

The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association

Issue 139

Sept - Oct • 1999

Matrix



- Arkwright: The Next Generation by Bryan Talbot
- New Columnist Stephen Baxter joins Matrix
- Marketing SF novels: John Jarrold writes
- Why big box office doesn't mean quality

Cover Art: Bryan Talbot

Inside

Matrix

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The bi-monthly news magazine of the
**British Science
Fiction Association**

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The BSFA was founded in 1958 and is a
non-profit making organisation, staffed
entirely by unpaid volunteers.

- No sooner has Matrix changed than it happens again. Due to unforeseen professional commitments, I'm unable to continue editing Matrix, much as I would like to, so a new Editor is needed.
- This issue is lighter on illustration and pictures than I would have liked - but that's a result of trying to pack so much in. Any errors are due to the flu, moving house and lack of time!
- Thanks to everyone who responded so positively to the last issue. - *Brian J. Robb*

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"That . . . is a man's . . . head!"

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● New editor(s) are being sought
for the Orbiter writing group with
Carol Ann Kerry-Green taking
over temporarily. Interested parties
should contact Carol at the
address indicated under Services.

Advertisement

Noesis #3

Now available from:

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Stories from Mike Copley, Jill McGroarty,

Malcolm Twigg, Ian Creasey and others.

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<http://www.ndirect.co.uk/~rwadding/Noesis/index.html>

NEWS

Coverage of all
that's happening
in the worlds of
Science Fiction

Awards take shape

Thanks to everyone who has sent nominations so far; the list is building up nicely now.

As always, though, we could do with more short story and artwork nominations.

The current list of nominations is shown below.

Best Novel

Children of God - Mary Doria Russell; The Bones of Time - Kathleen Ann Goonan; Headlong - Simon Ings; Th!GMOO - Eugene Byrne; Factoring Humanity - Robert J. Sawyer; The Astrological Diary of God - Bo Fowler; The Sky Road - Ken MacLeod; Distraction - Bruce Sterling; A Deepness in the Sky - Vernor Vinge

Best Short Fiction

The Gateway of Eternity - Brian Stableford (Interzone 139/140); Gorillagram - Tony Ballantyne (Interzone 139); Hunting the Slarque - Eric Brown (Interzone 141); Angelmakers - Paul di Filippo (Interzone 141); The Volvax Immersion - Tom Arden (Interzone 143); Malignos - Richard Calder (Interzone 144)

Best Artwork

Cover Matrix 136 - Colin Odell; The Dream Archipelago - Jim Burns (cover of The Dream Archipelago by Christopher Priest); Darwinia - Jim Burns (Cover of Darwinia by Robert Charles Wilson); The Gateway of Eternity - SMS (Cover of Interzone 140)

Nomination rules

Nominations for any of the categories can be sent at any time during the year. Please remember that it is the items with the most nominations on the closing date for submissions that will be shortlisted. So please remember

Postal costs push up BSFA rates

As a result of our increasing overheads, most notably the massive increases in postal costs on the 26th April 1999 (there was a much publicised 1p off basic 2nd class but all the bands above standard, including overseas, went up by about 10%) it is with great reluctance that we are increasing the membership subscriptions from 1st October 1999.

The new rates are:

UK waged - £21 (£20 for those paying by standing order),

UK unwaged - £14,

Europe & Rest of World by surface mail - £26

Rest of World by air mail - £32.

We have increased the rates by the smallest amount viable and the UK unwaged rate is still charged at cost.

If you pay by standing order

you will need to complete a new standing order form and send this direct to your Bank, remembering to cancel your existing one.

To help, there is a new standing order form included with this mailing, but if it is missing then please contact me and I'll send you another (address & email on page 2).

- Paul Billinger
Membership Secretary

Free Books!

● We now have a number of copies of *The Royal Changeling* by John Whitbourn (published by Earthlight last year), described by Chris Amies in a review in *Vector* 201 as "an engaging alternate history... a fierce bawdy fantasy, dark and humorous".

While stocks last we're making these available as free gifts to BSFA members. If you'd like a copy, please send an A5 SASE (50 pence postage) and two extra second class stamps to BSFA Whitbourn Offer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE. First come, first served: if we've run out, we'll use one second class stamp to return the SASE and other stamp to you.

Offer is only available to members living in the UK. Please allow 28 days for delivery. Any queries to the address on p2 or on chipmunk@tragic.demon.co.uk

- Claire Brislley & Mark Plummer,
BSFA Publicity and Promotions

if you want something to appear on the shortlist then nominate it even if it is already in the list of nominations.

The eligibility rules are as follows:

Best Novel. First published in the UK in the calendar year 1999.

Best Short Fiction. First appearance in the calendar year 1999, irrespective of country of origin (thus stories in non-UK magazines and original anthologies are eligible).

Best Artwork. First appearance in the calendar year 1999.

The closing date for nominations is 28th January 2000. You have plenty of time, but please remember to keep sending nominations throughout the year. If you are not sure whether a particular item qualifies please send it anyway. I would rather receive a nomination and have to discard it than not receive nominations!

- Chris Hill,
BSFA Awards Administrator

Matrix editor sought - again!

After just two issues, Brian J. Robb is leaving the Matrix editor post to take up a new editorial position at Titan Entertainment Group editing the Official UK Star Wars Magazine.

That means the search is on once again for an Editor for Matrix. The requirements include a thorough knowledge of SF, access to a PC or Mac computer and desktop layout skills. The BSFA committee will provide as much assistance as needed to ease the new editor into position.

Interested parties should contact new BSFA Publications Manager Vikki Lee at 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 2XA or by e-mail at

peverel@aol.com. A CV or samples of work should be sent along with application letters.

Alison Spedding
jailed for 10 years

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Alan Dean Foster
survives crash

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Earthlight signs
up top trio

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Media news

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Avon and Morrow sold in US

News Corporation, the Rupert Murdoch owned publishing empire has expanded its grip on the world of publishing with the purchase of Avon Books and William Morrow & Company from The Hearst Corporation, according to reports in *The New York Times*.

The companies will be bought within the HarperCollins stable. The transaction is estimated at less than \$180 million. Both Avon and HarperCollins in the US currently have active SF imprints, Avon Eos and HarperPrism. Implications for the UK arm of HarperCollins are unknown at present.

Bradbury decries 451 movie

Ray Bradbury is reported as being 'unhappy' over the lack of progress on Mel Gibson's long in coming film version of his novel *Fahrenheit 451*.

Speaking at the Chautauqua Theatre in Boulder, Colorado, the veteran author is reported to have felt 'completely left out' of the project since he delivered his screenplay for the film. Bradbury understands there have been a total of eight rewrites, but he has only seen one script which he claimed was very far removed from his original novel.

• The electronic frontier

Pocket Books has signed a deal with electronic publisher Peanut Press to make seven Star Trek novels available for reading on 3Com's Palm Computing platform. The books will retail for \$6.50 each in the US.

Earthlight sign up Bujold, Grimwood and McDonald

John Jarrold, Commissioning Editor of Simon and Schuster UK's SF and Fantasy imprint, Earthlight, has acquired the latest books of three of the biggest names in contemporary SF and Fantasy: Lois McMaster Bujold, Jon Courtenay Grimwood and Ian McDonald.

Bujold's latest 'Miles Vorkosigan' novel, *A Civil Campaign*, will be published by Earthlight in mid-2000 as a paperback original. This follows the imprint's publication of *Memory and Komarr*. Ms. Bujold has won more Hugos for Best SF Novel in the 1990's than any other author.

"Lois is one of the world's leading SF writers, and I'm very happy to be publishing her latest book," said Jarrold, Earthlight's Commissioning Editor. The deal was done with Leslie Gardner of the Artellus Ltd. Agency, representing Eleanor Wood in New York.

Jarrold also acquired a new

three-book series from British SF author Jon Courtenay Grimwood, whose novel *reMix*, Earthlight published in April, to be followed by *redRobe* in Spring 2000. Although the series has no title yet, Jarrold characterises it as: "The Alexandria Quartet as science fiction". Set in a fictional Middle Eastern city in an alternative twenty-first century, the series features Ashraf Bey, a young man who has several problems including a dependant aunt and cousin, a wife-to-be who hates him and the fact that, despite being newly-respectable, he is also the main suspect in a murder investigation.

"In this world," says Jarrold,

Stephen King recovers after auto accident

Following three weeks in the hospital and five rounds of surgery, best-selling author Stephen King returned to his home in Bangor, Maine on Friday, July 9th. He now faces up to nine months of physical therapy to complete his recovery.

King was seriously injured on June 19th when he was struck by a van while walking along the road near his summer house in western Maine. The author suffered numerous injuries during the accident, including a collapsed lung, a fractured pelvis and hip, and two breaks to his right leg below the knee. The accident was caused when a driver lost control of the vehicle after his dog began acting up in the front of the van. No Cujos jokes, please.

Additionally, King has asked Penguin to pull his novel *Age* (written as Richard Bachman) from its next printing, in the wake of the Columbine High School shootings.

• **Anderson goes on a Fantastic Voyage.** Kevin J. Anderson has signed a six-figure deal with Signet Books to write a novel based on the Academy Award-winning 1966 film *Fantastic Voyage*. The movie, which was novelised by Isaac Asimov, told the story of a group of scientists who were miniaturized and sent into a human body.

Anderson plans to use the same basic concept, but his book - dubbed *Microcosm* - will feature a new team of characters. Members of Team Proteus are sent to explore the seemingly lifeless body of an alien visitor. The novel will be submitted by the end of 1999, with publication due in Spring of 2000.

"the USA never entered the First World War, Soviet Russia made a separate peace with the Kaiser, and Britain was forced to sue for peace."

"Egypt was returned to the Ottoman Empire by its victorious ally and now, in the middle of the twenty-first century, the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires remain the dominant forces in European history. Jon has many plans for this series, but one of the earliest was that the city should be as strong a character as any human player. I'm looking forward to discussing it further with him, and seeing the first book."

The first book in the new series will be published in 2001. Jarrold concluded the Grimwood deal with Maggie Noach.

Finally, Jarrold will publish a new novel, *Ares Express*, from Ian McDonald, who is amongst the UK's most highly praised SF writers of the 90s in hardback, as well as republishing McDonald's best-known novel, *Desolation Road*.

"Ian is a true original," said Jarrold of this third deal. "Having read all of his books as they appeared, I'm really delighted to be publishing him. *Ares Express* takes Ian back to the Mars of *Desolation Road* with an entirely new set of characters and a train the size of a city block."

"This also gives us the chance to republish *Desolation Road*, which received immense critical acclaim on its original release, in paperback."

Both books will be published late in 2000. The McDonald deal was concluded with John Parker of MBA Literary Agents.

"In recent months, I've been lucky enough to take on Michael Moorcock, Robert Holdstock, Richard Calder and now Ian - it is a wonderfully strong hand of British writers to add to those we already publish," said a delighted John Jarrold.

Alan Dean Foster survives crash

Author Alan Dean Foster, aged 53, escaped with his life following a motorcycle accident. According to the author's own report: "On July 3rd my motorcycle and I engaged in a serious argument with a large pile of granite boulders... and lost."

Other than suffering a three-quarters full body sprain, a couple of bruised ribs and "the loss of enough skin to reupholster a healthy two-year old, everything but my ego is fine." Foster's bike was "in intensive care. The boulders got off with a few scratches and some bloodstains." Foster closed his comments on his near-death experience with the observation: "Time really does slow down when you're airborne."

