the Ocean of Night* (Vista: 20 Mar (R 1977); £5.99 pb) — Reissue of the first 'Walsley' book.
- Peter James** *Getting Wired* (● Mar; £3.99 pb, 128pp ill.) — A 'TechnoTerrors' story, the first children's book from Brighton resident James, better known for near-future thrillers such as *The Alchemist*. A group of children decide to get Big Bertha, their school's ancient computer, on to the Internet. Illustrated by Derek Brazell.
- Steve Martin** *Picasso at the Lapin Agile and Other Plays* (Indigo: ● Mar; £6.99pb, 160pp ill.) — The US comic and actor turns to playwrighting. The title play — which will be staged in London in autumn 1997 — concerns an imagined meeting between Picasso and Einstein in 1904: "their dialogue becomes a compelling examination of science and art and their impact on a rapidly changing society." Also included are *WASP*, *The Zip-Zag Woman*, and *Pat for the Floating Lady*.
- ★ **M. John Harrison** *Signs of Life* (● Apr; £16.99 hb, 256pp) — "An up-to-the-minute romantic thriller" set in London and Budapest about a courier for the genetics industry and his relationship with Isabel, who wants to fly. She takes a new DNA-based genetic treatment, and Mick learns what he's been carrying. "Fashion and fast cars, computers, biotechnology and the Eastern European Mafia" and more.
- Duane Frankel** *Bad Memory* (● Apr; £15.99 hb, 384pp) — Techno-thriller by a Houston-based systems analyst about a large computer company subject to extortion from a hacker who's infiltrated their network.
- Thomas Tessier** *Fog Heart* (● 24 Apr; £16.99 hb, 256pp) — Supernatural thriller.
- Peter Dickinson** *The Lion Tamer's Daughter and Other Supernatural Stories* (● Apr; £11.99 hb, 192pp) — Four tales from the highly-regarded children's writer.
- Peter Dickinson** *The Blue Hawk* (Apr; £4.50 pb, 240pp ill.) — Reissued young adult fantasy.

Orion



Including Millennium, Phoenix, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Dent

- ★ **K. W. Jeter** *Blade Runner 3: Replicant Night* (● 7 Oct; £16.99 hb, 309pp) — Sequel to *Edge of Human*. Here Jeter engages in a typically Dickian reality slip, in which Deckard sets his story to a movie director and watches his life unfold as the film is shot.
- Michael Moorcock** *The Dancers At the End of Time* (7 Oct; £6.99 pb, 664pp) — Vol. 7 of the 'Eternal Champion'; contains *An Alien Heart* (whose dedications include Bob Galvatron and Lemmy of Motörhead), *The Hollow Lands* and *The End of All Songs*. There's another joyful introduction, this time reminding us of Moorcock's jackets at *fin de siècle* sartorial elegance in the sixties: "For a while I took to wearing oddy-cut t-shirts and trousers, dipping carmenes in green ink and dusting my embarrassingly robust features with talc in the hope of looking paler and therefore more interesting."
- Mercedes Lackey** *Storm Breaking* (● 7 Oct; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 435pp) — Fantasy, conclusion of the 'Mage Storms' trilogy in the Valdemar series (which now amounts to 19 very thick novels). Illustrated with some competent drawings by an uncredited artist (Lynn Dixon?).
- Angus Wells** *Exile's Challenge* (● 21 Oct; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 440pp) — Fantasy, conclusion of the *Exile* diptych and delayed from August. Wells lives in Nottingham and is a former sf and fantasy editor; he's also written a number of pseudonymous Westerns.
- Terry Goodkind** *Stone of Tears* (4 Nov; £6.99 pb, 1056pp) — Book 2 of 'The Sword of Truth'. More Significant Capitalisation, maps, and Swords with 'Truth' written on them in the further adventures of the cunningly-named Richard Cypher. Tricky Dicky?
- ★ **Allison Sinclair** *Blueheart* (● 18 Nov; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 348pp) — Second sf novel from the author of *Legacies*. A story of underwater-adapted humans on the aqueous colony planet Blueheart who are under threat of being phased out in favour of terraforming.
- Adam Nichols** *The Pathless Way* (● 18 Nov; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 407pp) — Fantasy set in the same world as *War of the Lord's Veil*. Nichols now lives in Canada after much globe-trotting.
- S. D. Perry** *Alphas* *The Labyrinth* (● 18 Nov; £14.99 hb, 216pp) — Novelisation of the 'Dark Horse' graphic novels. "On the space station Innomina the infamous Dr Paul Church is hiding the results of his latest experiments. His aim: to bring human and alien together as one being."
- S. D. Perry** is the daughter of Steve Perry, with whom she wrote *Aliens: The Female War*.
- Elen Dattlow** (ed.) *Wild Justice* (● Nov; £15.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 320pp) — Anth. of original stories themed on revenge, contributors include Joyce Carol Oates, Michael Marshall Smith, Christopher Fowler and Pat Cadigan.
- Tracy Goodkind** *Blood of the Fold* (● Dec; £16.99 hb, 672pp) — Book 3 of 'The Sword of Truth'.
- Michael Moorcock** *Eric of Melniboné* (Dec; £5.99 pb) — Vol. 8 of the 'Eternal Champion'.
- ★ **Greg Egan** *Distress* (Phoenix: ● Dec; £5.99 pb) — Hard sf with much philosophical speculation.
- Various Authors** *Omnibus* (Jan 97; £5.99 pb) — Contains *Rogue* and *Alien Harvest*.
- Mikey Zucker** *Reichert Beyond Ragnarok* (Jan; £6.99 pb) — Fantasy.
- ★ **James D. Watson** *The Double Helix* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson: Jan; £16.99 hb, 240pp) — Non-fiction. Classic account of the discovery of the structure of DNA, with a new introduction by Steve Jones. Recommended.
- William H. Calvin** *How Brains Think* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson: ● Feb; £11.99 hb, 176pp) — Non-fiction. A theoretical neurophysiologist examines issues of the brain, AI and the evolution and future direction of intelligence. Other intriguing titles in the 'Science Master' series include John D. Barrow *The Origin of the Universe*, Paul Davies *The Last Three Minutes*, Ian Stewart *Nature's Numbers*, Stephen H. Schneider *Laboratory Earth* and George C. Williams *Plan and Purpose in Nature*: all £6.99 pb.
- Mikey Zucker** *Reichert Prince of Demons* (● Feb; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 576pp) — Fantasy, the fifth 'Reichert' novel.
- ★ **Paul M. Sammon** *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner* (● Feb; £17.99 hb, 464pp) — Non-fiction. Hundreds of hours of interviews with all the key players involved in making the key of film of the last twenty years.
- Michael Moorcock** *The New Nature of the Catastrophe* (Feb; £6.99 pb)
- Richard White** (ed.) *King Arthur in Legend and History* (Dent: ● Feb; £22.00 hb, 400pp) — Anth. of Arthurian texts, many translated into English for the first time.
- Keith Thomas** *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson: Mar; £22.00 hb, 736pp) — Non-fiction. Classic 1971 account of 'why astrology, witchcraft, magical healing, divination, ancient prophecies, ghosts and fairies were all taken seriously by Englishmen of the 16th and 17th centuries, and how and why this changed.'
- ★ **Harry Harrison** *The Stainless Steel Rat Goes to Hell* (● Mar; £16.99 hb, 224pp) — The Rat tackles a religious cult which has kidnapped Angelina.
- Mercedes Lackey & Larry Dixon** *The Silver Gryphon* (Mar; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy.
- ★ **James Buxton** *The Wishing Tree* (Mar; £4.99 pb) — First-rate horror novel. Something nasty in Epping Forest... Recommended.
- ★ **Lucius Shepard** *Barnacle Bill the Spacer* (● Mar; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 256pp) — Coll. of Shepard's short fiction. Also includes "A Little Night Music," "The Beast of the Heartland," All the Perfume in Arab," "Human History," "The Sun Spider" and "Sports in America".
- Kristine Kathryn Rusch** *The Fey* *Rival* (● Apr; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 576pp) — Fantasy, third volume on the 'Fey' sequence.
- ★ **Stephanie Perry** *Alphas* *Labyrinth* (Apr; £4.99 pb)
- ★ **Bruce Sterling** (ed.) *The Murder Network* (● Apr; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 512pp) — Anth. of stories (some) based around cyberspace, computers and robots from Stephen King, Philip K. Dick, Greg Bear, William Gibson and others. Introduction by Sterling.
- Michael Moorcock** *The Prince With the Silver Hand* (Apr; £5.99 pb)
- James Bibby** *Ronan's Rescue* (Apr; £4.99 pb) — Humorous fantasy.

Key

pb = paperback; hb = hardback; tp = trade paperback; pp = extent
 ill. = illustrated; ed. = edited; R (x) = reissue / reprint (first publication date)
 coll. = story collection (same author); anth. = anthology (different authors)

★ = Highlight ● = Editor's choice ① = First UK edition

Treat future dates with caution. All unquoted remarks by Chris Tetterton.

Quoted comments are from publishers' material - caveat emptor

Voyager



Including HarperCollins, Flamingo, Fontana

- ★ **Michael Marshall Smith** *Spare* (HarperCollins: ● 24 Oct; £9.99 hb) — Follow-up to the much-praised *Only Forward*. Chase story concerning a group of children raised as spare-parts for rich bastards, and their no-hoper minder. Exciting but metaphorically murky.
- William Horwood** *The Willows and Beyond* (HarperCollins: ● 4 Nov; £12.99 hb) — Third of Horwood's sequels to *The Wind in the Willows*.
- Jack McDewitt** *Ancient Shores* (● 4 Nov; £5.99 pb)
- Samuel R. Delany** *Neverjona* (4 Nov; £6.99 pb)
- Barbara Hambly** *Mother of Winter* (● 4 Nov; £5.99 pb)
- Hal Schuster & Wendy Rathbone** *Star Trek: The Unauthorized A-Z* (● 4 Nov; £6.99 pb)
- Andrew Murray** *The Tolkien Quiz Book* (● 4 Nov; £4.99 pb)
- ★ **Brian Aldiss** *The Secret of This Book* (18 Nov; £5.99 pb)
- ★ **Philip K. Dick** *The Game Players of Titan* (18 Nov; £5.99 pb) — "We are entirely surrounded by Vugs." Recommended.
- Stephen Donaldson** *The One Tree; The Wounded Land; White Gold Welder* (18 Nov; £5.99 pb) — Reissue of Donaldson's second set of doorstops.
- Sharon Shinn** *Archangel* (18 Nov; £5.99 pb)
- ★ **Stephen Baxter** *Voyage* (● 21 Nov; £16.99 hb, 581pp + afterword, diagrams) — With superb timing Baxter visits Mars in his new novel, an impeccably-researched alternative history based on what might have happened had America followed up on the moon landings in 1969. Here, Kennedy survives the assassination attempt in 1963 — though wheelchair-bound — and exerts enough influence over Nixon to push for a Mars landing in 1986. It's written in a distinctly American style, and Baxter orchestrates a large cast with some skill. Recommended.
- Kevin J. Anderson** *The X-Files: Ruins* (2 Dec; £5.99 pb)
- Philip K. Dick** *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (2 Dec; £5.99 pb)
- ★ **Robert Holdstock** *Ancient Echoes* (2 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Mythago' novel. Recommended.
- Mike Jefferies** *Shadowlight* (2 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy.
- Sheri S. Tepper** *Grass* (2 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Reissue of the influential utopia.
- Sheri S. Tepper** *Gibbon's Decline and Fall* (● 2 Dec; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb)
- T. H. White** *The Once and Future King* (2 Dec; £8.99 pb)
- Jack Vance** *Night Lamp* (● Jan 97; £9.99 pb, c400pp) — "Against the backdrop of the Gaian Reach, the widely populated region of space where the full diversity of human development is revealed, the story of Jaro Fath unfolds: from wildling orphan to spaceship captain, a tale of adventure and discovery wittily told."
- Raymond E. Feist** *Rage of a Demon King* (● Jan; £16.99 hb, c400pp) — Fantasy, volume 3 in *The Serpentwar Saga*.
- ★ **Jack Womack** *Let's Put the Future Behind Us* (Flamingo: ● Jan; £8.99 pb, 310pp) — Associational. Fyrie satire set in the New Russia from the renowned smoker.
- J. G. Ballard** *Running Wild* (Flamingo: ● Jan; £4.99 pb, 112pp) — A novella.
- J. G. Ballard** *A User's Guide to the Millennium* (Flamingo: ● Jan; £6.99 pb, 320pp) — Coll. of Ballard's essays and reviews.
- J. R. R. Tolkien** *The Monsters and the Critics* (Jan; £9.99 pb, 256pp) — First paperback publication of seven of Tolkien's essays, including "On Fairy Stories".
- Douglas Rushkoff** *Children of Chaos: Surviving the End of the World as we Know It* (HarperCollins: ● Feb; £12.99 hb, 288pp) — Non-fiction. Examination of the way cyberculture has affected today's children, who have embraced it wholeheartedly.
- J. R. R. Tolkien** *Tales from the Perilous Realm* (Feb; £12.99 hb, 224pp) — Coll. of Tolkien's four shorter fairy tales. *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *Leaf By Niggle*, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* and *Smith of Wootton Major*.
- ★ **Peter Atkins** *Big Thunder* (HarperCollins: ● Feb; £16.99 hb, 352pp) — Delayed from last April. A Kim Newman-esque sounding tale concerning Valentine Dyson (I imagine this is a reference to Valentine Dyall, the black-voiced narrator of the *Appointment with Fear* radio series), vicious doctored avenger of the 1930's pulp magazine *Strange Thrills*, who materialises in present-day

Manhattan when his creator, Norbert Read, falls into a coma after a car crash. He saves a girl from a mugger who he then tortures to death, "the while delivering a lecture on the nature of the Universe, of reality before the Fall, the true significance of the Alchemists' Great Work — and the approaching reconciliation of the living with the dead." Dyson goes on to make a film of Read's most famous story, "Big Thunder" and extract vengeance on his viewers. Liverpool-born (now Los Angeles resident) Atkins wrote the screenplays for three of the four *Hellraiser* movies, and this is his second novel: the first was *Morningstar*.

William Horwood *Seekers at the Wulffrock* (HarperCollins: ● Feb; £16.99 hb, c400pp) — Concluding volume in Horwood's lupine series.

Alex Kershaw *Jack London: A Life* (HarperCollins: ● Feb; £20.00 hb, c320pp) — Biography of the author of the fascist dystopia *The Iron Heel*.

Julian May *Sky Trillium* (● Feb; £16.99 hb, c400pp) — Delayed from July. The fourth and last Trillium book, and the second by May alone.

★ **Arthur C. Clarke** *3001: The Last Odyssey* (● Mar; £16.99 hb, c400pp) — The final "Odyssey" book, allegedly, in which "the light of Lucifer [the name by which the ignited Jupiter is known] is extinguished . . . and for the second time in four million years, the Moonlith awakes. The limitless power of an alien technology has decided what part humanity must play in the evolution of the galaxy, whether it wants to or not."

Robin Hobb *Assassin's Quest* (● Mar; £16.99 hb, c400pp) — Final volume of the "Farseter Trilogy", though Hobb is now working on a new series set in the same world.

★ **Michael Shea** *Unity* (HarperCollins: ● Mar; £15.99 hb, 272pp) — Near-future political thriller from the former diplomat and Press Secretary to the Queen. "It is four years since Scotland became independent, and it is struggling. A worldwide recession has brought mass unemployment and led to growing civil unrest — the Scottish economy is collapsing. [No change here.] But not by accident — the discontent is being deliberately orchestrated as part of a covert and vicious international intrigue." A US-based multinational offers a solution, but at a price . . .

Susan Sheets-Pyenson & Lewis Pyenson *The Fontana History of Science in Society* (Fontana: ● Mar; £12.99 pb, 512pp ill.) — Non-fiction. Examines the interplay of science with society, religion, and democracy.

Steve Jones *In the Blood* (Flamingo: Mar; £9.99 pb, 320pp ill.) — Non-fiction from the fine populariser of science, subtitled "God, Genes and Destiny".

Humphrey Carpenter *The Inklings* (Mar; £7.99 pb, 304pp) — Paperback reissue of Carpenter's biography of the group of Oxford writers which included Tolkien and C. S. Lewis.

Anonymous *Tom Clancy's Op-Centre: Acts of War* (HarperCollins: ● Mar; £5.99 pb, 400pp) — Techno-thriller. "Created by Clancy and Steve Piczenick, the actual writer is uncredited."

Lawrence M. Krauss *The Physics of Star Trek* (Flamingo: Mar; £6.99 pb, 206pp) — Non-fiction (sort of) from a physics professor. Foreword by Stephen Hawking.

★ **Umberto Eco** *The Search for the Perfect Language* (Apr; £7.99 pb, c400pp) — Non-fiction, well described by its title.

★ **Douglas E. Winter** (ed.) *Millennium* (● Apr; £16.99 hb, c400pp) — A "wraparound novella" by Olive Barker frames a series of stories set in the decades of the twentieth century. Contributors include Joe R. Lansdale, F. Paul Wilson, Poppy Z. Brite, Whitley Streiber, Ramsey Campbell, and others.

