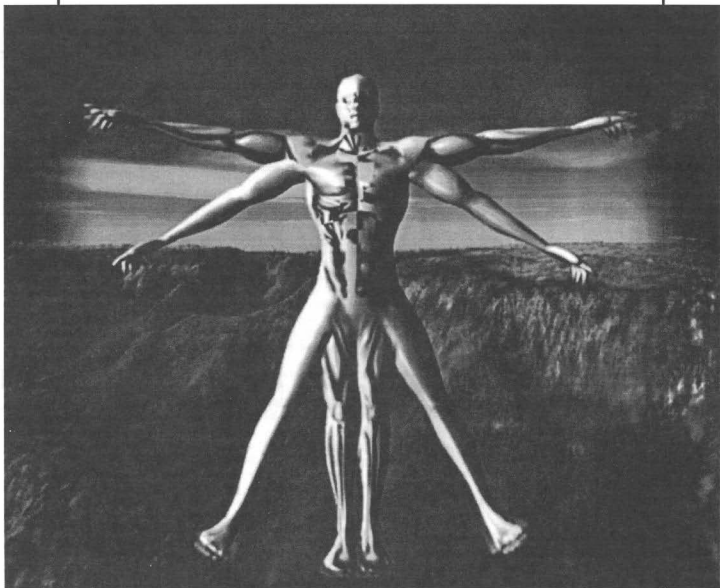


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£1.75

the news magazine of the british science fiction association



50th EASTERCON SPECIAL
AWARDS WINNERS AND WAITERS
VINCENT CLARKE: THE FOUNDING OF THE BSFA
STAR WARS
KUBRICK
BOOK AND MEDIA NEWS
WEB WONDERS
and lots, lots more...

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may/june 1999

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1999

matrix

the news magazine of the british science fiction association

issue 137

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stephen baxter on becoming vice president

We were proud to report Stephen Baxter becoming Vice President of the BSFA in the last issue of *Matrix*. Stephen himself has written a few words about his new role.

It's a great honour to have been asked to serve as the BSFA's Vice President. I admit it feels a little odd - as if I've morphed from Young Turk to Queen Mum in the blink of an eye - but it's an honour I'm delighted to accept.

Science fiction is at root commercial entertainment, of course. But I believe it has a vital role to play in our culture. Damon Knight (in 1973, introducing a Richard McKenna collection) wrote that 'science fiction is not a category but a way of looking at the universe'. Dead right. Science fiction teaches us to imagine places and times beyond the here and now, and to consider the other guy's point of view. These are surely skills we need to develop as we enter a new and dangerous century, in which the one thing we know for sure about the future is that it will be different from the past.

The BSFA has an essential role in the promotion of sf in Britain, and I'm happy to play a part. I just hope that as the new Veep I turn out to be Al Gore, not Spiro Agnew.

b.s.f.a. becomes amazon associate

Do you ever buy books directly from the internet? If so, you are no doubt aware of Amazon, the largest bookseller on the world wide web. It's so simple, dial up and peruse the vast selection of brand new books available, load up your virtual shopping cart, pay with your plastic and then sit back and wait for those books to arrive. Even better though, if you access the site via the rather splendid and informative BSFA website (<http://members.aol.com/tamaranth/>), then the BSFA will get 5% commission on all sales. So you can shop til you drop (into your comfy chair after a hard session on-line) and benefit the BSFA at the same time.

Of course, you may find you prefer to shop in the good old fashioned way, amble into bookshops, examine the contents of the books, revel

CONTENTS	
News	3
Awards News	5
Star Wars - John Ashbrook examines the influence of possibly the most successful sf film ever	6
Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer report on Picocon	8
The 50th Eastercon - con reports and lots of news	9
Forthcoming Books	12
Reviews of Vampires and Pleasantville	14
The Founding of the BSFA - by Vincent Clarke	15
Obituaries - Stanley Kubrick and Adolfo Bioy Casares	16
Surfing on Mars - Tanya Brown surfs the world wide web	18
Events Listings	20
Local Groups, London Fandom and a Dead Nurse	22
Letters	23
Technosphere - small furry virtual critturs?	23
Leonard Fell	24
Competition	24

in the smell of the paper and the binding, you can even pay using cash. In which case, don't let us stop you!

Or how about a combination of the antiquated and the hi-tech? Legendbooks.com is a used bookshop (or rather used book shop), selling hundreds of titles at a fraction of the new price.

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fate strikes a blow to orbiter

Only a few weeks after the new Orbiter Co-ordinator Kat Patrick accepted the job, introduced herself to the membership and commenced serious co-ordinating, her husband landed a super job in the USA, which means that Kat will be returning Stateside in a few months time. She'll be able to

carry on till the end of June, but Orbiter is actively on the lookout for another co-ordinator. The orbiter groups aim to provide a feedback service to aspiring amateur authors, whereby members of a group circulate their material to other participants in order to receive constructive criticism and advice, and

in turn provide feedback on writing they receive. If you would like to get involved with Orbiter, particularly if you wish to take over the co-ordinating of the groups, please contact Kat at 44, Ticknell Piece, Charlbury, Oxon, OX7 3TW.

arthur c clarke centre

An Arthur C Clarke Space and Communications Centre is being planned in honour of Clarke, president of the BSFA, and aims to celebrate his life's works. The centre intends not only to perform the function of museum, exhibiting Clarke's books, manuscripts and memorabilia, but is

also aiming to become an educational and research establishment. The Arthur C Clarke Foundation propose to build the centre in Minehead (Clarke's birthplace) overlooking the Bristol Channel, a large facility which should incorporate laboratories, lecture theatres and even a planetarium.

Donations and grants are currently being sought by the Clarke Foundation. If you wish to inquire, please contact the Arthur C Clarke Foundation of Great Britain, Dene Court, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 3LT, or visit the website at www.acclarke.co.uk

terrific response to matrix request

After the appeal for assistance with the production of *Matrix* in the March/April issue, we are pleased to report that there has been an excellent response from several BSFA members who are interested in getting involved. At

the time of going to press, details of appointments have yet to be finalised, but watch this space! Correspondence will be forwarded from this address to the new editors.

buck coulson dies

Matrix is sad to report the unexpected death of Robert "Buck" Coulson, author and fan, on 19th February. He is best known amongst fans for

Yandro, co edited with his wife Juanita, and winner of the 1965 fanzine Hugo. He also wrote, with Gene De Weese, *Now You See It/Them* (1975) and *Charles Fort*

Never Mentioned Wombats (1977) which spoof sf and sf conventions. For anyone wishing to make donations, Juanita suggests the American Heart, Lung and Diabetic Associations.

media news

➤ The huge, French, twisted, time-travelling comedy hit *Les Visiteurs* (1993) is to be remade as, surprise, *The Visitors*. Christina Applegate will play the two (time-separated) girlfriend roles. Back on board are the original male stars Christian Clavier and Jean Reno and director Jean-Marie Poiré. Enthusiasm for the project could be dampened by memories of the last 'European-director-remakes-his-own-classic' film - *The Vanishing* (George Sluizer) - which by any measure should have. Vanished that is.

➤ Another Batman film is due, this time with a 'young unknown star' and purportedly based on Frank Miller's *Batman: Year One*.

➤ *The X-Files*, 3rd *Rock From The Sun* and *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids* are all going to drag on for another season.

➤ *Terror t.r.a.x.*, a bizarre hybrid of CD and Fighting Fantasy style adventure (you choose your path with your CD track selector) is to be developed into a half-hour long weekly television series. Perhaps they will show it on different channels and allow you zap from one scene to the next...

➤ Marvel and Sony have spun a deal to create a film/television package out of everyone's favourite web-slinger Spiderman. Our arachnid-enhanced friend will remain the property of Marvel, with Sony financing the venture.

➤ 15 years before *Babylon 5*, *Battlestar Galactica* attempted the story arc principle and it's coming back with \$40 million of cash and *Wing Commander* writer Mark Finch scripting the Glen A. Larson produced feature. Cheesy hairdos, stoic stares and shiny cylons beckon.

➤ 2001: A Space Odyssey looks set to get a re-release just in time for the next millennium in a shiny new restored print, as was the late Stanley Kubrick's intention.

➤ Borislav Belovarski is set to adapt his trilogy *The Very Dead Artisans of Happiness* for television. The series concerns the setting up of a multinational space station, the Ark, the World War that followed its sabotage and the possibility of extra terrestrial intervention. 36 episodes are planned.

➤ Francis Ford Coppola's *First Wave*, a science fiction series that may be familiar to those of you with *Sky*, looks like being the 'next big thing'. Viewing figures place it above the 'are they still churning them out?' *The X-Files* in a number of countries.

➤ The 25th Anniversary Saturn Awards remain centred firmly in the US: of its twenty categories only two are not entirely filled with Hollywood product, Best Fantasy Film (*Babe: Pig In The City* gets a nod) and the hotly contested Best Genre Home Video Release (which includes *Matrix* fave *Gattaca*).

➤ The highly welcome (and recommended viewing for everyone - that means you too!) cinema distribution of Miyazaki's work, starting with *Princess Mononoke* this summer, may herald the long awaited popular acceptance of anime outside of the traditional 'fanboy' base. Warners are looking at purchasing *Mewtwo Strikes Back*, the feature version of the hugely huge *Pocket Monsters* TV series, toys, comics, games, bath mats etc. that seem to have engulfed Japan's pre-teens for the last couple of years.

Out of Focus

by Carol Ann Kerry-Green & Julie Venner

Issue 35 of *Focus* is out with this mailing, and is our 11th issue and our sixth year of editing the magazine. We have decided that it is time to hand the baton on to someone else and are now actively looking for new editors for *Focus* in time for the year 2000. We will hopefully have a new editorial team available to do a transitional issue with No. 36 and pass it over completely with issue No. 37.

Are you interested? Do you want to get involved in editing *Focus*? If so, write to Carol Ann Kerry-Green at 278 Victoria Avenue, Hull, HU5 3DZ, or email metaphor@enterprise.net giving your ideas on editing *Focus*. We will look at the requests and get back in touch with interested parties to start the ball rolling.

After six years we will miss editing *Focus*, but feel sure that there is someone out there just waiting to get their hands on the magazine - if there is, we want to hear from you.

Geoffrey A. Landis recognised for both science and fiction

Geoffrey A. Landis, who has won both the Hugo and Nebula awards for short stories, has been awarded a fellowship from the NASA Institute for Advanced Concepts to study advanced concepts for an interstellar probe. Landis's study explores a concept first proposed by Dr. Robert L. Forward (another SF writer) in 1984 to use a space-based laser, powered by solar energy generated near the orbit of Mercury, to push a lightsail to near-relativistic velocities. Landis's collaborator on the project is Dr. James Benford, twin brother of SF writer Gregory Benford.

Landis is scheduled to present his study at a NASA symposium in Washington, DC, on April 25th. The baseline mission being studied is an unmanned fly-by of the star Alpha Centauri.

Landis has also achieved success as a writer: His work on the Mars Pathfinder mission is summarised in an article, 'Return to the Red Planet', his first novel, *Mars Crossing*, recently sold to Tor, and this year's Nebula voters will be considering both his novella *Ecopoiesis* and his short story 'Winter Fire'.

Colin Greenland Story Alert

Colin Greenland's round-robin story with Gregory Ford, Kit Reed and Rachel Pollack has now been completed. It's a suspenseful tale of butterflies, interstellar capitalism and microwave pizza, it's called "Selling Point", and you can find it on Ellen Datlow's "Event Horizon" at

<http://www.e-horizon.com/eventhorizon/collab/story.ht> ml

Colin very much enjoyed his involvement with the project "Good fun it was too. Bloody 'hard' fun, but good fun none the less."

SF Blues

Walter Mosley, the crime novelist and "President Clinton's favourite writer", has just had new novel published, *Blue Light*, which much to everyone's surprise, including his American publishers, is science fiction.

The plot sounds eerily familiar to Dick's *Valis* with an "inscrutable" blue light (Dick's was pink) from an unknown point in the universe reaching earth and transforming those it strikes, causing them to evolve beyond the present state of humanity. The book follows one man, Chance, in San Francisco (another similarity with Dick) and his wandering with the "Blues", culminating in their "ultimate, apocalyptic battle". Just to show that he has fully understood the way the SF (publishing) genre works, the novel is the prelude to a projected trilogy. Mosley was in the UK during March to promote the book and was interviewed on Radio 4's arts program *Back-Seat*, sorry 'Front Row'. He was asked why the change of genre: "As a writer it's not much different than working on an assembly line at Ford Motor Company.

You only put on the front left hubcap, you don't come in one day and say you want to work on the transmission, you're told you're not qualified. Writing's the same. If you're a mystery writer, you're a mystery writer and that's what you'll stay". Mosley describes himself as a "Novelist" and has written outside of his original genre before (*RL's Dream* is a literary novel about the blues - music not light). Science fiction was one genre too far for his American publisher, WW Norton, who said to Mosley that they don't publish science fiction - despite having just published the *Norton Anthology of Science Fiction* - and as a result he had to change publisher, to Little Brown, who published the novel in America last year. Mosley, clearly, had no problem describing the book as "science fiction" but the interviewer, Mark Lawson, did. He described the move as "brave and unusual" and then went on to spend the rest of the interview ignoring *Blue Light* and asking about the earlier *Easy Rawlins* series and Bill Clinton.

AWARDS NEWS: WINNING & WAITING

International Horror Guild Awards
Recognising outstanding achievement in the field of horror fiction, fantasy, the fifth annual International Horror Guild awards were presented during the World Horror Convention on March 28. Ray Bradbury was declared Living Legend. The other winners were:
Novel: *Fog Heart* by Thomas Tessaie (St Martin's)
First Novel (*Tie*): *Dawn Song* by Michael Mariano (Tor)
Sik & Silk by Caitlin Kiernan (Roc)
Collection: *Black Butterflies: A Flock on the Dark Side* by John Shirley (Mark V. Ziesing)
Anthology: *Dark Terrors 4*, ed. by Stephen Jones and David Sutton (Gollancz)
Long Form: "Mr. Club and Mr. Cuff" by Peter Straub (Morrow)
Short Form: "Dead Blue" by Lucy Taylor (Imagination)
Fully Illustrated:
Non-Fiction: *The St. James Guide to Horror, Ghost, & Gothic Writers*, ed. by David Pringle (St James)
Movie: *Gods and Monsters*: Directed by Bill Condon, Screenplay by Bill Condon. Novel by Christopher Bram
Graphic Story/Novel: *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street*, written by Warren Ellis, art by Darick Robertson (DC/Vertigo)
Television: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*
Publication: *Helix*
Artist: Edward Gorey

Oscars
Another year of genre triumphs at the annual self-congratulatory industry award ceremony. This year the plethora of award given to science fiction, fantasy or horror films was:
Best Screenplay Adaptation for *Gods and Monsters* (Bill Condon)
Best Adapted Screenplay for *The Thin Red Line* (John Woo)
Special award for the *Thelma & Louise* award given to Norman F. Jewison, director/producer of *among others*, *Rollerball*.

The Lambda Literary Award Nominees
Bending the Landscape: SF ed. Nicola Griffith and Stephen Pagel (Overlook)
Things Invisible to See: Lawrence Schimel (Crier/Ultra Violet)
Falling to Earth: Elizabeth Brownrigg (Firebrand)
Galilee: Clive Barker (HarperCollins)
Desmond: Ulysses Dietz (Alison)

1998 SFWA Final Nebula Ballot
The Nebula Awards are decided and presented by active members of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, Inc. Founded in 1939, the organization now has over 1,000 members, including some of the leading writers of science fiction and fantasy. The awards will be announced at the 1999 Nebula Awards Weekend to be held in Pittsburgh on April 30 - May 2.