Foster made his first sale to August Derleth at *Arkham Collector Magazine* in 1968 and

followed further short fiction sales with his 1972 debut novel *The Tar-Aiyem Krang* (Ballantine). He's perhaps best known for his Humanx Commonwealth series and for writing the novelisation of *Star Wars* (credited to George Lucas) as well as the stand-alone *Star Wars* tale *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, the grandfather to the current glut of Wookiee books. His other film novelisation have included *Dark Star* and several *Alien(s)* tie-ins as well as the 1970's *Star Trek* Logs series.

1935 tale proves to be "Ultimate" for Jan DeBont

Following release of *The Haunting*, director Jan De Bont is in talks to helm the science-fiction thriller *The Adaptive Ultimate*, a Fox project based on Stanley G. Weinbaum's 1935 short story.

The film tells of a scientist who uses a dying homeless woman to test a process that grants powers of unlimited adaptability. Almost overnight, she becomes seductive, powerful and dangerous to society.

The scientist is torn between the love he feels for the woman and his responsibility to civiliza-

tion at large. Although Nicole Kidman's name had been associated with the project, it's unlikely that Fox would hold off for her availability. Weinbaum, who is best known to fans for his popular short story *A Martian Odyssey*, originally published *Adaptive* under the pen name John Jessel.

Odyssey mag folds

British SF magazine *Odyssey*, edited by Liz Holliday, has folded after seven issues, according to the magazine's own web-site.

The site recently announced: "We're sorry to report that *Odyssey* is no more, due to a variety of insuperable factors."

Holliday's SF and fantasy

stories have appeared in anthologies and magazines. In 1994 she was nominated for both the EasterCon Award and the Crime Writers Association Short Story Dagger. A graduate of the Clarion Science Fiction Writers' Workshop, she has also written several TV novelisations and is fiction editor of *Valkyrie*.

Alison Spedding jailed in Bolivia, faces ten years

Writer Alison Spedding, who was arrested last year in Bolivia on drug charges [see Matrix 133], has been found guilty and sentenced to a ten-year term, according to the web site of HarperCollins, her current publisher.

Spedding was employed as a lecturer at the University of San Andres in La Paz in March 1998 when anti-narcotics police found 2 kg of marijuana in her flat. She denied being a drug dealer.

Her novels include the *Walk in the Dark* trilogy: *The Road and the Hills*, *A Cloud Over Water*, and *The Streets of the City*, all currently in print from HarperCollins Voyager imprint.

Science Fiction comes under the academic spotlight

A unique, new degree course which has just been launched by the University of Glamorgan sets out to explore the link between science fiction and science fact.

The UK's first BSc in Science and Science Fiction gets underway at the University in September 1999.

The course aims to identify the relationship between science and science fiction in a revolutionary new way while encouraging people to consider careers in science and technology.

Building on the successful *Life in the Universe* course which ran last year and explored the possibility of extra-terrestrial life, the BSc in Science and Science Fiction has been specially designed to achieve a balance between the study of science in its accepted format and the phenomenon of science fiction.

Course leader and principal lecturer Mark Brake explained the rationale behind the launch of the Science and Science Fiction degree.

"Society badly needs more people who are science educators, with the ability to inspire and encourage young people to develop an interest in science and technology."

"We firmly believe that, by harnessing the popularity of science fiction and allaying it with the serious study of science, we have developed a degree course which will produce graduates able to convey complex information in an easily digestible format and who will have a range of skills," Dr Brake said.

The degree course will combine the expertise of academics in the Schools of Applied Sciences, Computing, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Students will be able to pursue particular specialisms within the degree but will need to sustain their study of science disciplines alongside their science-fiction related modules.

"The link between science fiction and science fact is much more tangible, but often ignored as a way of encouraging people to explore the fascinating developments in human scientific knowledge. The BSc in Science and Science Fiction presents us with a unique opportunity to do this," Dr Brake added.

Zebrowski, Chiang scoop Campbell and Sturgeon awards

Anderson, Sterling, Kandel and Ian McLeod are the runner-ups

Brute Orbits by George Zebrowski has won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for the Best Science Fiction Novel of 1998, while *Story of Your Life* by Ted Chiang scooped the Sturgeon Memorial Award for the best SF short story of 1998.

Runner-Up for the Campbell Award was Poul Anderson's *Starfarers*, while third place went to Bruce Sterling's *Distraction*. Runner-Up for the Sturgeon Award was *Wading River Dogs and More* by Michael Kandel, while in third place was Ian R. McLeod's *The Summer Isles*.

Four new members of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame were inducted: Jules Verne and A. Merritt posthumously, and Robert Silverberg and Ray Bradbury. The winners were announced by awards chairman James Gunn and presented at a dinner at the University of Kansas on Friday, July 9th. The awards are sponsored by the Center for the Study of Science Fiction at the University of Kansas.

The X-Files tops TV Emmy nominations

The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences has announced nominations for the 51st Annual Primetime Emmy Awards, and once again *The X-Files* heads the list of SF TV shows.

Chris Carter's series earned eight nominations this year, lead by Gillian Anderson for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series and Veronica Cartwright for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Drama Series.

NBC's SF comedy *3rd Rock from the Sun* scored seven nominations, starting with Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series, Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series, Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series for William Shatner's appearance as The Big Giant Head, and two nominations for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Comedy Series. NBC also saw its miniseries *Alice in Wonderland* earn six nods in technical categories such as Outstanding Art Direction for a Miniseries or Movie and Outstanding Main Title Design.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine garnered four nominations this year, including Outstanding Art Direction for a Series, Outstanding Hairstyling for a Series, Outstanding Makeup for a Series, and Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Series. *Star Trek: Voyager* was honored with three nominations, all in the Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Series category.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer and the miniseries *Stephen King's Storm* gained two nominations, while *Futurama*, *First Wave*, *Fantasy Island*, *The Pretender*, *The Profiler*, *Total Recall 2070*, *Invasion America*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Tom Clancy's Netforce*, *Todd McFarlane's Spawn* and *Touched by an Angel* each picked up a single nomination.

The Emmy Awards winners will be announced during a ceremony broadcast by Fox on Sunday, Sept. 12th. For more information on the Emmys and a complete list of nominees, visit <http://www.emmys.org>.

Willis and Sterling take Locus awards

Reader's Poll pick best of year

Connie Willis, Bruce Sterling, Grania Davis, Gardner Dozois, and Tor publisher Tom Doherty were the winners of the 1999 Locus Awards, presented at a banquet on July 3rd, at Westercon in Spokane, Washington. Winners received plaques and publishers of the winning works received certificates. The Locus Awards are given to the winners of the annual Locus Poll.

Best Science Fiction Novel: *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, Connie Willis (Bantam Spectra)

Best Fantasy Novel: *A Clash of Kings*, George R.R. Martin (Voyager; Bantam Spectra)

Best Horror Novel: *Bag of Bones*, Stephen King (Hodder & Stoughton; Scribner)

Best First Novel: *Brown Girl in the Ring*, Nalo Hopkinson (Warner Aspect)

Best Novella: *Oceanic*, Greg Egan (Asimov's Aug 1998)

Best Novelette [tie]: *The Planck Drive*, Greg Egan (Asimov's Feb 1998) and *Taklamakan*, Bruce Sterling (Asimov's Oct/Nov 1998)

Best Short Story: *Maneki Neko*, Bruce Sterling (F&SF May 1998)

Best Non-fiction: *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered the World*, Thomas M. Disch (Free Press)

Best Art Book: *Spectrum 5: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art*, Arnie & Cathy Fenner, eds. (Underwood)

Best Collection: *The Avram Davidson Treasury*, Avram Davidson; Robert Silverberg & Grania Davis, eds. (Tor)

Best Anthology: *Legends*, Robert Silverberg, ed. (Tor)

Best Artist: Michael Whelan

Best Editor: Gardner Dozois

Best Magazine: Asimov's

Best Book Publisher: Tor

Best '90s Author: Connie Willis

OBITUARIES

DeForest Kelley, 1920-1999

Just after the previous issue of Matrix went to press, the death of *Star Trek* actor DeForest Kelley, who played Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy on the original series from 1966-1969, was announced. Kelley died on 11th June in Los Angeles after an extended illness. He was 79 years old.

Kelley was not in either of the two pilot episodes for *Star Trek* but won the role of the irascible doctor of the *Starship Enterprise* with the first production episode, *The Corbomite Maneuver*. After the series' infamous cancellation by NBC, Kelley reprised his role in the animated *Star Trek* series (1973-1974) and then in six *Star Trek* feature films from 1979 to 1991. He is the first regular cast member of the original series to die, and seems to have been the only one not to have written a memoir of his time on the show. He is survived by his wife of nearly 55 years, Carolyn.

● Chris Boyce, author of the novels *Catchworld* and *Brainfix* and long-time SF fan collapsed and died at work on 30th June. He was 55.

● Bookseller John Roles died on 24th June. A man was arrested on suspicion of murder after Mr Roles was found dead in his burnt out flat. Ramsey Campbell says, "John was a science fiction fan of long standing and was one of the old members of the Liverpool Science Fiction Society back in the 1950s and 60s."

BOOKS

Compiled by Janet Barron

Forthcoming Books and Publishing Schedules

Key to book listings:

hp = hardback
tp = trade pb
pb = paperback
NOIP = Now out in paperback
= Reissue
= nonfiction
All others, first UK edition.
Comments in quotes are from publishers PR.

● **Ed. Mike Ashley**
The Mammoth Book of Seriously Comic Fantasy
(Robinson Oct pb £6.99 512pp)

● **J G Ballard** **The Drowned World** (Millennium Sept pb £6.99)

● **Terry Brooks** **Angel Fire East** (Orbit Oct hb £16.99 320pp)

The final volume in the trilogy that began with *Running the Demon*.

● **Brendan DuBois**
Resurrection Day (Little, Brown Aug pb £10.00 416pp)

'What if the Cuban Missile Crisis had become a full blown war? A chilling tale of intrigue and betrayal [] and one of the most inventive novels of alternative history since Robert Harris's *Fatherland*.'

● **Arthur C Clarke**
Greetings, Carbon-based bipeds!

A Vision of the Century (Voyager Sept hb £19.99 608pp)
Collected essays each with an introduction by Clarke.

● **Arthur C Clarke**
Rendezvous with Rama (Millennium Oct pb £6.99)

● **Arthur C Clarke**
Rama II (Millennium Oct pb £6.99)

● **Philip K Dick**
A Scanner Darkly (Millennium Oct pb £6.99)

● **Dianne Hales**
Just Like a Woman
How gender science is redefining what makes us female.
(Virago Sept hb £16.99 416pp)

● **NOIP Tom Holland**
The Sleeper in the Sands
(Little, Brown Sept pb £6.99 448pp)

'Egypt 1922. Howard Carter opens a mysterious tomb and its deadly secret.' Somewhere between a historical novel and a Gothic thriller.

● **Tom Holt**
Some talk of Alexander (Little, Brown Aug hb £16.99 320 pages)
'A compelling new historical novel from the acclaimed comic writer.'

● **NOIP Guy Gavriel Kay**
Sailing to Sarantium (Earthlight Sept pb £5.99 512pp)
Highly recommended.

● **NOIP Stephen King**
The Green Mile (Orion Oct pb £6.99)

● **John Kessel**
Corrupting Dr Nice (Millennium Sept pb £6.99)

● **Josh Kirby**
A Cosmic Cornucopia

(Paper Tiger illus pb £14.99)
'A definitive selection of the artist's work containing his signature illustrations for Terry Pratchett's novels and a host of others.'