★ **Stephen Baxter** *Vacuum Diagrams* (HarperCollins: ● Apr; £5.99 pb, c400pp) — Coll. of Baxter's "Xeelee" short stories, mostly published in *Interzone*.

Brian Lumley *Brain Lumley's Mythos Omnibus, Vol. 1* (HarperCollins: Apr; £6.99 pb, 688pp) — The first volume of Lumley's additions to the Cthulhu Mythos, contains *The Burrowers Beneath*, *The Transition of Titus Crow*, and *The Clock of Dreams*. The second volume will be issued in June.

★ **Melanie McGrath** *Hard, Soft and Wet* (HarperCollins: Apr; £16.99 hb, 320pp) — Non-fiction. Investigation into worldwide cyberculture and its associated lifestyles: road pranks, virus writers, technomads (nice phrase!), neo-Luddites, ambient DJs, email junkies and so forth. McGrath is British, and in the course of writing this travelled widely: London, San Francisco, Wales, New York, Singapore, Moscow, Prague, Berlin, Reykjavik. Worth investigating.

Orbit



Including Little, Brown, Warner

- Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle & Steven Barnes** *The Dragons of Heorot* (Sep (R 1995); £9.99 pb) — Sequel to *The Legacy of Heorot*.
- L. E. Modesitt, Jr.** *The Death of Chaos* (Oct; £6.99 pb) — Fantasy. Continues the story of Lerris from *The Magic of Recluse*.
- J. V. Jones** *A Man Betrayed* (● Nov; £16.99 hb, £5.99 pb) — Fantasy, volume 2 of *The Book of Vows* trilogy; the first was *The Baker's Boy* and the final volume, *Master and Fool*, will be published later in 1997.
- David Feintuch** *Midshipman's Hope* (● Nov; £5.99 pb) — First volume of *The Seafort Saga*, of adventure on the high seas of space — "Reads like a collaboration between Heinlein and C. S.

Forester," says David Gerrold. Even the covers look like recruiting posters. Three further volumes will be issued monthly.

★ **Tom Holt** *Paint Your Dragon* (● Dec; £15.99 hb) — Humorous fantasy. "Sculptress Bianca Wilson is a living legend. St George is also a legend, but not quite so alive. However, when Bianca's sculpture of the patron saint and his scaly chunk gets a bit too life-like, it's bound to open up a very unpleasant can of worms . . . especially when the Dragon decides that it's time to set the record straight."

Tom Holt *My Hero* (Dec (R 1996); £5.99 pb) — Paperback of Holt's previous novel.

David Feintuch *Challenger's Hope* (● Dec; £5.99 pb)

David Feintuch *Prisoner's Hope* (● Jan 97; £5.99 pb)

David Feintuch *Fisherman's Hope* (● Feb 97; £5.99 pb)

★ **John Clute & John Grant** (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (● 3 Apr; £45.00 hb, 992pp)

— The sibling volume to *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. This needs no recommendation from me: it is, quite simply, essential. See page 3 for further details. The book will be launched shortly before the publication date at Eastercon in Liverpool, and copies will be available there.

Hodder & Stoughton

Including NEL, Coronet



Mark Pepper *The Short Cut* (1 Nov; £16.99 hb) — Debut horror novel from actor Pepper, written whilst 'resting' — he's recently been seen in *Coronation Street*, *Pie in the Sky* and *Prime Suspect 3*. 'A Faustian tale of an out-of-work actor tempted by his new, smooth, scary manager.'

Stephen Spruill *Daughter of Darkness* (1 Nov; £16.99 hb) — Horror.

Ben Bova *Moons* (1 Nov; £16.99 hb) — Near future Yankee sf.

Buzz Aldrin and **John Barnes** *Encounter With Tiber* (NEL 21 Nov; £5.99 pb) — 'An epic of space exploration and alien contact with a dream team' — one of whom really has 'been there, done that!' Arthur C. Clarke says: 'It quite stunned. Buzz and John have written a classic. Its scope is astonishing, and it contains much wisdom and profound philosophy.'

A. A. Attanasio *The Dark Shore* (NEL 21 Nov; £5.99 pb) — High fantasy. Two sequels are on the way.

Jonathan Nasaw *The World On Blood* (NEL 21 Nov; £5.99 pb) — Horror.

Mark Dery *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century* (Coronet 5 Dec; £5.99 tp) — Non-fiction about the darker side of net culture, about which J. G. Ballard says: '[it] is without doubt the best guide I have read to the new computer culture that will soon dominate our lives.'

Kevin J. Anderson and **Doug Beeson** *Ignition* (NEL 5 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Techno-thriller, a 'cross between Apollo 13 and *The Hard*'. Beeson is a White House advisor on NASA.

Pierre Oulet *The Third Pandemic* (5 Dec; £16.99 hb) — Near-future biotech thriller from the author of *The Deus Machine*. Includes a 'supercomputer composed of living cells'.

Martha Lawrence *Cold Heart of Capricorn* (5 Dec; £16.99 hb) — Horror.

Legend

Including Arrow, Century, Hutchinson



Harry Harrison and **John Holm** *King and Emperor* (5 Dec; £5.99 pb)

Alan Dean Foster *The False Mirror* (5 Dec; £5.99 pb)

Maggie Furey *Harp of Winds* (2 Jan 97; £16.99 hb) — Fantasy.

Diana Gabaldon *The Drums of Autumn* (1 2 Jan; £16.99 hb) — Historical fantasy.

John Danton *Neanderthal* (2 Jan; £4.99 pb)

Tad Williams *Otherland* (1 2 Jan; £16.99 hb) — Near-future sf from the noted fantasist, set largely in virtual reality. First in a series of four books. Tad says: 'So far my only real

The Rest

Jane Goldman *The X-Files Book of the Unexplained Vol. 2* (Simon & Schuster: 24 Oct; £17.99 hb) — Goldman is a journalist married to Jonathan Ross, and says: 'Inside my books you'll find facts, theories, folklore, and a lot more besides — but I promise you'll never find one masquerading as another.' The first volume was a genuine bestseller.

J. K. Potter *Neurotica: Images of the Bizarre* (Paper Tiger: 1 Nov; £12.99 large format tp, 128pp il) — Horror illustrator Potter's second book of collected artwork, following on from

Dave Langford *The Silence of the Langford* (NESFA Press: 1 Nov; £12.99 tp, 278pp il, ISBN 0-915368-62-5) — Open this at random, and I defy you not to laugh. It's a collection of interviews, reviews, essays, speeches, stories and columns, including nearly everything from *Let's Hear It For the Deal Man* and another 200 pages of fresh material. (There's also a full bibliography, so now you can track down those sticky copies of *Knave* which featured Dave's stories.) Learn how to play the completely barny game of 'Fuzz-Buzz', enjoy with Dave the delights of really awful sf, discover The Truth about his job at AWRE at Aldermaston, and what he doesn't dare put into his novel *The Leaky Establishment*! [The set-up at AWRE bore about the same relation to real computers as (in the organisational field) the BSFA does to IBM], gibber as the Langfords move house, shudder at Dave's run-in with Whitley Streiber. And much more. Dave's talent is to combine an immaculately light touch with insight, wit and intelligence. His serious points are made deftly, and they're not unbarbed, only his charm and friendliness stand in the way of enraged authors, who usually end up buying him a pint. Very warmly recommended indeed, and you can get it from Andromeda or other specialist shops.

Mike Ashley (ed.) *The Chronicles of the Holy Grail* (Raven: 18 Nov; £5.99 pb, 448pp) — Anth of Grail-connected stories, both new and reprinted. Contributors include Brian Stanfield, Taniith Lee, Peter Tremayne, Darrell Schweitzer, Parke Godwin; there's a substantial introduction.

David Cronenberg *Crash* (Faber: 1 Dec; £6.99 tp) — Script of Cronenberg's controversial film of the J. G. Ballard novel. See review on page 12.

Lucie Arnott *Theonising the Fantastic* (Arnold: 12 Dec; £12.99 (?) tp) — Analysis of 19th and 20th century fantastic fiction by a lecturer in English at the University of Wales. The book 'illustrates and analyses the impact that recent critical theory has had upon current understanding of [...] fantasy fictions and their place in relation to the literary mainstream, [...] and examines how the genre demographics perceived to exist between fairy tales, gothic horror and science fiction can be productively broken down and rethought.' Arnott concentrates on six

Harry Turtledove *World War: Striking the Balance* (5 Dec; £16.99 hb) — Final volume in the alternative world tetralogy concerning an invasion by lacertine aliens during World War II.

Simon Clark *Dark* (NEL: 5 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Third novel from the Doncaster-resident author of the interesting *Book of Cray*.

Michael Williams *Arctady* (NEL: 5 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Dark fantasy from the author of *Weasel's Luck*. 'Williams's passion for the works of Milton, Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley informs the imagery and culture of *Arctady* in a wonderful swirling book reminiscent of Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast*'.

William Hope Hodgson *The House on the Borderland* (NEL: 5 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Classic dark fantasy / horror / sf story. Importantly, this is an unabridged edition — most recent paperback editions have been cut. There's an afterword by Ian Sinclair.

Chaz Brenchley *Dispossession* (NEL: 16 Jan 97; £5.99 pb) — Horror from the Newcastle-resident exponent of 'Northern Gothic'. 'A man awakes in hospital with no memory of the previous months. As he struggles to unravel the puzzle of his new life and solve a crime for which he has evidence stored in his computer, he turns to his oldest friend — a beautiful but fallen angel.'

Philip G. Williamson *Enchantment's Edge* (NEL: 16 Jan; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy, volume 1 in a series. The sequel is:

Philip G. Williamson *Orbs of the World* (16 Jan; £16.99 hb)

John Courtenay Grimwood *Neo-addix* (NEL 16 Jan; £5.99 pb) — SF, first publication.

Simon Clark *King Blood* (5 Feb; £16.99 hb) — Horror.

Allan Cole *When the Gods Slept* (5 Feb; £16.99 hb) — Fantasy, first in 'The Timura Trilogy'.

C. J. Cheryls *Clouds Rider* (5 Feb; £16.99 hb) — SF.

John Douglas *Zoo Event* (NEL: 6 Feb; £5.99 pb) — Horror.

Eric S. Nyland *A Game of Universe* (1 NEL 6 Feb; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy, first publication.

Mark Pepper *The Short Cut* (NEL: 20 Mar; £5.99 pb) — Horror.

unhappy about the book is that, since it's going to be four volumes, there are going to be 2700 middle books. Gack. No one sensible likes to write middle books.'

Andrew Harman *A Midsummer Night's Gene* (5 Feb; £4.99 pb) — Humorous fantasy.

Maggie Furey *The Sword of Flame* (5 Feb; £16.99 hb) — Fantasy, finale to the well-received 'Artifacts of Power' series. Furey will be touring to promote this.

Robert Jordan *Conan the Magnificent* (5 Feb; £4.99 pb) — Heroic fantasy.

Paul Barnett *Strider's Galaxy* (5 Feb; £5.99 pb) — SF.

Terry Brooks *First of Shannara* (6 Mar; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy.

Robert Jordan *Conan Chronicles* (11 6 Mar; £15.99 hb) — Heroic fantasy.

Maggie Furey *Diamarra* (13 Apr; £16.99 hb; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy, first publication. Delayed from November.

Terri Windling *The Wood Wife* (5 Apr; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy.

Robert Jordan *Conan the Triumphant* (3 Apr; £4.99 pb) — Heroic fantasy.

works: the 'Alice' books, *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*, and Iain Banks's *The Bridge*.

Jeanette Winterson *God Symmetries* (Penguin Granta: 1 Jan; £6.99 pb) The sixth novel from the author of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Saving the Cherry*. This continues Winterson's move away from conventional narrative into the novel of ideas, and concentrates on modern physics (a subject of increasing fascination to mainstream novelists): the 'gut' of the title is the postulated Grand Unified Theory, and the heroine Alice is an astrophysicist, born on a tug on the River Mersey.

David Weber *Honor Among Enemies* (Bantam: 1 Jan; £4.99 pb, 543pp) — First UK publication of an Honor Harrington novel, an sf military-adventure series successful in the US.

Bizarrely, Bantam are starting with the sixth book in the series, which may make it a little hard to follow.

Michael P. Kube-McDowell *Star Wars 3: Tyrant's Nest* (Bantam: 9 Jan; £4.99 pb, 366 pp+adverts) — Kube-McDowell — pronounced CUE-bow — lives in Michigan and his novel *Empire* was once nominated for the Dick Award; he now seems to concentrate on tie-ins.

Patrick McCormack *Sanctuary* (Raven: 1 Jan; £12.99 hb, 320pp) — Fantasy set in Dark Age Britain just before the death of King Arthur.

John Steakley *Vampires* (Signet: 30 Jan; £5.99 pb, 368pp) — Contemporary vampire thriller.

Joe Donnelly *Twilights Eyes* (Michael Joseph: 1 Jan; £14.99 hb, 384pp) — Psychological thriller set in the 60s from the author of:

Joe Donnelly *Incubus* (Signet: 30 Jan (R 1996);

£5.99 pb, 544pp) — Horror / Terc hybrid from the Dumbarton-resident journalist, exploiting the power that babies have over people. Stylistically much improved over his previous novels, but the subject matter is a little worrying.

Anita Ganeri (ed.) *True Mystery Stories* (NEL: 1 Feb; £9.99 pb, 352pp) — 'Thirty of the world's most fascinating unexplained phenomena,' possibly including why there isn't an 'X' in the title.

Terrance Dicks (ed.) *True Horror Stories* (Raven: 1 Feb; £4.99 pb, 352pp) — True tales of horror from the former Dr Who writer: it's not known how much BBC management is featured.

Jay Russell *Burning Bright* (Raven: 1 Mar; £5.99 pb, 320pp) — Horror story set in London's

Cable Street riots of 1934 and contemporary Spitalfields. Looks interesting.

Patrick McCormack *Albion: The Last Companion* (Raven: 1 Apr; £6.99 pb, 384pp) — Fantasy.

This may be a reissued *Sanctuary*, above; the PR is unclear.

THE CASE HISTORY —

I —, being suddenly possessed by a writing demon in May 1995, projectile-vomits works of fiction, and far from seeking the services of an exorcist decides to take this to the limit. Multiple manuscripts later and craving feedback suitable for a writer-in-embryo, she joins the BSFA and becomes a member of an Orbiter. She attends her first Eastercon, where Tanya Brown enlists her as a paperback reviewer and she meets Guest of Honour Colin Greenland. She signs up for Arvon course No. 41 (SF / F), the workshop taught by Colin and Gwyneth Jones, and prepares to be illuminated.

This is her story.

I had very little idea of what to expect. Would it be fun? Would it give me handy hints to transmute that dreaded data-dump? Would this workshop adopt Brian Stableford type rigour to temper my ego ("this is extremely painful but something you must learn to endure" — Focus 29)? I hoped for this and dreaded it.

This particular course (26-31 August 1996), taking place somewhere in darkest Devon, had its fair share of gremlins, some due to illness on the part of the organisers. The information on how much work would be assessed was late in arriving, giving me plenty of time to conceive grandiose visions of getting feedback on structure and general content of vast amounts of prose. Be warned — submitted work should be 2,000 words and no more. Also note that you do your own cooking, in shifts of five, something I actively enjoyed, although others turned pale at the thought of cooking for twenty. Other minor quibbles arose regarding the brochure — something described as a five-day course could be taken to mean, say, 4½ days tuition. Only after booking are you sent a slip telling you not to arrive before 4.00pm on the Monday. The course starts with a meal at 7.00.

Totleigh Barton is a pre-Domesday Book thatched manor house, beautiful and isolated — and noisy. The flagstones on the lower floor and the gaps between the stout oak boards on the upper floor amplify sound and allow light to permeate the bedrooms in almost supernatural fashion. Woe betide those sleeping over the kitchen or dining room or near plumbing, for they get to know the converse and habits of their fellows in unthought, unwanted detail. Don't expect to get much sleep if your Arvon course takes place in Devon, rather than at their Yorkshire or Inverness sites.

Each day included workshops taken by Colin and Gwyneth between 9.30 and 11.30, after which the hard part of their day began (each of the sixteen participants is allocated one hour with the tutors during which those 2,000 words are discussed, and other matters arising if there is time) and you were free to write. Evenings included a How-To session on submitting work, and readings by tutors or a guest reader (Terri Windling) or, on the final night, fellow attendees.

The morning workshops were writing exercises of the 'consequences' type rather than systematic teaching. Useful, enjoyable, but limited. However, perhaps this is intrinsic to the Arvon ethos, which is deliberately egalitarian. Maybe any week will see a very mixed bag of participants. Even this, avowedly a specialist course, attracted people who had a week free, or who used to read science fiction as a teenager or who couldn't make it on to the scriptwriting course. There were of course many, including myself, who were keen sf / f readers — one woman had won her place in a competition with the first chapter of a fantasy novel. But there were also those who, far from being attracted by the merits of Colin and Gwyneth as tutors, didn't seem to know who they were. I heard Colin addressed variously as Alan, and Mr Greenwood; he bore it graciously in silence.

