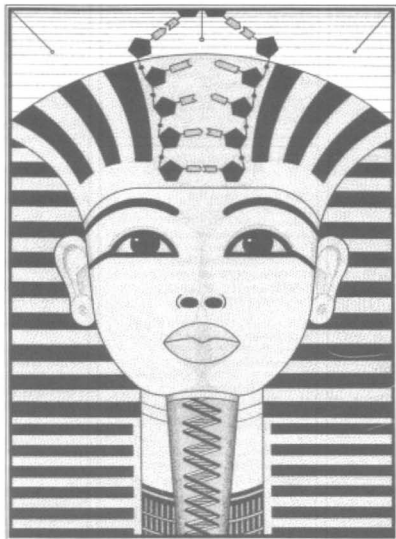


The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association £2.25

Matrix

Issue 147

Jan/Feb 2001



Top 10 SF films of all time

Pitch Black

BSFA London meetings news

Novacon report

Matrix

Issue 147 • Jan/Feb 2001

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

Registered in England. Limited by
Guarantee, Company Number: 921500
Registered Address: 1 Long Row Close,
Everdon, Daventry, NN11 3BE

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

ISSN: 0143 7909
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mittee members.
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Editorial Team.

Printed by: PDC Copyprint, 11 Jeffries
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Deadline for submissions for next issue:
7th February 2001

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Editorial

Whether or not the U.K.'s recent climatic upheavals prove the existence of global warming, or are simply just an aberration of the notoriously fickle British weather, you have to admit that it's rained quite a lot recently.

Which, in a roundabout way, is an apology for the much-delayed arrival of our last issue. Early in November our printers, PDC Copyprint in Guildford, suffered severe damage when the local river overflowed its banks and flooded their new print facility. Amongst the casualties were copies of the recently completed issue 146 of *Matrix*, which had to be printed again from scratch. Despite their heroic efforts this, and other technical problems, meant that the last mailing was, as you might have noticed, quite late. However, I hope that the issue's excellent contents made it worth the wait!

Assuming that you're reading *this* issue in good time, the main news of the moment, of interest to anyone who attends the BSFA London meetings, is that, from January, they will be moving to a new venue. See meeting organiser Paul Hood's article on page 16 for full details.

Elsewhere in these pages Gary Wilkinson offers his personal choice of the top 10 science fiction films of the last century. List making is always fun and I'm sure you'll find much to agree (and disagree!) with in Gary's choices.

All it remains for me to do is wish everyone a very happy and peaceful New Year. 2001? Didn't someone make a film with that in the title?

Forthcoming Conventions & Events

3 – 4 March 2001

Microcon 2001

Devonshire House, University of Exeter.
Contact: 22 Cottey Brook, Tiverton, Devon,
EX16 5BR

13 – 16 April 2001

Paragon: Eastercon 01

Hanover International, Hinckley, Leicestershire. Guests of Honour: Stephen Baxter, Lianne Norman, Michael Scott Rohan, Claire Brialet & Mark Plummer. Membership £35. Contact Paragon, c/o S. Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. members.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk; www.keepsake-web.co.uk/paragon

25 – 27 May 2001

Second (Second 2)

The De Vere Hotel, Swindon. Guest of Honour: Paul McAuley. Membership now £25. Cheques payable to 'Secon'. Contact Secon, 19 Hill Court, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL52 3JJ; second@sjbradshaw.cix.co.uk; www.secon.org.uk

28 June – 1 July 2001

A Celebration of British SF

University of Liverpool, deposit: £25, total cost) £235/\$355 (inc. B&B, 3 lunches, 2 dinners: student/unemployed £177/\$265), day rates £50. Cheques to The Science Fiction Foundation (22 Addington Road, Reading, RG1 5PT). GoH: Brian Aldiss, Stephen Baxter, John Clute, Nicola Griffith, Gwyneth Jones, Ken MacLeod. E-mail: Farah@fjm3.demon.co.uk or A.P. Sawyer@liverpool.ac.uk for details, or see www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/2001.htm

24 – 26 August 2001

Eboracon/HarmUni (Unicon 2001/filk con)

Langworth College, University of York. Guests of Honour: Douglas Hill, Anne Gay, Stan Nicholls and Pete Morwood & Diane Duane. Membership: £25 (students £20). Contact: Eboracon, c/o Mike Rennie, 68 Cricton Avenue, Burton Stone Lane, York, YO30 6EE; eboracon@psych.york.ac.uk

30 August – 3 September 2001

Millennium Philcon/Worldcon 59

Pennsylvania Convention Center & Philadelphia Marriott, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Guests of Honour: Greg Bear, Stephen Youll, Gardner Dozois, George Scithers. Toastmaster: Esther Friesner.

Membership currently \$145, \$40 supporting, but check for latest rates. Contact Philcon, Box 310, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006, USA; phil2001@netaxs.com; www.netaxs.com/phil2001

22 – 23 September 2001

Hypotheticon

Somewhere in Glasgow. Membership £15 to 1/1/01. Further details: Hypotheticon 2001, 25 Ravenscraig Avenue, Paisley, PA2 9QL; secretary@hypotheticon2001.co.uk

1 – 4 November 2001

World Fantasy Convention

Delta Centre-Ville, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Guest of Honour: Fred Saberhagen, others TBA. Membership: ask for current rates. Contact WFC, Attn: Bruce Farr, 7002, N. 6th Ave., Phoenix, AZ, 85021, USA; bruce.farr@intel.com; www.worldfantasy.org/wfc01.html

29 March – 1 April 2002

Helicon 2 (Eastercon)

Hotel de France, St Helier(?) Jersey. Guests of Honour: Brian Stableford, Harry Turtle-dove & Peter Weston. Membership £30, £15 supporting/junior. Contact: 33 Meyrick Drive, Wash Common, Berkshire, RG14 6SY; helicon2@smof.demon.co.uk

16 – 19 August 2002

Discworld Convention 2002

Hinckley, Leicestershire. Guest of Honour: Terry Pratchett. Contact: SAE to Discworld Convention 2002, 23 Medora Road, Romford, Essex, RM7 7EP; info@dwcon.org; www.dwcon.org

29 August – 2 September 2002

Conjose (60th Worldcon)

San José, California. Guests of Honour: Vernor Vinge, David Cherry, Bjo & David Trimble, Ferdinand Feghoot. Toastmaster: Tad Williams. Membership: \$120 until 31/12/00. Contact: PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-4128, USA; UK Agents 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, RG30 2RP; www.sfsoc.org/worldcon/.

4 – 6 October 2002

Conquest (media con)

Essex County Hotel, Southend-On-Sea. £50 reg, £20/day, £32 two days. Contact: 73 Bournemouth Park Road, Southend-On-Sea, Essex, SS2 5JJ. Tel: (01702) 469093.

News

Books, people and events making the headlines

GUFF winner

Administrator Paul Kincaid announced the results of the 2000 GUFF race, which will bring an Australian fan to the 2001 Eastercon in the UK. They are follows:

Damien Warman & Juliette Woods

(UK - 19, Australia - 12, Rest of World - 3, Total - 34)

Eric Lindsay & Jean Weber

(UK - 17 Australia - 22, Rest of World - 10, Total - 49)

No Preference

(UK - 3 Australia - 0 Rest of World - 1 Total 4)

Total votes cast UK - 39 Australia - 34 Rest of world - 14. In total 87 votes were cast.

The winner, therefore, is Eric Lindsay & Jean Weber.