● **Ed. Stephen Jones**
The Mammoth book of Best New Horror 10 (Robinson Oct pb £6.99 512pp)

● **NOIP Eds. S Jones & D Sutton**
Dark Terrors 4 (Millennium Oct pb £6.99)

● **Ed. Dick Jude**

Fantasy Art of the New Millennium (Voyager Sept illus hb £19.99 144pp)

Ten featured artists including Jim Burns and Steve Stone.

● **Jeff Long**
The Descent (Victor Gollancz Sept tp £9.99 320pp)

Horror/sf. 'A new world beneath our feet, a descent into the darkest parts of our hearts, an epic novel.'

● **George RR Martin**
Dying of the Light (Millennium Oct pb £6.99)

● **Paul J McAuley**
Shrine of Stars: The Third Book of Confluence

(Victor Gollancz Sept hb/tp £16.99/£11.99 320pp)

NOIP Paul J McAuley
Ancients of Days (Millennium Sept pb £6.99)

● **Paul J McAuley**
Fairland (Millennium Sept pb £6.99)

● **Paul J McAuley**
Pasquale's Angel (Millennium Sept pb £6.99)

● **Paul J McAuley**
Eternal Light (Millennium Sept pb £6.99)

● **Stan Nicholls**
Legion of Thunder (Victor Gollancz Oct tp £9.99 304pp)

● **NOIP Jeff Noon**
Pixel Juice

(Corgi Oct pb £5.99)

Short story collection fizzing with energy. Highly recommended

● **NOIP Richard Pinto**
The Chosen (Bantam Oct pb £5.99)

First volume of *The Stone Dance* of the Chameleon by new fantasy writer.

● **Terry Pratchett**
City Watch Trilogy (Victor Gollancz Oct hb £16.99 758pp)

Bumper volume comprising *Guards, Men At Arms, and Feet of Clay*.

● **Jan Siegal**
Prospero's Children (Voyager Oct hb £17.99 384pp)

'Destined to become a modern fantasy classic.'

● **McKercher Zucher Reichert**
and Jennifer Wingert
Spirit Fire

(Victor Gollancz Sept hb/tp £16.99/£11.99 368pp)

A Renshai novel



● **NOIP R A Salvatore**
The Demon Awakens (Millennium Sept pb £5.99)

● **## Tony Thorne**
Children of the Night: Of vampires and vampirism (Victor Gollancz Oct hb £18.99 224pp)

'A comprehensive account of the meaning and resonance of the vampire myth through the ages.'

● **Jack Vance**
Emphyrio (Millennium Oct pb £6.99)

'Far in the future the craftsmen of the planet Halma create goods which, unknown to them, are the wonder of the galaxy. Their society is harshly regulated - any use of machinery is punishable by death - and its religion is unforgiving. When Amiante Tarvok is executed for processing old documents with a camera, his son Ghyll rebels and decides to bring down the system. First, he must interpret the ancient story of the legendary hero Emphyrio...'

● **Kim Wilkins**
Grimoir (Victor Gollancz Sept pb £6.99 800pp)

● **## Michael White**
Superscience

(Earthlight Oct pb £6.99 320pp)

'From alien abduction to zombies, taking in earth magic, alchemy and genetic mutation on the way. Sceptics of the paranormal will devour this book.'

● **Boris Valjejo**
Dreams

(Paper Tiger Oct illus pb £20.00)

'Over 120 full colour paintings never printed before.'

● **Boris and Doris Valjejo**
Ladies

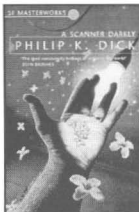
(Paper Tiger Oct illus pb £4.99)

Ten mythical tales retold by Doris Valjejo and illustrated by artist husband.

● **Tad Williams**
Otherland Vol 3: Mountain of Black Glass

(Orbit Sept hb £17.99 656pp)

Third epic virtual reality novel.



Diary of a Natural Born Fan

Feature by Yvonne Rowse

I'd better start by admitting I've only been a "fannish" fan for a couple of years and I still really haven't completely got the hang of what it's all about. Before then I read the books and the BSFA publications but I'd never met anyone else who did.

Of course, you can have a passion for SF without ever feeling the need to base your social life around it, but I was vaguely aware that you could.

Occasional books would mention conventions in passing, although not many went as far as Larry Niven, Stephen Barnes and Michael Flynn did in *Falling Angel* in basing a whole novel round fandom.

I read Matrix for years, scanning the convention listings with only mild curiosity before, in a moment of madness, sending off a cheque for *Intervention* (Eastercon '97). To say I fell into fandom and never looked back would be a lie. I struggled at *Intervention*, being naturally shy. Huge numbers of people all seemed to know each other.

I was desperately intimidated, but I managed to talk to a few

people. Most of the people I talked to were kind and I found a couple that I liked so much that I look forward to seeing them every year now.

I could see that I could enjoy a convention and I determined to go to *Intuition*, the '98 Eastercon. First, though, I thought I should try to meet some fans in a less intimidating setting. I looked through Matrix again and found the contact details for the Birmingham SF Group. They gave me a wonderful welcome and from then on I attended monthly meetings of the Brum Group, getting more drawn in until I took on being the newsletter editor and this year became the Chair. At the same time I went to Novacon and Eastercon, gradually making friends with more people.

I wrote a couple of Eastercon

reviews for Matrix and was asked to review a few fanzines. Aha, fanzines. I'd heard about those too. I had the impression that fanzines were real inner circle fannishness. I wrote my reviews and in the back of my mind, a small voice whispered, "I could do that." I could. I did. I finished my first fanzine, *Barmaid* 1, sometime in July last year (although it says June 98 on the cover - no good at deadlines) and sent copies out to the people whose fanzines I'd reviewed, a few people from the Brum Group and a few more whose names and addresses I found in letters columns.

I didn't have to wait very long - people wrote to me commenting on my 'zine. Since taking to fanzine fandom my mail has increased phenomenally. No more the two bills and an ad for a dating agency. Now I receive fanzines and letters of comment (LoCs) from all over the place. When the letters start to dry up (as they have at the moment) I know it's time to publish another issue.

What makes fanzine fandom such a wonderful thing for me is that I can get to know people on paper before meeting them at conventions and we've got a ready made subject for conversation. It's not necessary to dive

bomb straight in with a fanzine. Many people start by receiving fanzines and sending letters of comments back. You can dip your toe in with a LoC. Most fanzine editors are keen to receive comments on their zines. Some of us find editing the letter column to be the best part of putting our zines together and some letter writers become very popular and widely read because they contribute to a lot of zines.

Fanzine fandom in Britain is quite a small world. There aren't huge numbers of zines produced but this makes it easier to slip into it. The main thing I notice is how welcoming everyone has been, and how generous. And knowing people through fanzines meant that I had my best convention ever at Eastercon this year because for the first time I knew enough people to not just see a mass of terrifying strangers.

In this column I intend to cover such fannish stuff as conventions, local meetings and fanzines. Fandom is different for each person involved so if anyone wants to put me right on my views or wants to contribute anything to this column please contact me. If anyone wants to write in reviews of their meetings or give me information, please get in touch. Letters of comment are most welcome.

Jo's Time Wasters!

Results of
Competition 138
Solution:

Competition 139
Name-dropping

Numbers/Authors

A) 334/Disch, 1984/Orwell, 3/Chapman, 6/McIntosh, 8/Clifton.

B) 2001/2010/2061/Clarke, 7/Graves, 13/Ballard, 80/Aldiss, 2100/Heinlein.

C) 9 billion/Clarke, 1 billion/Aldiss, 451/Bradbury, 100/Bester, 70/Tall. Answer: 10000/Tiptree Jr, 20000/Verne

Do you remember characters' names? These are reasonably well-known. Title and author, please, usual book-token to the winner.

- 1) Isherwood Williams.
- 2) Richard Bransome.
- 3) Arthur Dent.
- 4) Bert Smallways.
- 5) Spice.
- 6) The Leewit.
- 7) Lowell Stone.
- 8) Myron Bronowski.
- 9) Dave Conway.
- 10) Ghan-buri-Ghan.
- 11) John Amalfi.
- 12) Rydra Wong.

There were several attempts, but only one correct: the ubiquitous Roger Robinson.

• Solutions to John Ollis, 49 Leighton Road, Corby, Northants NN18 0SD.

First contact to new Millennium

Speaking at the Arthur C. Clarke Award earlier this year, Paul Kincaid announced new links between the Science Museum and the Award.

The Museum is to join the BSFA and the Science Fiction Foundation in supporting and judging the Award. Their facilities for promoting and publicising the award will be greatly appreciated.

The Museum, which already has experience of the organisation of the Rhone Poulenc Prize for science books, has proved a popular site for the Clarke Award ceremony since 1994. This was

the year in which the Museum also hosted a Clarke exhibition, organised with energy by Doug Millard who has been extremely helpful in assisting in recent years, making it possible to use the lecture theatre as a repeat venue for the ceremony.

The judging panel for the next year's Award, drawn from the BSFA and the SFF, will also include Doug to represent the Museum. Paul expressed delight and satisfaction that his first contact with the museum should now be even more closely connected with taking the Award into the next millennium. - Janet Barron.

COLUMNS

Professionals and fans write on the varied worlds of science fiction

The day I met the Lunar Duke

Acclaimed British Science Fiction author and BSFA Vice President STEPHEN BAXTER begins a new regular column for Matrix. Much of his recent work has revolved around the space programme and exploration of the Solar System - actual, alternative and imaginary. Here he recounts his meeting with a real space pioneer.

Back in July I got to meet a Moonwalker. I was commissioned by the New Scientist magazine to do a short piece on the astronauts who walked on the Moon. This was to be part of their feature on the 30th anniversary of Apollo 11's first landing on the Moon, in July 1969.

I seek out bits of journalism like this to raise my profile outside the usual SF audience. This kind of outreach has to be good for me, and good for the genre in general. It's also all part of my ongoing research programme. Much of my research is actually serendipitous; such assignments give me the impetus to dig around in different corners of the culture, which turns up lots of unexpected gems.

And the real payoff, of course, is not the tiny cheque that comes through months later, but in the concluding plug: "Stephen Baxter's next novel is..."

Anyway, to support my astronauts piece the magazine put me in touch with Charlie Duke - the tenth Moonwalker, who flew to the Moon on Apollo 16.

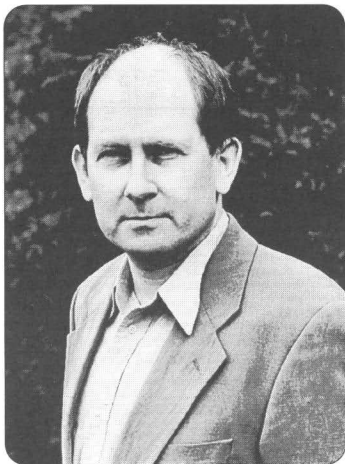
Charlie was on his way to London to promote Omega watches ("the only watch worn on the Moon!") and I managed to interview him briefly by email, heard him speak at a dinner sponsored by Omega, and was privileged to have lunch with him.

Charlie Duke is smaller than I expected, a trim, gently-spoken 63-year-old, these days much consumed by his Christian ministry. His after-dinner talk was very enjoyable, even if he had to plug the damn watches ("the stopwatch was one of the most useful of the Omega Speedmaster's features...").