So, if this workshop does not take this narrative-apart-and-see-how-it-works, what does it do, and who does it do it for?

It gets like-minded people together (female people, particularly when young, may have to go a long way before meeting another woman interested in sf, never mind writing it). And the closest intimacy does provide bonds.

It provides a venue for writing and thinking undisturbed, where if you want to stop for a coffee, you can chat with someone who will very likely be interested and understanding about what you are doing or trying to do.

It's weirdly stimulating, an out-of-time experience that cuts entirely loose from daily routine (maybe this had something to do with the lack of sleep). Being there made me focus on what I want from writing and how I want my writing to improve.

Rubbing along with two experienced writers is not to be sneezed at — from the dissemination of factual tidbits to more general encouragement.

the view from the manor house

janet
barron
visits arvon

I also came away with a bundle of intangible benefits not easily put onto the page. If I can find the sort of workshop that Brian Stableford refers to, I will certainly give it a try — but the Arvon week was immensely valuable as a writer's refuelling station, a pusher's pistons.

And yes, it was fun.

— © Janet Barron 1997

The Arvon Foundation's courses cost roughly £250, which includes all food, tuition and accommodation. There are also a limited number of bursaries and grants available for the unemployed, students, pensioners, and others on low incomes. For further information and details of 1997 courses contact:

The Arvon Foundation

Totleigh Barton
Sheepwash
Beaworthy
Devon
EX21 5NS

Tel: 01409 231338 Fax: 01409 231144

the view from the high street

Other surprises are the omission of both Isaac Asimov and Robert A. Heinlein. I always suspected that Asimov's fiction would date spectacularly badly, but the lack of a Heinlein title — *Stranger in a Strange Land*, perhaps — is more puzzling. But if they do a similar list this year *Mystic Chris* confidently predicts *Starship Troopers* will be on it.

Neuromancer doesn't get a look-in, and neither, sadly, does Alfred Bester. They've chosen what is probably the best *Disworld* book, though I'm surprised there isn't another (they're booksellers after all, and nobody sells like Pratchett). The Banks is an interesting choice — it's one of his more 'difficult' sf books.

Voyager clearly wins the publishers' race, with seven titles out of the twenty-two. I've read seventeen (the omissions are the fantasy doorstops). The oldest book is *Dune* (1965). Seven of the authors are British. Starting a library? You could do worse than this list; it'll set you back £128.78.

— Chris Terran

AFTER LAST issue's look at which sf books academics find interesting, here's the commercial view. Last May *The Bookseller* magazine printed a list of twenty-two 'core stock titles' for sf and fantasy, shown on the right. The magazine's audience is, of course, your friendly neighbourhood bookstore manager and buyer, so the list is a pretty good indication of what they think you want to buy. All are paperbacks and currently in print.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is the inclusion of two Patrick Tilly titles. *Fade-Out* (1975) is a minor technothriller with UFO overtones, and *Mission* (1981) is in the Jesus-was-an-astronaut tradition. Perhaps the success of *The X-Files* is giving Tilly a push, but if there were to be any of his titles at all I would have guessed at an 'Amtrak' book. Baffling.

Science fiction and fantasy: core stock titles

Iain M. Banks	<i>Feersum Endjinn</i>	Orbit £5.99
Greg Bear	<i>Blood Music</i>	Legend £4.99
Arthur C. Clarke	<i>Rendezvous With Rama</i>	Orbit £4.99
Raymond E. Feist	<i>Magician</i>	Voyager £5.99
David Gemmell	<i>Wolf in Shadow</i>	Legend £5.99
William Gibson	<i>Virtual Light</i>	Penguin £5.99
William Gibson & Bruce Sterling	<i>The Difference Engine</i>	Vista £5.99
Colin Greenland	<i>Take Back Plenty</i>	Voyager £5.99
Karin Herbert	<i>Dune</i>	NEL £5.99
Katherine Kerr	<i>Daggerspell</i>	Voyager £5.99
Julian May	<i>The Many-Coloured Land</i>	Pan £5.99
Larry Niven	<i>Ringworld</i>	Orbit £5.99
Jeff Noon	<i>Vurt</i>	Picador £5.99
Terry Pratchett	<i>Guards! Guards!</i>	Corgi £4.99
Kim Stanley Robinson	<i>Red Mars</i>	Voyager £5.99
Dan Simmons	<i>Hyperion</i>	Headline £5.99
Neal Stephenson	<i>Snow Crash</i>	Roc £5.99
Patrick Tilly	<i>Fade-Out</i>	Warner £5.99
Patrick Tilly	<i>Mission</i>	Warner £5.99
Vernor Vinge	<i>A Fire Upon the Deep</i>	Voyager £5.99
Janny Wurts	<i>Warhost of Vastmark</i>	Voyager £5.99
David Zindell	<i>Neverness</i>	Voyager £5.99

opinion

-Casting The Net- Andrew M. Butler ponders the domain of academic sf

TOP ME if you've heard this one before. In October 1991 I bumped into this bloke at the Philip K. Dick Celebration who was researching a doctorate on Dick: "I'm researching a doctorate on Dick," he said. Those were his words. "So am I." Those were mine. Both of us had found out about the event by accident, and found each other by another accident. We also found a third person, also researching Dick.

Over the next few months, as James Kneale (for it was he) and I sounded out each other's ideas, we began to wonder how many more of us there were out there, researching PKD and radical alterity. We decided that for the good of our Common V (or some such words for those initials) we would set up the Science Fiction Academic Network – later renamed to the Academic Fantastic Fiction Network – and allow academic to spake unto academic. (This nice story omits Mark Bould, whom James Kneale met through the small ads in *Interzone*, and who may have been part of the original idea, only to disappear off to milk cows whilst we started the hard work.)

Off went a number of letters to luminaries and looming luminaries – Tom Shippey, Edward James, Jenny Woolmark, David Seed, Andy Sawyer and so on. Some replied, full of enthusiasm. Some replied, warning us against being deluged by enthusiasts. Some never replied. We took a pile of flyers to a conference called Impossibility Fiction, where people said things like "I wish there was an academic journal for sf." "What about *Foundation*, *Science-Fiction Studies* or *Extrapolation*?" we replied. "Never heard of them," they said.

In December of 1993 we held our first conference, at UCL. "I wish there was an academic journal for sf." "What about *Foundation*, *Science-Fiction Studies* or *Extrapolation*?" we replied. "Never heard of them," they said. Two conferences later the academics were no longer saying things like that, and we had flyers for two of the three journals.

That was the sort of information that the AFFN was set up to share, along with details of conferences, publications, calls for papers and sf resources. We also aimed to hold conferences, and publish a newsletter on a two-to-three monthly basis. After three conferences and sixteen newsletters and forty-two months we've more or less achieved what we set out to do. The newsletter is now emailed to people on three continents.

In a sense we perform an equivalent function to items two and four of the Science Fiction Foundation, disseminating information about sf and investigating its usefulness in education. Most of our members are within the academic world. But even so we don't want to be the SFF or FoF, whatever they end up as. Nor do we wish to be a highbrow version of the BSFA, which aims to promote sf literature, according to its Articles of Association.

But we ought to be able to work together so that when someone says, "I wish there was an academic journal for sf," we can point them towards Edward James – or Andy Sawyer's article in *Matrix* 122. When someone wants to know a good book to read we could point them towards the reviews in *Vector* or *Foundation*. When someone wants to know who else is researching radical alterity, they can be pointed towards James Kneale or myself. Half a dozen of us have feet in all three camps (mutants) and this is to be encouraged.

Academically, sf is at a crossroads in Britain. In 1996 there were at least four sf conferences. It may be that for conferences the AFFN is obsolete – there are enough specialist events without our manufacturing them. If anyone can supply laurels, we're willing to rest on them. But we're very much aware of a whole world of academia out there which we barely touch. Two anecdotes:

1) At Warwick in 1995 several hundred people gathered together to sing the praise of William Gibson. A few other names emerged – Butler, Cadigan, Jones – but on the whole a certain cyberpunk emerged as not only the basis of academic study, but of philosophy and lifestyle, with very little regard to there having been any sf before him.

2) At Liverpool in 1996 an academic (who teaches media) pooh-poohed Octavia Butler as being only read by half a dozen or so southern-Californian types. Any suggestion that she was being studied in feminist, African-American and sf academic journals probably would have proved his point. We were elitist and were ignoring the true sf (from which the written stuff is but a backwater): *Star Trek* and its ilk.

So the question (to which I do not have a satisfactory answer) is this: whose sf are we promoting? Hundreds of (predominantly) young (and white, and male) academics find meaning in *Neuromancer*. I'd rather save a tree than write on it myself. But the experience must be valid, nonetheless. At the same time I had to spell *Neuromancer* to the half-dozen journalists I spoke to when I organised the Hull conference. I also spent hours explaining that sf was more than just *Star Trek*, only to find both newspapers added *Trek*-related photos to the stories....

Perhaps this is just a natural phase; after all, a hundred undergraduate essays every year ponder the question of Hamlet's madness so why shouldn't they argue about radical alterity in Gibson? And it's certainly easier for conglomerations of articles to appear: Dr X writes on Gibson, Professor Y writes another disputing her findings.

When I wrote a paper on Jack Womack for the Liverpool conference, I had nothing to kick against. Neither did Veronica Holliger (an editor of SFS), although she took support from a comparison with *Ridley Walker* and *A Clockwork Orange*. Being the second speaker on Womack, I was accused (partly in jest) by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr (another SFS editor) of making him canonical. At least half a dozen people said they'd have to get round to reading him. Articles may follow.

It would be possible to write articles on (say) Compton, Coney and Cowper, but we need something more organic than that. We need to msp sf rather than take random samples. And each of us cartographers has her own agenda. But at least the AFFN, BSFA and SFF/FoF can pool resources and compare agendas.

And there are other agendas, too. James Kneale is a geographer. One scientist attended the Liverpool conferences. Sf is not just the property of literature and cultural studies, it is also the property of scientists, linguists, psychologists and even (hello Edward!) medieval historians. As we wrote in the manifesto: we aim to be inclusive rather than exclusive. For us to achieve this, others must come forward and identify themselves.

— © Andrew M. Butler 1997

-What Is SF Anyway? - Roger Wilson wonders if it matters

WHO KNOWS, and who cares? This is one of the great debates of the 20th century, and will probably provide fans with a part-time conversation topic for the next millennium. My assertion is that it doesn't matter; what is relevant is good literature and / or entertainment.

First, look at the source. Can writers tell us what category they're writing in? From the evidence – anthology introductions and the like – there are no hard and fast rules. Some good ideas, but no consensus.

The companies who publish the books don't know: sf can be mainstream if it's by a 'normal' author, horror if it's by Stephen King. Conversely, 'sf' authors have traditionally struggled to get mainstream recognition; Philip K. Dick and Kurt Vonnegut are usually mentioned. Other examples of the confusion are Elton's first three books, *Stark*, *Gridlock* and *This Other Eden*. These were not sold as sf, but they are, extrapolating near futures from current events. Whether you agree with that extrapolation is another matter.

The next problem is that the retailers (and libraries) don't know what sf is either. One of my pet hates is going to the sf section and finding 90%+plus fantasy books. I am reading Terry Pratchett's *Hogfather* as I write; it has a label on it saying 'SF', but surely the Discworld books should be categorised under 'Humour'? That is their main attribute.

So now we arrive at the punters who buy, read, watch and listen to the stuff. If sf and similar books are read by about 15 million people, then I would estimate that there are approximately 14½ million ideas of what sf is all about. And no one is wrong. Sf to me is about being open-minded, accepting new ideas and their development. Inherent in this is the rejection of labels and categories, though these will create expectations.

I don't read much non-sf / fantasy, but this is due to time constraints and not because "it isn't sf". Conversely, if I'm not enjoying an sf or fantasy book I stop reading it, and probably don't buy any more by that author. So go out and buy, read and watch what you like, not what you think you should.

— © Roger Wilson 1997



Alice Krige as the Borg Queen and Patrick Stewart as Captain Picard.

let's do the
time warp...
again

john ashbrook

reviews

star trek: first contact

RIKER: "Ready to make history?"
LaFORGE: "Always!"

First Contact is the eighth 'Star Trek' movie, yet it proudly boasts a number of firsts. It is the first not to be weighed down by Shatner and Co. It is the first which neither requires nor encourages previous knowledge of 'Trek'. It is the first mature 'Trek' movie.

What do I mean by 'mature'? *First Contact* refuses to cling to old faithful criteria, which, however relevant in the summer of love, are hardly appropriate to an audience born a decade after the Apollo programme died. Kirk's crew boldly went where they'd been before, for nearly thirty years; Picard's posse chart a different course. How is it to deal credibly with the future if it can't even acknowledge the requirements of the present? Simple: they've brought the whole enterprise up (or down) to date.

The film doesn't fetishise all the paraphernalia of Star Fleet, as the previous movies did. There are no long, lingering shots of the shiny new Enterprise 'E' (indeed, they hardly even mention that it is a new ship). No jokey establishing scenes to get the audience settled back into an old familiar rhythm. The introductory voice-over tells us the dreaded Borg are already on an intercept course with Earth. Visually, we open amid the stars in Picard's eye, then pull out to an impossibly long and chillingly effective establishing shot of the interior of the Borg ship. From the micro to the mega in one smooth action.

As with the new uniforms and decor, this film is greyer and grimmer than those which preceded it. It draws on a more restrained colour palette; Jerry Goldsmith provides his most muscular score in years, if not decades, and thematically, the film deals with some sore points such as: what actually happened after WW3 to create the huggy-kissy Star Fleet generation?

What happened was: Zeffram Cochran. He invented the warp drive, heralded a new galactic age and, along the way, came to be revered as a god. As portrayed by James Cromwell (last seen jiggling for a pig in *Babe*) Cochran is an alcoholic curmudgeon with a soft spot for VERY LOUD rock 'n' roll. The last thing he wants is hero worship. Money? Yes! Whiskey? Definitely! Adulation? Nah.

The message he presents to the Trekkies, with irony so thick it makes you choke, is simple: don't worship heroes; they fart too. Cochran's cynicism is a breath of '90s apathy in the goodie-goodie world of the Federation, lampooning the bright-eyed earnestness of the regulars, and opening the film up to a non-Trekkie audience. His assistant (lover?) Lily (played enthusiastically by the greatly underrated Alfre Woodard) charmingly brings proceedings down to Earth, so to speak, with lines like: "Borg? Sounds Swedish."

Nevertheless, Cochran is the Borg's prime target. They tear open a hole in time, drop back three hundred years, and set about suppering his Warp Flight with the intention of stopping the Federation from ever being formed. Before Harlan

Ellison reaches for his lawyers again (and in case James Cameron is thinking of beating him to it this time) *First Contact* makes no bones about its source material. Those Borg absolutely will not stop... ever. And they will be back! Hey, if you're going to be all postmodern about it, you may as well postmodernise the best.

As with the regular TV episodes, the movie employs a primary / secondary plot structure: the first being the battle against the Borg aboard the Enterprise, the second being the fight to get Cochran spaceborne in time to make his appointment with destiny. Given the wider canvas of the movie screen, they have also employed a tertiary plot concerning the android, Data's imprisonment in the Borg hive, and his seduction / torture by the Borg queen, played by Alice Krige with a Hoover sticking out of her head.

In some ways this third story forms the heart of the film, as it analyses precisely what the Borg do. They force evolution ('uplift' as David Brin would call it) on you whether you want it or not. Usually they take a biological lifeform and add cybernetics to 'improve' it; with Data the process must be reversed if his 'distinctiveness' is to become part of their collective. I never thought a 'Trek' movie would deal with existentialism, but then life's full of surprises.

In keeping with the gravitas Stewart has always brought to the rôle of captain, not only does Picard elect to go down with his ship when things reach an impasse (not a dignity which Kirk - who saw off three ships in his time - could ever claim) but he chillingly perpetrates the most unthinkable act a captain can: when his crewmen start to metamorphose, he calmly executes them. Never before have the poor sods in red jerseys fallen prey to their own superiors. As one Borg lays broken and leaking before him, he dispassionately informs us that its name had once been Ensign Lynch - a confession of his own culpability as well as a sly nod, on the part of the scriptwriters, to the debt the Borg owe to David Lynch's vision of House Harkonnen in *Dune*.

Overall, first-timer Frakes's direction betrays his TV experience, with some of the set-pieces looking distractingly pedestrian, whilst a few too many of the special effects sequences are just not special enough. Nevertheless, the film doesn't need to fall back on spectacle and physical beauty; it has enough passion and incident to overcome - and even overwhelm - these few shortcomings.

As with any successful modern action movie, there are plot holes you could steer a planet through, but hopefully the whole romp charges past you so quickly that questions like "How do they generate the time warp to get back home?" won't trouble you until long after the event. Instead, take home the realisation, with justifiable quantities of surprise, that *Star Trek: First Contact* is an upstanding and outstanding piece of Hollywood technorama, with a captivating text, a laudable depth of subtext and, at the heart, a nobility which, as the Borg queen wryly comments: "... is a quality we sometimes lack."