F&SF sold to Van Gelder

The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction has been sold to its editor, Gordon Van Gelder, by long-time publisher and owner Edward L. Ferman. Van Gelder recently announced that he was leaving his 12-year editorial position at St. Martin's Press to take over F&SF. His new address is:

Gordon Van Gelder
Fantasy & Science Fiction
PO Box 3447
Hoboken, NJ 07030
e-mail GordonFSF@aol.com

Cambridge by Starlight

Colin Greenland and Susanna Clarke have both signed contracts with Patrick Nielsen Hayden for the third volume of *Starlight*., the award-winning anthology series, due out in mid-2001. It will be the first time the couple have both appeared in the same book since Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman Book of Dreams*., and Susanna will be the only British writer to have stories in all three volumes. Her 'Tom Brightwind, or, How the Fairy Bridge Was Built at Thoresby' is the story of a celebrated friendship of the 1780s, between a Jewish Venetian physician and a fairy prince. Colin's contribution, 'Wings', is a study of alien encounter, inspired by a Colorado speed cop.

BEM folds

The Spanish SF and newszine *BEM* has closed at issue number 75. It had been running for ten years. The editors Ricard de la Casa, Pedro Jorge Romero, Joan Manel Ortiz and José Luis González believed that a printed bimonthly newszine had become obsolete in the era of the Internet, when news spreads within days. Their website will continue to be maintained however, and a CD-ROM will be produced of all past issues.

Williamson endows chair

Veteran sf author Jack Williamson, Professor Emeritus at Eastern New Mexico University, has endowed ENMU's first chair, with the largest single gift ever given to the university. *The Jack Williamson Chair in Science and Humanities* will bring a visiting professor to the university annually, the appointment rotating among various fields in the sciences and humanities. The announcement was made in September 2000 at the Friends of Eastern Foundation's 25th Annual Breakfast. During this event Dr. Williamson also received the Outstanding Alumni Award for 2000, for lifetime achievement in the science fiction field.

Cinemafantastique Publisher Takes His Life

Frederick S. Clarke, 51, founder, editor and publisher of the sf/horror movie magazine *Cinefantastique* committed suicide on October 17th, the *New York Times* reported. Clarke was said to be suffering from depression. The newspaper said that the magazine will continue to be published by Clarke's wife, Celeste, its business manager.

Best Novel:

Martin Scott *Thraxas* (Orbit)

Best Novella:

Jeff VanderMeer, "The Transformation of Martin Lake" (*Palace Corbie* 8)

tied with:

Laurel Winter, "Sky Eyes" (*F&SF* 3/99)

Best Short Fiction::

Ian R. MacLeod "The Chop Girl" (*Asimov's* 12/99)

Best Anthology::

Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling eds., *Silver Birch Blood Moon* (Avon)

Best Collection::

Charles de Lint, *Moonlight and Vines* (Tor)

tied with:

Stephen R. Donaldson, *Reave the Just and Other Tales* (Voyager '98; Bantam Spectra)

Best Artist::

Jason Van Hollander

Special Award Professional::

Gordon Van Gelder for editing (St. Martin's and *F&SF*)

Special Award Non-Professional::

The British Fantasy Society

Lifetime Achievement::

Marion Zimmer Bradley & Michael Moorcock

Nova Awards

Winners of the Nova Awards for fan activity were announced at Novacon in Birmingham last November.

Fanzine

Plokta
(*Tortoise* came second and *Quasiquote* third)

Fanwriter

Yvonne Rowse
(after very close voting, involving a U.S. election-style recount and invocation of the

Awards

2000 World Fantasy Award Winners

The 2000 World Fantasy Awards for works from 1999 were presented at the World Fantasy Convention held at the Omni Bayfront Hotel in Corpus Christi on October 29th 2000. The winners by category were:

Nova Rules, Nic Farey and Mark Plummer eventually tied for second place)

Fanartist

Sue Mason
(Steve Jeffery second and D West third).

Full voting details will appear next issue.

Darwin's Radio wins Endeavour Award

The second Endeavour Award was awarded to Seattle author Greg Bear for his science fiction novel, *Darwin's Radio* (Del Rey Books). The award included a photo print of a painting by Portland, Oregon, artist John R. Foster and an honorarium of \$1,000. Presentation took place on November 17, 2000 at the OryCon science fiction convention in Portland. Marilyn J. Holt, a member of the Endeavour Award Committee accepted the award for Mr. Bear.

The other finalists for the award were *Calculus of Angels* by J. Gregory Keyes of Seattle, WA, (Del Rey Books); *The Mad Ship* by Robin Hobb of Tacoma, WA, (Bantam Spectra); *A Red Heart of Memories*, by Nina Kikiri Hoffman, of Eugene, OR, (Ace Books); and *The Terrorists of Irustan* by Louise Marley of Redmond, WA, (Ace Science Fiction).

The annual Endeavour Award honours a distinguished science fiction or fantasy book, either a novel or a single-author collection, created by a writer from the Pacific Northwest and first published in the year preceding the award. The first Endeavour Award was presented last November at OryCon, and was won by Greg Bear's *Dinosaur Summer* (Warner Books).

Kurt Vonnegut named New York official state author

The New York State Writers Institute of the State University of New York announced that Kurt Vonnegut will receive the New York State Edith Wharton Citation of Merit for fiction. The Citation carries an honorarium of ten thousand dollars, and the State Author/State Poet "shall promote and encourage fiction/poetry within the State and shall give two public readings within the State each year." New York Governor George Pataki will present the award at a ceremony in

January 2001. John Ashbery will receive the Citation of Merit for poets at the same ceremony.

The Governor awards each Citation to "an author whose achievements make him or her deserving of such recognition".

Dunn Wins First White Award

Mark Dunn's short story "Think Tank" won Ireland's first-ever James White Award for science fiction, named in honor of the beloved Irish author who died last year. Dunn won a cash prize and will see his story published in *Interzone*.

White, a native of Ulster, was best known for his Sector General series of stories and novels, set aboard an immense space hospital inhabited by multiple species on the galactic rim. Other White works included *Second Ending* and *The Watch Below*. White was also a prolific fan writer and co-edited the fanzine *Slant* with Walt Willis.

Butler wins PEN lifetime award

In October 2000 Octavia Butler received the PEN International Lifetime Award for helping to introduce African-American themes into genre fiction. Butler had previously won a MacArthur Foundation fellowship in recognition of her synthesis of science fiction, mysticism, mythology and spiritualism.

Stop press

Justina Robson, Clarke Award-nominated author of *Silver Screen*, has just won the first-ever Amazon.co.uk Writers' Bursary. Further details on Amazon's website.

Obituaries

L. Sprague de Camp, editor and author of such genre classics as the alternative history *Lest Darkness Fall*, and co-author with Fletcher Pratt of the influential comic 'Incomplete Enchanter' fantasy series, died in early November 2000, just short of his 93rd birthday.

Media News

Gary Wilkinson rounds up the latest on film & television

2001 in 2001

A restored print of Kubrick's classic *2001: A Space Odyssey* will go on general release in March next year after being shown at the ICA in January. There will also be a special video/DVD release later in the year.

5 Star Fails at Poll

Jerry Dole, ex-star of *Babylon 5*, has failed in his bid to become a congressman at the recent US elections. The Republican candidate, who played Garibaldi in the sf series, gained only thirty percent of the Californian vote letting in his opponent, the Democrat Brad Sherman. Dole has not yet announced if he will run again or whether he will try to follow his fellow actor, a certain R. Reagan, and use California as a stepping stone to the Presidency.

New Animated Oscar

A new Oscar category 'Best Animated Feature', the first in almost twenty years, has been recently announced by the Academy. The new gong will only be awarded when at least eight 'primarily animated' features are released in a given year. It is not yet been decided if the new category will be up and running in time for next year's ceremony which would look like being a two horse race between *Chicken Run* and *Toy Story 2*.