Novels:
Asaro, Catherine: *The Last Hawk* (Tor, Nov/97)
Haldeman, Joe: *Forever Peace* (Ace, Oct/97)
McDevitt, Jack: *Moondial* (HarperPrism, Apr/98)
Turtledove, Harry: *How Few Remain* (Del Rey, Oct/97)
Wells, Martha: *Death of the Necromancer*, Avon July 98
Willis, Connie: *To Say Nothing of the Dog* (Bantam Spectra, Jan/98)
Novellas:
Asaro, Catherine: *Aurora in Four Voices* (Analog, Dec/98)
Davidson, Avram & Davis, Grant: *The Boss in the Wall* (Tachyon Publications, Aug/98)
Finch, Sheila: *Reading the Bones* (F&SF, Jan/98)
Finkush, Eliot: *Izzy and the Father of Terror* (Asimov's, Jul/97)
Gerold, David: *Jumping Off the Planet* (SF Age, Jan/98)
Landis, Geoffrey A.: *Ecopoiesis* (SF Age, May/97)
Novellets:
Feely, Gregory: *The Truest Child* (SF Age, Nov/97)
Klages, Ellen: *Time Gypsy* (Bending the Landscape: SF, Overlook Press, Oct/98)
McCarthy, Mark J.: *The Mercy Gate* (F&SF, Mar/98)
Rusoch, Kristine Kathryn: *Echoes* (Asimov's, Jul/98)
Williams, Walter Jon: *Laine* (Asimov's, Sep/97)
Yolen, Jane: *Lost Girls* (Reims of Fantasy, Feb/98)

Short Stories:
Brust, Steven: *When the Bough Breaks* (The Essential Borderlines, Tor, Sep/98)
Fowler, Karen Joy: *Standing Room Only* (Asimov's, Aug/97)
Goldstein, Lisa: *Fortune and Misfortune* (Asimov's, May/97)
Landis, Geoffrey A.: *Winters* (Asimov's, Aug/97)
Rogers, Bruce Holland: *Thirteen Ways to a Water* (Morrow, Martin Greenberg and John Heitler, Ed., DAW, Jun/98)
Wentworth, K.D.: *Tall One* (F&SF, Apr/98)

Margaret A. Edwards Award
The American Library Association has announced that Anne McCaffrey is this year's recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award. The award, established in 1988, honors an author's lifetime achievement for writing books that have been particularly with teenagers, adolescents in helping questions of self, relationships and society. It will be presented at a luncheon at the ALA annual conference, held this June in New Orleans. The ALA has also created a gold seal for prominent display on Anne McCaffrey's books.

1998 Tiptree Award
The winner of the 1998 James Tiptree, Jr. Award is "Congenital Agnosia of Gender Ideation" by Raphael Carter which appeared in *Starlight 2* (ed. Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Tor Books). The annual award is named after Alice B. Sheldon, who wrote under the pseudonym James Tiptree, Jr. and is given to works that expand the role of women and men in science fiction and fantasy. By adopting a masculine pen name, Sheldon helped remove the preconceptions associated with an authors gender, specifically with the additional burdens of gaining adequate recognition as a female writer.

MEDIA NEWS

Steven Spielberg may be directing an updated version of *The Time Machine* for release next year. The director, who has not produced a decent film in the last decade, is also working on *Minority Report* with Tom Cruise, based on the Philip Dick novel. Both Cruise and Spielberg have not been paid for the \$80 million movie upfront preferring to go for the potentially lucrative percentage gross option.

The *Wing Commander* games have enjoyed a love/hate relationship with PC aficionados for many years - great cutaways, lousy game being a common cry. For media buffs the addition of *Malcolm A Clockwork Orange* McDowell and *Mark Britannia Hospital* (oh, and *Star Wars*) Hamill has always been of some amusement. Now the exploits of our future chums and those nasty Kilrathi have been transformed from silver disc to silver screen. Producers, Warner Bros. have decided that the project, originally a straight to video production is good enough for a theatrical release. Writer/Creator Chris Roberts directs.

Dungeons & Dragons, the popular cartoon programme (and RPG...) is to get the live action treatment courtesy of Sweetpea Pictures. The \$28 million budget allegedly allows for a sequence featuring

75 dragons on screen simultaneously, provided director Courtney Solomon can roll less than 18 on a d20.

More Star Wars - Episode One stuff (just keep telling yourself "It can't be that good"): Sony Classical will be releasing the soundtrack featuring John Williams and the LSO; Hasbro are making 4" figures with microchips so the toys can interact and speak with each other, negating the necessity for any child/toy interaction scenarios; new trailers and posters are worming their way out at www.starwars.com; "The Unauthorized (sic) Star Wars Compendium" is exactly that, Lucasfilm are suing for trademark infringement, expect to see lots more of these in the coming months.

Gum Goes To The Moon, Paramount's new science fiction comedy may well feature Vince Vaughn and Jon Favreau of *Swingers* fame (can't wait...)

Disney's reworking of Asimov's *Bicentennial Man* can now add Sam Neil (of *Event Horizon* and *The Piano* fame) to the cast list. He is to play the father of the family that employs Robin Williams as their android servant. Chris Columbus directs.

Director Walter Hill has left *Supernova* after completion of principal photography

because of irreconcilable differences with United Artists executives regarding the shooting of additional footage. The film is still to be released and stars James Spader and Angela Bassett. Whether Hill will still bill is not known.

Fans of top Canadian director David Cronenberg will be delighted to know that his latest film *eXistenZ* will not be attracting the sort of heated controversy we've come to expect from the maker of *Videodrome*, *Crash* and *Shivers*. The film is inspired by Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*...

Celuloid ecstasy alert! Jean-Jacques Beineix is back after nearly a decade away from feature production! He's got \$40 million to play with! It's going to be a vampire film! It's got Jean Reno in it! *Deal of the Millennium*? Too right! (Sponsored by PunctuationRuZ™)

Alien vs. Predator. Pants!

I'm sorry, perhaps that wasn't too clear. The American release of the new computer game *Alien vs. Predator* will feature quite possibly the most ridiculous promotion ever - free pants for the first 10,000 buyers. The tag line "A game so scary, we're giving you a free pair of underwear" had this writer wetting himself. So to speak.

as the new star was more
dooms ominously over him,
summer's movie schedules,
John Ashbrook decides to
vent his spleen at the whole
Star Wars franchise, holding
it solely responsible for almost
everything that is bad about
the modern American movie.

Star Wars stands astride the modern American movie-scene, casting a shadow across twenty-two years, hundreds of movies, thousands of careers and scores of billions of dollar bills. George Lucas has, with one film (and its two - soon to be three - sequels), had the greatest and furthest-reaching effect on the course of the American film industry of any individual since Thomas Edison.

Initially this may sound like hyperbole. Unfortunately, it's not. No 'star' actor, no director and no single producer has ever had quite so much of it all their own way. You may think that Steven Spielberg has had a greater influence over the hearts and minds of the American movie-going public, but the truth is, without the inspiration and support of his friend George, Spielberg would have been back to making small-budget personal movies with the turn of the eighties. Throughout the eighties and nineties, while Steve was up front, drawing the flak, George was in the background, quietly fanning the flames of a fire that has raged through every corner of one of the world's most lucrative and influential industries. That fire shows no sign of

dying out and, with another *Star Wars* behemoth ready to invade our cinemas, the flames will burn all the higher into the next thousand years. The first feature film of George Lucas, an avant-garde filmmaker, fresh out of college, was a stark vision of an

impersonal
America
taken to its
cold and
logical
extreme:
THX 1138
(1970).

As with George Orwell's 1984, *THX* was an intelligent pessimist's cry for vigilance. It sank without trace at the box-office.

Lucas's friend, Francis Ford Coppola persuaded him to make something commercial, something reassuring, something fun; so he turned to his teenage years. Set in a dreamy America yet innocent of Vietnam, or the Kennedy assassination, in a time before *Easy Rider* blew-away old Hollywood once and for all (or so it seemed), *American Graffiti* (1973) was a rite of passage movie with knobs on. Earning fifty times its production cost, *Graffiti* became, proportionally, the most successful film ever made and inspired a national taste for nostalgia exemplified by the TV series *Happy Days*. To misappropriate Robin Williams's phrase: If you claim to remember the sixties, they were probably the seventies re-run!

Buoyed by his sudden success, Lucas's next idea was to go back even further into his past and plunder the books and films he loved as a child: most notably the Universal Pictures *Flash Gordon* series and Tolkien's no-less long-winded *Lord of the Rings*. To an industry committed to churning-out domestic dramas and grittily realistic crime-stories, Lucas pitched a big, unwieldy, space opera; the kind of simple, glossy movie Hollywood had specialised in before TV took its audience away. He would cast actors whose faces you would never see, or whose dialogue you couldn't understand, and required special effects no one yet knew how to do.

Total madness. Yet, even in these early years, Lucas's skill as a salesman far outweighed his artistic gifts. The Powers That Be at Twentieth Century Fox looked at the mountain of money their competitor Universal had made out of Lucas's simple sixties nostalgia, and decided that, as he had already made one hit against all the odds, they would roll the dice.

Star Wars generated income unimagined until that time, and bombarded popular culture with its influence. Magazines like *Starlog*, *Starburst* and *Cinefix* were born to cater for the audience's new-found passion for sf films. In very short order, vast quantities of money was thrown at science-fiction by all the big studios: *Superman* (1978) took to the skies for the first time in twenty-five years, the old-dark house movie moved out to the stars in *Alien* (1979), *Star Trek* (1979) finally lumbered onto the big screen, as did Lucas's two points of departure: *Flash Gordon* (1980) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1979).

When Lucas came to make his follow-up *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), it debuted in a radically different market place - one now awash with simplistic child-oriented vaguely-sf-inspired blockbusters. Every year the average cost of a movie, along with the amount it

could be expected to earn, climbed stratospherically. Every year the film companies made more noise to promote their ever-more expensive movies. For the first time since the fifties films were big events, the ragged remnants of Britain's once glorious cinema industry heaved under the weight of attendance unlike any since the war.

So it was a brave decision for Lucas - the first multi-multi-millionaire film-maker since DeMille - to invest all of his time and a good deal of his own money into breaking all the rules once again. *Empire* was a solemn and mature film compared to its predecessor: the climactic show-down came only twenty-minutes in, the middle act explored this zen-ish religion he'd invented, then he wrapped it up with a down-beat, cliff-hanger ending where the hero didn't win. Woo. Dennis Hopper would've been proud.

By this point Lucas had set up his own film studio, enigmatically named 'Lucasfilm', and had sunk much of his earnings into creating 'Industrial Light and Magic' - the first of what would become many separate companies all working under the pretentious and inaccurate 'LucasArts' banner. These would come to include 'Sprocket Labs' the pioneers in digital editing, 'THX' the industry standard in audio reproduction (now available at your local multiplex) and 'Pixar' the first production house dedicated to CGI animation (and producers of *Toy Story* and *A Bug's Life*). In a brilliant and - at that time - unique move, all of these companies were in business to provide expert services to other film companies, as well as to his *Star Wars* franchise. Thus George's investments began to reap rewards far beyond the earnings of one mere film.

The first film had spawned a marketing revolution - even the most insignificant background character could, it seemed, be turned into a toy children would pay through their parents' noses for. The acid-test second movie introduced new characters and new toys and the world's appetite seemed unquenchable. The third film was therefore carefully and cynically designed to sell such toys, games, books, stickers and comics. Simply telling a story came a long way down the list of priorities.

Of course, power-broking his ever-growing empire meant that George had less and less time to spend at the sharp end of movie-making. The first film had been written, directed and produced by him, the second was co-written and co-produced by him, with his old film-studies tutor Irvin Kershner handling the directing. By the time the third movie came around - George only had time to fit in a little executive producing. You see, George The Artist was quietly being put to sleep, to make way for Mr. Lucas The Businessman. One could, with some justification, compare this to a sedate and liberal Republic being

consumed by the greed and efficiency of a machinic Empire. The result was *The Return of the Jedi* and the less said about that, the better!

To this day, every producer in Hollywood wants to reproduce Lucas's success, and chooses to do so by emulating his methods, rather than his original motives. Nowadays, no film of even a medium-sized budget will be green-lighted until it has a bankable 'star' attached - a name of which the worthy burghers of Pig's Knuckle, Nebraska can be reasonably expected to have heard.

Why? Because *Star Wars* brought back the personality cults that had pretty much died out with Marilyn Monroe and Jimmy Dean. The public began to look up to 'stars' again, and therefore make the effort to go and see their films. Schwarzenegger and Stallone were among the first to capitalise upon this, by being the first to earn ever-more outrageous amounts of money for effectively re-making the same film over and again. This steam engine began to roll thanks to *Star Wars*, but then it built up a momentum all its own. In 1982, Stallone made headlines by being offered \$3 million to write, direct and act in *Rocky III*. This year, Bruce Willis has allegedly been offered \$25 million to turn up and go through the motions in *Die Hard 4*.

A world-wide industry has evolved around the pursuit of celebrity - not just in producing fanzines, posters, 'their own story' books etc, but now informally through the ever-present paparazzi and, increasingly, the instamatic rumour-mill of the Internet. Every single column inch (including this one) whether good, bad or indifferent, is free publicity and therefore money in the bank for Hollywood.

Star Wars also succeeded in making films fill the big screens once again. More punters brought about the building of more cinemas. The mid-seventies were the nadir of cinema-distribution throughout the West. But, who now, reading this, is not within easy reach of at least one six, eight or ten screen multiplex? Now the real-estate developers also have a stake in making the movies more popular - so advertising campaigns become ever-more overt, with film posters an accepted part of our high street geography, and stars' faces a permanent fixture on every magazine cover and chat-show sofa.

Then there's the merchandising question. Learning from *The Ewoks* example, big budget summer movies must generate spin-offs. This can be seen particularly clearly in Disney films where every single character is specifically designed so it can become everything from a cuddly toy to a screen saver. This Spring saw *A Bug's Life* re-telling *The Magnificent Seven* with insects, but seven seemed such a paltry number that they worked-up literally

dozens of 'cute' bugs - each one targeted squarely at your disposable income.

Thanks to the *Star Wars* trilogy (all three of which crested two hours), the audience can now be expected to sit still for longer, so the average running time of a movie has increased from 90 minutes to about 120 minutes. Of course, a longer running time and expensive 'stars' mean that films have to earn more to break even. Consequently, the drive to be bigger, faster and louder than last year's hit is sending the financial band-wagon racing completely out of control. Now Jim (King of the World) Cameron has successfully spent \$300 million of somebody else's money to make the completely backward-facing *Titanic*. This film became the first ever to earn over \$1 billion. After video and TV sales have been added in, it will have crested \$2 billion. Does this mean we can expect more films about sinking ships? No, it means we can expect more films to cost \$300 million plus!

This means that no one dare risk making a movie unless they know it'll be a hit, and how do they know that? By copying something that already is a hit!

The overwhelming belief in Hollywood - founded on nothing more secure than Lucas's fondness for the films of his childhood - is that if it hasn't been a hit already, it won't be a hit now. It is an obsession which William Goldman, in his delightfully clear-eyed view of Hollywood: *Adventures in the Screen Trade*, calls simply 'Past Magic'. Hollywood lives to evoke past magic! This is madness. The first *Star Wars* cost less than \$10 million to make. This resulted in Lucas having to leave certain ingredients out, or find cheaper, more creative alternatives. He managed to 'correct' some of these details with the recent wash-and-brush-up job: *Star Wars - The Special Edition*, which cost another \$10 million. Even so, almost \$1 billion have been earned from a, by comparison, minuscule investment. The new *Star Wars* instalment has apparently cost \$130 million - and is considered relatively cheap given the number of expensive special effects we can expect from it.

Look at the roster of films either on release, or in production this year. Sequels. Remakes. Movie adaptations of TV series or Comics. Adaptation is a perfectly respectable way to make a film - almost all of Hitchcock's were based on books or plays, as are Kubrick's; but what is the point when nowadays all film-makers take is the title? *The Avengers* had nothing to do with Patrick Macnee, it was a pallid clone of *Goldeneye* and *Mission:Impossible*, neither of which were really works to which one should aspire.

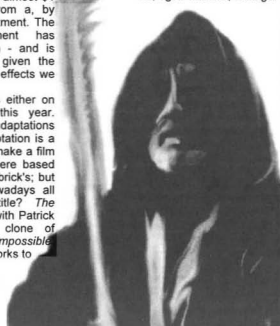
Where has all the innovation gone? In much the way that few authors can get a book published without writing it

'in the style of...' and promising several sequels, few films now get made without a guaranteed market. Gus Van Sant, one of America's more interesting independent film directors, recently found himself in a position of some power, having earned himself a few Oscars. All of Hollywood was at his feet, so what did he make as his first big-budget movie? A shot-for-shot remake of 'Psycho'. It wasn't a copy, it was a photocopy. Even if he was, as I suspect, taking the piss, it was still an expensive waste of time, effort and celluloid.