And the lunch was wonderful. Without wishing to sound gushy, to get to meet a man who walked on the Moon is just a fantastic perk of the job.

With my novelist's instincts, I was interested most in the human experience of being on our sister planet: "My first step on the Moon felt very much like walking in loose sand. It was very bright. As you looked away from the sun the Moon colour was light grey, and looking into the sun it appeared dark grey. It was very dark in the shadows. The Moon

"To get to meet a man who walked on the Moon is just a fantastic perk of the job. With my novelist's instincts, I was interested most in the human experience."



dust had a slight smell of gun powder which I found very strange. The one thing that brings back all the memories of my walk on the Moon is to see a half Moon in the sky. This was the phase of the Moon when we landed and I can see myself landing in the early

morning of the lunar day..."

By a sad coincidence, then came the news that Pete Conrad - the third Moonwalker - had been killed in a motorcycle crash.

At time of writing, only nine of the twelve Moonwalkers survive. Will anybody return to the Moon before the last of the twelve are gone? I once wrote a rather bleak short story for *Interzone* called *In the MSOB*, showing the last of the Moonwalkers all alone, abandoned in a dreadful old people's home, anticipating only euthanasia.

Charlie Duke remains optimistic. "I do believe we will return to the Moon in the next century. I am 63 years old and the youngest of the Moonwalkers so we cannot delay very much if any of us want to be around. I hope we are. I'd love to go again. It was a great adventure!"

I hope he's still around too.

Bryan Talbot Strikes Back!

British comics creator **Bryan Talbot** writes about his return to chronicle the legacy of Luther Arkwright

Hearth of Empire is now completely pencilled and runs to 284 pages. Dark Horse are currently issuing the novel as a series of nine monthly comicbooks before ultimately collecting the story into one volume.

Because the book is paced and structured as a novel and not as an episodic monthly book, each chapter is of a different length. These vary between 25 and 41 pages.

I've inked the first six chapters and most of #7, the fourth of which is now being

coloured by computer wizard Angus McKie.

I like to think of **Heart of Empire** (illustrated on the opposite page) as a story in its own

right, rather than a sequel. It's very different in nature to the first story, **The Adventures of Luther Arkwright** (panels reproduced below), and is designed to stand on its own, with no need to read the original.

For one thing, it is not as self-consciously experimental as the first and, unlike that one, has a linear storyline. It is much more accessible but, at the same time, is not "dumbed down". In a way, it's much more sophisticated.

I have tried to write an intelligent adventure story for adults. You could call it a science-fiction story of parallel worlds but really it's multi-genre and contains



elements of high fantasy, historical, detective, erotic, occult and superhero genres; a right genre-bender. There's also much more humour than in the first book, much of it dark though some ribald.

"Queen Anne, Empress of the World, is a walking nightmare. Arkwright himself has been dead these twenty three years but is still present in the form of statues, paintings and legend... And, in seven days, the world will end. Is that enough to be going on with?" - Bryan Talbot on Heart of Empire





Spot the Face Quiz

Can you name all 11 SF authors which Bryan Talbot has included in this scene from *Heart of Empire*? Send your suggestions (from l-r) to the Editorial address on P2. There's no prize, just a name check and that smug feeling of knowing you're smarter than everyone else...

Another difference is the protagonist; *Heart of Empire* is set twenty three years later and centres on Arkwright's daughter, Victoria (pictured on the cover of *Matrix*).

Raised as a princess, heir to a rapacious British Empire that dominates the world, she will be, to most comic readers, a problematic heroine. As opposed to the usual hourglass-shaped comic book heroine, she's nearly seven foot high, sickly and anorexic. Constantly plagued by migraine headaches and vomiting, she's consequently in a perpetually foul mood. And, oh yes, by dint of her privileged upbringing, she has racist tendencies.

The dying Pope, guided by a vision from God, sends his top assassin to the Imperial Palace in London with a dire mission.

Queen Anne, Empress of the World, is a walking nightmare.

Arkwright himself has been dead these twenty three years but is still present in the form of statues, paintings and legend...

And, in seven days, the world will end.

Is that enough to be going on with?

Although the story is complete in itself, there's much that aficionados of *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* will enjoy, such as recurring themes and

characters, including everybody's favourite grotesque Harry Fairfax, now a grizzled old fart who's totally out of control.

In fact, one character making a comeback from the first book is causing me a bit of worry. I'd already written the script and was well into the pencils when Princess Diana met her untimely end. In this story, my ("parallel")

Diana is a straitjacketed daemonic in the hellish mental asylum of Bedlam. I had to decide what to do and decided to stand by the story.

Speaking of real people in this fiction; there's a tavern scene that features about a dozen SF writers as background extras, most of whom specifically posed for the sequence, including Brian

"Arkwright's daughter, has been raised as a princess, heir to an Empire that dominates the world, she will be, to most comic readers, a problematic heroine. She's nearly seven foot high, sickly and anorexic."

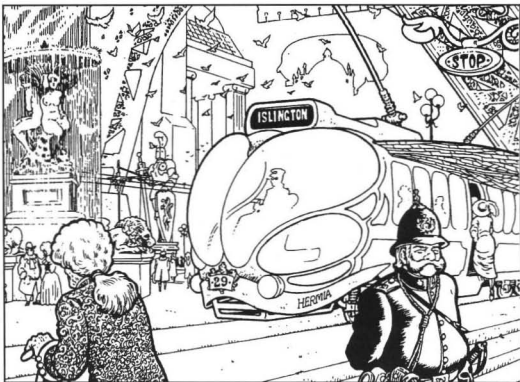
- Bryan Talbot
on *Heart of Empire*

Aldiss, Iain Banks, Octavia Butler, Gwyneth Jones, Ramsey Campbell, Colin Greenland, Molly Brown and Michael Moorcock (that's 8 of 11).

Kenny Baker (*Star Wars*' R2 D2) also posed for Sir Kenneth, one of the Queen's few court confidants though, unlike *The Tale of One Bad Rat*, which used real people as models for main characters, the vast majority of the cast are inventions.

How can I sum up the story without giving away any of the plot? Suffice to say that mystery and intrigue lead into to violent action that builds to an edge-of-the-seat climax. Well, I think it does, anyway.

Fan web site:
<http://www.bryan-talbot.com>

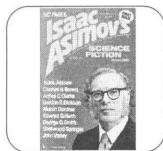


COLUMNS

Professionals and fans write on the varied worlds of science fiction

Asimov's time trip

Magazine fan **GLEND A PRINGLE** shares her obsession with pulp fiction.



Noesis, now on issue 3, is a fairly recent arrival produced by editors Lesley Milner and Robin Wadding. Although it's in its infancy, it has some good stories and nice artwork in its 40 pages.

Contributors to the latest issue include Peter Ruston, Ian Creasey, Jill McGroarty, Malcolm Twigg, Martyn Prince, Mike Cobley and Holly Day with subject matter ranging from alien contact to technology gone awry to a chilling 'last man on earth' story.

Like *Analog*, the magazine is a mixture of science fiction and fact, but that's where the similarity ends because the *Noesis* team takes a much more casual approach. Their book reviews are light and chatty, almost like discussing recent reading matter with your mates. *Noesis* is definitely showing promise. Keep up the good work!

I recently finished reading the first ever issue of *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* published in Spring 1977. Obtained in pristine condition during a recent foray to Hay-on-Wye, the cover was graced by Isaac himself - complete with trendy seventies mutton chops and kipper tie. It was definitely a bumper opening issue with 10 stories and a novella. Contributors included John Varley, Arthur C. Clarke, Fred Saberhagen, William Jon Watkins, and Asimov himself.

Perhaps you're wondering why in the world I'm telling you about an issue of a magazine that is 22 years old. Even if you aren't in the serious collector category, old SF magazines can still be fairly cheaply obtained and are a delight to read. That issue of *Asimov's* cost me the princely sum of £1.50, while some older issues of *Astounding*, *Amazing*, *Galaxy*, and *F&SF* dating back to the forties and fifties that I have got my hands on have been in the £2.50-£4 range.

Although perhaps not always in the collectable category as some of these are British reprints of American magazines, they nonetheless provide some good old classic SF, whether it be of the Buck Rogers type, enduring classics by our favourite authors, or just plain weird stuff. If nothing else, the old adverts they contain will have you in stitches. Enjoy!

● Subscriptions to *Noesis* are £2.75 per quarterly issue or £10.50 annually and are available from 61 Pengarth Rise, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 2RR. The website can be found at <http://www.ndirect.co.uk/~rwadding/Noesis/index.html>.

● Also recommended are *Crimewave* and *The Third Alternative*, both available from TTA Press, 5 Martins Lane, Witcham, Ely, Cambs, CB6 2LB and you can check out their website Shadowlink at <http://purl.oclc.org/net/taonline/index.html>

● Magazines for review, including small press and fanzines, should be sent to Glenda Pringle, 22 Mead Way, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 2BJ. I can also be reached via email at: chris@kidlington66.freemove.co.uk.

Marketing the genre

Earthlight editor **JOHN JARROLD** throws some light on SF publishing.



Marketing is one of the most important areas of publishing, after actually deciding which authors one wants to publish. You might think its main task is to tell people like you and me that a book is around - but no.

First and foremost, marketing tells the book trade - W.H. Smiths, Waterstones, Ottakar's, Books Etc and the rest - that the publisher is taking a book or author seriously. Seriously enough that any given bookshop should stock that book. If there aren't enough copies of a book out there, word-of-mouth can't start.

Word-of-mouth is the single most significant way a book by a newer author sells. I think back to Robert Jordan's *The Eye of the World*, Maggie Furey's *Aurion* or Ken MacLeod's *The Star Fraction*, all of which I was lucky enough to publish. In each case, the publisher spent a good amount of money on and about the first publication date, which ensured that there were a decent number of copies around.

This isn't simply a matter of putting an ad in *SFX* or *Starburst*: sometimes it is a decision to produce book proofs, sometimes to do a concerted ad campaign in the national press, sometimes to paint yourself Tango orange and walk up and down the street (actually, I made that last one up).

There need to be original ideas for different books; it really is too easy to plough the same furrow with every SF/Fantasy title because "Oh well, it's only genre stuff".

Crap.

Iain Banks is not Terry Brooks is not Robert Rankin. They all need specific and thoughtful marketing. Luckily, the "only genre" thinking is gradually heading to the waste bin, together with the purveyors of the idea (mostly people who talk about "sci-fi"). Yuk.)

From my own point of view, a marketing spend written into the author's contract also means that the entire company knows we are taking that author seriously. It's too easy to publish an author "for turnover purposes", simply to fill a bit of this year's budget.

This is the same sort of thinking that saw 60,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers die on the first day of the Somme. Authors as Poor Bloody Infantry. That's publishing as Accountancy.

One of my purposes in setting up Earthlight as an imprint of twenty-five or so books a year was to publish authors, not to fill monthly slots. It's always a slow job to make the general book trade aware of a new venture, but we aren't doing badly, and sales improve month on month.

Next time, I'll talk about cover artwork and design.

● This month's *Earthlight* releases include *Downs-Lord Dawn* by John Whitbourn (£5.99) and *Sailing to Sarantium* by Guy Gavriel Kay (£5.99) and non-fiction *Saucer Wisdom* by Rudy Rucker (£9.99). See the *Books* section, beginning on page 7.