Barbarella's Back

Thirty years after Jane Fonda starred as the cult kitsch sf heroine the character is to return to our screens, this time

played by Drew Barrymore -- currently officially a hot property after starring in and producing *Charlie's Angels*. No director has been announced but it will be scripted by John 'Go' August for Warners. The film will not just be a simple remake of the original but apparently will be incorporating elements of two other books in Jean Claude Forest's series: *Le Semble Lune* (*The False Moon*) and *Le Miroir Au Tempetes* (*The Mirror Of Storms*). No news yet on how 'revealing' this version is yet (or whether it is going to spawn any New Romantic band names).

Rock on a Roll

Star of the over-hyped ridiculous sham (sorry 'sports entertainment') that is the WWF, The Rock (real name Dwayne Johnson), is to receive an unheard of \$5.5 million for his first starring roll in *The Mummy* prequel *The Scorpion King*. After cameoing, and impressing the suits, as an Egyptian half-man, half-arachnid villain in *The Mummy 2*, the new film will tell the origin story of The Rock's character. Surely he can be no worse than Hulk 'one expression' Hogan? And don't forget he is already a best selling author with his 'auto'biography topping the charts.

Solaris Returns

Indie-king Steven Soderbergh is to direct a remake of the Russian sf classic *Solaris*. Produced by James Cameron via his Lightstorm Entertainment for Fox this offers the chance for intelligent and spectacular sf. The original 1972 film, which was based on Stanislaw Lem's novel of the same name, told the story of a Russian space pilot who travels to the Solaris space station after the commander goes mad and dies under strange circumstances (don't worry it's no *Event Horizon*) Expect a wait thought before seeing this because filming will not start until Soderbergh has finished rat-pack remake *Ocean's Eleven*.

Mir Show Grounded

Unfortunately it looks like the TV show

that was going to be literally 'out of this world' (sorry) will not now be going ahead. NBC had been planning a \$40 million reality game-show, produced via the Dutch company Mircorp, where contestants would battle it out to a win a place on a trip to the Mir space station. Unfortunately, the Russian cabinet has now decided that, due to its high running costs, the station will be ditched into the sea this coming February. The show's producers are hoping for an 'outside chance' to use the International Space Station as a replacement. What's next: *Who Wants a Trip to the Moon?*

Back in Black, Back Early

Amblin Entertainment and Columbia Pictures are planning to begin filming of *Men in Black 2* early on the 4th June to try and beat strikes by both the Screen Actors Guild and the Writers Guild of America which could be starting on 30th June. Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones, the stars of the original *MiB* will be slipping back into the black suits and Ray-bans, and director Barry Sonnenfeld is hoping to film for as long as possible. Exterior shots and any other scenes that need the most special effects are going to be shot early. If the strike does go ahead that footage can be worked on by the special effects teams who will not be affected. The Wachowski brothers are planning a similar shoot for *The Matrix* sequel over at Warners.

Exterminate!

There has been a rumour that Greg Dyke, the new director general of BBC, wants to make a Dalek film. Nothing else yet, like whether the Doctor will be in it, so don't get too excited. It might even be joke on his 'Dalek' predecessor.

Asimov Movie

Universal have bought the rights to Issac Asimov's murder mystery *The Caves of Steel*. They want Simon 'attached to everything' West to direct.

Abductee TV

Actor and comedian Paul Kaye, best known as celeb-baiter Dennis Pennis, but who also appeared in a staggeringly bad office-based sitcom earlier this year, is to become an alien game-show host. Kaye will become 'Bob Cosmos', who will star as the compare of *Alien Abduction* which should appear on BBC2 later this year. Bob will abduct three contestants and the studio audience will decide their fate. I can hardly wait.

By Crom!

John Milius the director of *Conan The Barbarian* is to return to helm the third Conan film *King Conan*. Mega directors the Wachowski brothers, of *The Matrix* fame, are also heavily involved, handling Second Unit and giving the script a workout. Arnie is said to be pondering returning as a more mature swordsman. Will this become a fantasy version of *Unforgiven* and see a mature performer reappraising the genre that made him famous? Well, we can hope.

Rising From The Grave

Two undead films based on video games could be coming to the screen. *House of The Dead* based on the Sega game of the same name was originally planned as a *Scream* clone at DreamWorks. Sega put the kibosh on that and it now seems the film, now at Mindfire Millennium, will be much more like the game, i.e. lots of zombies being blown away. *Resident Evil*, which was associated with zombie-meastro George Romero, now looks likely to be directed by Paul 'Mortal Kombat' Anderson. The plot sounds like *Day Of The Dead* meets *Aliens* with a shootout between zombies and an elite military squad. Another much mooted project that was thought well dead also looks like it may be possibly returning -- a sequel to cult '60s pagan horror *The Wicker Man*. Unfortunately, the man who wants to make it, Joe Belinger, was also responsible for the *Blair Witch* sequel and he wants it to be 'wacky'.

"Now it's dark"

Gary Wilkinson sheds some light on *Pitch Black*

The first feeling is not good; it had after all been put back from a summer release to find 'a student audience'. And at first glance it all looks a bit obvious -- *Mad Max* meets *Alien(s)*. But look a bit closer and you see a great little B-movie that thinks big, a film with a more interesting European feel to it than the usual Hollywood spectacles that all too often end up ringing hollow.

A transport spaceship crash-lands onto a bleak desert planet. At first it seems the survivors' only problems are the lack of water and an escaped prisoner. Unfortunately, there is something very nasty lurking in the shadows. And it is about to become very dark indeed. A spectacular eclipse allows some vicious nocturnal aliens to surface.

The film has a claustrophobic atmosphere, helped by its small cast. Even in the open desert scenes the characters seem crushed by the vastness of the landscape. The director, David Twohy, uses the fact that, for the most part, the actors are pretty well unknown to make you very uncertain about who, if anyone, is going to survive. The tension never lets off until the very end.

Vin Diesel plays the stone-cold steely-eyed killer Riddick. This is a man so hard he uses cold axle grease as shaving gel and scrapes the stubble off his bald head with a dagger. His eyes have an inhuman metallic glint to them, the result of a 'surgical shine job' to allow him to see in the dark. But, as with all the characters, he is not completely what he initially seems. Diesel, who previously appeared in *Saving Private Ryan* and was the voice of the *Iron Man*, is a star in the making, he is a

great actor with enormous screen presence who also, incidentally, plans to direct. Radha Mitchell (ex-*Neighbours*, but don't hold that against her, look at Guy Pearce) shines as the starship pilot who has the unwanted role of leader thrust upon her. *Farscape*'s Claudia Black appears as a mechanic, showing she too has real potential beyond the small screen. Add to that a lawman, a foppish antiquities dealer, a Muslim Imam and a young kid who hero worships Riddick. Although some of the other characters are indistinguishable -- particularly the younger Muslims who accompany the Imam -- we have, unbelievably for this type of movie, proper character development. All the characters have been well thought out, each has their moment to shine, and you end up actually caring who lives or dies.

Pitch Black is fantastically well shot, especially in the first half. The simple effects of bleaching the negative and using various colour filters creates a suitably unearthly landscape. Judicious, though not excessive, use of hand-held camera ups the pace in key sequences such as the crash landing. Twohy also produces the occasional arty extreme close-up to make things interesting, and overall creates a jarring, unsettling atmosphere.