As for this coming Summer's roster of revolution: it's going to be fairly quiet because of that *Star Wars* movie (by the way - don't buy that *The Phantom Menace* guff, it'll just be called *Star Wars Episode One*, trust me) from which every other distributor is running scared. But, a few startlingly original works of art should play across our screens between now and the turn of the millennium: Francis Ford Coppola's remake of *The Mummy*, Disney's animated *Tarzan*, Warner Brother's re-re-re-remake of *Superman*, Barry Sonnenfeld's adaptation of sixties TV show *Wild, Wild West*, John Woo's sequel to an adaptation of a sixties TV show *Mission:Impossible 2*, Marvel Comics's long-anticipated (!) adaptation of *The X-Men*, Matthew Broderick as everybody's favourite post-modern man *Inspector Gadget* and, last but not least, *Austin Powers 2: The Spy Who Shagged Me*. Looks like another benchmark year!

I wonder if film history would be a more enjoyable place if Vivian Leigh and Clark Gable had been reunited for *Tomorrow IS Another Day*? What about *Moby Dick 2: They STILL Call Me Ishmael*? Imagine *Casablanca* in colour with the new happier ending, or *Red*

Dwarf with all-new state-of-the-art digital special effects... oh, right. Thanks, George.



Jonathon Carrol Signing Session

On 22nd May, Jonathon Carrol will be signing his new book *Marriage of Stones* (Gollancz hardback) and paperback of *Kissing the Beehive* at the Andromeda bookshop in Birmingham at 12 noon. He is coming over especially and as this is his only UK date, make sure you don't miss it.

For further details contact Andromeda, 2-5 Suffolk St, Birmingham, B1 1LT, 0121-643-1999, <http://andromedabook.co.uk>

Sf At Poetry Convention

On 25th-27th June there is to be a poetry convention at the Barlow Theatre, Langley (nr Birmingham) which will feature Steve Sneyd who will be giving a talk, with illustrative poems by various people, read by Steve himself and John F Haines (editor of Handshake, the sf poets newsletter). There will also be time for discussion. The convention will serve to launch a new sf anthology *Sailors on the Sea of Fate* (Sol Publications, Southend), poems from fanzines and small magazines from 1940-1990, which was edited by Steve. The convention also features Haiku, Poetry and the Internet, the Anglo-Welsh Poetry Society and gives you the opportunity to read your poetry.

For further information, contact Geoff Stevens, 25 Griffiths Road, West Bromwich, B71 2EH, enclosing an SAE.

GUFF Winner

Paul Kincaid is the winner of this years GUFF (Going Under Fan Fund/ Get Up and Over Fan Fund) race and will be the UK representative at Aussiecon in September.

The New Doctor is a Woman?

Film students at the Bournemouth Arts Institute have obtained permission from the BBC to shoot a new Doctor Who pilot, with a twist. The latest incarnation of the famous doctor is to be a woman, played by theatre actress Deborah Blake, who will take on the might of classic arch-enemies the Cybermen, and also a new strain of the Millennium Bug which threatens the future of the planet. The new Doctor is to have some new companions too, one of whom, a Dr Ashley Simmons, is to provide the love interest. Deborah Blake is apparently thrilled to have won the part and thinks it's definitely about time women had a go at saving the planet. The film will mainly be shot in and around the Bournemouth area on a very small budget, and once finished, the students hope to take it to the BBC to see if they can obtain permission to make further episodes.

Star Trek Poetry Anthology

North East based Iron Press are publishing a new poetry anthology, *Star Trek - the Poems* next year. They are looking for a mixture of established poets and new voices, and are still looking for submissions, based on, or inspired by, Star Trek. Submissions in Klingon must be accompanied by full translation. Contributors will be paid if accepted for publication. Writers can send submissions to Valerie Laws, Editor, Star Trek - the Poems, 95 Queens Road, Whitley Bay, Northumberland, NE26 3AT, enclosing return postage, or by e-mail to richard.wall3@virgin.net

With thanks to Gary S. Dalkin, Paul Billinger, Steve Jeffery and Vikki Lee

Another year, another Picocon. Picocons are one-day events held annually in Imperial College and run by the Imperial College SF group; the decision of some of the current group's predecessors to number through Picocon Pi some years back has resulted in the situation whereby Picocon 16 was in fact the fifteenth Picocon. But that's scientists for you---and it is at least less complicated than the numbering of the British National SF Conventions.

Despite the inevitably transient membership of student sf societies, Picocons maintain a remarkable degree of continuity. Every year there is some sort of problem with the bar or the cheap food or both; every year the programme appears at first glance to be more exciting than it subsequently proves to be; every year the function space is reorganised into another formulation which doesn't quite work; every year the usual suspects from London and South Eastern fandom show up, marvel at the low cost of drinks, resolve to recoup the rising cost of non-student membership by drinking themselves into profit, and contemplate in horror the extreme youth of students these days. Only the students themselves change---and this year's Picocon resulted in some additional déjà vu when it proved possible to photograph seven past Presidents of the ICSF in the same room.

Guests this year, quite impressively, were Stephen Lawhead, M John Harrison and Jane Johnson---inevitably accompanied by 'Gabriel King'. The programme apart from the guests' talks was ambitious but patchy; despite the initial intention to run two programme streams for a membership of under one hundred people, at least one panel was cancelled due to ongoing indecision about what it was meant to be about, and some of the 'fun' items, quizzes in particular, showed signs of less than total scientific rigour in their preparation. The spitting and fuming from the BSFA team during the pub quiz as it proved that many of the questions on sf, fantasy and horror related to films of the past five years rather than those quaint old-fashioned book things is no doubt beneath our dignity to mention. This time, the function room arrangement involved putting the 'serious book dealers' into half of the main programme room---an approach reminiscent of 1950s conventions when the book-sellers would be given tables in the corner of the main room and asked to be quiet during programme items. Unfortunately, no such restrictions seemed to apply here---while all the other dealers (the SF Foundation, Z29 Plural Z Alpha etc) were allowed to set up in the downstairs function room in which the more light-hearted programme items and games were intended to take place while films and TV episodes were shown on a big screen without much of a soundtrack.

The bar problem involved it not opening until 12:30 PM and the food problem involved the key-holder having gone to Ireland for the weekend, but the Picocon committee solved both before the non-student attendees rioted. This year, however, the loud sporting events shown on the huge screen in the main bar turned out to be two rugby matches. Enter drunken idiots, stage left. One of the college's ex-student drinking societies were out in force, in drag and in a state of severe intoxication. Occasionally one of these luminaries would stagger into the downstairs Picocon function room to die relatively quietly in a corner; unfortunately they all recovered. Thus the disadvantages of a student convention become apparent: typical drunken aggressive adult rugby fans are never going to be successfully evicted by typical weedy student sf fans. But no violence to convention attendees ensued; the greatest threat seemed to be the dispute between the chap who set the questions for the pub quiz and virtually everyone taking part---appropriately enough on the issue of capital offences.

And it all seems unlikely to have put anyone off Picocon 17. After all, another year, another Picocon...

© Claire Brialley and Mark Plummer

50th Eastercon Special

9

Eastercon. It's a national institution isn't it? Each year, hordes of fans descend upon an unsuspecting city, take over one of its hotels and party like, well last year. Reconvene was the 50th National British Science Fiction Convention, held at the Adelphi in Liverpool (yes, that one on the telly), a venue that has become increasingly popular over the past few years. The convention theme was "Time Was, Time Is, Time Shall Be" and the guests of honour were Peter S. Beagle, Jeff Noon, John Clute, Tom Holt and Ron Tiner. All the usual events, those comforting pieces of convention such as the guest of honour speeches, masquerade, awards ceremony, art show, fan room, dealers room that embody the essence of Eastercon were in the programme. But what else went on?

LEONARD FELL

One must know one's market, I suppose, and confronted with several hundred of them at Liverpool, I now have more than enough material. At times it felt somewhat as if I were at a leather fetishist's weekend. (Not that I know what one of those is like. But I could imagine). Given the average size of the sf buff, several herds of cows must be severely depleted.

It was somewhat disappointing that I entirely failed to be mobbed on my appearance of the Friday night, as literally no one demanded my autograph on my last *Matrix* column. I hung around the BSFA stall, hoping for business, but the blonde on the desk told me off for fondling the merchandising. All I did was rearrange the publications to display the highlight to perfection.

I popped down to the Science Fiction Foundation hoping to interest them in archiving my manuscripts (when I produce one) but no dice. They'll be sorry when some large American

university offers me pots of cash. Nor did any publishers offer to buy me a drink, and hear my pitch. Perhaps they think I'm too good for them and will show the rest of their authors up.

I attended the awards ceremony, and discovered that Christopher Priest had won by one vote. I think this was my fault, as I amended my ballot to contain my novel. OK, it isn't published yet, and isn't finished. Yes, I have to admit to something under three hundred words. But there's no sense in being forward in coming backwards, and I thought it would give me some much needed publicity.

The same day Priest had won a mock Arthur C. Clarke Award, the judges clearly being intimidated into doing so by the presence of the same person in the audience. I hope the same doesn't happen with the real award. (On second thoughts, maybe I don't hope. If I get short listed I could gate crash the meeting. I'm impressed that the award is judged in public).

So there you have it, my first convention. I'll go back next year, and hopefully by then I'll sweet-talk them into having me as guest of honour. It's a long-term aim to win the BSFA Award; hopefully by 2001 I'll have one. Sitting in the mirror walled lounge, seeking for the TV cameras which would give me publicity -- and maybe a docusoap -- I had a sudden flash of inspiration for the climactic scene of my novel: what a better place to confront vampires, than in such a room. All I have to do is sit down and write it.

THE BSFA

Elizabeth Billinger, award winning accountant and guardian of the BSFA's purse, reports on The BSFA at Reconvene

As usual the BSFA was a significant presence in the Book Room at Eastercon, maintaining the time-honoured tradition of foisting tombola tickets on all and sundry and then begging them to take away the prizes, and this year we were also selling magazines, secondhand books and other merchandise. It seems that the BSFA tombola has become something of a national institution and buying tickets is a fundamental part of the Eastercon experience: tombola victims are now thoroughly trained and this year the army of volunteers behind the desk did not have to resort to sellotaping the feet of passing punters to the floor. The takings this year continued the healthy upwards trend and

added a welcome boost to BSFA funds.

I would like to offer grateful thanks to everyone who did a stint behind the desk. Even more heartening than the continued uptake of tombola tickets was the number of memberships we took this year. We are delighted to be able to welcome three new members and equally pleased to have five rejoining members return to the fold.

Outside the Book Room Andrew Butler

organised and moderated a series of four panels in which the results of the Best of British poll were discussed. None of the audiences were huge, but the discussions were interesting and left me at least determined to do some catching up with my reading. Thanks very much to Andrew and to all the other participants.

At the AGM Maureen Speller made public her recent decision to retire from her post as Administrator. She has written about this decision and about the changes that she has seen in the BSFA over the many years of her involvement. Reflecting on our activities at Reconvene I think that it should be noted that Maureen's vision and hard work are behind our current success. Our presence in the book room, the ubiquitous but highly successful tombola and the fact that people once more want to be part of the BSFA are just reasons for her to be proud. I should like to express, from myself, from the Committee and I hope on behalf of the rest of the members out there heartfelt thanks for what Maureen has done in her time with the BSFA.



The Famous BSFA Tombola: Elizabeth Billinger and Vikki Lee look on while Paul Billinger offers author Leonard Fell (out of frame) a chance to win....

Maureen Kincaid Speller announces retirement

In her own words...

At this year's BSFA AGM, in Liverpool, I announced my intention to retire as BSFA Administrator within the next month or so. After thirteen years on the BSFA Committee this wasn't an easy decision to make, but it's something I've been considering for several months.

When I first became actively involved with the BSFA, as editor of *Matrix*, I was told I wouldn't last very long. No one ever did. Four or five years down the line, I'd be burned out by the sheer effort of helping to keep things going. When I considered what was involved, I took the point. The BSFA was run by a small group of people, a very small group, who did a tremendous amount of work, but the result still often seemed to be modified chaos.

Never mind editing the magazine (and what would I have done without my faithful Amstrad PCW and my equally faithful partner, Paul Kincaid?), there were the collating sessions every two months - we had stopped duplicating the magazines ourselves by this point, but the magazines still had to be collated, stapled, folded, and the mailings stuffed, and volunteers were unsurprisingly rather thin on the ground. I was not remotely nostalgic for the good old days when Kev McVeigh finally took the decision, during his spell as Co-ordinator, to send the magazines to a mailing service.

There was also the business of running the company itself. Shortly after I became actively involved, we discovered, almost by accident, that the BSFA was being wound up as a company because accounts hadn't been filed for some years. That started a paper chase to discover why the Treasurer hadn't been doing so (it turned out his house was, literally, falling down around him) and started me on my own personal mission to get the BSFA on a proper business footing, along with a second mission to encourage people to start taking the BSFA seriously again.

Its famously chequered history as an organisation also meant that many fans openly treated the BSFA as a joke. True, the BSFA might have diverged from its original purpose, to draw people into fandom, but it was clear to me that it still had a valuable role in telling people about science fiction literature, and also in keeping in touch with fandom, acting as an interface, if you like. That's what I've tried to work towards, over the last thirteen years.

It's been a slow business, taking much longer than I'd

ever imagined, but we've done well. We've survived numerous problems and setbacks, gradually building a good solid team of individuals with specific skills and a commitment to the BSFA. As a result, it is now prospering. The magazines have never looked better, and we are

now on a regular publishing schedule, in partnership with our printer and mailing service. The membership system has been thoroughly overhauled, and subscriptions are being properly tracked again, while our finances are being effectively managed, even allowing us a small profit these last two years. The BSFA is out and about at conventions, fundraising and attracting new members, and frequently providing programme items, thus fulfilling our remit to educate people about science fiction. We've also re-established the BSFA Awards as an indicator of what's good in current science fiction. We are regularly consulted by outside groups and individuals, looking for information on science fiction. We can start thinking about the future rather than concentrating on maintenance.



Also at this year's Eastercon: At the BSFA AGM, Paul Kincaid was presented with an engraved hip flask in recognition of his work as long standing reviews editor of *Vector*. BSFA Award winner Christopher Priest made the presentation.

In which case, why leave now, when it's going so well?

Thirteen years is a long time, and if I'm not burned out, I am nevertheless tired. I've neglected a lot of things over the years, in favour of the BSFA, and I would now like to spend more time on my critical and fan writing, producing my fanzine and so forth, and more time reading. However, I also think it's important for the BSFA to have a change of perspective. I've done my best to guide it, according to my sense of what needed to be done, but now that so many of those goals have been achieved, I think it's time for others to take up the baton and lead the BSFA into the 21st century.

In fact, I won't be withdrawing entirely. At the AGM I was re-elected to the Council of the BSFA, and hope to continue working for the organisation there, particularly as the Council is starting to find a new and more significant role. And naturally, I hope that some of my articles and reviews will continue to find a home in BSFA magazines.

I never honestly thought I would last this long. I'd like to say it's been fun, all the time, but it hasn't. Sometimes it's been miserable, but when things have gone well, it's been satisfying, and I cannot tell you how much pleasure it gave me to watch the BSFA in action at this year's Eastercon. I'll miss it, of course, but I'm glad to know that I'm leaving a dynamic and healthy organisation.



The BSFA supports the
National Year of Reading

Andrew M. Butler Reports...

The Scene: St Petersburg Restaurant and Social Club, Liverpool. We'd approached it through first a major shopping thoroughfare, and then through increasingly seedy back streets between the city centre and Albert Dock. At first the entry phone didn't admit us; despite the evidence to the contrary, it seemed shut. We browsed the menu of the adjacent Greek restaurant, before a Russian appeared and invited us in.