REVIEWS

Time waits for no man, even Baxter

Time: Manifold 1

Stephen Baxter

Voyager Hardback, £17.99, 456pp

Published 2nd August 1999

Reviewed by **Brian J. Robb**

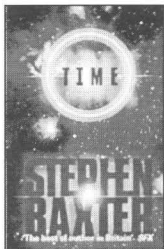
Stephen Baxter has been rightly acclaimed as one of the most important British SF authors of recent years.

His early output, notably the Xeelee sequence, alone qualifies him for that accolade, but his recent work has left something to desire. Whether it's the one or two books a year schedule, complacency or self-indulgence, his recent books - primarily *Moonseed* and *Mammoth* - have failed to live up to his early potential.

Thankfully that all changes with *Time: Manifold 1*. This is a return to form, drawing on the best aspects of works like *Voyage* and *Titan* to produce a blockbuster novel which is not content to restrict it's ambition to just one universe.

Baxter has never been a literary stylish, and in some ways his straight-forward prose suits this kind of hard science based speculation.

Reid Malenfant is a NASA reject with a large enough fortune to fund his own space program. His ambitions become more timely when futurist Cornelius Taine confirms that mankind faces sure extinction within 200 years. A Long for the ride into the



"The squid-pilots-rocket sounds like a daft idea, but in the context of the novel it really works. Time - and some of Baxter's other work - also owes a huge debt to one Arthur C. Clarke"

future, via an alien portal located on an out-of-the-way asteroid, is Malenfant's ex-wife Emma Stoney.

The book really picks up when the team investigate the artifact, with the first life form Earth to land on the asteroid being enhanced squids. In fact, the squid-pilots-rocket sounds like a daft idea, but in the context of the novel it really works (much to my own surprise).

Time - and some of Baxter's other work - owes a huge debt to one Arthur C. Clarke (no wonder they are collaborating).

It comes down to a matter of opinion whether an alien artifact which 'uplifts' mankind or a ordinary hotel room at the end of a space-time tunnel in which our hero spaceman unexpectedly arrives towards the climax is homage or rip off.

Although the denouement is predictable from halfway, the ride is thoroughly enjoyable. If Baxter is looking for a new direction, combining his space program speculations with the hard SF in *Time* is a way to go. This is his best book since the simple, but gripping, *Timelike Infinity*. It's only a shame *Time* takes 456 pages to do what *Timelike Infinity* did in 200-odd...

The Matrix view of science fiction books, films, TV and multimedia

Forthcoming US titles

September 1999 Books

Bear, Greg, *Darwin's Radio*, (Ballantine Del Rey, 1st US, hc)
Bujold, Lois McMaster, *A Civil Campaign*, (Baen, hc)
Card, Orson Scott, *Ender's Shadow*, (Tor, hc)
Carroll, Jonathan, *The Marriage of Sticks*, (Tor, 1st US, h, hc)
Clement, Hal, *Half Life*, (Tor, hc)
Daniel, Tony, *The Robot's Twilight Companion*, (Golden Gryphon Press, c, hc)
Joshi, S.T., *Arkham House: The First 60 Years*, (Arkham House, nf, hc)
King, Stephen, *Hearts in Atlantis*, (Simon & Schuster/Scribner, c, h, hc)
Nyhund, Eric S., *A Signal Shattered*, (Avon Eos, hc)
Pratchett, Terry, *Carpe Jugulum*, (HarperPrism, 1st US, hc)
Robinson, Frank M., *Science Fiction of the 20th Century*, (Collectors Press, nf, hc)
Robinson, Kim Stanley, *The Martians*, (Bantam Spectra, 1st US, c, hc)
Russell, Eric Frank, *Major Ingredients*, (NESFA Press, c, hc)
Stableford, Brian, *Agents of Mortality*, (Tor, h, hc)
Williams, Tad, *Otherland: Mountain of Black Glass*, (DAW, hc)
Zebrowski, George, *Cave of Stars*, (HarperPrism, hc)

October 1999 Books

Beagle, Peter S., *Tamson*, (Penguin/Roc, hc)
Beaumont, Charles, *A Touch of the Creature*, (Subterranean Press, c, hc)
Brooks, Terry, *Angel Fire East*, (Ballantine Del Rey, hc)
Fenner, Cathy & Fenner, Arnie, eds., *Spectrum 6: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art*, (Underwood Books, hc, tp)
Ferman, Edward L. & Van Gelder, Gordon, eds., *The Best from Fantasy & Science Fiction*, (Tor, hc)
Ford, Jeffrey, *Memoranda*, (Avon Eos, tp)
Gibson, William, *All Tomorrow's Parties*, (Putnam, hc)
Hendrix, Howard V., *Better Angels*, (Ace, hc)
Herbert, Brian & Anderson, Kevin J., *Dune: House Atreides*, (Bantam Spectra, hc)
Hoffman, Nita Kiriki, *A Red Heart of Memories*, (Ace, hc)
Lethem, Jonathan & Scholz, Carter, *Kafka Americana*, (Subterranean Press, c, hc)
Pulman, Philip, *His Dark Materials 3: The Amber Spyglass*, (Knopf, ya, hc)
Roessner, Michaela, *The Stars Compel*, (Tor, hc)
Somtow, S.P., *Tagging the Moon*, (Night Shade Books, c, hc)
Sturgeon, Theodore, *Baby is Three: The Complete Short Stories of Theodore Sturgeon*, Vol. 6, (North Atlantic Books, c, hc)
White, James, *Double Contact*, (Tor, hc)
Wolfe, Gene, *On Blue's Waters*, (Tor, hc)

FILM

Critical comments
on science fiction
in the cinema and
released on video



Marvel at Wars

by Gary S. Dalkin

The original Star Wars trilogy was a thrilling, funny, romantic, dark, exhilarating, mythological saga of an engaging band of rebels taking on the might of an evil galactic empire. The Phantom Menace is about a dispute over tax and trade rights. It's all down hill from here.

Let's clear one thing up right away: technically the film is an absolute marvel. It is by far the most visually breath-taking film yet realised, a vast tapestry of images of alien worlds which are at once monumental in scale, enormously detailed, rendered with pinsharp clarity, and absolutely realistic. This is the largest, most convincing, most beautiful science fiction dreamland ever projected onto a screen. Here all our pulp pasts come colourfully alive in glorious CinemaScope.

However, in terms of story and emotional engagement, *The Phantom Menace* is very different to the original films. All is cold digital perfection. The life, the fun, the entertainment is missing. Rather, we have what most resembles a slice of sober historical epic drama, acted out by largely detached, impersonal characters.

Continued Opposite



Will's wild ride in the mythic West

Wild, Wild West

Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld

Starring Will Smith, Kevin Kline, Salma Hayek

Released 13th August 1999, 105 minutes, cert 12

Reviewed by **Brigid Cherry**

**Film of
the Month**

It is debatable whether *Wild, Wild West* is a western, but given the heavy steam-punk overtones and special effects it is almost certainly a form of science fiction.

The cinema has not seen a large number of notable examples of the sci-fi western and this particular film's industrial gothic Victoriana is not unwelcome.

It would be hard, however, to cite *Wild, Wild West* as remarkable cinema (perhaps its closest tie, given a preponderance of breast jokes and the dressing up in women's clothing by the stars, is with a *Carry On* film).

Nonetheless, it's a good B-movie with great art direction, but more than anything else it is purely and simply a Will Smith vehicle.

Smith, over the last few years, has come to embody the smart-mouthed, sci-fi action hero. If he looked "good in this" in *Men In Black* (and rather ironically) epitomised the US cultural imperialist

"Smith, over the last few years, has come to embody the smart-mouthed, sci-fi action hero. He was made for wise-cracking, wild, wild Jim West even when resorting to some unflattering and comic gurning."

hero in *Independence Day*, he was made for wise-cracking, wild, wild Jim West even when resorting to some unflattering and comic gurning (but perhaps not when in drag).

Although the film remains centred around the body of Smith, it's the larger than life half-body of Arliss Loveless which gives Kenneth Brannagh a chance to thesp it up something rotten.

Ham never looked so tasty.

Loveless, in the great Bond villain tradition, is surrounded by great technology - oh, and some evil scheming women in costumes to die for.

It's the technology - from the sweeping glass emporium from which Loveless schemes to reverse the outcome of the American civil war to the giant arachnid steam-driven war machine, which lends the film its steam-punk overtones.

But whether you like the film or not probably depends on your attitude towards Will Smith rather than your love for retro-SF.

The good, the bad and the box office

Report by Gary S. Dalkin

Once big films went slowly around the distribution circuit. A movie, say Lawrence of Arabia, would play in a handful of cities, usually in 70mm "roadshow" presentations.

This process could last for months, before the film was allowed out into the ordinary suburban picture houses. Big films were not just big in terms of budget, but every effort was made to ensure they played in the most spectacular way on the largest screens with the best film format available. The slow distribution procedure kept the film exclusive, built up reputation by word of mouth, and created the feeling that the movie was something rather special.

Saturation releasing was a sign the film really wasn't very good, that the distributors wanted to take what profits they could before the audience caught-on. The practice was reserved for exploitation pictures and low-budget teen-orientated double features. Now these once reviled productions are the big pictures and they come and go just as quickly, but have state-of-the-art production values and cost \$100 million a time. Hollywood is in a trap of it's own making: all the big films are now aimed at the same teenage market, because the perception is that generally older people don't go to the cinema anymore - but older people don't go to the cinema anymore because all the big films are aimed at teenagers! The sense of going to the cinema as something special has, ironically, been destroyed by the endless quest for the big, louder, flashier, "experience".

Initial box-office gross has become everything, as an old movie is now anything which came out last week. The implication seems to be that, if all these people went to see this in three

days, you had better too, and soon. Not so long ago nobody outside the film industry knew how much money a film made, let alone how much it took on its first three days. Now that opening Friday-Sunday take has become a vital industry benchmark to judge the success or failure of a film, and every picture that comes out has to aim to top the previous leader for that particular weekend for that particular genre. This is damaging because a slow-building sustained success is no longer possible. If it doesn't make money right away it doesn't get a second chance, which means easily assimilated and marketed films with immediate appeal tend to do well, and so that's what gets made. Anything potentially challenging gets left in the box marked "Screenplays: brilliant but uncommercial". And that includes science fiction films which make the audience think rather than gasp.

To make sure of that all important opening weekend companies spend ever more money on hype, and then open the film on more screens than anyone has ever opened a film on before. Ten years ago 1000 prints was considered a major release. **Alien: Resurrection** and **Starship Troopers** battled each other with blanket releases on around 4000 screens each, and last year's **Godzilla** opened on 7000 screens across America. Choice is drastically cut, with the same film playing on multiple screens in the same complex, so where once big films were shown on a limited number of huge screens in 70mm, today's would-be epic

shows in six adjoining small auditoria, often with the thunderous digital sound from the next screen rumbling through the walls. Quality of presentation has been sacrificed for the convenience of a show every hour.

All else is spectacle for it's own sake, an amusement park approach to film in which content is not even expected. The emphasis has so far turned to visual effects such that recent reviews of the Jan DeBont remake of **The Haunting** have declared the film a failure because the effects don't offer sights previously unseen. Whatever the quality of the film, and it is hard to imagine Jan DeBont making anything remotely as effective as the original, the point seems to have been lost entirely if even critics judge a movie on the effects, rather than understanding that good effects are those which make it possible for the film-maker to tell a story as "effectively" as possible. Robert Wise's **The Haunting** is among the most terrifying movies ever made, perhaps because it concentrates on story, character and atmosphere. Today effects are their own justification, leading to entire sequences, and entire films, which exist for no other reason than that they can.