The special effects also work well. The aliens are pretty derivative of other movie monsters but they move in a very fast fluid manner that seems well thought out and is impressive. Although the film is very violent, most of the gore is implied rather than directly seen. We see via the alien's sonic based point of view and through Riddick's night vision which very much adds to the film (and as in *Predator* -- where it

was obviously borrowed from -- becomes an integral part of the plot). Also particularly impressive is the spectacular eclipse sequence half-way through. However, it is in the audio department where the film scores most for originality. The aliens do not have the usual hisses, snarls and roars -- their strange trilling calls are more reminiscent of the exotic bird sounds you always seem to hear in the background of Aussie soaps. Unfortunately, maybe some of the sets let the film down slightly and show its low budget; the crashed spaceship looks exactly like the lump of formed plastic that it is.

Admittedly it is no *Alien* or *Aliens* -- there are some major coincidences, some of the science is a tad implausible and it not does have those movies' seamless, totally believable, environments and backstory -- but *Pitch Black* is no slavish clone either, having the courage to move out into new territory, and ends up a lot better than most wide-screen sf on offer these days. As the *Alien* movie series runs out of steam and the straight stalk-and-slash horror movie dissolves into self-parody, this could be the beginning of a new and interesting, franchise where the people, not the monster, are the heroes. Although not a box-office smash in the States it's already gaining cult cred abroad and the video/DVD sales are apparently very healthy. On the back of this Twohy should be going on to bigger and better things. And as for Diesel? Well Arnie, you had better start practising your golf swing and rehearsing those political speeches, and Sly, if I were you, I would be going back cap-in-hand to the indie directors fairly smartish; in fact, all you old tough-guys had better duck and cover -- it looks like a juggernaut's coming through...

I want my DVD

Gary S. Dalkin on the release of *Terminator 2: Judgement Day: Ultimate DVD edition*

In retrospect it's easy to assume *The Terminator* (1985) must have been a major box-office hit, but until the day before it opened, no one had heard of it. Then a half-page advert appeared in the local paper. Here was a low budget SF exploitation movie starring that guy with the unpronounceable name out of *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), and featuring no-one else anyone had ever heard of, either before or behind the camera. It was probably going to be rubbish, but since the last half-way decent SF movie to hit Boumemouth had been *Brainstorm* (1983) over a year before, it looked like it might be worth a half-price matinee ticket.

The movie played for three weeks on the smaller of the two screens at the Gaumont (now the largest of the six screens at the Odeon). It made my Top Ten movies of the year, but back then it didn't seem so great, and certainly nothing to sing about compared to Boorman's *The Emerald Forest*. Just a superior, though rough around the edges, pulp SF ripping yarn. Of course, by the standards of the average \$100 million Hollywood blockbuster in 2000, *The Terminator* looks like a masterpiece.

Something strange happened. This film, which had done middling business at the UK box-office, gradually attained a whole new life on the then still growing medium of home video. Unbeknownst to most real film fans, who if they saw it at all, saw it at the cinema, *The Terminator* had become one of the first blockbusters to make its fortune not on the silver screen, but via the cathode ray tube. Which explains why a \$100 million sequel was made to a movie which cost \$6 million and grossed \$35 million.

They really must have done things differently then, because in that halcyon year of 1991 it was still possible for a

rational human being to reasonably assume that a summer blockbuster might not just be passable entertainment but actually a *bona fide* great movie. The summer of '91, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* was in competition with *Dances With Wolves*, *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Thelma & Louise*. *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* was a bigger hit than any of them, but no summer is perfect.

Of course Schwarzenegger had become a major star through *Total Recall* the year before, but who cared about Arnie? The mass audience, maybe. Here was a film which re-wrote all the rules. It wasn't quite as thrilling as *The Terminator*, but it made up for that with epic surrealism and destruction on a scale previously unimagined in Hollywood. And it was incredibly exciting. But, equally important, it told a story that made sense, that expanded on the original film without contradicting it. It brought the events of the first film full circle and resolved them. It was laced with irony and intelligence, contained a passionate anti-war message, gave Linda Hamilton (the true star of the film, regardless of Schwarzenegger's image on all the marketing) one of the best roles any woman has ever had in any film ever, and it all looked simply stunning. Film of the year, undoubtedly.

So then what happened? In typical James Cameron fashion he added some footage for a laserdisc Special Edition, which eventually also appeared on video. The team reunited for a third adventure, *T2:3D Battle Across Time* (1996), a combination of 3D 70mm film and stage show, which can only be seen at the Universal Studio theme park in Florida, and Cameron made *Titanic* (1997); essentially *Terminator 3* with a ship taking the role of the unstoppable killing machine.

Now, with the official *Terminator 3* in pre-production, and minus Cameron and Hamilton a sure fire disaster in the making, we have this DVD: *Terminator 2: Judgement Day: The Ultimate Edition*. Even following the similarly lavish 2 DVD set of Cameron's *The Abyss* (1989), this is an astonishing piece of work. Although only one disc it contains as much material as the 2 disc set because it is double-sided. Indeed, later versions of this edition have apparently been pressed on 2 discs.

For your money you get three versions of

the film in a standard DVD case inside a metal oversleeve; the original cinema release, uncut by the BBFC; the Special Edition as released on laserdisc and video, and an 'Ultimate Edition', which incorporates two further scenes, one of which is an extended ending set in the future. There is a nicely produced 32 page booklet and over 6 hours of supplementary material. Inevitably diminished in scale by the confines of the television screen, if you have a big widescreen set, sit close enough and turn the surround sound up to 11, the film still has tremendous impact.

There is an informative audio commentary carefully edited together from comments by 26 different people involved in the making of the film. There are three 20-25 minute documentaries. And there is a 50 section archive of material covering the entire history of the film, from pre-production to the preparation of the special edition. Some material is repeated between the commentary, the documentaries and the archive, yet there is still an enormous wealth of information, including deleted scenes with commentary and the entire screenplay. There is a lot of technical information, far more than on virtually any other DVD, such that this title constitutes a virtual film school on a 5 inch disc. Perhaps even more than *The Abyss* and *Fight Club* (1999) DVD sets *Terminator 2: Judgement Day: The Ultimate Edition* proves just how useful this format can be, not just for presenting movies for home consumption, but as effectively an interactive book on the making and history of those movies too.

The sound is as strong a Dolby Digital 5.1 transfer as I have heard, and one nice little touch in a release full of nice little touches is that the film has its own customised DD logo. There is also a DTS soundtrack, though not having a DTS compatible DVD player I haven't been able to test this. The image in anamorphically enhanced and pin-sharp, though as with most 'scope ratio movies not all of the film makes it onto the screen. This is most obvious in shots showing computer displays, where despite the claimed full original widescreen ratio parts of the text are still cropped off on either side of the screen. That apart, this set is faultless, and incredibly good value. Every home really should have one.

NOVACON 30: 10-12 November 2000

Claire Brialey on this year's con at the Britannia Hotel, Birmingham

Until the 1970s there was only one convention in the UK: the Eastercon, the British national science fiction convention, *the* convention. But in 1971 fans were suddenly spoilt for choice with the advent of Novacon, held, as the name suggests, in November and run by the Birmingham Science Fiction Group. Now in its somewhat celebratory thirtieth year – an occasion marked by the presentation of a special Nova Award to a deeply moved Vernon Brown whose idea the whole thing had been in the first place – Novacon has established a reputation for combining literary and fannish programme items, and this year's guest line-up bore this out: author Chris Priest, artist David Hardy, and bookseller and fan Rog Peyton.

It has also, however, established an informal reputation which sums up both what its devotees appreciate about it and what may deter other potential attendees: a convention which is rooted in the past, always the same, with a fanbase which prefers sitting in the bar and shopping to participating in the programme.