— © John Ashbrook 1997

WITH THE MEDIA OUTRAGE and scaremongering surrounding David Cronenberg's latest feature, you might be forgiven for suspecting him to be none other than Satan himself. However, if you're familiar with the Canadian director's portfolio you will realise that *Crash* shares similar devices, themes and concerns with his previous work.

The word 'auteur' has become somewhat devalued by overuse, but few film-makers better suit the term than Cronenberg, who since the mid-1970s has consistently explored 'difficult' territory, confronting his own psyche unflinchingly and creating a unique celluloid body of personal visions.

So, what is it about Cronenberg's film of J. G. Ballard's 1973 novel that has so powerfully incited the media machine to take arms against it? Why is this film seen as so much more of a threat to the nation's well-being than, say, *Videodrome*, *Shivers* or *Scanners*?

Pre-election political posturing, the collective closed-mind terror of exposure to issues requiring the application of criteria outside of pure black or white, and the desperate desire to blame the power of the image for our increasingly dysfunctional society all play a part. However, a comprehensive study of the complex issues surrounding censorship today would require several volumes, so I'll just sketch in the background:

At the 1996 Cannes film festival, *Crash* won the Special Jury Prize for its "originality and daring".

On 6 June 1996, the London *Evening Standard* carried a full-page attack on the film by respected critic Alexander Walker, who considered it "... beyond depravity". This brought it to the attention of our moral guardians, who without having seen a frame of the film itself, began to denounce it from every available soapbox. This in turn led to a mention in the House of Commons and the very real possibility of a ban in this country. At the time of writing, it has been screened four times by the British Board of Film Censors and once under special licence at the London Film Festival, but as yet there has been no decision made to award the film an 18 certificate necessary for its release. Westminster Council has banned the film from West End cinemas unless substantial cuts are made. *Daily Mail* columnist Chris Tookey has carved a niche for himself by not only demanding that the film is banned, but that concerned readers boycott Sony products in case Columbia Tri-Star – a Sony subsidiary – goes ahead and distributes the film, and that James Ferman (head of the BBFC) resigns because of the amount of violence on cinema screens. *Hysteria* continues to grow and the media circus around this 'Sex on Wheels' movie gains impetus.

Crash is not a 'normal' film. It cannot be judged using the usual popcorn criteria. It is a highly stylised, personal, existential film-making which is designed to challenge our comfortable assumptions of what a film is supposed to be. Its market is limited to art-house / cult devotees and genuine film buffs. The extensive tabloid publicity will only serve to draw titillation-seekers who will be utterly disappointed by the film. It's like asking a T-shirt that isn't to appreciate *musique concrète* or Karlheinz Stockhausen.

A synopsis reveals the extent of the problems the film poses:

Well-to-do middle-class couple James and Catherine Ballard (James Spader and Deborah Unger) indulge in casual sex with various partners and then recount their exploits to each other while engaged in clinical, almost passionless coupling. When he is involved in a head-on fatal freeway accident, a new plane of experience is opened up for them both. The passenger in the other car, the now-widowed Dr Helen Remington (Holly Hunter), has sex with Ballard and then leads him into the crazed world of ultimate hedonist Vaughan (Elias Koteas), who re-enacts famous car-crash scenes from history (Albert Camus, James Dean, Jayne Mansfield) with the aid of the motliest crew of characters since Frank Booth's bunch of misfits in *Blue Velvet*. He also prowls the airport perimeter roads in his huge, battered black Lincoln in search of accidents to photograph, and of the last word in sexual highs – his own final fusion of man and machine. Ballard and Catherine are drawn into this surreal netherworld and are propelled almost involuntarily toward their own cerebral and physical ca(r)tharsis.

Crash

John Costello

John Costello is one of the few people in this country to have seen David Cronenberg's controversial film adaptation of J. G. Ballard's *Crash*; he had to go to Paris to do so. He also attended the National Film Theatre Guardian lecture given by both men.



J. G. Ballard

Cronenberg's concern with altered states of being informs most of his films, but with *Crash* the experiment has stretched to the assembly of the film itself. Narrative obeys few conventions – the film opens with a series of three sex scenes, one after another – yet it has a recognisable structure. It is sexually explicit but unerotically. It intensely examines its characters' search for new levels of experience but remains curiously detached. The viewer is given no sense of 'normality' which is then deviated from. The car is as much a central figure as any of the human characters.

The sex is presented as almost disembodied, certainly unsatisfactory in the most fundamental sense for the participants. The missionary position is not used; indeed, the man is usually behind the woman so they cannot see each other's faces. In one scene, Ballard seduces Vaughan in his car; in another, he has sex with a healed crash-wound in Gabrielle's (Rosanna Arquette) rear thigh.

This is an experiment in style, not subversion: film-making pared to its essentials, right down to the base metal. The film as a whole is unlike anything else, and its parts are only reminiscent of other Cronenberg films.

In *Videodrome* we are unsure if James Woods' nightmarish reincarnation is taking place in the 'real' world or an induced video-hallucination ("long live the new flesh"); in *The Fly*, Jeff Goldblum's experiments cause his molecular fusion with both the physical and behavioural traits of a common house-fly; in *Scanners*, people with heightened mental capacity have to learn to live with their own superhuman powers as if they were an incapacitating disability; in *Crash*, Vaughan sees his death in a crash as a liberation of sexual energy on a level more intense than any other, and Ballard reclaims Vaughan's car and resumes his activities as if his own personality has been eclipsed by the more powerful Vaughan.

"All films are subversive"

David Cronenberg
French TV interview, 1989

David Cronenberg has taken up the challenge of examining areas at the borders of existence and treating what he finds with dispassionate curiosity. His code is one of openmindedness: he does not automatically resist that which is different or that which will change us. He lets the material he adapts alter him somehow, in much the same way as his central characters are altered by a fusion with something outside themselves, however bizarre. His method of film-making is not bombastic or prone to emotional rant; it is quite formal, almost antiseptic in its approach. As the bandwidth of what we are allowed to see by our repressed and repressive system narrows further, directors like Cronenberg are our last defence against the moral majority who, rather than be asked to consider films requiring thoughtful analysis, run screaming to hide behind the nearest pillar of society.

Crash is, in my opinion, Cronenberg's best film since *Videodrome*, and requires more than one visit to attune yourself to its unique vision of a search for a metaphysical catharsis in the absence of Meaning. Quite what the hordes who have been sucked in by its notoriety will make of it should it finally get a release is anyone's guess.

I was fortunate enough to attend the recent *Guardian* Lecture at the National Film Theatre given by Cronenberg and J. G. Ballard, an event sold out before tickets were even printed. The atmosphere was more laid-back than I had expected in the light of the censorship 'debate'. In fact, a sense of jovial camaraderie prevailed. Chris Rodley's rôle as anchor was largely redundant as anecdotes were swapped, compliments were paid and unity was demonstrated.

Ballard in particular came across as a contented chap, some distance from the angry purveyor of complex, surreal-tinged speculative fiction of the 60s and 70s. He now seems a million miles away from novels like *Crash*, *High-Rise* and *Concrete Island*, and shorter works like 'The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered As a Downhill Motor Race', or 'Why I Want To Fuck

Ronald Reagan'. One question that nobody cared (or dared?) to ask was why he has chosen such an establishment path more recently, certainly in terms of his novels.

Cronenberg came nearest when he kicked off by mischievously taking Ballard to task over a recent assertion that the novel *Crash* is "... a cautionary tale from the eye of the hurricane". Cronenberg said he doubted this was what Ballard felt back in 1973. A good-natured debate ensued and was closed by mutually congratulatory bonhomie: Ballard felt that the film is more extreme than the book, while Cronenberg thought the extent of Ballard's sexual self-analysis in the book was awesome.

"I don't have a moral plan. I'm a Canadian."

David Cronenberg
Film Yearbook, 1985

It is perhaps not surprising that care was taken to come out with honours even, as it were, as the two men's brands of science fiction are not dissimilar: each plays the rôle of a more-or-less detached observer chronicling events coolly and intellectually from the sidelines. (The characters in Ballard's novels *The Drought* and *The Drowned World* are as distant as the cast of *Crash*.) Each has had to run the gamut of rabid censorsmongers and patiently explains his position time and again. Each has tried in his own way to push back the boundary around what is acceptable, in a non-sensationalist, cerebral manner. Cronenberg in particular would be a first-choice candidate for a panel discussion on censorship; he is lucid, eloquent and matter-of-fact, and always seems to pick the right thrust or riposte.

The tempo increased when the questions from the floor began, and more topics for discussion were introduced. Cronenberg reeled off a few choice anecdotes: Holly Hunter abusing a journalist at a Cannes press conference; an Indonesian film festival's credibility going down the pan after it cut scenes with Rosanna Arquette's character because she wears leg-braces and calipers ('physical disabilities are totally taboo there, so sex with someone disabled ...'), and his musings on the purpose of sex in today's society when the male doesn't even have to be present at conception were particularly entertaining.

Ballard's contribution to the evening was more low-key than Cronenberg's, but he managed to keep people's interest in the main, and his questioning of why Cronenberg hadn't named the film's central character 'David Cronenberg' instead of 'James Ballard' was highly amusing. Of course, in the spirit of the evening Cronenberg said that he could see exactly why Ballard had named the central character after himself; it was such a brave move, and he never had any intention of changing it.

As a spectacle the event was somewhat lacking, but fascinating nonetheless for the audience, which generated a palpable mood of being in *On Something Exclusive*. I must confess to experiencing a sense of fannish pride myself, not least when I duly took my copies of the screenplay to be signed afterwards. Indeed, my evening was rounded off perfectly when I spotted the film's producer Jeremy Thomas wandering around unrecognised and added his signature on the flyleaf to the two main protagonists'.

So, a very civilised affair which belied the turmoil bubbling beneath the issues involved. Cronenberg told me afterwards that for his next project he is returning to the theme and title of one of his first films, *Crimes of the Future*, albeit substantially reworked. With any luck, all the attention and controversy will have pricked Ballard into revisiting a few of his earlier themes and territories. If he set out now to write a novel more disturbing and visionary than *Crash*, think how bizarre and / or interesting the result could be. For my money, he could do far worse.

— John Costello 1997

John Costello is a Film and Media Studies lecturer who once taught both John Ashbrook and Paul Billinger in Science Fiction appreciation. Needless to add, the idea didn't take. Mr Costello loves sf movies and hates *Star Trek*.

fanzines

about 4,700 words 10 fanzines ... and 2 deadlines

Claire Brialey
and
Mark Plummer
on fanzines

Mark: I guess we'd better make it clear from the start that it was Chris's idea that we write a fanzine review column as one of these dialogue pieces. Just in case it doesn't work, you understand. . . . (Oh, and I'd also better explain that the afterthoughts go in angle brackets, like this. It's a meaningless affectation in these days of word processors but with any luck they'll humour us. — MP)



At first I thought this might be an interesting time to review the current fanzine scene, what with Novacon and everything. You remember of course the deluge of fanzine publishing that accompanied last year's convention, heralding for many another one of these Fanzine revivals that seem to come along every six weeks or so. Virtually everybody, or so it seemed, had produced something for the occasion and it gave the convention the air of a treasure hunt as the dedicated collectors scoured the darkest corners of the hotel, trying to complete their sets. And, as several observers have noted subsequently (including you I think), the dedicated collectors, after pausing to marvel at this mighty fanzine output and wonder whether this really *did* herald a Real Fanzine Revival, carefully filed their precious bounty in the Special Novacon Fanzine Carrier Bag which was allowed to languish under the bed, its only remaining function being to confuse future archaeologists in future centuries who will probably look on it in much the same way that we look on Stonehenge: it obviously represents an awful lot of work by an awful lot of people but you can't help wondering why they did it.

Whatever, it seems that last year's Novacon was merely a glitch rather than a trend. I understand that Jan Orys put out another issue of *VOSP* but I didn't actually see it. There was of course Dave Hicks with *Morality's Revenge* and, aside from us, that was about it actually. Bloody typical really: last year Dave seemed to be about the only person who *didn't* do a fanzine and this year he was just about the only person who did.

However, there have been a few fanzines appearing in the weeks leading up to Novacon so perhaps we can start with some of those (I suggest we come back to Dave and MR at some later stage seeing as at this point, two days after Novacon, I haven't actually read it yet). (Aha, so it wasn't just me who was late with this, recalling that you gave me a disc just before Christmas. — CB) (Right. Somewhere around here we should probably have a calendar with pages being ripped off it to symbolise the passage of time. — MP)

I'll kick off with *Ansible*, mainly because it's the most frequent but also because I have this sense — which you and everybody else might think rather peculiar — that it's actually somewhat under-appreciated. Now I know that it, and Dave Langford himself, have garnered a somewhat impressive stack of Hugos — thirteen in total — and this obviously represents a tangible form of 'appreciation', but I can't help noticing the hordes of people at the first Thursday of the month meeting at the Wellington Tavern in London who flock around Dave to collect this month's instalment, and who do so with no real recognition that he doesn't have to do it and he doesn't have to give them a copy. It's almost as if they regard this as being part of the package, the reward you get for merely showing up (and, heaven help us, we need some incentive these days). I reckon everybody who goes to the Wellington should buy Dave a pint at least once a year. I like *Ansible*: it strikes a perfect balance between being a genuinely informative newsletter and a source of entertainment. While I value other news sources — such as *Matrix*, he said, getting that one in quick — *Ansible* has a certain advantage of immediacy arising from its monthly schedule, and it's always a handy reference source for, say, convention contact information, changes of address, and recent award winners. But there's more to it than that. There's the article on that idiotic Penguin *Irish* promotion in *Ansible* 111 (October) for instance, or the TAFF coverage in 112 (November), or Ron Tiner's one-page graphic novel adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* in 113th. And if you've got Internet access you don't even have to go to the Wellington to get a copy.

Apparatchik's also available on the net — pretty slick link, huh? — and appears even more frequently: once every three weeks these days. While it's less efficient as a news source — it doesn't really purport to be a newszine anyway — it again has certain advantages arising from its frequency. There's Andy Hooper's fanzine countdown, for instance, and I think I'll have to disagree with Paul Kincaid on this one. For starters, the column is one of the most comprehensive guides to currently available fanzines: Andy reviews more titles than just about anybody else and does so shortly after they're published. And while the reviews are relatively short, they do serve to give general flavour of the style and content of the fanzine in question. It's a *different* style of review, to say, some of the columns in *Attitude* — and I'm thinking here particularly of Mike Abbott's article in issue 9 — but each is valuable in its own way. Whatever, it does seem that *Apparatchik* readers do actually write off for copies of the fanzines that Andy has reviewed, something which I'd been led to believe was something of an anachronism. I wonder if *Matrix* readers do that? The received wisdom seems to be that they don't. Anyway, on top of the reviews there's an impressive letter column; again as a consequence of the frequent schedule, the letters remain current and are discussing live issues. I would say something about the articles but it seems that I've lent all my recent copies to Paul Kincaid so he can do his fanzine review column for us — god, are we an incestuous little community or what? — so perhaps you can say something about them. Or about something else entirely. Go on, surprise me. . . .

Claire: I don't think there's much I can add to what you've said about *Ansible* and *Apparatchik*, but inevitably I will (no surprises here, you see). *Ansible* and *Apparatchik*, as newszines in one way or another, are the only type of fanzines which I can appreciate having some added worth by appearing on the Internet. (The fact that I've only been reading fanzines for a few years doesn't prevent me having *Strong Views* about things like their appearing on paper as a primary format: if people can do genuinely innovative things electronically, good luck to them — but the Internet hasn't stopped me reading books or magazines and it's not going to stop me reading fanzines either. — CB) I agree with your assessment of *Ansible*'s general and constant worth, and probably also about the way it's taken for granted as a Grand Old Fannish Institution which somehow springs fully-formed from Dave Langford's *Ansible* box every month — an impression which may well be assisted by what appears to be effortlessly good writing and what certainly is subtle but effective editing. The last *Apparatchik* I got on paper, issue 70, followed up the TAFF story it had broken in the previous issue, but also included an article from Victor Gonzalez about fanzine writing — which managed to be interesting even though I'd not yet read the issue of Christina Lake's *Never Quite Arriving* which the article used as a specific example of a good fanzine. The other articles were interesting although there is no overall theme, something it's probably much easier to do without inviting comment in a larger zine. The letter column regularly takes up nearly half the fanzine and has a regular mailbag from correspondents in North America, the UK and Australia — this time with at least half the letter column focusing, unsurprisingly, on TAFF.