Colin 'n' Mitch and I had had a splendid meal at an Armenian restaurant in Manchester at last year's Eastercon, and prior to this year's, I researched the Merseyside Yellow Pages. Russian seemed to have the edge over those other worthy Indian (a train carriage-like restaurant half way up to the disused church) and Chinese (a particularly fine set of banquets in deepest Chinatown) establishments, although we'd sampled them first. This year we enlarged the circle to include the rest of *Matrix*'s current team.

The menu held our attention for a quarter of an hour, as the merits of various borschts, gherkins and blinis were debated. Substantial amounts of the Russian beer (from Croydon, natch) aided and abetted the decision. It was a wondrous meal: a kind of Russian ravioli, a stupendous fish, steaks Russian-style, each with a fruit side salad. Distinctly recommended, but you won't find it unless you look for it.

Meanwhile, back at the con, I chaired four panels on British science fiction since the war, based on the poll that appeared in *Vector* last year. This is all part of a long-term campaign to raise the profile of the BSFA at Eastercons. The audiences were small, but appreciative, the size perhaps resulting from the perverse layout of the Read Me which had two separate sets of timetables. Maureen Kincaid Speller, Andy Sawyer, Paul Kincaid (twice), Colin Greenland, Chris Hill, Paul Billinger and Tanya Brown all ad libbed splendidly, and all of us came away wanting to go away and read the books mentioned. With any luck, transcribed versions will be published in *Vector*.

The tombola continued to attract a ridiculous number of pound coins, and for once we cleared all the many fine works of literature on offer to be won. The same cast of thousands continued to breathe sighs of relief as they came away with only a sherbet flying saucer, and the usual suspects won five books with every dip.

And in the rest of the con we chatted, drank, made merry and did our Tom Hanks impressions. Someone commented that back at work the next week we'll crack jokes or shoot back retorts, astounding our colleagues with the speed of our wit. Perhaps that speed of mind, even when hungover, is the heart of a successful convention, and it's potentially addictive. Still, next year in Glasgow.

Bidding Session For 2001



This year there were two committees bidding to run the 2001 Eastercon: *Paragon* for the Norbreck hotel in Blackpool represented by Alice Lawson, Steve Lawson and Nigel Furlong who promised fireworks, versus *Sarkasm* chaired by Tobes Valois and Jim de Liscard for the Channel Isle of Sark who guaranteed completely trouble-free car parking. It was a hard fought session, involving presentations from both committees, questions from the floor and a game of Twister. *Paragon* won with 114 votes to 34 and subsequently announced their guests to be Michael Scott Rohan, Stephen Baxter, Lianne Norman and the BSFA's very own Claire Brialley and Mark Plummer. If you would like to sign up for the 2001 Eastercon, to be held on 13th-16th April, you may do so by contacting Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. Telephone 0114 281 1572 or E-mail steve.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk. Memberships are currently £25 Attending, £15 Supporting, £12.50 Junior and £5 Child.

BSFA Award Results

Administrator Chris Hill Reports

The results of the 1998 BSFA Awards were announced on Sunday 4th April at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. The results were:

Best Novel

The Extremes - Christopher Priest
(Runner-up: *To Hold Infinity* - John Meaney)

Best Short Fiction

La Cenerentola - Gwyneth Jones (Interzone 136)
(Runner-up: *Vulphicus* - Eric Brown (Interzone 129))

Best Artwork

Lord Prestimion - Jim Burns (Cover Interzone 138)
(Runner-up: *Jedella Ghost* - Dominic Harman (Cover Interzone 135))

Both Christopher Priest and Jim Burns were at the ceremony to receive their trophies.

As always thanks to everybody who sent nominations and voted in the final ballot. Thanks to all the BSFA Committee for their encouragement, to Colin Odell and Mitch Le Blanc for again constructing the award trophies, and to Maureen Kincaid Speller, Jennifer Swift and Colin Greenland for presenting the awards at the ceremony.

The 1999 BSFA Awards

Well, now that is over it's time to kick off the 1999 awards, so get those nominations rolling in! The categories are:

Best Novel: Novel first published in the UK during calendar year 1999.
Best Short Fiction: Fiction first appearing (in magazine or anthology) during calendar year 1999 irrespective of country of origin.
Best Artwork: Artwork first appearing in the UK during calendar year 1999.

More on this next issue, but in the meantime here is a list of the nominations received so far:

Best Novel

The Children of God - Mary Doria Russell
Headlong - Simon Ings

Best Short Fiction

The Gateway of Eternity - Brian Stableford (Interzone 139/140)
Gorillagram - Tony Ballantine (Interzone 139)

Best Artwork

Cover - Colin Odell (Matrix 136) (*blush* - eds)



ORION

Orion/Gollancz:
(including
Millennium,
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Dolphin, Vista)

Pat Cadigan
Avatar (Dolphin,

March, pb, £3.50, 112pp) and
Eric Brown *Walkabout* (Dolphin,
March, pb, £3.50, 112pp) Two new
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(Millennium, April, pb,
£5.99, 576pp) 1st time in
one volume, the
previous six *Web* novels
from Baxter, Bowkett,
Brown, Joyce, Furey
and Hamilton.

Terry Goodkind *Soul of
the Fire* (Millennium,
April, hb, £17.99, 544pp)
Book five of the *Sword
of Truth* Series.

Storm Constantine *Sea
Dragon* *Heir* (April
[now June], hb, £16.99,
352pp) First book in a
new epic high fantasy
trilogy. "Where the wild
mountains of Caradore,
in the northernmost part
of Magravandias, reach
the ocean, there the sea
dragons make their
mournful lament...."

Windsor Chortlon *Cold
Fusion* (Orion, April,
hb/tp, £16.99/£9.99,
352pp) 21st Century
near future thriller in a world
transformed by climatic catastrophe.

Jonathan Carroll *Kissing the Beehive*
(Vista, May, pb, £6.99) 1st Paperback
reprint, (reviewed in hardback in *Vector*
201 by Steve Jeffery).

✓**Ian McDonald** *Kirinya* (Vista, June,
pb, £6.99) 1st paperback ed.

Valery Leith *Company of Glass*
(Millennium, June, hb/tp, £16.99/£10.99,
352pp). The first book of *Everien* - "first
volume in an epic fantasy ripe with
magic, action and intrigue).

Poppy Z. Brite *Self Made Man* (Orion,
July(c), hb/tp, £16.99/£9.99, 256pp). "A
second collection of short fiction and
includes tales which will leave you
moved, shocked, and above all,
gripped by her storytelling".

Ann Halam *The N.I.M.R.O.D.
Conspiracy* (Dolphin, July, YA, pb,
£4.50, 170pp) Young adult thriller.

Fritz Leiber *Lean Times in Lankhmar*
(Millennium, June, R, omn, £6.99,
352pp) Millennium are re-publishing
Lieber's famous *Fahrd* and the *Grey*

Mouser adventures. This is the
second volume of four,
collecting the third and fourth of
Lieber's 'Swords' stories. The
first two stories were collected
in 'Ill Met in Lankhmar',
published in February 1999.

JMH Lovegrove *Berserker*
(Millennium, June, pb, £5.99,
352pp). Volume two of *The
Guardians*.

Bruce Sterling *Distraction*
(Millennium, June, hb/tp,

£16.99/£9.99)

**Mercedes
Lackey & Larry
Dixon** *Owlsight*

(Millennium,
July, hb/tp, £16.99/£9.99,
304pp) Companion
volume to the recent
Valdemar novel, *Owflight*.

Adam Nicholls *The
Songster* (Millennium,
July, pbo, £5.99, 416pp)
Second book of the
Whiteblade Saga.

James Barclay
Dawnthief (Millennium,
July, tpb, £9.99, 320pp).
Book one of the
Chronicles of the Raven -
"Stunning fantasy in the
tradition of David
Gemmell from a bright
new talent".

Olaf Stapledon *Last and
First Men* (Orion SF
Masterworks, June,
R[1930], tp, £6.99, 288pp)

George R. Stewart *Earth
Abides* (Orion SF
Masterworks, June,

R[1949], tp, £6.99, 352pp)

✓**Philip K. Dick** *Martian Timeslip*
(Orion SF Masterworks, June, R[1964],
tp, £6.99, 240pp)

✓**Alfred Bester** *The Demolished Man*
(Orion SF Masterworks, June, R[1953],
tp, £6.99, 256pp)



ORBIT

*Orbit (including
Little Brown,
Abacus, Virago,
Warner)*

Ken MacLeod
*The Sky
Road* (Orbit,
June, hb, £16.99)
David Brin
Foundation's

Triumph (June, Orbit, hb, £16.99,
352pp) Following on from Gregory
Benford's *Foundation's Fear* and Greg
Bear's *Foundation and Chaos* in the
Second Foundation Trilogy.



Maggie Furey *The
Heart of Myrial*
(July (originally
May), Orbit, hb,
£15.99, 432pp)

"*The Heart of
Myrial* is the first
volume in a major
new two-volume
series from the
bestselling author of
*The Artefacts of
Power*".

Julia Gray *Fire
Music* (Orbit, July,
pb, £6.99)

Ken Russell *Mike
and Gaby's Space*

Gospel (Little Brown, June, tp, £9.99,
224pp) "In the beginning was a
spaceship. And the spaceship was
called A.R.K. 2001. The robot crew
members - Mike the pilot and Gaby the
navigator - are about to do something
quite remarkable. They are all set to
consign two humans to the surface of a
planet called Earth. And in these two
experimental prototypes, named Adam
and Eve after a couple of pot-plants,
the entire robot cosmos has placed its
hope of survival.... Wickedly funny and
original"... it says here! (-it's bound to
be good - all of his films are wonderful -
eds)



HarperCollins

*Voyager
(including
HarperCollins,
Flamingo,
Fontana,
Thorson)*

Robin Jarvis *The Fatal Strand*
(HarperCollins, April, YA, pb, £5.99,
448pp) Thrilling Conclusion to the *Tales
From the Wyrd Museum* Trilogy.

Kevin J. Anderson *Blindfold* (Voyager,
May, pb, £5.99) Science fiction thriller
set on the colony world of Atlas where
Truthsayers use a telepathy virus,
Veritas, to establish justice and guilt.

James Mallory *Merlin*. *The King's
Wizard* (Voyager, June, pb, £5.99,
272pp) Second volume in the series
inspired by the star-studded television
mini-series, *Merlin*.

Barbara Hambly *Dragonshadow*
(Voyager, June, pb, £6.99, 336pp)
Long-awaited follow-up to Hambly's
Dragonbane.

Eric Lustbader *Pale Saint*
(HarperCollins, June, hb, £16.99,
384pp). High-tech detective novel
combining genetic engineering, cloning
and the hunt for a genocidal killer called
'The Pale Saint'.

Christie Dickson *Quicksilver* (©HarperCollins, July [originally April], hb, £16.99, 320pp)

Julian May *Orion Arm* (©Voyager, June, hb, £16.99).

Gill Alderman *Lilith's Castle* (©Voyager, June, pb, £6.99) Sequel to *The Memory Palace*.

Janny Wurts *The Grand Conspiracy* (©Voyager, June, hb, £15.99) Book two of *The Alliance of Light*.

Raymond E. Feist *Krondor: the Assassins* (©Voyager, July, hb, £16.99) *Krondor: the Betrayal* was the novelisation of a role-playing video game. Looks like this is the next in the series.

Katharine Kerr *The Black Raven* (©Voyager, July, hb, £16.99) Sequel to *The Red Wyvern*, and book two of the *Dragon Mage* series.

Mike Jefferies *The Ghosts of Candleford* (©Voyager, July, pb).



Earthlight (including *Simon & Schuster*)

David Farland *Brotherhood of the Wolf* (©Earthlight, May, tp, £9.99) Sequel to 'The Sum of All Men' which was published in the U.S. in hardcover by the title *The Runelords*.

✓**Eugene Byrne** *ThiGMOO* (©Earthlight, June, pb, £5.99, 224pp) Debut novel from a well-known *Interzone* contributor. "At the University of Wessex two academics have used computer power and AIs to create over 200 fictional characters from all periods of history, known as erams, who respond to questions as a real human being would." Then a number of the erams escape the system and become self-aware...

Marcus Herniman *The Siege of Arrandin* (©Earthlight, July, pb, £5.99, 608pp) Debut fantasy novel about the empire of Lauton, split by internal religious differences while also beset by invasion of barbarian hordes who are trying to take the strategic city of Arrandin.

Rudy Rucker *Saucer Wisdom*. (©Earthlight, July, tp £9.99). Described as a "non fiction novel" in which Rucker casts himself as a central character given a tour of the future of society and technology by a man abducted by inhabitants of a tiny flying saucer. Includes an introduction by Bruce Sterling.



TOR

Tor (including Forge)

Lisa Goldstein *Dark Cities Underground* (Tor, June, hb, \$22.95 256pp).

Young journalist Ruthie is sent to interview Jerry, a

man who, as a child, was the central character in a series of children's stories written by his mother. However, Jerry's fantastic childhood world is real, and very threatening...

Kathleen Anne Goonan *Mississippi Blues* (Tor, June, tp, \$15.95, 512pp) Sequel to the highly rated *Queen City Jazz*.

✓**David G. Hartwell & Damian Broderick** (Ed.) *Centaurus. The Best of Australian SF* (Tor, June, hb, \$24.95, 384pp). Stories from Peter Carey, Greg Egan, Terry Dowling, Sean McMullen, Lucy Sussex, A. Bertram Chandler, Rosaleen Love, George Turner and others.

Forthcoming Tor books also received in proof:

Thomas Harlin *The Shadow of Arrat* (Tor, July, hb, \$26.95, 480pp) Fantasy alternate history set in 600 AD where the war between Persia and the Roman Empire is fought with armies and magic.

Sean McMullen *Souls in the Great Machine* (Tor, June, hb, \$27.95, 488pp) "It is the 40th century. Librarians fight duels for the honor of their computers, railway captains die for the honor of their galley engines, and technology is limited to biplanes and wind trains." What sounds like an entertaining 'steampunk' novel from three-time winner of the Australian Science Fiction Award.

✓**Suzy McKee Charnas** *The Conqueror's Child* (Tor, May, hb, \$24.95, 384pp) Sequel to *The Furies* and the fourth and final novel in the *Holdfast Chronicles*.

L.E. Modesitt, Jr *Gravity Dreams* (Tor, July, hb, \$24.95, 400pp)

Robert F Sawyer *Flashforward* (Tor, June, hb, \$23.95 320pp) "In pursuit of an elusive nuclear particle, an experiment goes awry and, for a few moments, the consciousness of the entire human race is thrown ahead by twenty years. As the implications truly hit home, the pressure to repeat the experiment builds. Everyone wants a glimpse of their future, a chance to

flashforward and see their successes... or learn to avoid their failures."

George R. Turner *Down There in Darkness* (Tor, May, hb, \$23.95, 352pp) The last novel from one of the great SF writers, author of *The Sea and the Summer*, who died in 1997. This last novel will appear in time for the 1999 World SF Convention in Australia.

Fredrik Pohl (ed) *The SFWA Grand*

Masters (Tor, June, hb, \$24.99, 384pp) The first of three anthologies which will cover the work of fifteen SFWA Grand Masters. Volume One features classic stories from Heinlein, Simak, Leiber, Williamson and de Camp.

Peter Watts *Starfish* (Tor, July, hb, \$23.95, 320pp).

First novel from a Canadian sf writer, set in a near future where surgically altered workers are engaged in the exploitation of deep ocean geothermal resources.

Virgin

Peter J. Evans *Mnemosyne's Kiss* (©Virgin Worlds, pb, March, £6.99, 380pp)

Trevor Hoyle *Mirrorman* (©Virgin Worlds, pb, March, £6.99, 470pp)

Avon

Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling *Silver Birch, Blood Moon* (Avon, March, pb, \$13.50, 371pp)

BBC Books

Bill Kerwin/Aardman *Wallace & Gromit. A Grand Day Out* (©BBC, April, pb graphic novel, £6.99, 48pp) Graphic novelisation of the deservedly acclaimed Aardman animations.

Best of the Rest.