In practice, like most common knowledge, the reality of Novacon doesn't entirely deserve this description. Maureen Kincaid Speller, in charge of programme for the past two years, has introduced some solid discussions of literary sf and science—both guest-based and drawing on an enthusiastic pool of attendees—as well as continuing a series of debates around fannish issues. And while Novacon does offer a lot of opportunities for socialising and has developed a particular character drawn from its core constituency of regular attendees, the membership isn't static and the

atmosphere is largely inclusive.

That said, it's not all good news. Chairman Tony Berry had apparently hoped that the thirtieth Novacon would be a big one, pushing up membership numbers from the 300 of recent years; in fact, attendance dropped and only 250 memberships were sold. Novacon is suffering something of an identity crisis: is it the BSFG's regional convention, a national convention welcoming old and new fans alike, a serious literary convention, a sociable fannish convention, or an attempt at combining all of these aspects? At this stage it seems like it doesn't quite know, and with the choice now between rather more than two conventions a year, potential attendees are themselves uncertain enough to be staying away.

The venue was far from ideal; the Britannia has never been particularly suitable for a Novacon, with function space spread out between the second and ninth floors. The committee had attempted some innovation in their third year using the site, but the malfunctioning of one of the two main lifts on Friday and its lack of repair throughout the convention somewhat dampened many attendees' enthusiasm for much mobility around the con. And the Sunday afternoon panel on the future of sf was going strong until it was interrupted in the closing stages by a fire alarm. Novacon will not be returning to the Britannia next year, and the committee may mercifully have realised that suitable Birmingham hotels do not want or need sf convention business.

The Nova Awards reflected something of Novacon's underlying uncertainties, with what seemed like

some rather safe results even though *Plotka's* Best Fanzine win was their long-awaited first. Yvonne Rowse won another Nova as Best Fanwriter after a topical three recounts and the ritual invoking of *The Rules* (Nic Farey and Mark Plummer declined to take legal action), and Sue Mason won her third Best Fanartist Nova. Nova votes, too, have declined in recent years despite a flourishing UK fanzine scene.

All that said, this Novacon had its share of high points. All the guest talks were well-attended, and the opening panel which examined all three on how they'd ended up being guests together at Novacon 30 gave an excellent start to the convention and summed up much of what gives Novacon its enduringly good atmosphere. There is no doubt there will be a Novacon 31, and equally little doubt that most regular attendees will be there. The challenge now is to persuade some more and some different people that Novacon has a future that looks good to them.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES FOR SALE

Recent donations and bequests mean that the Science Fiction Foundation has a large amount of sf/fantasy books and magazines for sale. Income from this goes to support the work of the Foundation, including its sf library at Liverpool.

For further details look at the website at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/sale.html>, or contact Andy Sawyer, Special Collections and Archives, University of Liverpool Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA, UK (e-mail: asawyer@liv.ac.uk).

The Top Ten SF Films Of All Time

Gary Wilkinson's personal choice of the genre's best

It is all about telling tales, mining the imagination. Throughout the ages we have gone from telling tales around the flickering campfire, via a multitude of mediums including the epic and the novel, until finally, this century, we have watched our tales, first via the flickering image of cinema, and then television. Although we now mostly look down on a small screen in the corner of the room rather than staring up at the big screen in the dark, the film still remains healthy today -- if only as a source for mass marketing beyond the cinema. Although, as we step into a new century, new ways of telling arise, increasing interactivity and open-endedness via the internet and through complex video games, there still seems a hunger for a good film.

From the beginning these tales have always looked from the here and now into worlds beyond the common experience -- from the monster filled voyages of Jason and Odysseus to today's widescreen sf epics, the most popular cinematic genre by far.

So, as we step into a new century from one dominated by film, it seems a good moment to assess what has been achieved in one of its most lucrative genres. Selecting the best is always going to be difficult and I have had to exclude many fine films. However, I think the following can form the basis for any good video or DVD collection.

Metropolis (1927)

Directed by Fritz Lang

The expressionistic masterpiece *Metropolis* is arguably the best film of the silent era. It looks absolutely fantastic and was a huge influence on much that followed; more for its cinematography rather than the melodramatic plot, though its portrayal of downtrodden workers fighting against machine-driven corporate oppression is still relevant today. The classic design of the robot was incorporated into *Star Wars* as C3PO, and Rotwang became the archtypal 'mad scientist' character. Unfortunately an early print was butchered and we will probably never have a complete definitive version.

2001: A Space Odyssey

(1968)

Directed by Stanley Kubrick

"See you next Wednesday"

Slow. Slow. However, once the viewer accepts the film's own pace its true majesty is revealed. Basically the history of mankind, from ape to spacefarer; the shot going from spinning bone to spinning space-station remains one of cinema's finest transitions. The effects remain flawless to this day and the soundtrack features the perfect use of classical music. The human characters are reduced to bit-parts, their conversations meaningless, against the quasi-religious sweep and perhaps deliberately, HAL becomes the most interesting character. They will still be talking about this one in another hundred years. But

what does it all mean? See it, then make your own mind up. Far-out man.

A Clockwork Orange

(1971)

Directed by Stanley Kubrick

"Viddy well, little brother. Viddy well."

The mad, bad brother to the above; yet another brilliant experience from one of the greatest directors ever. The film, like the book, asks serious questions about society and an individual's place in it. Little Alex in his droog outfit remains a cinematic icon. Banned, but now back onto our screens, it seems to have gained much whilst it has been away. Suitably operatic in tone it twists another set of classical excerpts into a kitsch splendour. Just the thing to watch before nipping out to the milk bar.

Star Wars (1977)

Directed by George Lucas

"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..."

One of the best intros ever -- the huge wedge of a space ship pressing you down into your seat -- and a breath-taking climax. This was the film that launched a thousand plastic models and became a cultural phenomenon, so powerful it warped the lives of all the people connected with it and helped to change the industry. Truly epic in scope, not surprising since the plot dug into heroic archetypes via *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. *Empire*, which followed, was dark and powerful and a worthy sequel, but the rest?

Jedi, the special editions; *Phantom*? As Dante says in *Clerks* "just a bunch of Muppets".

Alien (1979)

Directed by Ridley Scott

'In space no one can hear you scream.'

Haunted house movie set on a spaceship. Truly terrifying, it is one of the best horror films ever. You really feel for its determinedly blue-collar heroes and Weaver's Ripley became a cinematic icon. This time you did not see the zip-fastener in Giger's classic biomechanical monster design and his crashed asymmetrical spaceship with its elephant-like pilot looks, well, the most completely 'alien' ever to be screened. Followed by *Aliens*, an adrenaline-fuelled roller-coaster of a movie, the dark but flawed *Alien*³, and another so awful I'm not going to even dignify it with a name.

Mad Max II: The Road Warrior (1981)

Directed by George Miller

"I'm just here for the gasoline."

Another epic; this one launched the many post-apocalypse movies currently clogging up the shelves of video rental shops. Much imitated but never bettered, it was poetry in motion that raised the car chase to high art. Almost dialogue free, but then Max is the strong silent type, and the great secondary characters, especially the Gyo Pilot make up for that. One of the few sequels to surpass its original, though *Mad Max* in itself is a lean, mean gem of a movie. Forget *Thunderdome*.

Blade Runner (1982)

Directed by Ridley Scott

"...tears in rain"

Well, the best of the ten in my opinion. Critically mauled on its release and abandoned at the box office, the *Directors Cut*, which removed Ford's voice over, the happy ending made a darker movie altogether, and it became a much-loved cult classic. Visually stunning with its *noir* influenced design, the special effects still look great. Vangelis' jazzy, electronically synthesised score fits the movie perfectly. Harrison Ford and Sean Young give fine subtle performances and Rutger Hauer is a powerful presence -- his self-penned final speech is pure poetry. Years ahead of its time, no wonder William Gibson staggered out of a screening dreading that he had missed the cyberpunk boat. Every time I even think about *Blade Runner* I want to watch it all over again.