Staying alliterative, I'll move on to *Attitude* since you only mentioned it in passing and may, therefore, have left me with something to say. . . . The *Attitude Project* is nearing its end now and what remains of the fanzine part is clearly going to be focused on the convention in February and what it achieves. *Attitude* can take the majority of the blame for making me actively interested in fanzines (and I certainly used its review column as one of my early sources for interesting fanzines) and so I owe it quite a lot. It still perplexes me a bit, though, in terms of what it's actually trying to do, and how it's trying to make us respond: is the simple fact that it has made me respond the main point, or is it far more complicated than that? This is always lurking at the back of my mind when reading or thinking about *Attitude*: I can't quite lose my sense of The Project (or The Experiment) and What On Earth Are They Trying To Do To Us, and treat it entirely on its merits. Is that the point too? It's all too horribly circular, and even if it is the point I find it can distract and detract from what is, at this particular stage (issue 9), a very enjoyable and thought-provoking fanzine.

I'd been bothered for a couple of issues prior to this that just maybe *Attitude* was losing it: although there were still some interesting articles and a solid editorial framework, it had begun to seem a bit patchy overall. Issue 9, though, is right back on track, focused on the convention with "teaser" articles for a number of items, and thus to some extent drawing in the threads from what has gone before, but including some splendid material ostensibly outside that core: John Dalman's editorial on Eastercons, a chapter from Irwin Hirsch's 1987 GUFF trip report, an excellent and challenging article from Helena Bowles on pornography, feminism and sexuality, Lynne Ann Morse on a rest-and-refuge project for prostitutes in The Hague, and the lengthy and incisive fanzine review column from Michael Abbott which you mentioned before. All this and John Grant, M. John Harrison, reviews of *Evolution* and *Albion*, a still flourishing letter column, "Stance, Erudition and Scorn" (the anti-editorial at the end), and a variety of entertaining and apposite illustrations. I shall miss *Attitude* when it's all over; there are a lot of fanzines around at the moment, although as you said some haven't actually appeared since the Novacon 1995 publishing explosion, but I think more than one will have to aim to fill the *Attitude*-shaped gap. Hey, maybe that just might be the point

And so, moving – rather more swiftly – on, I'll turn to a couple of personalizations in contrast to the various all-encompassing sweeps of the three As: Ian Sorensen's *Bob*, which came out at the beginning of November, and *The Dissillusionist* from Antony Shepherd (the Döppegänger), which was published for Novacon. And both, this time round, are very personal zines indeed. *Bob* issue 11, subtitled "Bob Wire" and with a very fetching Jim Barker illustration of Ian as Pampy Anderson on the cover, has a quick round-up of *Albion* and a glancing reference to management policy at the school where Ian teaches. At the end is a review of Eastercon, and a short letter column. But the main body of the fanzine is a long article where Ian describes and tries to analyse clearly and rationally his relationships with women and his responses to those relationships. It's an article which demands a response, whether you know Ian or not (and, indeed, he is actively seeking a response), but such a response is probably quite hard to articulate; although other *Bobs* haven't been quite so, well, personal, they have been firmly personally-oriented, which may explain the shortness of the letter column. (Also, if I remember correctly, Ian isn't too keen on letter columns. — MP) I certainly find it hard to review: it's an interesting and focused piece of writing, relating to an integral part of the life of someone closely involved with fandom, but it's quite hard to assess a piece of personal writing like this critically.

Except, perhaps, in comparison to another personalization. *The Dissillusionist* has now reached issue 4, although the Döppegänger describes it as the "Oh damn, I've nothing written in time for Novacon so I'll just do a fanzinetee" issue. It doesn't seem excessively disjointed, for all that. Like *Bob*, it is personally-oriented, focusing on details of Dop's life: both within fandom (a short article on bizarre journeys to fanfests events, and an occasional column on "Favourite Things") and outside it, influencing his life and lifestyle and Who He Is Today (another short article on moving house, and the major piece of the fanzine, which deals with Dop's contraction of Guillain-Barré Syndrome). It is more of a historical and informative article than Ian Sorensen's, which manages to be both didactic and expository; Dop's article is, however, still a powerful piece of writing, eliciting a more straightforward response of both sympathy and admiration. Both fanzines may seem a little strange to read if you don't know the authors; equally, however, they represent one way to begin to get to know them. It depends what you're looking for in a fanzine.

And there's a thought on that to hand back. Mark, what are you looking for in a fanzine? Have you found all of it in any of the fanzines we've mentioned so far, or any of the ones you may be about to mention?

((NB: I'd also like to cover Pogonophobia 4 and Moriarty's Revenge 4. It would also be nice to give space to Science Fiction Five Yearly, FTT 21 and Ploktia 4, and I've also got Mimosa 19, Wild Heirs 18 and Thingummybob 15 which I suppose we could do if we realistically have time to read them now that I've made this late . . . unless you've been a girly swot and read them all already. Obviously, if you have others which you'd also like to include, we either can't do all of them or I need to be much, much quicker next time. — CB)) (Yes . . . well, Paul's still got all my recent US fanzines for his review column. I think this is what's known in the trade as bad planning. Look, let's keep quiet about it and hopefully nobody will notice. I'll try to bluff it out. — MP))

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer
live in Croydon. They co-edit (and mostly write)
Waxen Wings and Banana Skins, which won
the 1996 Best Fanzine Nova Award.
Mark was also runner-up for the
Best Fanwriter Nova.

Mark: Oh dear, you want me to do philosophy? I guess what I look for in a fanzine is, by and large, something that's interesting to read. Now this is a bit nebulous, I know, and doesn't distinguish what I look for in a fanzine from what I look for in a professional magazine or a book or any other written medium. It's a simplistic approach but there you go. OK, a practical application

You've already addressed a couple of personalizations, including *The Dissillusionist* which I forgot to mention when I was talking about Novacon fanzines and for which Döppegänger will probably never forgive me, so this seems like a good moment to bring in Dave Hicks and *Moriarty's Revenge* 4 and to ask myself whether this is what I look for in a fanzine.

Well, for starters, it's a nice clean tidy production, something which, based on what I said a couple of paragraphs back, doesn't actually figure in the equation but which I should probably write in somewhere. I was going to contrast this with *The Dissillusionist* although when I go to look back on it I notice that Dop seems to have curbed most of the wilder DTP excesses I tend to associate with his stuff so

perhaps I won't. I must admit that I was surprised there wasn't more artwork, not least because Dave is one of the better fan artists around, but I don't think this is actually a drawback as such.

To a certain extent this fanzine functions as Dave's catch-up service, complete with the almost obligatory "Why this fanzine has taken two years to produce" remarks, but there's also a fairly strong personal essay in "Rock and Roll Sewer-Side". I suspect I can personally relate to this more than you, Claire, the teenage heavy metal fan experiences of Dave's earlier years are very familiar to me. I mean, yeah, when I was eighteen I was amassing Hawkwind albums at an alarming rate (I now amass Frank Zappa CDs which probably says something although I don't know what). ((In the interests of harmony I'll avoid suggesting anything here. — CB)) It's a fine piece of writing – I particularly like the phrase "manly manipulation of machine heads" – and, while it may not be apparent at first, it even has itself back to fandom towards the end. Finally, there's the letter column, something which seems a little redundant due to the lengthy interval between this and the previous issue. As a basic principle I like letter columns but I think there's a case for dropping this traditional route when there's a couple of years between issues. Just an opinion.

So, yeah, I reckon *Moriarty's Revenge* is a pretty good example of a personalization and I'd like to think that Dave will produce a further issue in a bit under two years this time.

Coming back to "something interesting to read" and to something you said back up there, I've never been quite sure what to make of *Attitude*. There is this tendency to see it as something more than words (and artwork) on a page; *Attitude* seems to be thought of more as a philosophy, as something more than a string of (what by the end will have been) twelve fanzines and a convention. In part, it's because the whole enterprise could be seen as being somewhat evangelical. I don't really know whether that was the editors' intent but it seems to have been the effect. It has a large mailing list and, probably as a result, reaches many people who see few if any other fanzines (and, consequently, may have been crucial in at least some of them developing an interest in the fanzine form). The presence of professional writers – here John Grant and M. John Harrison – might serve to establish a more overt connection between the fanzine and 'real' sf. These are the sort of things that spring to mind when I think of *Attitude*; somehow whether any of the articles are actually any good doesn't seem to enter into it. For all that, I would agree that issue 9 had a stronger article content than the issues immediately preceding it; the pieces by Helena Bowles and Lynne Ann Morse were particularly good. And there's an entertaining letter column as well: substantial and, by virtue of the fanzine's relatively frequent publication schedule (quarterly), reasonably current. Mike Abbott's fanzine review column is well done; as mentioned earlier, it fulfils a different function to Andy Hooper's roundup in *Apparatchik* but it's no less valuable. I particularly like the way the column itself directly interacts with another fanzine – *Waxen Wings and Banana Skins* (bloody stupid title that, they should shorten it to . . . oh, I don't know, *Waxen Skins* or something) – which does help to establish the idea that all these bundles of photocopied and duplicated paper aren't just floating around in splendid isolation. My one regret here is that, working on the basis that they don't change their policy, this will be a one-off column: I'd like to see Mike develop his ideas over time. Maybe once *Attitude* reaches the end of its lifespan somebody else will take him on.

But now I'm backtracking when I should be going forward. And I'll go forward by moving on to Chuck Connor's *Thingumbob* 15 which showed up here relatively recently. I'd seen one previous issue which mainly sticks in my mind for being printed on foolscap paper and therefore doesn't fit into my fanzine filing system. Fortunately this latest number is on more conventional A4 and so will, hopefully, stick in my mind for other reasons. Like *Moriarty's Revenge*, this fanzine has seen a fair gap between its current and previous issues and, unlike Dave, Chuck has decided to drop the letter column as a result.

Chuck styles *Thingumbob* "The Tru-Fringe-Fan's Fringe-Fan-Fanzine" [That's easy for him to say. — Chris] and I guess I'm not a Fringe-Fan 'cos I have to admit that I don't really get a lot of this. The Harry Turner 'DIY Thingumbob' is, as you'd expect, beautifully done, and the short article by Sabina Molloy on entertaining small children with mercury is entertaining enough. However, the miscellaneous 'weird shit' stuff just leaves me cold. It's not that I feel such material is out of place in a fanzine — on the contrary, I would like to think that I'm fairly open (despite quaint old-fashioned notions about having real skiffy articles in fanzines) — but even though I'm normally quite interested in this sort of thing for some reason the examples just don't connect. What can one say? It's unconventional; if you don't like fanzines [Insert Jim de Liscard-style 'They're all just bollocks really' riff here. — MP]] you might like *Thingumbob*.

OK, do you have any idea how much text Chris wants? Is it all academic 'cos we've missed the deadline anyway? Will there be mushrooms for breakfast? Will Penelope ever escape from the Hooded Claw? Why do we keep saying that? [Not because we're hoping for a deus ex machina which will miraculously make this column on time without us having to speed-read fanzines we'd probably otherwise quite enjoy... or something? Nah. Surely not. And as the water slowly rises to chin level, we are clearly doomed — but no, it's dropped back to waist height in the next frame and we have a temporary reprieve. — CB]]

[There you go, you can say whatever you like now about any one of a dozen miscellaneous fanzines you happen to have lying around because you are a good and organised fan who hasn't lent all her recent titles to Paul Kinsaid. Actually, it's just occurred to me that Paul's column is late too. Is everything in fandom always destined to be late? Couldn't we just correct this problem by extending all deadlines by a month or two? If only life were that simple. Onwards... — MP]] [In fact I am a completely disorganised fan who has only recently excavated the study and found loads of fanzines, but I'll attempt to pass it off as organisation if you like. — CB]]

Claire: OK, miscellaneous fanzines it is. *Plotka* (from Alison Scott, Steve Davis, and cohorts) immediately leaps to mind, but mostly for what I think are the right reasons. *Plotka* threw me into confusion by sneakingly arriving in the post the day after I'd sketched out a review of the previous issue — but it often throws me into confusion: like others who don't recognise the acronym I spent at least its first three issues calling it 'Plotka'. [Me too. I know that it's an acronym but I think that 'Plotka' is actually a better name. — MP]] I also admit to being initially misled by it; I thought that the jokes about superfluous technology would wear a bit thin and then where would *Plotka* be? Well, by the fifth issue it seems to be having a pretty good time, waiting for Alison to give birth and for Steve to get married in Australia; it combines a lot of personal details, and personality, from the editorial cabal (or ASSSGM) with stuff from numerous contributors and correspondents. This time there's even something about skiffy. There's a great deal of material packed into 14 [nicely laid-out — there's something to be said for superfluous technology] pages; previous issues have been a bit in-yer-face, with some articles deserving greater exploration (the excellent review of the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition in the last issue, for example). This time round, however, many of the articles run to about a page and are a bit more developed, and the letter column, by far the longest feature at around 6 pages, is packed with fans jostling to have fun. Alison's pregnancy must be weighing on her mind (and, no doubt, pressing on her internal organs) as there are several baby-related items in issue 5 — the closest *Plotka* has come to a theme other than the ubiquitous superfluous technology. Next issue is threatened to be a 'Weddings and Babies Issue' for the Attitude Convention in February; but who knows if we should take that — or anything else — seriously? (I particularly like the apparently personalised tick-boxes on the back cover telling us all why we've got a copy.) *Plotka* is sometimes snippy and frequently self-referential, but it's also well-packed, enthusiastic and generally good fun.

By contrast, *FTT* from Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas is a heavier-weight fanzine dealing with Real Issues; although it still finds time for a few giggles, they tend towards the ironic and the generally more grown-up... *FTT* on its twenty-first outing could apparently stand for any one, or all, of 28 different things, although it does incorporate 'International Revolutionary Gardener'. Both the international

focus and the environmentalism is up-front, which may be one of the reasons I like it. [Since, for the uninitiated, I have to deal with both at work from the more restrained Civil Service side of the argument. — CB]] Articles range from Judith's description of her adolescence on a farm in Australia through vastly different travelogues from 'E. B. Frohve' (American Revolution), Andy Sawyer (Tunisia), and Judith's sister Roslyn Hanna (safari with occasional hippo) to Joseph's end-piece on Open Day at Kensal Green Cemetery, sneaking up on you and hitting hard about social and environmental disasters — with history and skiffy, hurrah, woven in. The letter column is lively, with some topics from several issues back still running, and succeeded in making me want to re-read the earlier issues, which are also jolly good stuff.

And finally, for my turn [Good point you made, ooh, some time ago now — how long did Chris want this to be...? — CB]] [Having skipped ahead to the end and established that this is about 4,700 words, I'd say, "About 4,700 words." — MP]], I can't possibly ignore Alison Freebairn's *Pogonophobia*, not least because it'll probably come round and give me a good kicking. *Pogonophobia* (which of course we all knew means a fear of facial hair — a title which demonstrates the fanzine's relevance to fandom in roughly the same way that the contents do) has now reached its fourth issue; originally intended as a monthly fanzine, it's still more frequent than most. Alison has a style, panache, dress sense and general turn of phrase to die for — and deservedly won the Best Fanwriter Nova in 1996, to general acclaim. [I won't mention right now who came second. — CB]] *Pogonophobia* deals with Alison's Impressions of life and why to live it — sometimes as a semi-detached and rather curious observer, sometimes with a direct, frank and demanding engagement. It is, undeniably, a personalzette; it has a fanish context rather than a fanish, or skiffy, content. And yet it does feel fanish — and it reads so well it doesn't much seem to matter what it is. Where you might curl up on the sofa with Attitude 9 and a glass of wine, or take *FTT* to the garden with a mug of coffee, *Pogonophobia* invites you to take it into the shower with a beer — and laughs at you when your fanzine gets all soggy.

And, since I seem to have degenerated into more wibbling [You? Wibbling? Heaven forbid. — MP]] than *Matrix* readers deserve, it seems like time to shut up. I haven't done Science Fiction Five Yearly after all — maybe the next issue...? Nor have I had a chance even to read *Götterdämmerung*, which arrived this morning. [Are you going on, with further comments or more fanzines? Anything to sum up? I seem to have concluded by pulling out Attitude 9 and *FTT* and *Pogonophobia* in general, but there's no particular reason you have to pick winners too... Help. I don't know how to stop. — CB]] [It's OK. Back carefully towards the door while smiling sweetly and retaining an impression of outward calm, and then make a run for it. — MP]]

— © Claire Brialley & Mark Plummer 1997

FANZINES AVAILABLE FROM:

Anisble

Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU

Apparatchik

Andy Hooper, The Starliner Building, 4228 Francis Avenue North #103, Seattle, WA 98103, USA (US\$3 for three months' supply, \$12 for a year or a lifetime subscription for \$19.73) — or c/o Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Wiltshire, West Midlands, W13 1HX (£10 annual subscription; £19.37 for a lifetime sub.).