Jim Burns *Transmutations* (Paper Tiger, June, art, tp)

Julie Bell *Soft As Stone* (Paper Tiger, June, art, tp)

Roger Taylor *Return of the Sword* (Headline, June, hb)

Ben Bova *Return to Mars* (Hodder & Stoughton, June, hb)

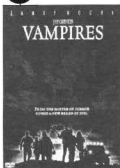
Diana Wynne Jones *Puss In Boots* (Hippo)

David Gemmell *Midnight Falcon* (Bantam UK, June, hb)

Patricia Anthony *Flanders* (Black Swan, June, tp)

Anne Rice *Vittorio The Vampire* (Chatto & Windus, May, hb)

Robert Rankin *Snuff Fiction* (Doubleday UK, Jun, hb)



FANGSTER'S PARADISE

Cert: 18 (TBC).

Dur: 95 mins

John Ashbrook gets his teeth into 'Vampires', John Carpenter's long-awaited come-back movie.

It's a curious turn of events when Wes Craven has turned himself into a one-man-industry, churning out horror movies with tedious regularity and making himself a mint in the process (the innumerable Freddie Kruger and 'Scream' films being his two most successful franchises), whilst his contemporary, John Carpenter, a far-finer and more imaginative film-maker in so many ways, is struggling in the hinterland of straight-to-video production.

When the news leaked that Carpenter was returning to his roots with a low-budget horror flick about vampires, there was much excitement amongst those of us who remember with fondness Carpenter's cheapo masterpieces of yore - such as 'Assault on Precinct 13', 'Escape From New York' and, of course, the source material of all those 'Scream' movies: 'Halloween'.

This new film is based on a novel called 'Vampires' written by the improbably named John Steakley, which is a big dumb rollercoaster of a book, dealing with a hyper-efficient Vatican-fund Rento-kill team which hunts down and exterminates ... you guessed it - vampires!

As the film's opening credits roll over the dustbowl deserts of the Southern USA, the formidable James Woods plays Jack Crow, fang pranger par excellence, whilst Daniel Baldwin (one of Alec's 748 brothers) is given the thankless task of being the sidekick who isn't there to get killed at all. Together they lead Team Crow into a Vampire Nest and set about cleaning house. Their method of disposal resembles nothing so much as whaling, since it involves firing a harpoon into a convenient vampire's chest, then winching said harpoon out into the sunlight where its spitting and squealing passenger will quite naturally barbecue up a treat.

After this promising intro, Jack meets his nemesis - the '7ber-Goth, Vathek - who is the original vampire, 'The Source', as one passing Cardinal puts it 'Of the disease' and so the greatest vampire killer alive locks horns with the greatest vampire ... not alive.

I confess, I did wonder, if Vathek is so smart, why does he make his home in America's deserts where the sun is very hot, the days are very long and the nights aren't? And why do old friends keep telling each other things they clearly already know? And why does Baldwin take Sheryl Lee (last seen wrapped in plastic in 'Twin Peaks') hostage then strip her completely naked? He says he's looking for vampire bites but I somehow have my doubts.

Okay, so this isn't vintage Carpenter. It owes too great a debt to Rodriguez's 'From Dusk Till Dawn' and not enough to Carpenter's own films. Its source material hardly rates as literature and, in adapting it, Carpenter hasn't bothered to ennoble it with anything as vulgar as common sense. But it is still great fun.

The battle sequences which book-end this slim tale are bravura set-pieces and, unlike 'Blade', all their pyrotechnic effects seem to have been achieved on-set, not added digitally afterwards. Besides which, it is always a pleasure to watch Jimmy Woods chewing the furniture in any movie.

Indeed, there are moments of great beauty here, such as the sequence where the sun sets over the desert whilst Vathek and his brood rise slowly from the loose soil, accompanied by the slide guitar of Mr Carpenter who, as tradition demands, performs his own musical score.

'Vampires' was never going to be a profound film, and it could have been a lot more original than it ultimately proved, but, taken as an undemanding romp, this film will probably find a welcoming and well-deserved market on home video. Of course, as far as I'm concerned, Carpenter's traditionally lush Cinemascope photography demands wide-screen, and for that you'll just have to invest in the American DVD.

PLEASANTVILLE

New Line Productions 1998, 125 minutes. Cert 12.

Director, Producer and Writer: Gary Ross.

Producers: Jon Kilik, Robert J Degus,

Steven Soderbergh. Director of Photography: John Lindley.

Editor: William Goldenberg. Music: Richard Newman.

Cast: Tobey Maguire, Jeff Daniels, Joan Allen, William H. Macy,

J. T. Walsh and Reese Witherspoon

Before Channel 4 showed *Babylon 5* in their kiddies holiday slot, they showed a rather splendid television series created by the film director Joe Dante, *Eerie, Indiana*, which was set in an eponymous town and was weirdsville central. Week after week, Marshall Teller would encounter Big Foot or Elvis or the Lost Property Office, or wake up in a different time zone because he had forgotten to reset his watch. In one episode his best friend's brother bites the remote control and is zapped into the tv set.

Pleasantville begins with a similar premise: twins David (Tobey Maguire) and Jennifer (Reese Witherspoon) find themselves zapped into their tv set having unwittingly hit that large red button on the remote control given to them by the elderly tv repairman who had called even though they hadn't yet contacted one. David is a fan of a 1950s sitcom, *Pleasantville*, and it is in this black-and-white utopia that they find themselves. The MTV-loving Jennifer is at first agghast at the clothes she has to wear and the amount of food she has to eat, but soon changes her mind when she meets, lusts after and gives oral relief to the captain of the basketball team.

After this, the black-and-white world begins to change: beginning with a rose changing into colour, then cars, then neon lights, then rock-and-roll appears on the juke box in the ice cream parlour where David works. Books in the library, previously blank, take on the words as David tells them the stories, and one day, it even rains. The digital technology which enables the visual marvel is excellent, and the film is a beauty to watch.

Maguire is brilliant, with the same nerdish grin that Edward Furlong has worn to excellent effect in John Waters's recent *Pecker*, his voice cracking as he remains on the threshold of puberty. J. T. Walsh demonstrates that he was the finest cameo character actor of his generation (check out his third-lead rôle in *Red Rock West*), and it is fitting that the film is dedicated to him. William H. Macy as David's tv father demonstrates the same kind of vulnerability that he had in *Fargo* and his various Mamet rôles: his disorientation at the lack of reply to his 'Honey, I'm home!' after his wife has left him is quite touching.

But it is on the level of ideas that the film begins to fall down, as it tries to have it both ways. *Pleasantville*'s townsfolk are understandably made uncomfortable by the changes to their friends and neighbours ('No coloreds' signs appear in shop windows), and for a while the film works as an allegory of American apartheid and civil rights. Except, of course, we can't all become black / coloured, as the film insists. And David, surely, likes the ancient sitcom precisely because of how different it is from 1990s America: the film opens with lessons on AIDS and statistics on how college education is less likely to win you a job. Yet he shows little concern, after his initial upset, that the place is changing, he argues most forcefully for a change, and is the first to leave. His climactic speech is the worst kind of children's fiction wish-fulfilment. Meanwhile, his sister, having discovered herself through reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, appears more assimilated to this antithesis of MTV.

However for visual effects, for an appealing parable in the tradition of *Edward Scissorhands*, for young actors who we will see more of and older actors at the peak of their powers, this is a film to catch on the big screen.

Reviewed by Andrew M. Butler.

As a follow on to the sad news of Vincent Clarke's death on the 29th November last year, Matrix would like to share an article written by Vinc himself, first published in *Mimosa* 18, which tells of the founding of the BSFA....

Introduction by Nicki and Richard Lynch: Here's another story about British fandom, this one from the 1950s. That decade might be considered the Golden Age for British fandom; it featured a large number of hyperactive and very talented fans: Ken Slater, Sandy Sanderson, Ron Bennett, Terry Jeeves, Eric Bentcliffe, Ethel Lindsay, Chuck Harris, Arthur Thomson.... One of the most active of all was Vincent Clarke, who among his other accomplishments, was one of the driving forces behind the founding in 1958 of the British Science Fiction Association. Vincent's new article for *Mimosa* remembers an incident that just may have influenced that event.



It all happened just before Xmas, 1957, and why it happened at that late date I just don't know. It had been years since I'd had any passionate regard for science fiction. Fandom was a Way of Life. And yet, this paragraph in the prestigious Sunday newspaper, *The Observer*, irritated me.

It was in a column by a very respected film critic, C.A. Lejeune, and mentioned in passing details of the policy of the New Shakespeare Theatre in Liverpool. I don't know if the NST gave performances of Shakespeare and Ibsen and Tennessee Williams, but Miss Lejeune mentioned that on Sunday nights, they let their hair down and showed films to the New Shakespeare Film Society. They retained, though, a strong sense of propriety. A brochure was issued giving policy and general rules, and one was quoted: "There will be no war films in the present Hollywood-Pinewood sense of the word, or films of violence, horror, science-fiction or exaggerated sex." I don't remember if I had a mental query or two about "exaggerated sex", but the thought of SF being included amongst the damned gave me, inexplicably, a sudden passionate desire to do something. So I hauled out the old typewriter, inserted a stencil, and wrote a general letter to a dozen or so friends. I quoted the pertinent paragraphs, said, "This obviously calls for indignant letters," and advised sending them to the NST via Miss Lejeune at *The Observer*.

I then spat on my palms, and did my own little bit. "...I am not, of course, acquainted with the personnel of your Society. It may, for instance, consist exclusively of old ladies with strongly religious views, who would naturally tend

to be critical of this particular sub-section of the Arts. "Given, however, that your Society comprises a normal cross-section of those interested in the Cinema as an Art, like myself, I must say that I can see nothing irreconcilable between this and an interest in science fiction, in print or on the screen.

Your classification of science fiction with distasteful sensationalism is insulting. ... Do you really imagine that the stuff Hollywood (and, alas, this country) so often issues under the label of science fiction is unreservedly welcome..." etc., etc. I then sat back and awaited results.

I didn't have long to wait. John Brunner sent a copy of his letter virtually by return:

"...I am disturbed and annoyed to see that yet one more wholesale generalisation has been made about science-fiction. At the time of the purge of obscene literature in pocket-books a few years back, one grew accustomed to this sort of thing from back-street newspapers; to find it perpetuated in the leading Sunday newspaper is altogether another question..." etc., etc.

Archie Mercer, an active fan from the early 1950s to, as it turned out, the early 1980s, also contributed: "...And then there are classics, such as *Things to Come*, which one would have thought was just the type of film to deserve showing to a serious cinematic society--surely to ban this sort of thing on the strength of *The Vampire from Umpteen Thousand Megacycles*' is absurd..."

Sid Birchby, a pre-War fan, also had his say: "...As one who has for thirty years been reading science fiction with no marked crumbling of morals, I find the association [with horror, etc.] odd. ... After all, the mere fact that a film deals with, say, a monster emerging from a flying saucer, does not make it 'science fiction', any more than a handful of classic allusions make Titus Andronicus a great play..." etc., etc. Sid was sufficiently moved by the occasion to sign his letter to these snobs "B.Sc.Tech., A.M.I.C.E."

And there was distant thunder from Northern Ireland, from one Walter A. Willis: "It is sad when Hollywood producers bill cheap horror films as 'science fiction', but it is alarming when a film society lets itself be taken in. Your attitude is all too reminiscent of that of literary snobs to the film itself, twenty years ago..."

Other fans rallied around, including Ron Bennett and Manchester's Dave Cohen. Ron was the only fan to get a direct reply from Miss Lejeune, possibly because he addressed her as "Mr.": "...Although the subject [of SF films] doesn't fascinate me myself (perhaps because I'm a woman), I know what very wide appeal it has, and feel that the Wanamaker people [huh??] are misguided in putting a tabu (if in fact they have done so) on all films of this kind..." etc., etc.

And finally, there was a reply from the New Shakespeare Theatre Club itself, to all of the individuals who'd written to them via Miss Lejeune: "...appreciate your kindness in making suggestions... The first General Meeting of the New Shakespeare Film Society was held yesterday, when the question of the content of films was briefly referred to and it was clearly the feeling of the meeting that each film would be judged on its merits ... any serious science fiction film of good quality would not be excluded solely on account of its subject matter."

So that was the end of a tempest in a tea-cup. But, looking at the old APazine from which most of the above was taken, I've had a few thoughts. Sid's use of those letters after his name... John Brunner wrote on World Science Fiction Society-headed notepaper... The triumphant result, puny though the struggle was, of concerted action... And the fact that this occurred in November 1957. It was the very next month that I wrote a rabble-raising piece so stirring that at the next Convention, mid-1958, various fans, principally Terry Jeeves and Eric Bentcliffe, got together and formed the BSFA - the British Science Fiction Association. British fans then had the headed note-paper, the voice to represent them, the works. The BSFA is still going, after 37 years. Is it possible that the original source, the straw which did the damage, that eventually led to formation of the BSFA, was the collective fuddy-duddies of the New Shakespeare Film Society?

Mimosa is an American fanzine edited by Nicki and Richard Lynch which is "devoted to preservation of the history of science fiction fandom." Published approximately twice yearly, copies are available for four dollars (US currency or equivalent) from PO Box 3120, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20885, USA. The most recent issue, number 23, includes the second part of Mike Resnick's 'Worldcon Memories', Ron Bennett on the 1960 British Eastercon, Dave Kyle on Forry Ackerman and many more.

With thanks to Mark Plummer

Stanley Kubrick was renowned for his meticulous attention to detail and punishing shooting schedules, his reclusive nature and obsession with perfection afforded him almost mythological status during his lifetime.

His death in March, following the completion of principle photography on *Eyes Wide Shut*, is a grievous loss to the art of filmmaking.

Born in Brooklyn in 1928, Kubrick's academic credentials were unremarkable, his interests developed into drumming, chess and eventually photography. It was following this interest, encouraged because of his lack of motivation in school, that the young Kubrick became a photographer on 'Look' magazine. His total understanding of the technical process of photography, his eye for compositional excellence and an ability to emphasise the dramatic in the everyday won him recognition. It was then, following a photoshoot with twin boxers Walter and Vincent Cartier that Stanley decided to attempt filmmaking. His first short, made for Pathe News and featuring the same boxers was called *Day of the Fight* (1951), an assured 16 minute diary documentary with an uncommonly good sense of composition. Other shorts convinced Kubrick that he should resign from photography and pursue filmmaking, which he did with his largely unseen feature debut *Fear and Desire* (1953).

His second full length production *Killers Kiss* (1955) was a clever film noir notable for its striking photography and imaginative use of non-synchronised sound, but far more impressive was *The Killing* (1956) - a heist movie set on a racing track that was innovative for its non-linear chronology and gritty attention to detail. The film was later to provide a basis for the narrative structure of Tarantino's debut film *Reservoir Dogs* (1992).

A meeting with star Kirk Douglas, an admirer of the young director's work, led Kubrick to become the director of *Paths of Glory* (1957) an astonishing, sobering and mature anti-war film notable for its audacious long tracking shots and seminal performances from all of the cast. Its powerful message against class-sanctified execution and the futility of war, place it in a league that includes *All Quiet On The Western Front* (1930) and little else. It was banned in France for a number of years due to its perceived criticism of French military practice. Completing his working relationship with Douglas, *Spartacus* (1960) was produced on the tail-end of the epic cycle and is the zenith of the genre. Despite this it proved a difficult

shoot for the young director who, after his experience on the film, insisted on complete artistic control for all of his subsequent projects.

Lolita (1962) was destined to be a controversial film from the outset, based as it was on Nabokov's contentious book concerning paedophile Humbert Humbert's relationship with the titular Lolita. Kubrick filmed the book as an elaborate black comedy, casting James Mason in an almost sympathetic light and featuring a virtuoso performance from Peter Sellers that is chilling to watch even 37 years on. Despite the inevitable backlash and the necessity to redub a line of dialogue to appease the MPAA, the deft handling of the subject matter is subtle and restrained without compromising Nabokov, but remains entirely Kubrick's.

By this time his attention to detail and obsession with perfection was well known, he would often shoot as many as fifty takes, printing them all, to get the shot he required, he would cover every conceivable angle to search for the most dramatic and appropriate take. He was constantly devising new methods of film production and photography to realise his artistic vision. When a film was in pre-production he would read voraciously on all aspects of the subject to ensure that, where it did not impinge on the narrative and emotional flow of the project, accuracy was maintained. Often he would continue to edit the film after its initial opening to hone down the material to maintain optimum concentration of effect. Film to him was, to paraphrase Godard, truth 24 times a second.