The Terminator (1984)

Directed by James Cameron

"...it absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead"

Arnie's finest hour. This ultra-dark, violent and gritty movie launched both his and Cameron's career. The best artists steal, as Cameron did with this movies plot, but it well surpasses its origins. The special effects may look cheap (they *were* cheap), but it transcends its budget and is a much better work than it's comic strip sequel. A future Frankenstein brings dark Gothic *noir* to the bright lights of the big city with only a gutsy girl to stop him.

Brazil (1985)

Directed by Terry Gilliam

Basically 1984 meets *Monty Python* with a liberal dose of Kafka. The middle film of Gilliam's loose trilogy that deals with the uncertainties and fantasies of the different ages of man. With childhood represented by the superb *Time Bandits* and old age in the bloated but undervalued *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, *Brazil* fits in between them, but is much darker in tone, becoming a satire on the horrors of totalitarianism and bureaucracy. A brilliant cast includes Jonathan Pryce, Robert de Niro and an inspired Michael Palin playing against type. Gilliam's visual style is as assured as ever and the ultra-bleak ending is perfect. The director's heroic struggle just to get this released is an epic in itself.

Akira (1988)

Katsuhiro Ôtomo

The spearhead of the manga invasion, this is a piece of brilliant animation. Rival motor-cycle gangs battle it out in Neo-Tokyo. A mysterious Government agencies raises telekinetic kids. Then it gets really strange. *Akira* is definitely one film that you have to seem a number of times to really appreciate. What initially seem a confusing number of plot stands combine into a magnificent whole on later viewings. It is broad in scope with its multiple themes on religion and society, but, like many of the above, ultimately concentrates on an all too-human drama.

Has Gary got it right? Your favourite not here? Write in and nominate it! (ed.)

"Monster! Monster!"

Gary Wilkinson gets his teeth into *Nosferatu: the Visitor*

Sitting in the frigid barn-like stone hall of Thoresby Indoor Riding Stables on a cold October night waiting for the beginning of a play that promised an 'unnerving' experience you cannot help thinking: will it live up to expectations? Will *Nosferatu: The Visitor* be as chilly as the atmosphere? We have already had our interests piqued with a sculptural display based on the themes of the play by local theatrical students in the yard outside and the nearby flood-lit rococo Thoresby Hall seemed the perfect backdrop.

Nosferatu: The Visitor is an adaptation of Bram Stoker's most famous novel. *Dracula* and the whole of the modern vampire myth seems to have been around for so long, and to have undergone so many variations in the popular media from the silent classic *Nosferatu*, via Hammer, Rice and now Buffy, that it is a wonder that anyone could find any new insight in the material. Well Jonathan Holloway, via his acclaimed Red Shift theatre company, has certainly managed to do just that.

The events of the novel have been moved forward in time to a Blitz-shattered '40s London, so they reflect the true-life horrors of the recent war and produce a *noir* atmosphere, as compared to the Gothic of the original. Many familiar characters from the novel, including Van Helsing, Seward, Renfield and Lucy are present, but they, and the events of the novels,

are subtly warped. We begin feeling we are in familiar territory but soon move out into the unfamiliar and indeed the 'unnerving'.

The chief blood-sucker is an offstage presence (as in Kim Newman's *Dracula* novels) -- a man of science, a haematologist, a blood doctor, who may or may not also be a supernatural terror. He seeks out and preys on the physically and morally weak. This is very much reminiscent of *noir* horror films like *Doctor X*. His identity is deliberately kept hidden for most of the play providing one of a number of plot twists.

The play uses the theme of sexual repression buried in the original novel and reinterprets it in the cloying atmosphere of the late forties and fifties. The buried passions lead on to madness every bit as disturbing as Renfield's mania. The play also looks at, and reinterprets, the religious aspects of the novel in a modern, more faithless time.

The staging of the play itself is very impressive. Some of the stark images from the film version of *Nosferatu* were obviously inspirational. The high racked temporary seating placed you close to the actors, adding to the claustrophobic atmosphere. A rotating backdrop allows fast scene changes and was effectively used via subtle movement to warp the stage whilst Renfield was performing one of his mad rants, twisting the viewer's perceptions.

The play was fully scored, with a short overture and musical cues to the characters giving the play a further link with *noir* cinema. There was also effective use of natural background sounds to add atmosphere along with much use of voice-over to eerie effect, a reminder of the epistolary nature of the original source novel. The acting was especially impressive with the small team of actors taking multiple parts effectively creating believable and involving characters. The genuine stage presence of this gifted troop held you spellbound.

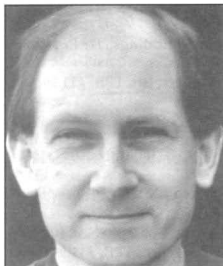
Well, in the end, the play more than surpassed my expectations. It kept me riveted despite the cold as the various twists of the plot were played out. This is a play that has you thinking about its implications long after the actors have taken their curtain calls and reacquaints you with the unique thrills that only the stage can provide.

I think the best praise you can give adaptation is that, as in this play, it gave me new insights into the source and *Dracula* had been placed on the 'to read' pile.

One final note: Red Shift will be touring in the spring next year with an adaptation of G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* and I, for one, am definitely looking forward to it.



Guest Column by Stephen Baxter



One of the perks of my job is that I sometimes get to be among the first to read the best new stuff. So it is that I've just finished Paul McAuley's rather wonderful new novel *The Secret Of Life* (Voyager, January 2001). Paul's premise derives from up-to-date speculations about life on Mars.

Mars, viewed through science's imperfect lens, has always provided us with great stories. In an essay for *Foundation* (no. 68, 1996) I reviewed the history of Mars in sf, and identified a number of key images, all (more or less) driven by the contemporary science.

Thus Percival Lowell's marvellous Mars, a dying world covered in irrigation canals, sparked Wells's envious intelligences, Burroughs's gorgeous Barsoom, and Bradbury's wistful golden-eyes. As it emerged that Mars didn't have enough water to fill all those canals, a new 'Arid Mars' model developed: the Mars of Weinbaum, Heinlein, Clarke and Dick, a frontier land where the plants had leathery skin and you

could walk around with a foam-rubber facemask.

Alas, the spaceprobes proved that Mars is harsher still. 'Arid Mars' was replaced by what I called 'Viking Mars', the Mars of Bear, Bova and Robinson, a world of unique, spectacular landscapes – and with giant aquifers just under the surface, ready to make Mars human.

Now, I would argue, a new model is emerging, a model we might call 'meteorite Mars' – with a nod at that famous (or notorious) bit of Mars proclaimed by NASA in 1996 as containing traces of primitive life. Our new Mars was once warm and wet, and perhaps life flourished – but Mars, too small, too far from the sun, quickly settled into a permanent Ice Age. Life could only have survived by huddling deep underground, sustained by Mars' inner heat.

Just as the engineers, pioneered by Bob Zubrin, are figuring out ways to live on this meteorite Mars, so a new flotilla of Mars novels and stories has followed that NASA rock, including Paul's new book, Geoff Landis's *Mars Crossing*, Greg Benford's *The Martian Race*, and *White Mars* by Brian Aldiss and Roger Penrose.

A key theme in the new understanding is planetary cross-pollination. If meteorites sail regularly between our worlds, perhaps they can transport, not just traces of life, but life itself. Perhaps those putative Mars bugs are actually Earthlings – or maybe we're all Martians.