Attitude

Michael Abbott, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge, CB1 3QF

Bob

Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY

FTT

Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London, N15 4JU

Moriarty's Revenge

Dave Hicks, 1 St Woolos Place, Newport, South Wales, NP4 4GQ

Plotka

Alison Scott, 42 Tower Hamlets Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4RH

Pogonophobia

Alison Freebairn, 19 Wateryetts, Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire, PA13 4QP

The Diffusionist

Antony 'Doppelganger' Shepherd, Ground Floor Flat, 76 Dartnell Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 6JA

Thingumbob

Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chesterton Road, Wissett, near Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 0NF

Waxen Wings and Banana Skins (Now renamed Banana Wings)

Claire Brialley, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7HA

Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 6JE

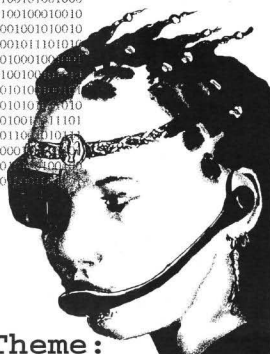
All fanzines apart from Apparatchik should be available free if you send a stamped, self-addressed envelope — A4 sized, two or three first class stamps — but the usual arrangements for continuing to get fanzines require you to trade your own zines, offer artwork or contributions, send letters of comment or other stuff the editors profess themselves interested in, or send a small donation and/or a supply of SASEs. □

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INTERVENTION
 THE 1997 UK NATIONAL SF CONVENTION

IT BEGAN WITH *Marine Boy*, quickly followed by the discovery of the Behind The Sofa position. History records that I was watching *Dr Who* from the age of three, but my first memory of the programme was the cliffhanger in which someone was trapped in a rapidly flooding airlock. There was also some mind-leeching telepathic seaweed (naturally), and a lot of screaming.

When I was seven we moved to Bournemouth and I started going to the Morning Matinee at the local ABC cinema. The first thing I ever saw on a movie screen was a *Mighty Mouse* cartoon. This was followed by the penultimate episode of the 'classic' fantasy serial *Danny the Dragon*. The following week we were treated to the finale of the aforementioned, plus, to ensure our return, episode one of *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe*. No expense was spared, but we were quite happy to lap up this, even then, ancient drivel. On a bad week the 'main feature' would be something from the Children's Film Foundation, but if we were lucky we would get ninety minutes of a man in a rubber suit stamping on, or a model of Tokyo. *Atragon*, *Terror of the Deep* was as good as it got, and it seemed pretty good back then.

Proper pictures beckoned. I had already been allowed to stay up late to watch the moon landing. I don't know exactly what it was, but something about the title caught my imagination and I knew I had to see it. Perhaps it was the inclusion of numbers and the colon. Even the title seemed big and important and special. My aunt had to take me to a little out-of-the-way fleapit to see 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. It was the most amazing thing I had ever seen (though my aunt wanted to leave after twenty minutes, bored because there were no ladies in pretty costumes), and I didn't have enough experience of cinema to know it was unique. I kept going to see other films hoping to find something else as good, or better. I still haven't.

From there I read everything fantastical I could find. The first 'proper' sf book was *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, followed by *War of the Worlds*. Then I discovered John Wyndham and on through Clarke, Asimov, etc. I watched all the TV shows at every opportunity, but they came to seem thin stuff beside the books.

Star Wars arrived and was wonderful, but I never ever thought of it as real sf. Hollywood epic blockbusters being an entirely different sort of pleasure with all their own glories and failings which made them nothing at all to do with the written word of sf.

At university I briefly made the mistake of reading 'proper literature'. Then I discovered what I had only previously suspected: most of it is pretentious and tedious. I came to my senses and returned to reading books which were enjoyable.

Memoirs of an Invisible Man

When it was suggested, in a letter to *Vector*, that I don't exist I wasn't sure whether to be amused or insulted. The idea appeared to arise from the fact that very few people in fandom have ever seen, met or spoken to me. Here is as good a place as any to explain why.

Once upon a time I was a teacher. Seven years ago I suffered an injury to my lower back. Net result: three partially crushed discs in my lumbar spine, with bonus rheumatism thrown in at no extra cost. Now all this is rather painful, and the pain limits my movements, especially with regard to travelling. I also don't really have the stamina required for the hectic world of conventioning.

The good side of being all but unemployable is that it leaves plenty of time for reading books, magazines, and - eventually - discovering the BSFA and something called Fandom. So, having had a couple of

WHO THE HELL DOES GARY DALKIN THINK HE IS?

Gary Dalkin, Joint Features Editor of *Vector*, has a strong belief in his own existence. Which is more than some . . .

A BOY AND HIS GOD



You won't find the Matrix caption team falling for this one. We'd never say "Gary Dalkin stroking his pussy", oh no. He's strangling it.

TV reviews in *Interzone*, I sent a spec review (of *Waking the Moon* by Elizabeth Hand) to Paul Kincaid and asked if I could, please sir, grovel grovel, review some books. The rest is history. Except . . .

Why I Like SF Enough . . .

. . . to want to help edit *Vector*. Because of the sense of wonder which no other branch of fiction can provide (David Zindell, Greg

Bear, Arthur C. Clarke). Because of the diversity of the genre. Any style, any subject, any idea or emotion known to human experience can become a part of sf.

Because sf is an implicitly optimistic genre. The very fact that much of it takes place in the future, however bleak the individual futures may be in certain books, suggests a faith that the human race will be around for some considerable time to come. (Olaf Stapledon, Gene Wolfe, Mark S. Geston.)

Because sf is the best-equipped fiction to tackle the Big Issues. Not what mainstream fiction considers important, love, death, politics and social issues (though sf of course can and does deal with these on a regular basis), but the really big stuff. Life, the Universe and Everything. The ultimate purpose of creation. The existence, or not, of God. How it all works. (Stephen Baxter, Walter M. Miller, J. G. Ballard.)

Because I enjoy having my imagination stimulated by amazing new ideas, and because sf has the constant capacity to surprise and astound. Because it is possible to begin reading an sf story with no idea of where it may be going, or of the marvels the writer may have secreted along the way. The best sf is the most unclinked literature in the world. (Terry Dowling, Dan Simmons, Neal Stephenson.)

Because we live in a technological, science-derived culture. Serious, near-future sf is the best fiction for understanding the possibilities which face us. (Paul J. McAuley, Greg Egan.)

Because it's both fun and exciting. (Peter F. Hamilton, Ian M. Banks.)

And, deliberately last, but not least, because I'm actually interested in science. About what it can tell us of the way the universe works.

Most of the above can also be taken as reasons why I don't like the majority of media sf; it simply doesn't do the things for which I like sf. Likewise, most fantasy fiction. It pacifies the imagination with endless clichés, and rather than confront reality escapes from reason into an arbitrary metaphysics. When anything can happen I simply can't care what does.

Having said all that, perhaps I should record that I love the *Star Wars* films, the films of James Cameron, Terry Gilliam, and a dozen others or so, including *Metropolis*, *Things to Come*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Forbidden Planet*, *Planet of the Apes*, 2001, *Zardoz*, *Time After Time*, *Excalibur*, *Blade Runner*, *ET*, *The Thing*, *Hook* and *Alien*. I also like the fantasy of Clive Barker, Robert Holdstock, Mark Helprin, Stephen Donaldson and Ray Bradbury.

Meanwhile . . .

In real life I sometimes review films for the *Bournemouth Evening Echo*, do lots of boring exercise, look after a cat called Bramble, cook hot, spicy meals, belong to Greenpeace, Amnesty International, the Green Party, Winton Evangelical Church, and laugh at the word 'goat'. I don't like the politics of greed and division; hug cynical nihilism; people who cycle on pavements; the vacuum mechanical noise which currently passes for popular music; Americanisation; adverts; people who talk in cinemas; the term 'sci-fi'; fantasy trilogies; on-screen logos; the Tory Conference; and people who don't know which way to wear a baseball cap.

As everyone is doing it now, I'll end by noting that this piece was written to the sounds of Jan Garbarek, William Alwyn, Howard Hanson, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Loreena McKennit, Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy and Bernard Hermann.

— © Gary Dalkin 1997

T-Shirt Winner

Sadly, there's no T-shirt winner this time as nearly all the substantive letters I received in response to the last Matrix were from BSFA officials, who are thus disqualified; the rest didn't quite measure up. Perhaps you were all too busy over Christmas. I simply can't believe that you all think Matrix and the BSFA are so wonderful that there's nothing to complain about, or there's nothing happening in current sf (or the world) that you feel strongly about.

Here's a suggestion. There's an election coming soon in the UK, and the winner will probably see the country through to the next millennium. Some years ago Matrix asked its readers what sf or fantasy books they would recommend for politicians to read – and, one hopes, learn something from – and it seems an appropriate time to repeat that. What would you make Messrs Ashdown, Blair and Major read?

Ten years ago Matrix was on its 65th issue, and had a new editor. "I'm Maureen Porter," she introduced herself, "the newest member of the BSFA Committee, and presently editing my first edition of Matrix, the first of many, I hope." Many changes and a marriage later, she was running the BSFA. Other things don't change, however. Maureen said in her editorial: "You can all manage one letter a year, can't you? Even if it's to tell me to piss off because you're too busy."

Matrix 65 carried... eight pages of mail. More than twenty-five letters.

Those were the days, eh?

—Chris Tarran

From Gary Dalkin

5 Lyford Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH11 8SN
I was intrigued to read David Curl's preference for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* over *Independence Day* (it's not id4 – that's just marketing hype that we shouldn't be so silly as to support).

I used to think very highly of the Spielberg film, until I saw it again earlier this year after an interval of 18 years. I was most disappointed. The film collapsed entirely, so I wonder if David Curl is drawing comparisons based on old memories, or if he has seen the film recently. Certainly *Close Encounters* is visually marvellous, but *Independence Day* is even more so. For the first time it puts on the screen all those starships we recall from old pulp magazine covers in a way which makes them look absolutely real, utterly breathtaking. Unfortunately *Close Encounters* has only one other virtue besides its visuals, and that is John Williams' glorious music score. Other than that, it is a vastly overlong story about a deeply selfish man who happily abandons his family – admittedly his children are all horrible and totally out of control, but what does that say about his parenting skills? – to chase some pretty lights. Which is running away from responsibility into fairyland in the most childish way possible. It is not surprising that the film constantly refers to Disney, even quoting "When You Wish Upon a Star" in the music for the finale.

Independence Day meanwhile may be riddled with plot holes, which in the context are minor enough to be forgiven, but it remains an utterly thrilling, exhilarating experience. A slice of gloriously cinematic film-making on a scale rarely seen in the 90s, and done with such a sense-of-wonder and sheer joy of film (there are few concessions to the inevitable pan and scan for video which will, probably by the time you read this, destroy the scale and majestic compositions) that it can only be applauded as the best fun sf movie since the *Star Wars* trilogy ended. And frankly I

don't think we should go looking for messages as to the state of America. We should just enjoy the best jaw-dropping spectacle in years. ☺

Paul Kincaid and Mark Plummer both have strong views about another UK Worldcon, mooted by KIM Campbell in the last issue.

From Paul Kincaid

60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ
Almost before the dust has settled from *The Scottish Contention*, KIM Campbell and Pat McMurray have started talking about the next one. A Worldcon is a big event that requires big organisation and takes a long time to get off the ground – so it is understandable that they should start working now if they are to look for another British Worldcon in the next decade. But why the rush? There is no imperative that we hold a Worldcon regularly, and there may be good arguments for not doing so. Certainly, I can't help feeling that we need longer to absorb the lessons of the last three British Worldcons.

The first question that needs to be answered is why we should want a Worldcon at all. I have been involved to some extent in each of the last three British Worldcons; I have also been actively involved in science fiction fandom in the years leading up to and following on from each of those events. So far, I have been unable to identify a single benefit that any of those Worldcons has brought to either British science fiction or British fandom.

The single most important event in British sf over the last couple of decades was the birth of *Interzone*, and that owes nothing to any Worldcon. No British writer who has been successful in America (one thinks most recently of Ian McDonald, Paul McAuley and Stephen Baxter) owes that success to the showcase of a British Worldcon – in fact British Worldcons have far more often showcased American writers to a British audience than they have British writers to American attendees. And in terms of the Hugo Awards, a British venue has not noticeably altered the preponderance of American members who nominate and vote for them – there is a fractionally greater chance of a British nominee winning in Britain, but the record is hardly spectacular and it certainly hasn't meant any sort of breakthrough in terms of sales or popularity.

So have the Worldcons had a beneficial effect on British fandom? No, rather the opposite. In 1974/5, the shortlived magazine *Science Fiction Monthly* introduced proportionally more people to fandom (measured in terms of convention attendance) than all three UK Worldcons since then. In the period leading up to the 1979 Worldcon the British fanzine scene was as healthy as it has ever been, but scene disappeared as a result of the Worldcon and it was the mid-80s before it recovered to anything like its pre-Worldcon level. After 1987 it disappeared again. Immediately after the 1995 Worldcon there were signs of a fanzine renaissance (mostly among people uninvolved with the Worldcon, or people expressing their relief at escaping its clutches), but the initial boom has not been sustained. KIM Campbell said: "We feel that Active Fandom is in need of revitalisation", with the implication that another British Worldcon would do just that – but if a Worldcon was indeed the solution, wouldn't we now be in the middle of the revitalisation brought about by *The Scottish Contention*?

So how about the claim that it will benefit science fiction in this country by stirring up interest outside the genre? Well, each of the last three British Worldcons generated at least one television programme (the

1979 Worldcon resulted in a short series about key sf writers followed by a round-up programme about the convention). The first part of the 1979 series treated sf with a seriousness unusual on British television – but it was a level of seriousness that has patently not been sustained. All three programmes about the conventions had exactly the same attitude – in 16 years and over three Worldcons not one jot of difference has been made to how sf is perceived and presented. In the run-up to the 1995 Worldcon, when Channel 4 launched their SF Weekend which was scheduled to coincide with the Worldcon (and hence exclude a notable portion of its audience) one of the people involved in the whole enterprise did not imagine there was any difference between sf and ufos, and still saw science fiction programmes as primarily aimed at children. The magazine *SFX* has done more to stir up media interest in sf than any Worldcon has done.

In short, I can see no evidence that British Worldcons have benefited British sf or British fandom. But maybe it is not about what Britain will get out of it, but what Britain will put into it. If altruism was the heart of it all, then it might be an enterprise worth supporting. If we imagine that British science fiction and fandom have a distinctive characteristic then maybe we should be telling the world.

Except that on the evidence of Worldcons to date, that is not likely to happen. The most innovative and successful element of the 1987 Worldcon (perhaps the only successful part of that convention) was the fanroom organised by Greg Pickersgill. It was, in effect, a typical British convention in the heart of a Worldcon that had otherwise eschewed everything British and it was so successful that it was copied at a Worldcon across the Atlantic in a curiously watered down version known as the Fan Faire. So what happened in 1995? Rather than going back to a successful original, we staged a pale copy of the Fan Faire. All the models for Worldcons (with very few honourable exceptions such as that 1987 fanroom) are American, and British Worldcons have tended to copy those models. This isn't mere slavishness – to win a Worldcon bid, and then to sustain and run such a convention, you need massive American support; if you don't do it the American way you're not staging what they recognise as a Worldcon, and you don't get that support. So British Worldcons hardly have a sparkling record when it comes to presenting – and representing – British fandom.

And the record isn't much better when it comes to presenting British science fiction. British Worldcons are traditionally seen as an opportunity to bring to this country masses of American writers we might not otherwise get the chance to meet. A worthy enough ambition in its own way, but it hardly makes for a grandstand presentation of what makes sf in this country valuable or exciting. I don't mean to be jingoistic about this – for me the most thrilling thing about *The Scottish Contention* was meeting Samuel R. Delany, and that probably wouldn't have been possible outside a Worldcon. But a Worldcon isn't about giving me a chance to meet my heroes, or giving any other Worldcon organisers that chance, come to that. What it is about is... what?

I can't see why we should want another British Worldcon. So far, I've seen no evidence that anyone else has thought about why we should want this. But until we've answered that question, at least, I don't think we should even be considering putting another Worldcon bid in place. ☺

Continued overleaf...

From Mark Plummer

14 Northroy Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 6JE

A nice bit of layout this time: on page 20 there's KIM Campbell seeking to introduce new people to the wonders of fandom through another British Worldcon and on page 21 there's Tanya Brown explaining how the manifestation of fandom she saw at the Worldcon in 87 nearly put her off the whole show for life. It does rather tend to support KIM's contention that Conspiracy failed as an entry-level convention but was this a rôle to which it aspired in the first place?

I've never been convinced that Worldcons bring significant numbers of new people into fandom. Oh sure, there have been a few who came in through that route but I don't subscribe to this idea that a Worldcon is a good way "to introduce the diversity of fandom to a generation who have grown up with science-fictional things happening as part of everyday life, but who may not realise there is a fine social life attached." Personally I can't see that many people being willing to lay out a substantial sum for a registration fee (£100 in 1995) because they want to find out about this "fine social life"; it's a lot of money to pay just because you're curious. And anyway, why do you need something on a Worldcon scale to introduce people to the "diversity of fandom"? Can't this be done just as efficiently through an Eastercon (which has the added advantage of a significantly lower membership rate)?

I must admit that I'm also curious about this notion that another British Worldcon within the next decade is somehow not merely desirable but actually necessary. "We need to encourage fans established in one area of

activity to take a look at what else is available," says KIM. Setting aside the interesting question of who the "we" might be in this particular context, why does anybody "need" to do this? And even if we accept that for some bizarre reason this is actually necessary, why can this only be accomplished through a Worldcon and not, as mentioned earlier, an Eastercon? Speaking as a fan who is, I guess, established in at least one area of activity, I would like to think that I am perfectly capable of taking a look at what else is available without KIM and Pat going to all the trouble of running a Worldcon to enable me to do it.