When Kubrick purchased the rights to Peter George's *Red Alert* it was assumed that the book, dealing as it did with the annihilation of the world due to mistrust and political misunderstandings, would have to be treated with the sense of sobriety that infused *Paths of Glory* and Kubrick's meticulous research into all aspects of the nuclear arms race seemed to confirm that. Instead the film underwent a title change, became *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Stopped Worrying And Learned To Love The Bomb* (1964) and was transformed into a comedy. The sophistication of *Dr. Strangelove* lies in its delivery. Eschewing slapstick (a war room custard pie fight was cut despite the weeks of shooting and preparation) the film's strength lies in the authenticity and hysteria of the situations, the dialogue is so sharp it hurts, with all the performances just the manic side of believable. Peter Sellers gives exemplary performances as the President Muffley, Dr Strangelove and

Group Captain Lionel Mandrake, whilst Sterling Hayden as Jack D. Ripper talks about contamination of his "bodily fluids" with the utmost sense of seriousness. Although the realism of the aircraft and bombing procedures did not endear Kubrick to the American military and many critics found the ending distasteful (although the original intention of having an audience sing-along of "We'll Meet Again" complete with bouncing ball following the lyrics would perhaps have evoked an even stronger reaction) the film has lost none of its freshness, humour or paranoia over the years and remains a comic masterpiece.

Following this step into speculative fiction Kubrick teamed up with Arthur C. Clarke to produce what is regarded by many as the greatest science fiction film ever produced - *A Space Odyssey* (1968). Loosely based on Clarke's short story *The Sentinel*, the film is less of a story and more of an experience; Kubrick's intention to produce primal emotions through the cinemascope image is film at its most experimental and yet basic. Large sections of the film are devoid of dialogue; it is the only time since the silent era that a major Hollywood studio has committed itself to producing visual poetry. Essential to the production was the pioneering effects work, a major undertaking that took three years from conception to execution and represented the apogee of effects work of the time. In an age where two year-old special effects appear dated the lasting achievement of 2001 is phenomenal - Kubrick had a large 'Ferris wheel' space station set constructed, huge models were painstakingly built, monitors in the background were constantly showing specially shot 16mm footage, costume design was put through meticulous scrutiny down even to the hat shape worn by space stewardesses. Douglas Trumbull, later director of *Silent Running* (1974), was in charge of some of the experimental film work used in the film's closing segments requiring the building of a camera mount "as big as a house". To show the 'starchild' foetus, a huge sculpture was commissioned. The whole effect (advertised as "The Ultimate Trip"), which mystified studio executives and contemporary critics, was a huge commercial success. That it received few awards after its release merely indicated the lack of understanding of pure cinema as opposed to narrative regurgitation.

To follow 2001, Kubrick decided to tackle another science fiction work, aesthetically far removed from its

predecessor and yet morally similar. If 2001 was a poetic inner expression of Darwinism and contact with superior extra-terrestrial life, *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) represented the exterior manifestation of the struggle of man with himself. 2001 is thought, *A Clockwork Orange* is action. The controversy surrounding the film and its depiction of violence has tended to cloud final analysis, most criticism being levelled at the first third of the picture and not the overall piece. Even a Channel Four documentary about the film purporting to laud it, concentrated only on these aspects of the piece. Essential to *A Clockwork Orange* is Alex (Malcolm McDowell), a loveable, amiable, cultured rapist and murderer with a love of Beethoven. The uncomfortable aspect of the film is that you identify with Alex, he is intelligent and witty, he is your narrator, you applaud his crimes and despise the state that removes his will to power. You are complicit in enjoying the violence even if you cannot condone it and that is the point. With a soundtrack composed of synthesised versions of Purcell and good old Ludwig Van, a succession of astonishing, extreme wide-angle tracking and some of the most outrageous sequences outside of a Ken Russell film, *A Clockwork Orange* is at once uncomfortable and enjoyable. A film often despised by those who have not seen it or understood it.

Taking a break from genre filmmaking Kubrick produced the most sumptuous literary adaptation to date, *Barry Lyndon* (1975). Based on the epic novel by Thackeray and shot by either natural light or candle, *Barry Lyndon* is as meticulous as it is intellectually engaging.

Since *Dr Strangelove*, Kubrick had lived and worked in England, his hatred of (particularly aeroplane) travel and a desire to work unhindered by Hollywood's jet set made it a natural home. He continued to keep in touch with American popular culture; he was often sent videotapes of American Football matches that he watched repeatedly, admiring the strategy of the game. This unwillingness to travel far had led to some interesting decisions regarding the method of filming. *Barry Lyndon* had been set partly in Germany, *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) in Vietnam and, his next film, *The Shining* (1980) in Maine, USA. Kubrick never left the UK, preferring the freedom of expression that studio based shooting offered.

The Shining was critically mauled but publicly adored on its release. Kubrick had taken a whole new approach to filming the tired horror genre that had become increasingly formulaic in recent years, preferring to emphasise the 'horror of self' as much as the visceral trappings that had become a recent cliché. Instead Kubrick favoured a combination of the psychological and

the surreal in realising his vision, making full use of the recently invented steadycam to create a smooth prowling structure. Adding superbly intense sound enhanced the claustrophobia. The experience is more disturbing than scary or nasty but, in seeing the development of the horror film over the next decade, it would have been preferable for this approach to have been more universally adopted instead of the endless stream of unfunny latex horror comedies that epitomised the decade.

Kubrick's last fully completed film, *Full Metal Jacket* was less about Vietnam than about the dehumanising of cadets to create unemotional killing machines. Again the lack of understanding as to the nature of the film led to heavy media criticism.

Stanley Kubrick was an artist and a visionary who had the technical ability and dogged determination to produce such a diverse body of work. For a man viewed by everyone who met him as an intellectual, his films have nonetheless enjoyed immense popular success because of their ability to be appreciated on an emotional and aesthetic level as well as an intellectual one. Even to his detractors, the loss of Stanley Kubrick is the loss of a great artist, even if his films were loathed, they couldn't be ignored; respect for him throughout the film industry was unsurpassed.

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ADOLFO BIOY CASARES

Adolfo Bioy Casares, Argentinian writer and frequent collaborator with Jorge Luis Borges, died in Buenos Aires on 8 March 1999, aged 84. Although little known outside his native Argentina, except for his collaborations with Borges, he was recognised in his native country as one of the literary giants. His writing ranged widely in style and was often light-hearted or satirical (he once told a friend: 'Solemnity is what people confuse with being profound'), but his best work and his most abiding literary interest was fantasy. He said at one point that his life was about fantasy because in a country where politics had everything to do with personal whim, fantasy was the only reality.

His first book, *Prologue (Prologo)*, published at the early age of 16 in 1929 displayed an early interest in surrealism, though he would later disavow the work. He first came to prominence with *La invención de Morel* (translated in *The Invention of Morel and Other Stories*) which won the prestigious Buenos Aires Municipal Prize when it was published in 1940

and which Alain Robbe-Grillet has acknowledged was an important source for his screenplay for *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*. Despite the title, *The Invention of Morel* is a novel, though a fragmented one using the imaginative resources of the novel in a story which features immortality.

There is overt fantasy, though partaking more of magic realism than the work of his friend Borges, in two other novels that are accounted the best of his career. *The Dream of Heroes (El Sueño de los Heroes)* (1954) tells of a workingman who undergoes a strange and terrifying experience at a carnival and can only understand what happened by trying to recreate it, despite the best efforts of a secret protector. *Diary of the War of the Pig (Diario de la Guerra del Cerdo)* (1969) is an allegorical and nightmarish story that seems to anticipate the persecutions and death squads that would later plague Argentina.

Although he started out studying law, Bioy Casares became involved in the Argentine literary scene of the 1930s, which at the time was centred upon the

literary magazine *Sur* founded by Victoria Ocampo, the sister of Silvina Ocampo who would become Bioy Casares's wife in 1944. It was in this circle, too, that he met and began his long relationship with Borges. One of their earliest collaborations was a set of detective stories, *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi (Seis problemas para Don Isidro Parodi)* (1942), which they wrote under the pseudonym Honorio Bustos Domecq. They would also collaborate on a series of satirical literary essays, *Chronicles of Bustos Domecq (Crónicas de Bustos Domecq)* (1967). As well as their collaborations, the two ran a publishing venture between 1945 and 1960, which brought out in Argentina the work of writers they both admired, including H. G. Wells. They also edited a number of anthologies, including *Gauche Poetry, The Anthology of Argentinian Poetry, Extraordinary Tales*, and, with Silvina Ocampo, *The Book of Fantasy*.

Bioy Casares also featured as a character in several of Borges's stories, most notably 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius'.

© Paul Kincaid 1999



surfing on mars

The premise is simple:
what can you get for
the price of a popular
confectionery product?

For this issue the BFSa's very
own webmistress Tanya Brown has
been surfing for Matrix in a relentless quest for
science fiction related sites on the world wide web...



<http://members.aol.com/tamaranth/>

What a wonderful website! (An entirely unbiased observation, honest: OK, I designed it, but others seem to rate it too, and the hit counter is climbing rapidly). The BSFA site changes almost every week: recent additions include the introduction of a Merchandise page, listing the various BSFA publications, and telling you how to order those T-shirts which are the envy of others at conventions and pub meetings. (Orders can't be made over the Web yet). Tempted though I am by the link to Amazon.co.uk, which will enable me to buy books at discount, while donating 5% of any purchases to the BSFA, I head straight for the Links page, knowing that from there the whole Internet will open up before me. Eventually.

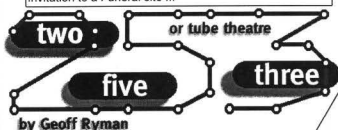
<http://www.jeapes.ndirect.co.uk/odyssey/>

Odyssey is a fine magazine, and its website, while pleasantly free of graphics, is full of interesting things. It's not an electronic version of the magazine, but there are teasers for the latest issue, writers' guidelines, and details of how to subscribe. There's also a flourishing and provocative online letters page.

Checking out the 'sample of issue 7' page, I found extracts from short fiction by Cherith Baldry and Jo Walton, amongst others: snippets of features by David Langford (yes, he is ubiquitous, isn't he?) and Colin Greenland: and an intriguing paragraph from Hilda Reilly's article on languages. Good to know that the literary end of the British SF scene isn't restricted to Interzone. Browsing the Links page, I find a link to Molly Brown's exemplary Invitation to a Funeral site ...

<http://www.okima.com/>

Molly Brown's historical crime novel, Invitation to a Funeral, is a Restoration whodunnit featuring Aphra Behn and Nell Gwyn, among many others. This page introduces the cast of the novel, and showcases some of the author's other work - if you don't get sidetracked (as I did) into the 'jaunt round Restoration London'. A wealth of historical research went into the novel, and inspired this site - together with recipes for 'a fricassee of Oysters' and 'hashed meat', and poetry by Lord Rochester. SF? Ah yes ... some of Molly's short fiction - including the BSFA Award-winning 'Bad Timing' - is also available from this site. 'She wanted an ocelot, but all she got were links ...' With an invitation like that, who can resist?



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

Geoff Ryman's 253 was one of the first hypertext novels. Hypertext (clicking on links that take you to another part of the document) is a quintessentially Web-based medium which allows an author to create an interactive, multi-directional work instead of the boring old linear novel. Judge for yourself how well this one works. 253 is the tale of the passengers on a Bakerloo line train (it must be SF: it's rush hour, but everyone has a seat): at first they may seem to have nothing in common beyond the fact of travelling together, but there are a multitude of connections between individuals. 253 is also available in antiquated 'book' format, made of real paper: if you've read the novel, see how differently it works in its original form!



to the next page

<http://www.omnimag.com/>

This is a graphics-oriented site: it offers the option of high-res or low-res graphics, and the latter are quite impressive enough. Omni was one of the first glossy SF magazines to hit the newsstands, back in the 1970s. In 1996 it suspended print operations, subsequently appearing only on the Web. Despite its popularity as an e-zine, Omni on the Internet suspended publication too, in 1998: what's there will stay, but it's no longer being updated. Despite that, there are some fascinating articles - science, fiction, science fiction ... a Howard Waldrop story, links to collaborative net fiction, reviews ... worth bookmarking and returning, since none of it seems likely to disappear in the immediate future.

The Links section is divided into Authors, Publishers, Science ... I decided to check if they'd heard of anyone from Britain, and found myself at ...

from previous page

<http://www.sam.math.ethz.ch/~7Ep Keller/Baxter-Page.html>

This page is rather out-of-date ('upcoming appearances' lists venues on the Titan launch tour in 1997), but it offers links to interviews with, and articles by, Stephen Baxter. There's also a biography (complete to the publication of Titan) and a timeline for the Xeelee sequence. Clearly a labour of love: a shame that, for whatever reason, it's not maintained.

<http://www.skatecity.com/ah/>

The Uchronia Alternate History page opens onto a plethora of resources, articles and summaries.

I was fascinated by the divergence timeline - an astoundingly detailed list of alternate history stories and non-fiction articles arranged by date of divergence. So we start with Harry Turtledove's A World of Difference (point of divergence being the time at which the solar system coalesced, since the 'alternate' premise of this novel is that there's a larger planet in place of Mars) and finish with Doron Rozenblum's "If" ["If"], which examines two alternatives to the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin. Every single item on the timeline carries a synopsis and publication details. There's a page devoted to the Sidewise Awards for Alternate History (frontrunner for novel is Harry Turtledove's How few Remain, with Peter Delacorte's Time on my Hands also listed). The Links page offers links to newsgroups, zines, games and authors: almost at random, I picked Dr Shade's Laboratory...



<http://indigo.ie/~imago/newman.html>

"Who is this brooding figure? Among his many personas are: International Author of Mystery, Cameo (and not so) Actor Extraordinaire, Fearsome Film Critic, Sonorous Broadcaster, and, most serious of all, Semi-Professional Kazoo-Player". The truth can be revealed here: Dr Shade is Kim Newman, and one of Dr Shade's doppelgangers is Games Workshop author Jack Yeovil. There are links to pages about several of Kim Newman's novels; film reviews and an exhaustive list of publications and broadcasts. Although Mr. Newman's page does not (sniff) mention the BSFA, he is a member of the British Fantasy Society:

<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/6859/>

The British Fantasy Society web site features news, publications, event listings (somewhat out of date), a page about Fantasycon 23 (September 1999) and a message from Ramsey Campbell, the President of the BFS. There's also a page of links to many fantasy and horror authors, primarily those who are members of the BFS - a fascinating cross-section of British genre fiction. If you're fed up waiting for the Links page to load (personally, I've found sites hosted by geocities tend to be slow), you can reach the Storm Constantine Information Service directly ...



<http://members.aol.com/peverel/>

This is the official site of Inception, the Storm Constantine Information Service. Information about the author's latest publications, links to magazines in which Storm's work has appeared, and a mail order service offering out-of-print or otherwise unobtainable copies of some of her books. There are links to the website of the magazine Visionary Tongue, a writers' project with which Storm is associated. But enough of this serious stuff! On Vector Reviews Editor Steve Jeffery's links page, we find ...

<http://www.clangers.co.uk/>

The Clangers site includes books, videos, audio files of the Music Trees ("a handsome pair of crotchety trees that Tiny Clanger grew from the last two semiquavers that the soupdragon forgot to eat"), character and episode guides, & instructions on making your own Clanger! There's also an account of censorship:

"You know quite well we can't say things like that on children's programmes." "But ..." I said, "they don't say it. They whistle it." "But surely people will know?" "If they have nice minds they will hear him say 'Oh dear me. The naughty thing is jammed again.'" "Oh, all right then, I suppose so, but please keep the language moderate."