What a wonderful twist to this ancient tale! As Paul McAuley says in *The Secret Of Life*, this is 'life that is related to us yet which has taken a completely different path' – life like our own, yet shaped by four billion years of different evolution. And as Aldiss and Penrose argue eloquently, if life really is present then Mars is not just a vacant lot for the terraformers, but a living world with its own rights.

Another key theme of the new model is cooperation. In Paul's book, the pressure of Mars's desiccation reduces life to 'a single species which may have absorbed the repertoire of all other Martian species'. The theme was prefigured in Bear's *Moving Mars*, and recurs in the Aldiss/Penrose book, where Olympus Mons turns out to be a single vast cooperative organism.

But Lowell's Martians cooperated too. In his classic book *Mars and Its Canals*, (1906), Lowell said of his global canal builders: 'The first thing that is forced on us in conclusion is the necessarily intelligent and non-bellucose character of the community which could thus act as a unit throughout its globe'.

The science moves on; the detail changes. But meteorite-Mars' doomed-microbes epic is essentially the same scenario as Lowell's (give or take a few levels of multicellular complexity). Perhaps there is, after all, only one story of Mars.



Books

Forthcoming books and publishing schedules, compiled by Janet Barron



Key

HB = hardback
TPB = trade paperback
PB = paperback

NOIP Now out in paperback

= Reissue

= nonfiction

*** Watch out for these

All others, first UK edition. Unless references are given, all quotes are from the publisher.

#Brian Aldiss, *Last Orders and Other Stories*

#Brian Aldiss, *The Male Response*

#Brian Aldiss, *New Arrivals, Old Encounters*

#Brian Aldiss, *Intangibles Inc. and Other Stories - Five Novellas*

#Brian Aldiss, *Report on Probability A*

#Brian Aldiss, *A Romance of the Equator*

#Brian Aldiss, *A Rude Awakening*

#Brian Aldiss, *The Saliva Tree*

#Brian Aldiss, *Seasons in Flight*

#Brian Aldiss, *The Shape of*

Further Things
(all House of Stratus, Jan, PBs, £6.99 each)
Mammoth series of Aldiss reissues from a new (print on demand?) publisher.

Mark Anthony, *The Dark Remains*,
(Earthlight, Feb, TPB, £9.99, 544p)

*****Stephen Baxter, *Deep Future***
(Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Jan, HB, £18.00, 256p)
Non-fiction in the *Profiles of the Future* mode by Clarke's heir.

NOIP Stephen Baxter, *Longtusks*
(Millennium, Jan, PB, £5.99, 304p)

Ben Bova, *The Precipice*
(Hodder & Stoughton, Feb, HB, £17.99, 448p)
'Once, Dan Radolph was one of the richest men on Earth, but now that the planet is spiralling into environmental disaster, he must look to the wealth of the stars to save the economy. Martin Humphries is also aware of the potential of space-based industry, but he does not care if Earth perishes.'

Orson Scott Card, *Shadow of the Hegemon*
(Orbit, Feb, TPB, £11.99?, 384p)
Another alternative take on the original Ender books.

#Orson Scott Card, *Prentice Alvin*,
(Orbit, Jan, PB, £6.99, 448p)

#Orson Scott Card, *Seventh Son*
(Orbit, Jan, PB, £6.99, 320p)
Re-issue of the first two books of arguably Card's most interesting work to date.

David Eddings, *The Redemption of Althalus*
(Voyager, Jan, TPB, £11.99, 704p)

Maggie Furey, *Spirit of the Stone*
(Orbit, Feb, HB, £16.99, 432p)

Terry Goodkind, *Faith of the Fallen*
(Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Feb, TPB, £11.99, 608p)

*****Robert Holdstock, *Celtika: Book one of the Merlin Codex***
(Earthlight, Jan, HB, £16.99, 352p)
Celtic/Arthurian fantasy by the masterful author of *Mythago Wood*.

Kim Hunter, *Knights Dawn*,
(Orbit, Feb, HB, £9.99, 384p)

Stephen Jones (ed.), *Dark Terrors 5*
(Millennium, Jan, PB, £6.99, 576p)

NOIP Katharine Kerr, *The Fire Dragon*,
(Voyager, Feb, PB, £6.99, 400p)

Mercedes Lackey, *The Black Swan*
(Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Jan, HB, £16.99, 376p)
Fantasy based on *Swan Lake* - 'a monumental tale of loyalty and betrayal, of magic used for good and evil, of love both carnal and pure, and of the incredible

duality of human nature...?

NOIP Mercedes Lackey & Larry Dixon, *Owlknight*,
(Millennium, Jan, PB £6.99, 400p)

Juliet Marillier, *Son of the Shadows*
(Voyager, Feb, TPB, £10.99, 496p)

NOIP Juliet Marillier, *Daughter of the Forest*,
(Voyager, Feb, PB, £6.99, 480p)

*****Paul McAuley**, *The Secret of Life*
(Voyager, Jan, HB, £16.99, 400p)

'It's 2025 and the Earth is damaged. Irreparably. The quest for scientific solutions is hampered by commercial greed, political infighting and a mass fear that whatever we do, we can only make things worse. Then a miracle. Scientists at the Chinese Martian base have discovered the 'Chi' -- an active micro-organism several kilometres below the surface. Very active. Left undisturbed for 2 billion years, it has super evolved and is able to swap DNA at will, maximising its survival whatever the environment. Against all protocol the 'Chi' is brought secretly back to earth. Where it is stolen, and accidentally plunged into the Pacific Ocean. Only a few weeks later, a giant slick of plankton is found growing at an exponential rate. It is sucking the seas dry of life. And the question must be asked. Who is colonising whom?'

Anne McCaffrey, *The Skies of Pern*,
(Bantam Press, Feb, HB, £16.99)

Another Pern novel.

L.E. Modesitt Jr., *Darksong Rising*,
(Orbit, Jan, PB, £6.99, 624p)

Michael Moorcock, *The Dreamthief's Daughter: A Tale of the Albino*
(Earthlight, Feb, HB, £16.99, 352p)

A new Elric novel.

NOIP Linda Nagata, *Vast*,
(Millennium, Feb, PB, £6.99, 432p)

Adam Nichols, *The Curer*
(Millennium, Feb, PB, £6.99, 488p)

NOIP Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle, *The Burning City*
(Orbit, Jan, PB, £6.99, 704p)
Hard SF stalwarts' first joint venture into fantasy.

Robert Silverberg, *The King of Dreams*
(Voyager, Feb, TPB, £11.99, 400p)

*****John Sladek**, *Tik-Tok*,
(Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Feb, TPB, £9.99, 176p)
Re-issue of a classic about the malevolent robot with faulty 'Asimov circuits'.

#William Tenn, *Of Men and Monsters*,
(Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Jan, TPB, £9.99, 256p)
Another classic re-issue.

#Sheri S. Tepper, *Beauty*,
(Millennium, Feb, PB, £6.99, 432p)

#John Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids* (with intro by Barry Langford)
(Penguin, Feb, PB, £6.99, 256p)

Editor's comments

A return to Pern, another Ender novel and the further adventures of Elric. Well, authors have to pay the rent and fans of these series will no doubt be rejoicing, but where's the new stuff? Fortunately we've got a clutch of good books to look forward to in 2001. The new novel from Paul McAuley concerning the promise (or threat) of life on Mars – a subject made especially timely by the discovery last December of sedimentary lake beds on the Red Planet looks typically interesting.