Following on from Roger Wilson's letter, I'd agree that Hay-on-Wye isn't terribly good for sf; the specialist shop there is both expensive and uninspiring. I'd recommend The Fantasy Centre (157 Holloway Road, London, N7 8LX). It never ceases to amaze me that so many fans - even those in the Greater London area itself - don't seem to know of its existence. Anyway, for the benefit of those who don't know about it, the stock is all second-hand sf / fantasy and includes standard 'reading copies' and collectables as well as a large range of pulp and digest magazines. For those who can't get to London regularly (or at all) they produce a catalogue several times a year. ☺

From Terry Jeeves

56 Red Star Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorks., YO12 5RQ
I enjoyed *Matrix* [122] even more than usual although I can't say the same for the cover - sorry but it was a bit 'messy'!

Sorry to hear of the TAFF fund snafu. I suppose it

was inevitable sooner or later. I suppose a central, two (or three) signature account might help - but that wouldn't solve the current crisis. At £80 a month it will take over two years to pay back the deficit.

I got one of those Penguin 'Irina virus' letters and decided it was an inept publicity stunt, so I junked it.

I also enjoyed Andy Sawyer's piece on sundry sf publications and I'm pleased to say that the latest issue of Algis Budrys's *Tomorrow: The Magazine of Speculative Fiction* has my short story "The Einstein Instant" therein - I've crashed the American market at last - I even got an invite to join the SFFWA but declined because of the \$45 dues.

Anent Roger Wilson's letter, why not run (occasionally) a section listing sf dealers - Ken Slater, Ken Cowley, Simon Gosden, Mike Don all being excellent dealers. Seems a useful item for readers. [Coming soon! - Chris] I've visited Hay-on-Wye twice and both times found the sf overpriced - 1932 ASF for £30 for example.

Had a surprise today whilst browsing through Ken Slater's massive catalogue. I looked for one or two well-known 'names' and suddenly realised that a very high proportion of authors were strangers to me. Once upon a time I would recognise 80-90% of authors in a catalogue, now they are nearly all new to me. Old age is hell. ☹

We also heard from: John Ollis, Andy Sawyer, Mark Valentine, and an anonymous member who sent a Christmas card. Thanks!

I do hope to hear from at least a few of you for the next issue. If only to tell me to, er, go away

— Chris

— BSFA news

IMPORTANT!

Let's All Go On An Easter Holiday

Intervention is this year's national UK convention, and will as usual be hosting the BSFA Annual General Meeting. It's all happening at the Britannia Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool from 28 to 31 March 1997. Please note that you must book soon: there will be no on-the-door memberships available, and the rates rise to £50 on 1 March; membership closes on 14 March. If you book before March it costs £25 (C25 unwaged). See the events listing for details, or the ad elsewhere in this issue.

You don't need to be a full member to attend the BSFA AGM, however (though I'd encourage you to do so - you won't regret it!). At press-time it's not certain precisely when the AGM will be happening (probably on Saturday afternoon), so please contact Maureen Kincald Speller for further information (address / phone / email details on page 2). We'd like to get as many members as possible to the AGM; we want to see what you look like! Come along and meet the gang, moan at us, tell us what you want from the BSFA; hey, you can even vote us all out if you think you could do better. The BSFA will have a stall in the dealers' room too, so come and introduce yourself. Hope to see you there!

Address Change

Please note that Elizabeth and Paul Billinger have now moved. Send all renewals, address changes etc. to:

Paul Billinger
BSFA Membership Secretary
1 Long Row Close
Everdon, Daventry, Northants., NN11 3BE

Tel: 01327 361661

Email: billinger@enterprise.net

Don't Forget

If you haven't yet filled in the BSFA Membership Survey in the last mailing, there's still time. And nominations for next year's BSFA Awards are now open (for works published in 1997), so let Kay McVeigh know if you come across something that takes your fancy.

A happy and prosperous 1997 to each and every one of you.

— Chris Terran

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Your Treasurer looks back at the last financial year

The obvious and disappointing thing about the BSFA's results for the year ended 30 September 1996 is the return to a loss-making situation. As I said when commenting on last year's accounts, if the BSFA is to expand its activities then we really need to be making, on a consistent basis, profits that can be ploughed back into projects like the publication of *A Very British Genre*.

The principal reason for this year's loss is the significant fall in income. Last year's turnover was boosted considerably by sterling efforts at Intersection, the Glasgow Worldcon, which not only raised funds from the sale of T-shirts, publications and, of course, the tombola, but also brought an influx of new members. Sadly, and I'm afraid that the irregular publishing of the mailings has probably had something to do with this, there has not been a corresponding rush of renewals in August and September 1996.

Having observed the falling membership numbers, steps have been taken recently to reduce costs accordingly. For example, the number of magazines printed for each mailing has been cut to a minimum. These cost savings, however, cannot match the fall in subscription levels and are, to some extent, counteracted by increases in postage costs. The large fall in 'cost of sales' - that is, the direct cost of producing the magazines - is attributable to the publishing schedule rather than planned cost savings. During the year ended 30 September 1995 a full six mailings were issued; in the year to 30 September 1996, however, only five issues of *Vector* and *Matrix* were produced.

I hope that at the end of the next financial year we will be able to look back at a full six mailings. To finance this, however, we are going to have to do some serious work in promoting the BSFA and increasing the membership numbers. Obviously the Committee are making plans to this end, but every little helps, so if you enjoy your membership don't forget to recommend the BSFA to your friends (and relatives, the milkman and anyone else who knows you).

— Elizabeth Billinger

BFA accounts

COMPANY INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1996

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

SECRETARY: E. A. Billinger

REGISTERED OFFICE: 60 Bournemouth Road
Folkestone, Kent
CT19 5AZ

COMPANY NUMBER: 921500

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1996

The directors submit their report and accounts for the year ended 30 September 1996.

Principal 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	C. A. Green
I. M. Banks	D. R. Langford
E. A. Billinger	K. McVeigh
C. M. Cary (resigned 31/5/96)	M. D. Plummer
A. M. Cook (resigned 31/5/96)	A. Sawyer
M. J. Edwards	M. S. Speller
J. Glover (resigned 31/5/96)	C. J. Terran
S. Glover	

M. J. Edwards, D. R. Langford, A. Sawyer, M. S. Speller retire by rotation and being eligible offer themselves for re-election.

Small company exemptions

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the exemptions conferred by Part 11 Schedule 8 of the Companies Act 1985.

On behalf of the board: E. A. Billinger, Director, 9 November 1996

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPT. 1996

	Notes	1996 £	1995 £
Turnover	2	10,638	13,668
Cost of sales		<u>9,925</u>	<u>11,055</u>
Gross profit		713	2,613
Net operating expenses		<u>1,274</u>	<u>1,872</u>
Operating profit (loss)	3	(561)	741
Interest receivable	5	<u>16</u>	<u>12</u>
Profit (Loss) on ordinary activities before and after taxation		(545)	753
Retained profit brought forward		<u>1,101</u>	<u>348</u>
Retained profit carried forward		<u>£ 556</u>	<u>1,101</u>

The only recognised gain/loss for the period is the loss for the year of £545.

There were no acquisitions and no discontinued operations in the year.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 1996

	Notes	1996 £	1995 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible Assets	6	49	52
Current Assets			
Stocks	8	1,292	1,309
Debtors	7	284	330
Cash at bank		<u>1,581</u>	<u>574</u>
		3,157	2,213
Creditors			
Amounts falling due within one year	8	<u>2,623</u>	<u>1,137</u>
Net Current Assets		<u>534</u>	<u>1,076</u>
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		<u>£ 583</u>	<u>£ 1,128</u>
Capital and Reserves			
Profit and loss account		556	1,101
Other reserves		<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>
		<u>£ 583</u>	<u>£ 1,128</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:

- i ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with section 221; and
- ii 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 1985 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, 9 November 1996

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPT. 1996

1 Accounting policies

Basic of accounting: 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

Stock: Stocks are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

2 Turnover

Turnover represents income from subscriptions, publications, advertising and associated sales together with fund-raising activities.

3 Operating profit

This is stated after charging the following:

	1996 £	1995 £
Depreciation	<u>3</u>	<u>3</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

	1996 £	1995 £
Bank interest	<u>12</u>	<u>5</u>

6 Tangible fixed assets

	Library £	Awards £	Total £
Cost			
At 30 September 1995			
& 30 September 1996	<u>913</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>940</u>
Depreciation			
At 30 September 1995	888	-	888
Charge for the year	<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3</u>
At 30 September 1996	<u>891</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>891</u>
Net book value			
At 30 September 1996	<u>22</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>49</u>
At 30 September 1995	<u>25</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>52</u>

7 Debtors

	1996 £	1995 £
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>284</u>	<u>330</u>

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	1996 £	1995 £
Loan from Mexican Hat	-	300
Trade creditors	<u>2,556</u>	<u>668</u>
Current corporation tax	<u>19</u>	<u>19</u>
Accruals	<u>48</u>	<u>150</u>
	<u>2,623</u>	<u>1,137</u>

9 Share capital

The company has no share capital being limited by guarantee.

10 Capital commitments

Commitments for capital expenditure at the year end were Enil (1995: Enil).

IMPORTANT

- Please enclose an SAE when contacting conventions.
- Efforts are made to ensure the accuracy of all the information here, but check with the convention before booking.
- If you run, or know of, any unlisted conventions or events please let me know at the editorial address.
- Please mention Matrix when enquiring.
- Special thanks to: **Dave Langford, Chris O'Shea, Bridget Wilkinson**; errors are mine.

22 Jan 1997: BSFA London Meeting

The BSFA's free monthly meetings are held in the upstairs room of the Jubilee Tavern on York Road, London SE1, between Waterloo and Westminster Bridges. Nearest stations Waterloo (mainline or Underground) or Westminster (Underground). Things start at about 7.00pm; if you get there early and the upstairs room is closed we'll be in the main bar and, if in doubt, the landlord will be able to point us out to you. Meetings are open to all.

☎ Paul Hood on 01621 816440 for further information.

31 Jan - 2 Feb 1997: HarmoniX

Fik (s related music) convention at the Rozel Hotel, Weston-Super-Mare. Guests Sue Mason, Mary Ellen Wessels (MEW). Registration £23.

☎ HarmoniX, 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ

31 Jan - 2 Feb 1997: Pegasus 97

Star Trek / general convention at the Hilton National Hotel, Coventry. Guests include Dennis Ashton. Full membership is £30, child £15, or £15 per day; cheques payable to 'Pegasus Conventions' (please include 2 large SAEs).

☎ Pegasus 97, 16 Bramwell St., Eastwood, Rotherham, S. Yorkshire, S65 1RZ

6 Feb 1997: London SF meeting

Wellington pub opposite the Old Vic exit from Waterloo Station. 'London Circle' meetings are held on the first Thursday in each month, and usually start about 5pm. No special events but very popular and crowded.

☎ Just turn up!

8 Feb 1997: Compulsion 97

Gaming on somewhere in Edinburgh with guests Steve Jackson, Andrew Harman, Andrew Rillstone. Registration £2.50.

☎ Geas Convention, c/o Kenny Haycox, 67 Maitland Hog Lane, Kirkliston, ED29 9DU

☎ geas@ed.ac.uk

☎ http://www.ed.ac.uk/~geas/

14-16 Feb 1997: Attitude: The Convention

Convention organised by the Attitude fanzine team. Membership until 31 Jan is £27 attending, on the door £35 (if available). Venue is the Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern, Worcs. (where the 1997 Novacon will be held): rates are £33 pppn single, £29 pppn double, twin, triple or quad.

☎ First Floor Flat, 14 Pritwell Square, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 1DW

☎ 0114 281 0697

☎ Attitude@btch.demon.co.uk

21-23 Feb 1997: TrinCon 2

Trinity College, Dublin. 'Ireland's Premier Science Fiction Convention', and who could deny it with this amazing guestlist: Gill Alderman, Iain Banks, Pat Cadigan, Jonathan Carroll, Maggie Furey, Stephen Gallagher, Harry Harrison, Michael Marshall Smith, Paul J. McAuley, Ian McDonald, Kim Newnam, Nicholas Royle, Geoff Ryman, Lucius Shepard, David Wingrove, and more. All for only £15, which is the 'pre-booking' rate and must be paid before 15 Feb 97; on the door it'll be £20. Under 14s and one-day passes cost £12. Cheques / POs payable to 'Dublin University Science Fiction Society'.

☎ TrinCon2, 40 Daniel Street, Dublin 8, Ireland

☎ sfsc@maths.tcd.ie

☎ http://www.csc.tcd.ie/~sfsc/trincon

26 Feb 1997: BSFA London Meeting

2 Mar 1997: **Picocon 14**
Imperial College's annual one-day convention, held on a Sunday, 10am-8pm. An ideal and cheap introduction to conventions. Guests are Simon Ings and Nicholas Royle: membership is £8 (students only £3).

☎ ICSF c/o IC Union, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB

6 Mar 1997: London SF meeting

8 Mar 1997: The Nightwatch

Babylon 5 convention at the Connaught Rooms in London. Guest is Jeff Conway.

☎ Wolf 359, 141 Warden Road, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 9BE

☎ 01753 701708

9 Mar 1997: The Nightwatch

Jeff Conway scoots up to Glasgow for another one-day Babylon 5 convention. Venue is the Quality Central Hotel. Profits go to Leukemia and Cancer Children's fund.

☎ Sector 14, PO Box 3870, Troon, KA10 7PZ

☎ sector14@glod.demon.co.uk

☎ http://www.glod.demon.co.uk/sector14/

15 Mar 1997: UKCAC

UK Comics Art Convention at the Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London.

☎ UKCAC, PO Box 146, Glasgow, G1 5RN

21-23 Mar 1997: AKFT Konvention 3

'Adult' Star Trek con (over-18s only) at the Warwick Arms Hotel in Warwick.

☎ Clare Wilton, 29 Courtenhall Road, Blisworth, Northants, NN7 3DD

☎ john@reliant.demon.co.uk

☎ http://www.reliant.demon.co.uk/akft/index.html

26 Mar 1997: BSFA London Meeting

28-31 Mar 1997: **Intervention**
The 1997 Eastercon, themed around 'Communication'. Venue is the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. Guests are Brian Aldiss, Octavia Butler, David Langford and Jon Bing. Membership is now £35 attending, £25 supporting or unwaged.

☎ Intervention, 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS

☎ 01234 376596

☎ intervention@ponpey.demon.co.uk

☎ http://ds.dial.pipex.com/minerva.tech/interven

.htm

3 Apr 1997: London SF meeting

19 Apr 1997: UnConvention 97

The annual Foran Times convention at the Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London. Last year's was reviewed in Matrix 120.

☎ UnConvention 97, PO Box 146, Glasgow, G1 5RN

23 Apr 1997: BSFA London Meeting

1 May 1997: London SF meeting

2-5 May 1997: The Mission

Star Trek convention at the Norbreck Castle Hotel in Blackpool.

☎ Wolf 359, 141 Warden Road, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 9BE

☎ 01753 701708

11 May 1997: Fantasy Fair 7

One-day event sponsored by Peterborough SF Club, at the Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough, 10.30am-4.00pm. Guests, games, dealers, all for £1.50 or so.

☎ Bruce King, 1 The Hallards, Eaton Socom, St. Neots, PE19 3QW

☎ 01480 216372

23-26 May 1997: Year of the Wombat

Humour convention at the Bestwood Lodge Hotel, Nottingham, themed on hangers. Registration £25 until Eastercon.

☎ Year of the Wombat, 22 The City, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 2ED

24-26 May 1997: Fantasticon UK

General convention at the Harrogate International Conference Centre. Guests include Harry Harrison, David Gemmell, Lisa Tuttle, Ramsey Campbell, Jack Cohen and Rog Poyton, proprietor of the Andromeda Bookshop in Birmingham. Events include items on cut radio sf and a comprehensive video programme. Rates until 1 Sep 1996 are £40.50 attending, £13.50 supporting, with reductions for individual days. Children aged 5 and below are free, children under 14 half price.

☎ SAE to Fantasticon UK, 38 Planetree Ave., Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 9TH

☎ nirs5@aber.ac.uk

28 May 1997: Arthur C. Clarke Award

Science Museum. Invitation only.

28 May 1997: BSFA London Meeting

This month's meeting may be changed or cancelled due to the clash with the Clarke Award.

11-14 Jul 1997: The Alliance

Major Babylon 5 con at the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. The enormous guest list includes J. Michael Straczynski and membership is £70.

☎ The Alliance, 141 Warden Road, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 9BE

18-20 Jul 1997: Convocation

The 16th Union combined with the British rôle-playing game convention. Venue is New Hall in Cambridge and the guest is Stephen Brust. £20 registration, and numbers are limited to 180.