There are slim signs of change. Last year the ultra-low-budget **Pi** and **Cube** were considered better than any other the summer SF blockbusters. This summer, while the \$75 million **The Haunting** has been poorly reviewed, **The Blair Witch Project**, shot for (rumour has it) \$60,000, and also a return to an older type of supernatural horror, has received rave reviews and become a surprise box office smash. It may be an anomaly, or it may be a sign that audiences are finally rebelling against the tyranny of big bad blockbusters.

Continued from P. 14

Marvel at Wars

Supposed comic relief comes in the form of the incomprehensible Jar-Jar Binks, a wonder of digital animation, but at heart just another racist comedy foreigner like last year's Russian cosmonaut in **Armageddon**.

Other than the young Darth Vader, Anakin Skywalker, there is no one to care about because we learn nothing about them. There are no relationships, no personal interactions between characters, yet, astonishingly for a modern blockbuster, the focus is on gunboat diplomacy and a minor dispute over tax and trade rights.

It would be cynical to suggest that in building his own empire since **Return of the Jedi**, Lucas has come to the mistaken belief that such things are of as much interest as a desperate battle against evil incarnate.

On the plus side, composer John Williams acquits himself with his customary genius, and Liam Neeson makes the best he can of his Jedi Knight. His nemesis, a personality free Lark Lord of the Sith called Darth Maul, looks like a survivor from **Braveheart**, and cannot hold a lightsaber to Darth Vader.

If you want to see a film which recaptures the fun, excitement and sheer love of Saturday matinee serials which inspired Lucas in the first place, the ironic thing is that there is a film out right now which does the job superbly - it's **The Mummy**.

The Mummy is a Lucas and Spielberg Indiana Jones flick in all but name, and it outclasses by a very long way indeed any pulp fiction those elder-statesmen of the screen have released in years.

The Phantom Menace features far too much talk, and a dearth of the spectacular, pulse-pounding action we know and love **Star Wars** for.

The pod race is quite brilliant, and the huge final battle orchestrated with the eye of a visionary, but, perhaps in a sop to the "moral majority" almost all the violence is done to robots which are about as menacing as an anorexic army of C3PO's.

The thrill has gone, leaving a lovely, embalmed tableau. It's called **The Phantom Menace** because there's no real menace here at all.

Star Wars, Episode I:

The Phantom Menace

Directed by George Lucas

Starring Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Liam Neeson, Jake Lloyd

132 minutes

Certificate U

UK release date 15 July 1999

MEDIA

tube tales

● The crusade to save Crusade

With the future of J. Michael Straczynski's **Babylon 5** spin off series **Crusade** in serious doubt a fan campaign has been launched to try and save the show. Fan groups raised \$6,000 to place two campaigning adverts in **Daily Variety** and the Sci-Fi Channel's magazine **Sci-Fi Entertainment** in an effort to win a reprieve for the show, cancelled by broadcaster TNT before they'd even shown any of the 13 episodes produced. Actors contracts expired at the end of July, although there was still hope that another broadcaster, such as the Sci-Fi Channel (which recently cancelled **Sliders**), might purchase a second season of the series. Planned, like **Babylon 5** before it, as a five year story **Crusade** chronicles the adventure of Captain Matthew Gideon (Gary Cole) and the crew of the starship **Excalibur** in their search for a cure to a plague which has struck the Earth.

● Farscape going far

Variety reports that Jim Henson's fantasy-adventure series **Farscape** has picked up a second-season commitment for 22 episodes from the Sci-Fi Channel.

Farscape centers on an astronaut who tries to find his way home after being hurled across space onto a starship controlled by aliens. It is filmed in Sydney, Australia.

The show is the highest-rated series on the Sci-Fi Channel, delivering a primetime average of 576,000 cable homes every Friday in its 8 p.m. timeslot. The second season will begin in March 2000.

● Babylon 5 goes Into the Fire

The Sierra Studios **Babylon 5** space combat simulation game for the PC has been retitled **Babylon 5: Into the Fire** to reflect the 'impending danger and action' of the game's storyline, according to series creator J. Michael Straczynski. The game will see the return of some familiar **Babylon 5** faces, including Bruce Boxleitner as John J. Sheridan; Mira Furlan as Delenn; Jerry Doyle as Michael Garibaldi; Tracy Scoggins as Capt. Elizabeth Lochley and Wayne Alexander as Lorien who have all shot new film footage for the game. In order that the spin off should be as true to the original as possible, digital sets which were created for the series were used in the game, as were original costumes and props. The script for the game's video sections is over 100 pages long, the length of the average feature film. The game will be released early next year.

● Will Paramount boldly go one more time?

The latest **Star Trek** TV show might revive an old movie idea - that of the **Starfleet Academy** series, focusing on a younger set of Federation cadets training for deep space missions. Dubbed **Star Trek: Flight Academy**, reports had series creators Brannon Braga and Rick Berman scripting a two hour pilot. The show would feature a cast of young unknowns and have no cross-over with any existing **Trek** shows, thus keeping costs low. However, **The New York Post** reported that such ideas 'had never even been discussed' according to a source

at Paramount. It was confirmed that Braga and Berman were 'in the early stages of a new series concept' which could be launched in 2002. There were no details of what the 'new concept' may entail. Eventually Brannon Braga was forced to respond to the fevered speculation, telling **Cinescape** that if there were to be a new series 'I highly doubt if it will have anything to do with **Starfleet Academy**'. He admitted that he and Berman were looking at ideas for a new show in the franchise but that all proposals were 'nebulous'.

● Galactica Wars

Series creator Glen Larson and star Richard Hatch are squaring up for a battle over the remake rights to **Battlestar Galactica**. Hatch has long championed the return of the show - with himself in the starring role, and even went so far as to produce a self-financed promo for a new series, featuring him as Commander of the **Galactica** fleet taking on a new race of Cylon warriors. Meanwhile, original series producer Glen Larson has his own plans for a new movie featuring the **Battlestar Pegasus** under the command of Commander Cain. Universal owns the rights to the series and it is not clear which, if either, of these competing projects the studio supports.

● DS9 bows out

The final episode of **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** earned a 5.4 rating in the Nielsen, making it the No. 1 SF syndicated show for the week ending June 13.

● Smart gets big

Sixties spoof spy series **Get Smart** is heading for the big screen in the wake of the success of **Austin Powers**. Rob Reiner is set to direct Jim Carrey.

News of upcoming science fiction television, radio, and soundtracks

Disney Developing Tron Series?

Disney may be exploring the possibility of a **Tron** TV series.

The animated show is reportedly called **Warriors of Tron** and tells the story of four high school kids who learn about a plot to destroy the world's computer systems on Jan. 2nd, 2002.

Since no one in authority believes their story, the kids turn to aging **Tron** creator Flynn for help. Flynn eventually agrees to send the students into the computer, where they must compete in a variety of games that were set up to destroy the system.

According to the Ain't It Cool web site, Disney already has a script for the project and is currently designing storyboards and conducting animatic tests. At the same time, the Internet has been full of tales of a **Tron** remake/sequel being developed by **Toy Story** creators Pixar Animation Studios. An unidentified source at Pixar said the studio is currently trying to decide whether to remake the original film or create a sequel.

Toy Story director John Lassiter is reportedly heading the project, as he claims **Tron** as one of his early inspirations. Although Pixar would not confirm the story, production on the new **Tron** film is supposed to start once the company completes work on **Toy Story 2**.

● Hungry bans The X-Files

Due to its "negative impact" on the development of young children, the Supreme Court of Hungary has banned the country's TV stations from screening episodes of **The X-Files**.

Rings cast firms up with Ian McKellen and Holm

Casting is progressing on Peter Jackson's ambitious film trilogy version of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, with Ian McKellen and Ian Holm reportedly joining the cast.

Ain't It Cool News says it has confirmed that McKellen will play the role of Gandalf, while Holm will star as Bilbo Baggins, the part he played in the acclaimed Radio 4 version of the tale.

McKellen will reportedly join the New Zealand Rings shoot in January 2000, immediately after he finishes his role as Magneto in Bryan Singer's *X-Men* film. McKellen supposedly read all three scripts for the Rings movies and fell in love with the trilogy, which he will spend 11 months working on.

The Faculty star Elijah Wood has signed on to play the sought-after role of Frodo Baggins, while Sean Astin is in talks to play the character of Sam Gamgee, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*. Claudia Christian, Christopher Lloyd and Danny DeVito are reported to have been seen with the script, according to reports.

British actor Billy Boyd will play the role of Pippin, according to *The Sunday Times*, which reported that Boyd auditioned twice for the role before his agent called up and asked him, "Guess who is playing Pippin in *The Lord of the Rings*?"

Boyd said he thought both of his tryouts for Pippin went well, although it took an agonizing six weeks of waiting before his agent told him he'd landed the part. The actor described Pippin as "a character whose naive and inquisitive nature almost add up to bravery."

Actor Stuart Townsend is set to play Aragorn, according to *The One Ring Net*, beating out fan favourite Jason Carter.

Final Fantasy finds its voice

The vocal talents of Alec Baldwin, James Woods, Ving Rhames, Ming Na-Wen, Donald Sutherland, Steve Buscemi and Peri Gilpin are lined up for the movie of the popular Playstation game *Final Fantasy VII*. Although the plot of computer animated film *Final Fantasy* will not follow the plot of any of the games but will be set in a similar fantasy world.

Picard too old for Trek?

During the Saturn Awards, Paramount executive Sherry Lansing announced a 'new and fresh' approach to the next *Star Trek* movie - the 10th in the series - which is due for release in two years time. 'We want to come up with something different, possibly with new cast members,' said Lansing, prompting speculation that some of the Next Generation actors may be too expensive or even too old for further Trekking.

Scott, Paquin for X-Men cast line up

Dougray Scott has now officially signed on for the part of Wolverine in Bryan Singer's long-delayed *X-Men* movie and has also agreed to a sequel option. Anna Paquin (*The Piano*, *She's All That*) has officially signed on to play Rogue, a psychically-gifted high school girl who has the ability to absorb the powers of people she comes in contact with. Halle Berry has been cast as Storm, a mutant superhero who can control the weather, and Rebecca Romijn-Stamos has been signed to play Mystique, an evil character who has blue skin and who can mimic the appearance of anyone. Rumours also link Maria Bello (*ER*, *Payback*) and Jim Caviezel (*The Thin Red Line*) with the roles of Jean Grey, a woman with intense psychic powers, capable of telepathy and telekinesis and Cyclops, a guy who has the

ability to shoot devastating energy from his eyes. *X-Men* leader Professor X is to be played by Trek's Patrick Stewart. Ian McKellen will play the evil Magneto.

Keanu continues his quest for the spoon

It's been confirmed that Keanu Reeves will feature in two sequels to *The Matrix* to be shot over the next two years at the Fox Studios in Sydney, Australia. Warner Brothers and Village Roadshow will co-produce the two sequels, which will be filmed back-to-back and may even be released within months of each other. Back behind the cameras will be *The Matrix* creators the Wachowski Brothers.

Apes still talking?

William Broyles, screenwriter on *Apollo 13* and *Cast Away* is currently writing the latest script for the *Planet of the Apes* remake. He's the latest in a long line of scribes to have tackled the film, including official King of the World James Cameron and *Batman's* Sam Hamm.

MIB set to return?