And on that note, dear reader ...



end

1999

30 Apr-3 May: Supernova 99

Star Trek con at the Jarvis Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. Reg. £45.
 Supernova Conventions, 4 Burford Corner, Westhumble Street, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 6BS.
supernova.conventions@virgin.net
<http://reespace.virgin.net/supernova.conventions/>

9 May: Fantasy Fair 9

Cheap one-day market-type event at the Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough, from 10.30-4.00pm. Sponsored by Peterborough SF Club. Guests include BSFA Award nominated **John Meaney**, artist **Roger Mason** and **Dave Hodges**, immortalised as 'Hodgesaigh' in Terry Pratchett's 'Discworld' books. Day will include gaming demonstrations and fantasy dress competition.
 Bruce King, 1 The Hallards, Eaton Socon, St Neots, PE19 3QW. 01480 216372

21-24 May: Trinity (Eurocon)

Dortmund, Germany. Multilingual (including English). Guests include **Sam J. Lundwall**, **Brian Aldiss**, **Harry Harrison**, **Terry Pratchett**. Reg. £34. Beluga Post (Chair). Frankfurter Weg 18, D-59439 Holzwickede, Germany +49 2301-5785 Fax +49 2301 5743 TRINITY@cbg.de
<http://www.cbg.de/sf-tage-nrw>
 UK Agent: Mike Cheater, 42 Elm Grove, Southsea, Hants, PO5 1JG 01705 361350
mike@frasers.demon.co.uk

28-30 May: Secon.

General sf con with a light but varied schedule and plenty of opportunity to socialise at the Hertfordpark Hotel, Stevenage. Guest **Stephen Baxter**. Reg. £17.50
 Secon c/o 92, Lichfield Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3TR
secon@bradshaw.cix.co.uk
<http://www.cix.co.uk/~sbradshaw/sec.con.html>

4-6 June: Avalon

Star Trek Con at the Meadowside Centre, Burton Upon Trent. Reg. £50, £20 per day.
 Avalon, 8, Yew Tree Road, Hatton, Derby, DE65 5EX

12 Jun Inense and Insensibility

Psychedic 60's sf conference in Liverpool. Contact Andy Sawyer, Librarian/Administrator, Science Fiction Foundation Collection University of Liverpool Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA, UK
 E-mail asawyer@liv.ac.uk
<http://www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/sffcho.me.html>

25-27 Jun: Poets and Small Presses

Steve Sneyd talking on sf poetry. Advance Reg: £4 to Geoff Stevens, 25 Griffiths Rd, West Bromwich, B71 2EH

16-18 July: Baroquon

The annual role playing con, at New Hall College, Cambridge.
 Guest **Mary Gentle**. Reg. £18, Supp. £4.50. 8, Saddler's Close, Baldock, Herts, SG7 6EF
baroquon@philm.demon.co.uk
<http://philm.demon.co.uk/Baroquon/main.html>

16-18 July: Nexus 99

SF/Media con somewhere in Bristol
 Nexus 99, 1, Lullington Road, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2LN
nexus@cosham.demon.co.uk
<http://www.cosham.demon.co.uk>

24-25 July: Telefantastique 2

Multi media con at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. Guests **Mira Furlon**, **Diane Duane**, **Peter Morwood**. Reg. £45.
 38, Rochford Avenue, Loughton, Essex IG10 2BS.
fr62@dial.pipex.com

11 Aug: Total Eclipse of the Sun

Totality passes through Cornwall, Northern France, Romania and bits of Italy. Cornwall and France have been booked solid for some time now, but Jonathan Cowie is hoping to organise an eclipse trip to Romania, where the best seeing will be, taking advantage of local fan links. Enquiries (no commitment necessary yet) to: 44 Brook Street, Erith, Kent, DA8 1JQ

13-15 Aug: Wincon V

The 1999 Unicorn at King Alfred's College, Winchester. Guests include **Diana Wynne Jones**, **John Barnes**, **Warren Ellis**. Reg. £25 att, £15 supp.
 Wincon V, 53 Havant Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants., PO2 7HH
wincon@pompey.demon.co.uk
<http://www.pompey.demon.co.uk/wincon.html>

14-15 Aug: Fincon

Turku, Finland. Guest **Connie Willis**.
<http://www.utu.fi/sfs/fincon>

26-29 Aug: Conucopia

Venue Anaheim Marriott Hotel, Anaheim California.
 Guests **Jerry Pournelle**, **Nicki & Richard Lynch**, **Ellen Datlow**.
info@99.nasfic.org
www.99.nasfic.org
 UK Agent:
 John Harold, 8 Warren Close, Langley, Slough, Berkshire, SL3 7UA

26-29 Aug: Polcon

The Polish national convention in Warsaw.
klub@rassun.art.pl
<http://rassun.art.pl>

27-30 Aug: Galileo IV

The 48th British Star Trek convention at the Heathrow Park Hotel, London. Guest **Walter Koenig**. Reg. £40, supp. £10.
 38, Planetree Avenue, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9TH
<http://www.homeusers.prestel.co.uk/mrichardson/galcon.htm>

28-30 Aug: Shinnenkai 99

Annual anime (Japanese animation) con at the Radisson Hotel, Heathrow Reg. £25 to Feb 99, £30 to 1 Aug, £35 on door.
 PO Box 110, Didcot, Oxon., OX11 7YH
shinnenkai@new-moon.demon.co.uk
<http://www.direct.co.uk/~newmoon/s/hinnenkai/>

2-6 Sep: Aussiecon 3

The Worldcon goes down under to Melbourne. Guests **Greg Benford**, **Bruce Gillespie**, the deceased **George Turner** will still be honoured. Reg. until 31 July 1999, at which time no new memberships will be accepted until the opening of the convention.
 UK: £110 after 6th April
info@aussiecon3.worldcon.org
<http://www.aussiecon3.worldcon.org>
 UK Agent:
 Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Road, Reading, RG1 7TT
martinhoare@cix.co.uk

3-5 Sep: Festival of Fantastic Films

Sacha's Hotel, Manchester.
 Reg: 50 til June 1st 95, Meadowgate Road, Salford, Manchester M7 3QP

10-12 Sep: Masque 7

Costume Con. University of Wolverhampton, W Midlands. Reg. £30 til 1st Aug, then £35.
 130, Hampstead Hall Rd, Hand, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham B20 1JB

17-20 Sep: Cult TV 1999 (Breakaway)

Media con. Guests include **Simon MacKordkendale** from 'Manimal' and **Frazier Hines**. Venue is Pontin's Sand Bay Holiday Village in Weston-Super-Mare. Registration plus 3 nights board for £128, with variations. Cult TV 99, PO Box 1701, Peterborough PE7 1ER

01733 205009
cultvuk@geocities.com
<http://www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/2042>

17-19 Sept: Fantasycon 23

The Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. Organised by the British Fantasy Society. Guests **Robert Rankin** and **Louise Cooper**, **Graham Masterton** and **Mike Tucker**. Reg. Attending £50, Daily £30 Supp £25, discounts for BFs members, check with organisers.
 David J Howe, 46 Oxford Road, Accoys Green, Birmingham, B27 6DT

25-26 Sep: Hypotheticon: 1999

"Scotland's other national convention" at the Central Hotel, Glasgow. Reg. £15, under 15s £10, under 5s free, supp. £5.
 Hypotheticon: 1999, Flat 0/2, 11 Cleghorn Street, Glasgow, G22 5RN

2 Oct: Rebellion 99

Star Wars con at the Moat House Hotel, Northampton. Many guests.
 Rebellion 99, Kentstone Close, Kingsthorpe, Northampton NN2 8UH

8-10 Oct: Octocon 10

Irish convention at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, near Dublin. Guests include **Robert Rankin**. Reg. £14 to Easter, £18 to mid-September, £22 on the door.
 Octocon 10, 64 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX

8-11 Oct: Gaylaxicon: 1999

The tenth Gaylaxicon, "a science fiction, fantasy and horror convention for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people and friends", in Washington D.C. Guests **Diane Duane**, artist **Nancy Janda**. Gaylaxicon 1999, PO Box 656, Washington D.C. 20044
Gcon1999@aol.com
<http://www.gaylaxians.org/GNework/index.html>

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

- Always include an SAE when requesting information
- Please mention Matrix when responding
- There may be errors in this listing. Never make a journey to a convention without checking first
- If you spot any errors, or have the latest news, do let us know
- Running an event? Tell us about it
- With thanks to Dave Langford

23-24 Oct: Convergence

Media con at the Stakis Bristol Hotel, Bristol. Guests include **Michael Sheard**, **Warwick Davis**, **Jacqueline Pearce**. Attendance limited to 200. Reg. £35. Convergence, 46 Brins Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8XU. Mail on 0117 940 9017, mobile 0981 994969 mail@nexuscon.demon.co.uk

30-31 Oct M.R. James Weekend.

Celebrating 20th anniversary of Ghosts and Scholars magazine at Royal Victoria & Bull Hotel, Rochester, Kent. £25 Reg. 150, Elstree Park, Barnet Lane, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 2RP.

5-7 Nov: Novacon29

Birmingham's annual sf convention at the Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. Guest is mathematician and writer **Ian Stewart**. Reg. £28 to Easter 99. Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. 01384 825386

2000**27 Dec-2 Jan 2000: Millennium**

See in the new millennium (a year early if you're a pedant) at this con, to be held somewhere in northern Europe, probably the UK or a Benelux country. £4.00 per year, to be deducted from the eventual membership cost.

Millennium, c/o Malcolm Reid, 2/R, 9 Aisle Street, Hyndland, Glasgow, G12 9RJ. vdputte@simplex.nl

4-6 Feb Didergi-12

Pronounced (Digger-Douze) Filk Con at Forte Posthouse, Milton Keynes. Guests are **Brian Biddle**, **Urban Tapestry**. Reg £22, unwaged £11. 119, Whitehill Lane, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5LU.

Intersection Programme Book

edited by Kees van Toorn
A4, perfect bound, 176 pages
Produced by and for the 1995 World Science Fiction Convention, this contains articles by or about Samuel Delany, Gerry Anderson, Viné Clarke, Peter Morwood, Diane Duane, Anne McCaffrey, Jo Fletcher and others as well as a comprehensive listing of past Hugo winners, past Worldcons, and sf around the world.

Issued free to members of the convention, there is much of interest here for non-attendees.

Price: £6.00 (including £1.50 p&p)

21-24 Apr: 2Kon (Eastercon)

The 2000 Eastercon at the Central Hotel, Glasgow. It's themed on "Celtic SF and Fantasy" and the guests are **Guy Gavriel Kay**, **Deborah Turner Harris** and **Katherine Kurtz**. Reg. £25, £20 now out. Reg.£15. Progress Report 1 now out.

2Kon, 30 Woodburn Terrace, St Andrews, KY16 8BA
2Kon@dcs.st-and.ac.uk
http://www.theory.cs.st-and.ac.uk/2Kon

26-29 May: CostumeCon 18

Costuming con at Hartford, Connecticut. Reg. \$50 to 9 Aug 98. CostumeCon18, 11 Winter Street, Amesbury, MA 01913-1515, USA
http://cc2000.org
www.cc2000.org

2-6 Aug: Eurocon 2000

Gdynia, Poland. Reg. £10. Gdansk Klub Fantastyki, P.O. Box 76, 80-325 Gdynia, Poland
+48-58-531073

31 Aug-4 Sep: Chicon 2000

The 58th and millennial worldcon, guests **Ben Bova**, **Bob Eggleton**, **Jim Baen**, **Bob & Anne Passovoy**, and **Harry Turtledove** (toastmaster). UK Agent: Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Road, Reading, RG1 7TT
Martinhoare@cix.co.uk
P.O. Box 642057, Chicago, Illinois 60665, USA
chi2000@chicon.org
http://www.chicon.org/

2001**29 Dec-1 Jan: Hogmanaycon**

Celebrate the real millennium at the Central Hotel, Glasgow. Guests **Spider & Jeanne Robinson**, **Sydney Jordan**, **Vince Docherty**.

Prof. Oscar Schwighofer. Reg. £25 att., £5 supp.
26 Avonbank Road, Rutherglen, Glasgow, G73 2PA
john@gelsaba.demon.co.uk
0141 569 1934

24-27 May: SFRA 2001

The Science Fiction Research Association Academic Conference at the Schenectady Ramada Inn & Convention Center, Schenectady, NY, USA. Features "Provocative Papers, Winning Workshops, Amazing Art, Riveting Readings, Pleasurable Parties, Lavish Luncheon, Copious Confabulation, Non-Banquet Banquet, Fabulous Frozen Feast, Broodingnagian Banquet, and more".
Jan Finder at the wombat@juno.com
http://www.klink.net/~fcs/sfra2001.ht ml

30 Aug-3 Sep: The Millennium Philcon

The 2001 Worldcon, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center and the Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. Guests **Greg Bear**, **Stephen Youll**, **Gardner Dozois**, **George Scithers** and **Toastmaster Esther Friesner**. Suite 2001, 402 Huntington Pike, Rockledge, PA 19046, USA
phil2001@nettaxs.com
http://www.nettaxs.com/~phil2001

BIDS**Eastercon 2002:**

Check the Eastercon pages for the latest news.

2002: Worldcon San Francisco Bay Area

In an unprecedented move, the SF in 2002 Worldcon Bid Committee has filed a second Worldcon bid for a site in San Jose, California. The bid is for the same weekend, for the same

committee, with different facilities. "Until recently, our negotiations with the primary property we wanted to use in San Francisco, the Marriott, had been going well," said Kevin Standie, the chair of the bid. "A few weeks ago, however, they wrote to us demanding a number of concessions, both financial and organizational, which would prevent us from being able to offer the type of Worldcon that fans expect."

Memberships in the Bay Area in 2002 bid at all classes (Pre-supporting, Pre-opposing, and Friend) remain unchanged from that of San Francisco in 2002. The previously announced cross-grade offer, whereby members of the now-withdrawn Seattle in 2002 Bid can take credit toward a membership in the San Francisco in 2002 Bid, was scheduled to continue through April 5, 1999.

Reflecting the dual nature of the bid, the committee's name changes to "Bay Area in 2002," with the slogan "Now We're Between The Rock and a hard(ware) place," alluding to Alcatraz and the Silicon Valley.
Info@sf2002.sfsfc.com
http://www.sfsfc.org/worldcon/
UK agents Steve Davies & Guilia de Cesare, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2RP
Steve@vraidex.demon.co.uk

2003: Worldcon

Toronto Presupporting £9.
UK agent Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU
Ansible@cix.co.uk
Hancock@inforamp.net
http://www.worldhouse.com/worldcon -2003

Regular Meetings Overleaf**First Day Covers**

Produced for Intersection, the 1995 World Science Fiction Convention, these covers feature the four stamps issued in June 1995 commemorating the works of H G Wells. A limited edition of 1,000 was produced and the remaining covers are now only available through the BSFA.

Price: £5.50 each (inclusive of 50p p&p)

ITEMS FOR SALE**A Very British Genre** by Paul Kincaid

A5, stapled, 66 pages

Produced by the BSFA in 1995 for Intersection, the World Science Fiction Convention, this booklet traces the history of British science fiction and fantasy from its origins in the mediaeval period to the present day, and includes a chronology of notable works and a checklist of the award-winning books of currently active writers.

Price: a copy of VBG is free to BSFA members. Either send an A5 SAE (31p stamp) or, if ordering other items and if you prefer, add 50p for p&p to your order. Additional copies cost £4.00 each (including 50p p&p).

TO ORDER:

SEND ORDERS TO: BSFA, 14 NORTHWAY ROAD, CROYDON, SURREY CRO 6JE, UK

E-MAIL: CHIMPUNK@TRAGIC.DEMON.CO.UK (for queries only, not orders please)

Cheques made payable to "BSFA Limited". Please allow 28 days for delivery.

In the event that requested items are out of stock, we will endeavour to contact you to see if alternatives can be provided. In this respect, a contact phone number and, if you have one, e-mail address would be useful.

BSFA London Meetings

The BSFA's London meetings are held at 7.00pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month (except December), at the Florence Nightingale pub - nearest stations Waterloo (mainline or Underground) or Westminster (Underground). If you get there early we'll be in the main bar; if in doubt ask the landlord. Meetings are open to all. Paul Hood on 0181 333 6670 or paul@auden.demon.co.uk for further information. See below for a flavour of the meetings...

28th April: Simon Ings

London Circle Meetings

Also at the Florence Nightingale (see below) London Circle meetings are on the first Thursday of the month and usually start about 5pm. No special events but very popular and crowded. Just turn up! Upcoming meetings: 6 May 99

The Brum SF Group

Birmingham: The Brum SF Group meets on the second Friday of the month on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel on New Street, venue of this year's Novacon. Membership is £15 per year, which includes a monthly newsletter. Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX. bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk

Cambridge SF Group: Meets on the second Monday of the month in The Wrestlers, New Market Road, Cambridge.