☎ Convocation, 19 Uphall Road, Cambridge, CB1 3HX

25-27 Jul 1997: Voyage 97

The second Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea convention, held at the Novotel, Arundel Gate, Sheffield. 'Wonderful friendly atmosphere, episodes, discussions, costume party, writers' workshop, zine library.' But no details of rates, unfortunately.

☎ Voyage 97, 15 Fulfers Court, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4DZ

3 - 5 Sep 1997: LoneStarCon

The 55th World sci convention in San Antonio, Texas. Guests include Algis Budrys, Michael Moorcock.

☎ PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755-2277, USA

UK agent: Mike Moir, 27 Hampton Road, Worcester Park, Surrey, KT4 8EU

23 Oct - 2 Nov 1997: Coachcon

Coach trip starting in London, via Portmeau, to Euro-Octocon in Ireland, and back to London for the World Fantasy Convention.

☎ SAE or 2xIRCs to 64 Richeborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX

24-27 Oct 1997: Euro-Octocon '97

The 1997 Eurocon and Ireland's national sci con combined.

☎ Euro-Octocon '97, 211 Blackhorse Avenue, Dublin 11, Ireland.

☎ nmchugh@td.ie

☎ http://arcogrant.ltc.ie/ie/OctoCon.html

31 Oct - 2 Nov 1997: World Fantasy Convention

1997 sees the centenary of Bram Stoker's Dracula, and the WFC will be celebrating this (which doubtless explains the contact address). Venue is the Britannia International Hotel in London's Docklands, now restored after being blown up by the IRA.

☎ Membership is now £75.

☎ PO Box 31, Whitby, North Yorks., YO22 4YL

14-16 Nov 1997: Novacon 27

The 1997 Novacon moves out of Birmingham to the de Vere Abbey Hotel in Great Malvern. Guest is Peter F. Hamilton and registration is £25 until April.

☎ 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS

10-13 April 1998: Intuition

The 1998 Eastercon at the Piccadilly Jarvis Hotel in Manchester. Guests Connie Willis, Ian McDonald and Martin Tudor.

☎ Membership is £28, £15 supporting. Note new address.

☎ Intuition, 1 Waverley Way, Carshalton Beches, Surrey, SM5 3LD

☎ INTUITION@smf.demon.co.uk

☎ http://www.sas.ac.uk/~acbj/intuition/intuit

ion_index.html

21-24 Aug 1998: The Wrap Party

Celebrate the conclusion of Babylon 5 at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Confirmed guests are J. Michael Straczynski, Harlan Ellison, Jack Cohen, John Ridgeway, Bryan Talbot, Adam 'Mojo' Lowebowitz, John Matthews.

☎ Membership until the 1997 Eastercon is £50 (instalment scheme available), under 17s half price, under 12s free. Room rates: £40ppn triple, £42ppn double or twin, £47ppn single.

☎ The Wrap Party, PO Box 505, Reading, RG1 7QZ

☎ TheWrapParty@bipin.co.uk

☎ http://www.bipin.co.uk/TheWrapParty

2-6 Sep 1999: Aussiecon 3

The Worldcon goes down under. Guests George Turner, Greg Benford, Bruce Gillespie. Membership is \$140 [US].

☎ UK Agent: Martin Hoare, 45 Tiltelust Road, Reading, RG1 7TT

Members' Noticeboard

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

LOCAL GROUPS

PETERBOROUGH SF CLUB is celebrating its 21st anniversary this year. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at the Bluebell Inn, Dogthorpe, and on the third Wednesday of the month in the bar of the Great Northern Hotel, opposite the BR station. Guests lined up for this year include artist **Russell Morgan** on 2 April and **Simon Ings** on 4 June. Contact: SAE to 56 Pennington, Otford, Gidday, Peterborough, PE2 5NB

HULL SF GROUP meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 10.30pm at Ye Olde Blue Bell, Market Place. Hull Activities include informal members' talks, guest speakers who have included Pat Cadogan, Graham Joyce and Colin Greenland; debates and readings. Not forgetting drinking and merry chat. Contact: Ian & Julie on 447553 or Dave & Estelle on 4444281.

CARDIFF SF GROUP meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in The Golden Cross, 283 Hayes Road, Cardiff.

CAMBRIDGE SF GROUP meets on the second Monday of the month in The Westlies, New Market Road, Cambridge.

READING SF GROUP meets weekly on Mondays at 8.00pm in The Sun, Castle Street, Reading.

BIRMINGHAM SF GROUP is one of the most active groups in the country. Meetings are held on the third Friday of the month at a pub in Birmingham; it seems to be moving around at the moment so contact them for details. There's usually a guest speaker. Membership is £10 per year, which includes a monthly newsletter. Contact: Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX. Email: bmf@btccat.demon.co.uk

FONT, the Manchester SF Group, meets on the second and fourth Thursdays in the city, at the Crown and Anchor Beer Engine (Hilton St / Port St. corner) in Manchester city centre. Usually from about 8pm till last orders. The group's not formally closed to new members, but anyone who wants to find out how to get to the pub is welcome to phone Mike Dixon on 0161 226 2980.

LEICESTER SF GROUP: If you live in the Leicester area then the Leicester Science Fiction Group would like to hear from you. We meet on the first Friday of the month with the venue to be arranged. Contact: Tim Groom on 0116 279 2920, or email: tcsf@leic.ac.uk

COLCHESTER SF / HORROR / FANTASY GROUP. We meet on the third Saturday of each month at 12.30pm in The Playhouse pub on St. John's Street. We are mainly a discussion over a few beers kind of thing. If you fancy coming along either give Des Lewis a ring on 01255 812115 or you can just turn up.

CAMBRIDGE MEETINGS: If you live in the Cambridge area and would be interested in getting together for regular Sunday meetings, John Oram would like to hear from you. Contact: John Oram, 3 Oatlands Avenue, Bar Hill, Cambs., CB3 8EQ or phone 01954 781797 after 6pm.

WANTED

WANTED: a copy in any condition of *The Rabbie Rabbies* by Eric Frank Russell. Contact: John Ollis, 51 Belmont Road, Luton LU1 1LL

MINISTER CLASSICS WANTED: not for me, for a friend. Honest good. Market rate is around a quid, but I'll pay £12 to £20 dependent on condition or will swap for duplicates. Titles wanted include: *Aesop's Fables*, *Cuivert's Travels*, *Hamel: Just So Stories*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Legend of Seelie Holme*, *Macbeth: Master of Ballantrae*, *And Flinders: Pride and Prejudice*, *Torn of the Snow*, *Daisy Miller*, *Prince and the Pauper*, *Wind in the Willows*, *Wuthering Heights*.

Andy Butler, Flat 3, 28 Louis Street, Hull HU3 1LY. Tel: 01482 229148

HELP A DESPERATE EDITOR. Wanted: a copy in any condition of Brian Stabeland's novel *The Paradise of the Stars*, published by Ace Books (I think) in the 70s. Also *Glasty Beyond Belief*, the bad of quotations book. Chris Tarrant, 9 Beachwood Court, Back Beachwood, Gorse, Leeds LS4 2HS

WANTED: Complete set of BBC TV video *Survivors*. Will accept any damage or collect it local. Contact: Geoff Hunt, 71 Poplar Grove, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 3DN

BOOKS REQUIRED - Ace Doubles, Banks, Corley, Delany, Nevins, Saterhagen, Stabeland, Sterling, Sneyd.

Writings series, and many more. Send SAE for wants list to Ian Forsward, 12 Winston Way, Fareham, Cambs., PE7 3BU. Tel: 01753 241836

BOOKS WANTED: Original Ace paperback editions of the following books by Megan Lindholm: *Hazy's Right*, *The Widdings*, *The Lumbermen Gate*, and *Wizard of the Pigeons*. Any copies in any condition of *The Unicorn Treasury* edited by Bruce Coville, published by Doubleday in 1988, and *Strategist of Fantasy* by Brian Atwater, published by Indiana University Press in 1992. Please contact **Michael Braithwaite**, 27 Marsh Drive, West Hendon, London, NW9 7QZ or phone 0181 202 9018.

FOR SALE

COLLECTION CLEARANCE. I have lists for Paperbacks, Hardcovers, Audiocass, and Magazines including sets and runs and SFF / Analog for 1934 to 1959. Send SAE for lists, please say which. Contact **Terry Jeeves**, 56 Red Star Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorks. YO12 5RQ

DANCER FOR THE WORLD'S DEATH, an illustrated signed and numbered limited-edition booklet by Storm Constantine with cover art by Dave Meering. Due October from Inception at £35.00 inc. p&h. Cheques payable to Inception. Also available by Constantine from Inception. An Elemental Tale (a fantasy) and Colours (a poem). We also have stocks of now out-of-print books: *Alph*, *Montrose Regiment*, *Sign for the Sacred*, *Burying the Shadow*, plus a few copies of the original 'Wasteland' booklets. Please send SAE for details: a booklet Contact Inception. Steve Jeffery & Nikki Lee France, 44 White Way, Kington, Oxon. OX5 2XA

HARM'S WAY by Colin Greenland - "What if Charles Dickens had written a science epic?" (Locus) - large paperback, the one with the pretty cover, £3.50. Also the two linked fantasy paperbacks: *The Order of the Thin Or* and *Other Voices* (covers by Roger Dean and Ian Miller), £1.50 each. Prices include postage. Colin Greenland, 48 Shulton Street, Cambridge, CB1 2DA

THE WAY TO WRITE SCIENCE FICTION by Brian Stabeland. Signed post copies available at £5. Also available: *The Empire of Fear*, £10 hardcover, £5.95 paperback. The *Science Fiction Society's* *Science Fiction Yearbook* £8.00. The *Asgard Trilogy*, £10 bound set (limited to 500 copies) of 3 pbs. All prices post-free. Order from Brian Stabeland, 113 St Peter's Road, Reading RG6 1PG

COLLECTION FOR SALE: new review copies of SF and Fantasy fiction and related non-fiction, books about literature / TV, author studies etc., plus my personal collection of fiction, related non-fiction, American magazines about fantastic literature. Hardcover and

paperbacks, most in excellent condition. Some collectables. All very reasonably priced from £1 up. US \$1 brings complete lists.

Please contact **Nail Barron**, 1149 Line Place, Vista, CA 92083-7428, USA

CRUCIFORM VARIATIONS a collection of 12 science-fictional cryptic crosswords (including annotated solutions) by John English is now available! Price £2.00 from Beacon Publications, 75 Roslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex, RM9 0RG

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MISC

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SOME LOVELY MAN sent me - that's Jilly Reed - a copy of Emma Bull's *War for the Oaks* a couple of months ago in response to my ad here and I LOST HIS NAME AND ADDRESS. If you are, please write or ring so I can pay you what I owe and not expect of mortification.

Please contact **Jilly Reed** at: Hill House, Moats Tye, Suffolk, IP14 2EX. Tel: 01494 612722.

JAUNTING ON THE SCORIAN TEMPESTS AND **REILING BULLIONS OF HELL**, a centenary essay on M. P. Sherry's *Parsons in the Fire*, by Brian Stabeland, in the latest *Readers' Newsletter*. Free from Mark Valentine, 23 Southfield Terrace, Addingham, Wiltshire, Wiltshire, Wiltshire, BA1 9PP

INFORMATION SOUGHT. After nearly forty years of involvement in it, I was intrigued to hear my first trace of the 30's writer Robert J. Hogan, described as a hero of the pulp, in the latest *Encyclopedia of SF*. I would be very grateful for whatever information any members might be able to let me have on this pre-war namesake of mine. Contact: Robert J. Hogan, 30A Grange Avenue, Cornhill, Somerset, BA1 9PP

Baen

Occasionally we'll be looking at American publishers, and we start off with **Baen Books**, an imprint which tends to specialise in whimsical fantasy, of adventure, military and libertarian sf, etc. You won't find the books listed below in most high street shops but they should be available in specialist stores or from import dealers. Assume that \$1 = £1.

★ **Newt Gingrich & William R. Forstchen** 1945 (Sep. \$5.99 pb R. 35p) - Alternative history of positing that the Axis powers won WW II. Gingrich is the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Lois McMaster Bujold Cataganda (Oct. \$5.99 pb R. 35p) - The seventh Vorkosigan novel. Baen are also simultaneously reissuing *Borders of Infinity* (Oct. \$5.99 pb R. 30p), *Falling Free* (Oct. \$4.99 pb R. 30p), and *Ethan of Athos* (Oct. \$5.99 pb R. 25p).

Lois McMaster Bujold The Spirit Ring (Oct. \$5.99 pb R. 38p) - Fantasy adventure.

★ **Lois McMaster Bujold** Memory (Oct. \$2.00 hb R. 4.00p) - The new Miles Vorkosigan novel. Since her first publication in 1986 Bujold has won 4 Hugos for stories in the 'Vorkosigan Saga'.
L. Sprague de Camp & Catherine Crook de Camp The Incorporated Knight (Oct. \$3.95 pb R. 25p) - Light fantasy.

Larry Segriff Space Dreams (Oct. \$5.99 pb R. 25p) - SF adventure.

William R. Forstchen & Larry Segriff The Four Magics (Oct. \$6.99 pb R. 30p) - Forstchen was responsible for the odious *Magic: The Gathering* phenomenon (a machine for extracting money from impressionable teenagers), and this is based on his new fantasy card game playfully entitled *Fantasy Adventures*. You get a free card with the book.

L. Sprague de Camp The Reluctant King (Oct. \$6.99 pb R. 1.68p) - Fantasy. Omnibus edition of *The Goblin Town*, *The Clocks of Iraz* and *The Unbeheaded King*.

Robert E. Howard Beyond the Borders (Oct. \$5.99 pb R. 1.25p) - Heroic fantasy, reconstructed from Howard's writings by T. K. F. Wesskopf.

Lois McMaster Bujold Cordelia's Honor (Nov. \$15.00 hb R. 51p) - Omnibus reissue of *Shards of Honor* and *Barryar*.

Lois McMaster Bujold Brothers in Arms (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 35p) - A Vorkosigan novel.

Mercedes Lackey The Fire Rose (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 1.44p) - Romantic fantasy. For readers of Margaret Atwood... and Mary Stewart? Says Baen, jarringly.

William R. Forstchen & Ben Olander The Price of Freedom (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 30p) - Militaristic. A tie-in novel to the latest release of the *Wing Commander* computer game, which features live-action segments from Mark Hamill and Malcolm McDowell. Three earlier tie-ins are:

Mercedes Lackey & Ellen Guon Freedom Flight (Nov. \$4.99 pb R. 30p)

William R. Forstchen Fleet Action (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 30p)

William R. Forstchen & Andrew Keith Heart of the Tiger (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 38p)

Joseph Sherman Forging the Runes (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 38p) - Quest fantasy set in Dark

Ae Ireland, sequel to: **Joseph Sherman** The Shattered Oct (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 41p)

Piers Anthony & Mercedes Lackey If I Pay Thee Not In Gold (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 41p) - Fantasy

Mercedes Lackey Bardic Voices (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 49p) - Fantasy, book 1 of 'The Lark and the Wren'.

Mercedes Lackey & Ellen Guon Knight of Ghosts and Shadows (Nov. \$4.99 pb R. 35p) - Fantasy.

Mercedes Lackey & Larry Dixon Born to Run (Nov. \$5.99 pb R. 33p) - Humorous fantasy, a 'SERIATED' edge novel, wherein good olives are into stock-car racing and bad olives into kiddie-porn, snuff films and drugs. Tasty or what?

Jody Lynn Nye The Ship Errant (Dec. \$21.00 hb R. 4.00p) - First publication of the sequel to:

Anne McCaffrey & Jody Lynn Nye The Ship Who Won (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 33p)

Anne McCaffrey & Margaret Ball Partnership (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 33p)

Anne McCaffrey, Elizabeth Moon & Jody Lynn Nye The Planet Pirates (Dec. \$15.00 hb R. 89p) - Omnibus reissue.

Margaret Ball Mathematics (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 35p) - Fantasy, a 'Chicks in Chinnail' novel. 'A novel for anyone who's ever had a yen to attend a PTA meeting in full armor.'

Esther Friesner ed. Chicks in Chinnail (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 35p) - Fantasy.

Margaret Ball The Shadow Gate (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 35p) - Fantasy.

Holly Lisle & Walter Spence The Devil and Dan Cooley (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 35p) - Light fantasy. Satan's minions settle in North Carolina, and one upwardly-mobile devil makes a pact to help a disaffected witch with his ratings (no, not Chris Evans). See also: **Holly Lisle** Sympathy for the Devil (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 25p)

James P. Hogan The Proteus Operation (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 40p) - Hard sf in which time travellers from the 21st century help Hitler win, and only good of Yankee know-how can save the day. Draft.

David Drake All the Way to the Gallows (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 28p) - Drake, king of militaristic sf, attempts humour in this sf novel.

David Drake Mark II: The Military Dimension (Dec. \$5.99 pb R. 30p) - Military sf.

David Drake Lackey and His Friends (Dec. \$4.99 pb R. 30p) - 'A... combination of Orwell's 1984 and Dirty Harry.'