Variety has reported that another adventure featuring the MIBs is in the works with Screenwriter Robert Gordon (*Addicted to Love*) has been hired by Columbia Pictures to write a script for the film. Problems over the availability of Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith, not to mention the cost of the participation of the stars, producer Steven Spielberg and director Barry Sonnenfeld had seen the possibility of a sequel all but ruled out. Jones is committed to both *Space Cowboys* and *Blood Meridian*, while Smith is set to work with Nicolas Cage in the comedy *100 Pronounce You Chuck and Larry*, before reteaming with Sonnenfeld again for their Muhammad Ali biopic.

Doctor Who movie announcement due

The BBC have confirmed they will make an announcement on a big screen *Doctor Who* project during August after *Event Horizon* director Paul Anderson admitted his involvement in an interview with *Total Film* magazine. Neither Anderson's office nor the BBC would confirm rumours that a major black American actor had been offered the lead role, nor that Gary Oldman was up for the part after he expressed interest in a recent *TV Times* interview. No writer or any details of how far the screenplay has progressed were available from either source. Eighth Doctor star Paul McGann had no comment to make.

Damon in Minority

Matt Damon is set to re-team with his *Saving Private Ryan* director Steven Spielberg alongside the already cast Tom Cruise in *Minority Report*, the film based on the Philip K. Dick short story.

Who'll be Anakin?

Speculation on who will play the 19-year-old Anakin Skywalker in Episode 2 of the *Star Wars* prequels looks set to be settled in September or October with a casting announcement. Although hot favourite Rick Shroder (*NYPD Blue*) is a dead ringer for young Jake Lloyd from *The Phantom Menace*, he may be deemed too old to carry the part. Leonardo DiCaprio became the subject of heated speculation when he was spotted several times with George Lucas, but it is said his own disappointment with *The Phantom Menace* ruled out his participation.

You'll believe a man can fly, after all

Screenwriter Bill Wisner has been hired to pen a new version of the oft-delayed Warner Bros. film *Superman*, according to *Variety*. The on-again, off-again film, set to star Nicolas Cage as a very 'alien' man of steel looks set to be a go project once more. Wisner co-wrote *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* with "King" James Cameron.

Space cowboys ready to ride

Joining Clint Eastwood on *Space Cowboys* - which he is writing and directing as well as starring in - are Tommy Lee Jones, James Garner, James Cromwell, Donald Sutherland, William Devane and Marcia Gay Harden, according to *Variety*. Eastwood, Jones and Garner play ageing hot shot pilots drafted by NASA to fly a critical space mission to rescue a malfunctioning satellite launched in the 60s. Shooting began at the end of July.

Gadget shrinks

After negative preview reactions Disney have slashed the running time of the Matthew Broderick starring film *Inspector Gadget* to a mere 81 minutes.

Cage set for Rollerball remake, Cruise gears up for Deathrace

Nicolas Cage looks ready to sign up for the John McTiernan remake of *Rollerball* which is being fast-tracked into production by Fox. Also on the way is a remake-update of *Deathrace 2000* to star Tom Cruise. The film, dubbed *Deathrace 3000* will be directed by *Event Horizon* helmer Paul Anderson. Cruise will take the part originated by Sylvester Stallone in the 1975 original. Anderson is also working on a new *Dr. Who* movie in conjunction with the BBC, according to recent reports.

The Mummy strikes back

According to *Variety* Universal Pictures have finalized a deal with Stephen Sommers to write and direct a sequel to *The Mummy* and is set to have talks with the first film's star, Brendan Fraser.

Following the \$43-million US opening weekend of *The Mummy* in May, a sequel seemed inevitable, and Universal began discussing the follow-up with the principals not long after receipts starting rolling in. As of end July, the picture had earned more than \$150 million domestically in the US and an equal amount overseas.

Going Back to the Future Again?

Total Film magazine reported advanced plans for a fourth *Back to the Future* film, based on an idea by Steven Spielberg. His storyline sees Doc Brown's time-travelling flying train caused the UFO crash in Roswell 1947 - and the story follows his attempts to rescue the aliens and their ship which has a vital component from the train.

Stranded in 1947, Doc has to get back to the future and stop the nuclear fusion core of the engine imploding - an event which would wipe out New Mexico.

Help also comes along in the form of more of Marty McFly's relatives and Doc's long-lost sister.

EVENTS

**Forthcoming
conventions,
signings and
local meetings**

1999

2-6 September

AussieCon 3 (1999 WorldCon)

Melbourne, Australia
Guests: Gregory Benford, Bruce Gillespie,
the late George Turner will be honoured
Advance booking now closed: \$A300 reg
at the door, \$A75 per day, \$A50 evening
info@aussiecon3.worldcon.org
UK Agent: Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst
Road, Reading, RG1 7TT
martinhoare@cix.co.uk

3-5 September

Festival of Fantastic Films

Sacha's Hotel, Manchester; Reg £50
Contact: 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford,
Manchester, M7 3QP

10-12 September

Masque 7

Costume con, University of
Wolverhampton, West Midlands
Reg is now £35
Contact: 130 Hampstead Hall Road,
Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, B20 1JB

17-20 September

Breakaway - Cult TV 1999

Media con, linked to Space 1999
Pontin's Sand Bay Holiday Village,
Weston-Super-Mare
Guests: Simon MacCorkindale (Manimal),
Frazier Hines (Dr Who)
Reg (includes 3 nights board) £128
Contact: PO Box 1701, Peterborough,
PE7 1ER, 01733 205009
culttv@geocities.com
www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/2042

17-19 September

Fantasycon 23

The British Fantasy Society annual event
Britannia Hotel, Birmingham
Guests: Robert Rankin, Raymond Fiest,
Louise Cooper, Graham Masterton,
Mike Tucker
Reg £50 att, £40 daily, £25 supp.
Contact: David J. Howe, 46 Oxford Road,
Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 6DT

25-26 September

Hypothetical

"Scotland's other national convention"
Central Hotel, Glasgow
Reg £15, under 15s £10, < 5s free, £5 supp.
Contact: Flat 0/2, 11 Glegghorn Street,
Glasgow, G22 5RN

2 October

Rebellion 99

One day Star Wars convention
Moor House Hotel, Northampton
Contact: Rebellion 99, Kentstone Close,
Kingshorpe, Northampton, NN2 8UH

8-10 October

Octecon 10

Irish national con
Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co.
Dublin; Guest: Robert Rankin
Reg £18 to 31 Aug, £22 on door
Contact: 43 Eglinton Rd, Donnybrook,
Dublin 4, Ireland
UK c/o 64 Richborne Terrace, London,
SW8 1AX

6-11 October

Gaylaxicon 1999

10th annual convention for gay, lesbian,
bisexual and transgendered fans and
friends. Washington DC, USA
Guests: Diane Duane, Nancy Janda (artist)
Contact: PO Box 656, Washington DC,
20044
Gcon1999@aol.com
www.gaylaxians.org/GNnetwork/index

23-24 October

CONvergence

Media con
Stakis Bristol Hotel
Guests: Michael Sheard, Warwick Davis,
Jacqueline Pearce
Attendance limited to 200
Reg £35
Contact: 46 Brins Close, Stoke Gifford,
Bristol, BS34 8XU
mail@nexcon.demon.co.uk

30-31 October

MR James Weekend

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

5-7 November

Novacon 29

Birmingham's annual SF con
Britannia Hotel, Birmingham
Guest: Ian Stewart (chaos theory
mathematician)
Reg £32, £35 at door
Contact: 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge,
W.Midlands, DY9 8SS

12-14 November

ArmadaCon 99

Cophethorpe Hotel, Plymouth.
Guests: Stephen Baxter, Michael Sheard,
Lionel Fanthorpe
Reg £27, £22 concessions or £11/day.
Contact: PO Box 38, Plymouth, Devon.

27 December-2 January 2000

Millennium (Europe)***EVENT CANCELLED***

2000

4-6 February 2000

Didgeri-12 (Didgeri-douze)

Filk con
Forte Posthouse, Milton Keynes
Guests: Brian Biddle, Urban Tapestry
Reg £22, unwaged £11
Contact: 119 Whitehill Lane, Gravesend,
Kent, DA12 5LU

21-24 April 2000

2KON (Eastercon)

Annual UK convention
Theme is Celtic SF and Fantasy
Central Hotel, Glasgow
Guests: Guy Gavriel Kay, Deborah Turner
Harris, Katherine Kurtz
Reg £25 (£30 from 1 Dec), £20 unwaged,
£15 supp/junior (8-15), infants (0-7) free.
Progress Report 1 available now.
Contact: 30 Woodburn Terrace, St
Andrews, KY16 8BA
2kon@des.st-and.ac.uk
www.theory.cs.st-and.ac.uk/2kon

28 April-1 May 2000

AD 2000

Star Trek Event
Palace Hotel, Manchester.
Reg £55 after July 1999
Contact: SAE to Sector 14 (AD 2000), PO
Box 3870, Troon, Scotland, KA10 7PZ.

26-29 May 2000

CostumeCon 18

Hartford, Connecticut
Reg \$50
Contact: 11 Winter Street, Amesbury, MA
01913-1515, USA
info@cc2000.org
www.cc2000.org

2-6 August 2000

Eurocon 2000

Gdynia, Poland
Reg £10
Contact: Gdansk Klub Fantastyki, PO Box
76, 80-325, Gdansk, Poland

31 August-4 September 2000

Chicon 2000

58th WorldCon
Chicago, Illinois, USA
Guests: Ben Bova, Bob Eggleton, Jim
Baen, Bob & Anne Passovoy, Harry
Turtledove (toastmaster)
Contact: PO Box 642057, Chicago,
Illinois 60665, USA
UK Agent: Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst
Road, Reading, RG1 7TT
martinhoare@cix.co.uk

2001

29 December-1 January 2001

HogmanayCon

Celebrating the REAL Millennium
Central Hotel, Glasgow
Guests: Spider & Jeanne Robinson,
Sydney Jordan, Prof. Oscar Schweighofer
Reg £25 att, £5 supp.
Contact: 29 Avonbank Road, Rutherglen,
Glasgow, G73 2PA
john@gelsaba.demon.co.uk

13-16 April 2001

Paragon

Eastercon 2001
Norbreck Hotel in Blackpool
Guests: Michaels Scott, Rohan, Stephen
Baxter, Lisanne Norman, and fan guests
Claire Brislley and Mark Plummer.
Membership currently £25 Attending.
£15 Supporting, £12.50 Junior and £5 Child.
Contact: Steve Lawson, 349 Myrtle Road,
Sheffield, S2 3HQ.
steve.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk

30 August-3 September 2001

The Millennium Philcon

The 2001 WorldCon
Pennsylvania Convention Centre and
Pennsylvania Marriott Hotel
Guests: Greg Sear, Stephen Youll, Gardner
Dozois, George Scithers, Esther Friesner
(toastmaster)
Contact: Suite 2001, 402 Huntingdon Pike,
Rockledge, PA 19046, USA
phil2001@netaxs.com
www.netaxs.com/~phil2001

About Matrix Convention Listings

● Information (including updates and corrections) should be sent to the Editorial Address on Page 2; Details should always be checked before travelling: Always enclose an SAE when requesting information: Please mention Matrix when responding.

● Thanks due to David Langford's Ansible for some con info.

MEETINGS & EVENTS COUNTRYWIDE

● **Belfast Science Fiction Group** meets alternate Thursdays in the Monico Bar, Rosemary Street, Belfast at 8.30pm. Contact Eugene Doherty 01232-208405, tinman@technologist.com.