Cardiff SF Group: Meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in Wellington's Cafe Bar, 42 The Hayes, Cardiff.

Colchester SF/Horror/Fantasy Group: Meets on the third Saturday of each month at 12.30pm in The Playhouse pub in St John's Street. Des Lewis on 01255 812119

Glasgow: SFFantasy writers circle run from the new Borders bookshop in Glasgow. It's an extension of the old Glasgow SF Writer's Circle, which includes several Interzone contributors of the past, and which also put

together the Shipbuilding anthology for the Scottish Worldcon a couple of years ago. The workshop runs on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 8pm and there's a good pub around the corner. If interested, contact Gary Gibson, who works at Borders, or E-mail him at: garygibson@skiffy.freemove.co.uk

Hull: SF Group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, 8pm to 10.30pm at Ye Olde Blue Bell, Market Place, Hull. The Hull Group marked its tenth anniversary in October. Ian & Julie on 01482 447953 or Dave & Estelle on 01482 444291.

Leeds Alternative Writers: A group of SFFantasy writers aiming at paid publication, meeting on the second Saturday of the month at 2pm in central Leeds. For details please ring Ian (0113 266-9259) or Sean (0113 293-6780)

Leicester: SF Group meets on the first Friday of the month; venue varies. Tim Groome on 0116 279 2280 rbean@globalnet.co.uk

Manchester: FONT meets in Wetherspoons's pub (on the corner of Piccadilly Gardens, near the BR Station) on the second and fourth Thursdays in the month, 8pm onwards.

Mike Don on 0161 226 2980

Peterborough: SF Club meets on the first Wednesday of the month at the Bluebell Inn Dogsthorpe and on the third Wednesday of the month in the bar of the Great Northern Hotel, opposite the BR Station. Guest on 7 April is Alex Stewart. SAE to 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5RB. Pete on 01733 370542.

Portsmouth: The South Hants SF Group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at The Magpie, Fratton Road, Portsmouth.

Reading: SF Group meets weekly on Mondays at 9.00pm; for a trial period they have moved to the Hope Tap, Friar Street, Reading.

Surbiton: Surrey SF Group meets in the Coronation Hall, Surbiton, a Wetherspoons

London fandom goes with the flo'

Most, if not all, of the London fan meetings which had been taking place in the Jubilee Tavern on York Road, including the long-standing 'First Thursday' meeting, have now relocated to the nearby Florence Nightingale (AKA 'The Dead Nurse') on the roundabout at the south end of Westminster Bridge. Fans have elected to follow popular landlord Kevin Bridge to his new home, which also offers a more spacious bar and larger function room.

The Florence Nightingale was first mooted as an alternative First Thursday venue back in 1992 when the then venue, the Wellington Tavern, proved to be too crowded after part of the main bar was walled off and converted into a wine bar. Indeed, the 'Go with the Flo' campaign resulted in a few one-off fannish gatherings being held there, until a projected BSFA/SF Foundation event had its booking bounced at the last minute, forcing a relocation... to the nearby Jubilee Tavern. The Jubilee, with decent beer, cheap food and an affordable function room, quickly proved popular with fans; several regular meetings, including the BSFA, relocated there and it has also hosted a number of parties and at least one fan wedding. The 'First Thursday' meeting moved there in early 1997.

The regular Thursday meeting-at first a weekly one-dates back to the late 1940s and was originally held in The White Horse on Fetter Lane. These gatherings were fictionalised by one of the attendees, a certain Arthur C Clarke, as Tales from the White Hart. Legend has it that Thursdays were chosen because fan and later New Worlds editor Ted Carnell had a half-day holiday on that day. At some point in the 1960s meetings changed from weekly to monthly - the first Thursday

of the month - and have continued through several changes of venue; the Florence Nightingale is the seventh. The first change from The White Horse to The Globe in Hatton Garden, provides an additional precedent for the recent move to the Florence Nightingale; as Walter A Willis noted in his 'Fanorama' column in Nebula, this relocation, too, was due to "following a popular landlord". At their peak, the First Thursday gatherings were believed to be the biggest regular fan meetings in the world and, although numbers have diminished in recent years, they remain a regular focus for London and south eastern fans, as well as fans from out of town. Already this year the London meetings have seen fannish visitors from Ireland, Jersey and Sweden.

The Florence Nightingale currently hosts the following regular fan meetings:

First Thursday: London Circle - general meeting in the upstairs bar.

Third Wednesday: Z29 Plural Z Alpha, The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy Appreciation Society, in the main bar downstairs.

Fourth Wednesday: BSFA meeting in the upstairs bar.

Every Friday: a group consisting, for the most part, of veterans from the City Illiterates evening class, who could be upstairs or downstairs depending on space.

Except for the BSFA, which usually has a guest speaker from seven o'clock, all these meetings are social and very informal. Entry to all is free. In all cases you can probably assume that there'll be somebody there by six o'clock and sometimes earlier.

© Claire Brailey and Mark Plummer



TechnoSphere

For those of you with dog-hating landladies or cat allergies, TechnoSphere could provide the solution: why not create a virtual animal? TechnoSphere is an evolution simulator that allows you to create your own creatures and observe their progress as they grow, evolve and die in a virtual 3D simulation environment. The simulation is maintained by a combination of artists, designers, academics and programmers and has some pretty images to admire and a selection of videos. It came as a disappointment though to find that we would never actually get to see our creatures in action.



When you create a creature the first decision is between herbivores and carnivores: our first two creations were herbivores, the default option. Then the fun starts as you select from five choices each of head, body, eyes and wheels, which give the finished animal different characteristics (you have to guess what the differences are). You don't get to see the assembled effect until the creature is complete and the effects can be pleasing or exceedingly comical.

Of our original creations, Tabs never made it to adulthood, dying of starvation at 31 days, though she did manage to travel a massive 185 km and consume 40 kg of food. Mollusc, on the other hand, became an adult at 30 days but died, also of starvation, at 35 days. She had a good time, mind you, in her brief adult life, mating 33 times (though without conception taking place), making several unsuccessful passes at other creatures and deftly avoiding the romantic advances of Gatherer of Greens. In between times, she mostly seemed to be asleep when we popped in to see what was happening. He maximum lifespan in TechnoSphere is about 5 months.

There are facilities to study the family tree of your creatures (not much use if they don't live long enough to procreate) and you can leave a short message of remembrance for the dead.

The whole thing is fun enough for us to have created another 3 creatures (2 carnivores and another herbivore) but there are quite a few frustrations. The server is frequently unavailable - it is borrowed - especially at weekends, and it would be nice to have statistics for the TechnoSphere as a whole. There is a hall of fame where you can find the fastest, sexiest and oldest creatures, and you are told the dimensions (don't worry, the creatures don't fall off the edge) and landscape of the world. There is, however, a sense that this is all an experiment in progress and we are left with the feeling that it might be fun to watch the experiment as well as keeping an eye on our babies.



<http://www.technosphere.org.uk>

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LETTERS TO:

Matrix Letters
c/o : the editorial address
or: E-Mail us at:
colin.mitch@virgin.net

letters

Firstly a response to Andrew M. Butler's letter in M 136 regarding reviews that give away plot details

Should a film review be concerned about not giving away any plot twists? This really on what the reviewer is trying to achieve. There is more than one way to discuss a film (or anything).

A review should give the reader an indication of what the film is about, and what its qualities (or lack of them) might be. This shouldn't involve giving away too much of the plot and certainly not any major twists. It is a dangerous assumption that everyone who is interested has seen the film. I got to see Cube at the first screening it received in Hull only last week, almost six months after it was released. Pi has yet to be screened here, and I suspect its not going to be. As far as Cube is concerned, I re-read the reviews after I had seen the film and did think that Ian Simpson had given away too much of the plot. It would have been sufficient to tell us that the solution was more complex than first appeared, even if he felt that was still too simplistic and rather too obvious. A critical article about a film would find itself severely hampered if the writer had to be careful not to give anything away. The writer obviously has to consider more than the general story and the overall feel and quality, and cannot do this without sometimes spoiling the film for those who have yet to see it.

The reviews in Matrix, in general, tend to be quite short and as such have no real excuse for giving away crucial plot details.

from: Dave M. Roberts, Hull.

○

Moving on.....

As I believe many other members will feel, I cannot let Chris Terran's departure go without expressing my praise and appreciation for all the work he has done. Chris was Matrix editor from shortly after I joined the BSFA; I think I have a couple of issues before he took over. Those issues were good but, in my opinion, Chris took Matrix to a high standard which I am sure will set a stiff challenge to any future editor or editorial team.

So, thanks Chris, for a brilliant period of editorship and all the hard work and commitment you put into this voluntary job for us BSFA members.

from: Doreen Norman, Hartwell, Bucks.

Please continue to send letters to Matrix.

All correspondence will be forwarded to the new editors.

BSFA INDEX

If you have net access and have visited the BSFA website, you may have noticed a link to the BSFA Index, a nothing short of remarkable, cross-linked reference to the publications Vector, Matrix and Focus. Additionally, with references to all 93 issues of Paperback Parlour/Inferno, it is quite a document. Compiled by Mike Cross, it details contents of magazines, articles written, contributors and subject (authors, directors, books reviewed etc). There has been some interest in obtaining a printed copy of this document, however this is quite a feat, such is the extent of the index. At this stage it would be useful simply to gauge levels of interest, no promises as yet, to see if this could be feasible. It is probable that a small charge would be made for this. If you are genuinely interested in receiving a copy of the index, please contact the editors (address on page 2).

If you have not have web access, but would like an electronic copy, that is much easier to arrange. Please contact Mike Cross, 41 Redland Drive, Kirk Ella, Hull, East Yorkshire, HU10 7UX Tel. 01482 656866

In the beginning was the word, and the word was "published". Yes, in a moment of blazing glory, the name of Leonard Fell has graced and lifted the otherwise dour pages of *Matrix*.

How could it be otherwise: it is so like that total eclipse in Cornwall this year when the brilliance of the sun will be cast down by the speed of the dark thrown off by the moon getting in the way. Already police are developing contingency plans, laying in supplies, roadblocks, alerting the territorial army, as thousands, nay, millions of individuals rush to glimpse, to catch, to marvel and above all, to note that rather embarrassing typo half way down my first column.

It was either Mitch or that other chap, Cliff, who decided to stick me last in the magazine, as the sweet at a succulent feast. It is to be hoped (how could it be otherwise?) that this was the final crowning moment, the coup de grâce, the cote du rhone, the plume de ma tante of the magazine, rather than the slim wafer that causes one to explode.

Such a lot has happened in the last month that I don't know where to start. I took my crew of a robot science officer, a hologram security guard and an alien cook with a cute furry dustbin as their captain and sent them on a mission to make the universe safe for democracy and free enterprise. Somehow, even as I wrote those words, I knew it was enough. Democracy, free enterprise, and ethically produced, non-genetically modified bananas, which is rather a mouthful but at least you get plenty of potassium from them.

I decided that I needed another crew man, a pilot, and I thought that the perfect crew member would be something which could transform itself. At first I thought a werewolf, but I decided that I prefer the idea of a vampire. After all, werewolves only metamorphose at full moons and who knows when you're going to get one of those in the inky blackness of space. And it was that very inky blackness of space that gave me the clue to vampires: what better place to escape all that daylight than in inky blackness? (Memo to self: find out why stars don't count for vampires. And does it mean that they always have to keep a planet between themselves and the Sun? Imagine a colony of vampires on a planet very close to the Sun, for ever moving as the planet rotates them to inevitable doom... And also whether gravity slingshots around the Sun). So I'm envisaging a revitalisation of the vampire myths. No one's done that before.

I was reading a review in a back issue of *Victor* about some novel called *The Swallow*. It mentions that it's a backyard spaceship, which seems unlikely as they use a hollowed out comet or asteroid, and unless you happen to have the Antarctic permafrost in your backyard this doesn't seem very likely at all. So I find that I'd rather have a proper spaceship made from the things found in a backyard: a lot of wood, a rusty bicycle, the twins' pram, a rotatory washing line and a swingball. If you took all the wood and glued it together and then sharpened the end, you'd have something which would pierce the

atmosphere. What a lovely image: vampires steering their way through the inky etc. of and so on, inside a great big wooden stake. Which you have to admit is much safer for a vampire than the alternative.

My tame thirteen-year-old boy, whose garden it was I was looking through, showed me an interview with the author. Apparently she wants us to treat the spaceship as if it's a bus. 'Imagine,' said Sarah's Trevor's Jimmy disgustingly, 'you'd wait hours for a spaceship, and then three come along at once.'

This seems so right: I find I rather find this preferable. It's some kind of race memory. Of a race that does everything in threes.

'It's been done,' said Jimmy. 'The Ramans'. 'The Ramans run three buses simultaneously?' I ask, convinced that this is the way forward.

'No, spaceships. Well, everything really.' He lent me a pile of books about the Ramans, which I suppose I ought to read. I must be missing something: if the Ramans do everything in threes, why are there four books about them? Apparently they do sequels in threes. But not original books. That's a one off. So surely that's one thing they don't do in threes. Presumably there's two other things they don't do in threes.

So there's these vampires who need to collect up a load of wood for their spaceship, but there's one problem. What if one of them gets a splinter in his hand? It's pretty nasty for us, and we're not the undead.

One of the several dozen editors of *Metrics* - do they take a page each or something? - Alice, gave me a clue in her email: 'Hope you're beavering away merrily.' I remembered all those Walt Disney documentaries they'd stick on when they'd run out of Goofy cartoons, about the wonders of beaver. How they could completely alter a landscape with their activity, flooding vast tracts of land. So we need a planet of beavers to assemble the wood. Onward to Beaverworld.

Why would they do this? Clearly the vampires and beavers have interbred, interbred, and there's this colony of vicious vampire beavers. The un-undead beavers gang up together to build a spaceship to get them off the planet. And the vampires are quite happy to go along with this because, although beavers are vicious little buggers, with sharp teeth, every time they do what comes naturally to the beaver part of the vampire beaver, they get splinters in their teeth and get killed off. The tragedy of their situation is that they must exile themselves from a wooded planet, in a wooden spaceship.

They have to just make sure that old beaver wood-lust doesn't come upon them, and that they don't eat their spaceship mid-flight.

H'mm, memo to self: how do you launch a wooden spaceship without setting fire to it?

One tip that has been passed on to me is to get to know my market: fans. Apparently I can do this by visiting some dead nurse. Or by spending the Easter weekend in Liverpool. Which I find I prefer.

- Leonard Fell 6 March 1999

Now, what could you waste your time on this month? Yes the very thing...

COMPETITION 137: BUMFF
YOU have been voted by a majority of ten as the winner of the Bilateral Urda Major Fan Fund, involving a round trip convention. You spend a month in Urda Major System, including a week at the Universecon Constellation. Write a brief (100 words or so) report on any aspect of your trip and send it to John Ollis, 49, Leighton Road, Corby, Northants NN18 0SD by 26th May 1999.

The best reports will each receive copies of Colin Greenland's Tabitha Jute trilogy, published by Voyager and generously donated by HarperCollins publishers, with the usual book token also going to the winner.

ROLL THE CREDITS...

Matrix 137 May/June 1999

Interstitial Issue #2:

They're Back, They're Hungry

Without whom.....

Elizabeth Billinger
Paul Billinger
Vikki Lee
Steve Jeffery
Andy Butler
John Ashbrook
Tanya Brown
Claire Brialley
Mark Plummer
Carol Ann Kerry Green
Leonard Fell
Tony Cullen
Mike Cross
John Ollis
Maureen Kincail Speller
The Brum SF Group
The Peterborough SF Group
Alice

Thanks for everything.

Techie Bit.....

This Matrix was once again rustled up on several remarkably slow PCs, using lots of infuriating software (you can hear cursing throughout Coventry), printed on an HP Laserjet 4L, reproduced by PDC Copyright before being united with the BSFA's other fine publications and distributed by Bramley Mailing Services. We'd like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who has given us lashings of support with the production of these two issues. All errors (glaring and otherwise) and omissions are ours, naturally, so profuse apologies. Good luck and very best wishes to the new team. Colin and Mitch April 1999