● **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 for this year's Novacon (See Event Listings). Membership is £15 per year, which includes a monthly newsletter. Contact: 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 Cambridge Blue on Gwydir St, 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. Contact: Des Lewis on 01255 812119.

● **Glasgow SF/Fantasy Writer's Circle** is run in the Borders bookstore and includes members of the Glasgow SF Writer's Circle and several past *Interzone* contributors. The workshop runs on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 8pm. Contact: Gary Gibson at Borders Glasgow or e-mail him garygibson@skiffy.freeserve.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. Contact: Ian & Julie on 01482 447953 or Dave & Estelle on 01482 444291.

● **Leeds Alternative Writers** is a group of SF/Fantasy writers aiming at paid publication, meeting on the second Saturday of the month at 2pm in central Leeds. For details please ring Ian on 0113 266 9259 or Sean 0113 293 6780.

● **London: The BSFA** London meetings are held at 7pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month, except December, at the Florence Nightingale pub. The nearest stations are Waterloo (mainline or Underground) or Westminster (Underground). Meetings are open to all. For further information contact Paul Hood on 0181 333 6670 or e-mail paul@auden.demon.co.uk.

● **London Circle Meetings.** Also at the Florence Nightingale pub, the London Circle meetings take place on the first Thursday of each month, starting at about 5pm.

● **Manchester: FONT** meets in Wetherspoon's pub (corner of Piccadilly Gardens, near the railway station) on the second and fourth Thursdays in the month from 8pm onwards. Contact: 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 railway station. Contact: Pete on 01733 370542.

● **Portsmouth/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 9pm at the Hop Leaf, Southampton Street, Reading. Note location change*

● **Surbiton/Surrey SF Group** meets in the Coronation Hall, Surbiton.

Convention News Notes

● A possible 2002 EasterCon could be Incandescent, with a bid involving organiser Pat McMurray negotiating with an unnamed South Coast hotel.

● Convention organiser Simon Bradshaw admitted: "We are tentatively poking - still with a long bargepole - at the idea of Second II (almost inevitably to be known as "Second", I fear)."

Frisco 2002 WorldCon bid collapses after San Diego makes an attractive offer

The Bay Area in 2002 Worldcon Bid Committee has withdrawn their bid for San Francisco, leaving only the bid for San Jose, California.

The Bay Area group filed both bids earlier this year, planning to give voters the opportunity to choose between them; however, the Argent Hotel, planned as San Francisco's headquarters facility, has recently booked another group into the space, making the San Francisco site impractical, according to the organising bid committee.

Earlier this year, the Bay Area in 2002 Bid Committee announced that the hotel they originally planned to use as their headquarters, the San Francisco Marriott, had withdrawn from negotiations with the committee and would not be available.

Bay Area in 2002 put together an alternate proposal centred on the Argent Hotel, one of the 1993 Worldcon hotels. In the meantime, the San Jose Convention & Visitors' Bureau presented the Bay Area committee with an attractive proposal centred on San Jose. The Bay Area committee decided to let the site selection voters make the decision, and filed both bids with Aussiecon Three, the Worldcon administering the election.

Hard Decision

On June 14, the Argent informed the Bay Area bid hotel liaison, Michael Siladi, that they had given the necessary space in the hotel to another group that was able to make a firm commitment now. The convention bid chair, Kevin Standlee, after meeting with members of the committee, determined that, without the Argent, the Bay Area in 2002 bid would be unable to put together a workable San Francisco proposal.

"It was a hard decision for us", admitted Standlee. "We originally promised fandom a Worldcon in San Francisco, and we very much wanted to deliver on that promise if that was what people wanted, but we had to consider the viability of the site. Without the either the Marriott or the Argent, we simply didn't have enough hotel rooms within in easy walking distance of the San Francisco Moscone Convention Centre. Meanwhile, we had a very promising alternative in San Jose. It is a good site, and the local hotels and convention centre are very eager to have our business."

The Bay Area in 2002 Committee now is concentrating on the San Jose bid. The site centred on the San Jose facility includes approximately 1500 hotel rooms within about 300 meters of the San Jose Convention Centre.

In addition, the San Jose facilities are less expensive to rent, include less-expensive parking, and are adjacent to a 24-hour-per-day light rail system that connects the Convention Centre to more than 1000 additional hotel rooms.

Memberships in Bay Area in 2002 remain valid for the San Jose site, even if they were purchased when the bid was only for a San Francisco site. Attending or supporting member of Aussiecon Three, the 1999 Worldcon, will vote on the site of the 2002 Worldcon. Aussiecon Three will issue site-selection ballots soon and members need not actually attend Aussiecon Three to vote, as it is possible to vote by mail. The bid will post additional information on their web site, <http://www.sfsf.org/worldcon/>, as it becomes available.

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Due to space restrictions, letters may be edited for publication

Mark Plummer
Croydon, Surrey

A good start for the new *Matrix* team and especially good to see some SF magazine coverage again. However, I hope you don't mind if I take issue with Glenda Pringle's description of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* as a "pulp" because I think this is more than just a trivial semantic point.

Neither of the usual literal senses in which the term is being used - either to denote a format (approx. 10in x 7in) and/or the use of a type of cheap paper stock manufactured from chemically treated wood pulp - are true of *F&SF*, and the metaphorical sense of the term, a basic type of action-adventure story, isn't really appropriate either. When *The Magazine of Fantasy*, as it was called for its first issue, appeared in 1949, the literal "pulp" were way past their heyday. *F&SF* was one of the new breed of magazine like *Galaxy* which launched the following year, that adopted the digest (5.5in x 7.5in) format used by *Astounding* since 1943 and aimed for an adult audience by publishing more "literary" stories, even publishing work by "respectable" mainstream names alongside the familiar genre authors. The pulp titles were extinct within a few years - some converted to digest format, but most just died out - and the digests continued in a largely unchanged manner through to the present day.

The fact that these magazines have been largely unchanged for 50 years may explain their current lack of popularity but that's another argument ...

Fay Symes
Bournemouth

I was intrigued by John Ashbrook's letter in *Matrix 138* accusing reviewers of giving away the endings and ruining his appreciation. I cannot recall one single incident where this has spoiled my enjoyment of a book, film, or tv show.

For my personal taste, the opposite is true. Despite the brilliant twists and turns of *Babyton 5*, there would

have been so much more to appreciate if we had known what was going to happen and could catch all the clues on the way.

In retrospect, Kosh's dialogue is brilliant. I wish I had time to watch the whole series through again from episode one.

I once accidentally watched the end of the film *The Andromeda Strain* before the main showing - and discovered how interesting it became when I could watch the plot unfold while knowing how it would turn out.

When I was young I borrowed the last two volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* from the library, because the first was out on loan. It seemed delightful to read the first volume later, with a picture in my mind of how the characters had changed by the end.

I also admit to sometimes checking the end of a book before I finish it.

Being a very fast reader, there is just no way I can read a book slowly enough to appreciate the writer's style, the finer points of hidden clues, the structure of a devious plot, if I am desperate to find out what happens in the end.

I'd have to re-read the book immediately once I'd finished it. (Not the same as reading a favourite book for the twentieth time with undying appreciation.)

I am seriously hoping that I will find a complete review of the final episode of *Deep Space Nine* before it shows here on Sky. I really want to know how Odo and Kira's relationship turns out, and whether Sisko stays on Bajor or becomes a Prophet, so that I can appreciate the dialogue while it is being spoken, and watch the writer's craft in progress.

Okay, so maybe I'm weird. Maybe it all stems from the anguished week I spent as a child believing that the *Eagle* comic was going to kill off Dan Dare and his colleagues after one particularly nail-biting cliffhanger.

It's the kind of thing that can happen in fiction these days - but never did in the balmy fifties. If only I hadn't been too young to know there was always a happy end ...

Dave M. Roberts
Hull, East Yorks

Following the level of intelligent positive criticism that *The Matrix* has received in the mainstream press, I was both surprised and disappointed by Brigid Cherry's attack on it.

Brigid Cherry is perfectly entitled to dislike the film, which she does with a vengeance, but I felt that her review was inaccurate in a number of ways and that as a result she vastly under-rates the film.

The opening paragraph states that: "There is no spoon!" Keanu Reeves yells triumphantly in *The Matrix* whilst riding up a lift shaft the hard way by hanging onto the cables".

This is not correct and gives a seriously false impression of the motivation of the Reeves character. He mutters the sentence, in an attempt to persuade himself that the insane thing he was about to do was not physically real, and therefore survivable. This may seem like splitting hairs, but the former interpretation supports that idea that the film is no more than an action movie with lots of explosions, the latter that the film actually has some substance.

Philip K. Dick said that reality is whatever is still there after you stopped believing in it. This is precisely what "there is no spoon" is getting at.

The Matrix is, for the most part, deeply rooted in classicism and mythology. The ideas that Philip K. Dick used in his novels, particularly *Time Out of Joint*, are used to construct the film. The intent not being to tease the viewer with "what is reality?", at least not after the first half hour or so, but to construct a world in which the protagonists' understanding of reality is questioned. Most of all by the lead character, Neo. The messianic nature of Neo is at the core of the film, with direct links back to the Gnostic saviour who reveals the knowledge of our true selves and hence enable a release from the material world, or the matrix in the film.

There are also, of course, many direct references to mythology. For example, the cookie given by the Oracle to Neo, echoes the small cakes given to knowledge seekers at the Delphic Oracle; and, just as at Delphi, the words "Know Thyself" stand over the oracles door. Morpheus (the god of dreams, "he who shapes") names his ship after King Nebuchadnezzar, the supposed builder of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, an early version of a created reality. There seem to be an almost endless supply of these references.

The Matrix is also a visually stunning film. Brigid Cherry claims

that the Wachowski Brothers pretend to art. I disagree, they pretend to style and the film has this by the bucketload. The fight scenes, straight from Hong Kong action movies, are excellently staged. The dramatic use of "bullet time" photography gives the audience the feeling that the protagonists are dissociated from the world as we understand it. The freedom fighters and agents are operating in a different reality from the world of the Matrix (either a future computer construction or the world which we inhabit).

Although flawed, *The Matrix* is a film that works well on the level of an action-adventure, and also on a deeper level if you choose to look for it.

PS. What happened to Leonard Fell and is he coming back?

Brigid Cherry replies: 'The Matrix is a piece of mass Hollywood entertainment, and to claim any more for it is disingenuous. It's really not worthy of the level of analysis you claim. There is no way that the film can be compared to the classic texts mentioned, and even Philip K. Dick's work is far better than *The Matrix*'s theft of his themes. The only reason they're touched on at all is because Dick is now trendy in Hollywood. You claim the film 'aspires to style' - that's fine, but where's the content? You're reading far too much into a slick, empty film. Sorry if I upset your inner 12 year old!'

Colin Greenland
Cambridge

Congratulations (if that's the right word) on taking on *Matrix*. Glad to spot your review of the Radio 4 version of *Voyage*, about which I think you're absolutely right. From the episodes I heard, it's very effective.

Without taking sides in the "quarrel" between Gary Dalkin and John Ashbrook, I'd have to say that an intelligent and discerning moviegoer cheering the death of the supporting feature is like a novel reader disparaging the short story.

Yes, I saw that canoe movie - oh God - and those endless train rides through Scenic Canada - but also a number of good and intriguing low-budget quickie dramas, not to mention animation.

It was a format that worked, when it did work, like the old Ace Doubles, launching new talent on the back, literally, of established fame. Handing the whole programme over to the major studios and advertisers has not been one of the cleverest developments in the history of cinema.