There's also *Deep Future* the first book-length work of non-fiction by Stephen Baxter (of this very parish) exploring potentially mind-boggling prospects for the human race.

In the world of fantasy a new work by Robert Holdstock is always an event and advance word of mouth suggests that *Celtika*, his own take on Celtic myth is very good indeed.

Print on demand publishers seem to be cornering the market in worthy re-issues. Last time around it was the Wildside Press with their editions of the work of the late Keith Roberts. This time it's House of Stratus, who are returning to print a range of Brian Aldiss' works, including such classics as *The Saliva Tree* and *Report on Probability A*. This trend look set to continue, at least in the near future, so watch this space for details of further ventures.

NEW DAWN FOR BSFA LONDON MEETINGS

Paul Hood introduces a new venue for the monthly events

As of the January 2001 meeting the B.S.F.A. London Meetings will be changing venue to the Rising Sun in Cloth Fair, EC1.

In recent years the meetings have been held in pubs where we have had to pay room hire. When we moved from The Jubilee to The Florence Nightingale we obtained the use of a much larger room. This was initially available to us for the same price as our old haunt at The Jubilee due to the landlord being one and the same man. Since then, however the price has been increasing on an annual basis. The room at The Florence Nightingale is well worth the price charged but it is larger than we need.

The room hire and guests costs are met by holding a raffle but the takings from the raffle will no longer cover all these expenses. The B.S.F.A. is not in a position to subsidise the meetings (and if it were, should it?), so I thought I would look around to see if somewhere smaller and cheaper was available.

My search, whilst not a comprehensive one of central London (a mammoth task), took in some sixty or seventy pubs. From these I found a dozen where the landlord would let us book part of the pub at no charge. Continuing to hold a raffle when the room is free

means that we could afford to bring in guests from further afield (previously a limiting factor).

Mark Plummer suggested throwing open the final choice to interested parties and having an evening of visits to these pubs. Therefore I sent an email invitation to those on my meetings mailing list. I would like to stress that what ensued was not a pub-crawl. Of the respondents only three could make the date I chose. I would like to thank Mark Plummer, Claire Brialey and our very own editor Andrew Seaman for turning out for what was more a whistle-stop tour rather than a glorified piss-up.

Three pubs particularly impressed the panel, but The Rising Sun was the unanimous first choice.

The pub is located in Cloth Fair, which runs parallel to Long Lane (which heads west from Barbican Station). It is also near to Farringdon Station and a little further from Holborn Viaduct and St Paul's stations (see map below).

The Rising Sun itself is a small Samuel Smith's pub, and the room I have booked is a cosy upstairs bar with two fireplaces. There is also air-conditioning for the summer. Mark commented on quietness in the

room, which is particularly welcome after the traffic noise at The Florence Nightingale. Claire later said that, as an unaccompanied female, she wouldn't mind walking to and from The Rising Sun's location of an evening.

We liked The Rising Sun, we hope that you will too. Come along and see for yourself in 2001. We have Cherith Baldry on January 24th and Ben Jeapes on February 28th.



Club Corner

Club Corner is absent due to reasons of space, but will be back next issue. In the meantime, there is one major change to the listings

Glasgow SF/F Writers' Circle

Alternate Tuesdays at 8pm, The Conference Room, Borders Bookstore, Buchanan Street, Glasgow (actual dates are publicised in Borders' events guide, available in store, or ask at the Information Desk). All genres and standards of proficiency welcome. Contact: Neil Williamson, 0141 353 2649, or e-mail: neilwilliamson@btinternet.com

BSFA Awards

Chris Hill rounds up the latest news

Please find below the listing of the current nominations for the 2000 British Science Fiction Association Award.

This issue is the 'last call' for nominations for the 2000 awards. As you can see, things have picked up since last issue with both Novel and Short Fiction categories looking fairly healthy.

But still the Artwork nominations list is looking very thin indeed compared with previous years. Come the closing date at the end of January I will have to make an executive decision on whether it is actually worth presenting the award. So please, if you want to ensure that there is an Artwork award this year, send those nominations in!

The next issue will contain the short list and the ballot papers, but if you want to know more quickly then either: a) keep an eye on the BSFA web page, which will have details as soon as possible after the short list is finalised, or b) drop me an e-mail at awards@sandman.enterprise-plc.com.

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

The closing date for nominations for the BSFA Awards is:

31st January 2001.

Please note: Any nominations received after that date will be

ignored.

The eligibility rules are as follows:

Best Novel. First published in the UK in the calendar year 2000.

Best Short Fiction. First appearance in the calendar year 2000, irrespective of country of origin (thus stories in non-UK magazines and original anthologies are eligible).

Best Artwork. First appearance in the calendar year 2000.

Remember, if you are not sure if something qualifies, send me the nomination anyway and I will check.

Best Novel

Revelation Space - Alastair Reynolds

Under the Skin - Michel Faber

redRobe - Jon Courtney Grimwood

Perdido Street Station - China Miéville

Dracula Cha, Cha, Cha - Kim Newman

Ash: A Secret History - Mary Gentle

Paradox - John Meaney

Reckless Sleep - Roger Levy

Look to Windward - Iain M. Banks

Finity - John Barnes

Light of Other Days - Stephen

Baxter and Arthur C. Clarke

The Winged Chariot - Ben Jeapes

Silverheart - Storm Constantine &

Michael Moorcock

Super-Cannes - J. G. Ballard

The Burning City - Larry Niven and

Jerry Pournelle

The Amber Spyglass - Philip

Pullman

Spellfall - Katherine Roberts

Year Zero - Brian Stableford

Best Short Fiction

'Colours of the Soul' - Sean

McMullen (*Interzone* 152)

'La Vampiresse' - Tanith Lee

(*Interzone* 154)

'Adventures in the Ghost Trade' -

Liz Williams (*Interzone* 154)

'Great Wall of Mars' - Alastair

Reynolds (*Spectrum SF* #1)

'Destiny on Tartarus' - Eric Brown

(*Spectrum SF* #2)

'Mud' - Nina Kiriki Hoffman

(*Amazing Stories*, Winter 2000)

'The Neon Heart Murders' - M. John

Harrison (*The Magazine of Fantasy*

& Science Fiction April 2000)

'HMS Habakkuk' - Eugene Byrne

(*Interzone* 155)

'Singing Each to Each' - Paul Di

Filippo (*Interzone* 155)

'To Cuddle Amy' - Nancy Kress

(*Asimov's* August 2000)

'Bonsai Tiger' - Garry Kilworth

(*Spectrum SF* #1)

'The Worms of Hess' - Barrington J.

Bayley (*Interzone* 160)

'The Suspect Genome' - Peter F.

Hamilton (*Interzone* 156)

'The Welfare Man Retires' - Chris

Beckett (*Interzone* 158)

'Mean Time in Greenwich' -

Elizabeth Counihan (*Interzone* 158)

'Angel on the Wall' - Catherine S.

McMullen (*Interzone* 159)

'The Miracle at Kallithéa' - Eric

Brown (*Spectrum SF* #3)

'Ebb Tide' - Sarah Singleton

(*Interzone* 161)

Best Artwork

Aquefungsoids - Mark A. Garlick

(Cover of *Neosis* March/April 2000)

Wonderland - Chad Michael Oliver

(*TTA* 24)

redRobe - 'The Whole Hog' (Cover

of *redRobe* by Jon Courtney

Grimwood)

Physiognomies of Flight - China

Miéville (Cover of *Vector* 213)

Hideaway - Dominic Harman (Cover

Interzone 157)

Look to Windward - Mark

Salwowski (Cover of *Look to*

Windward by Iain M. Banks)

PULPitations

Glenda Pringle on magazines old and new

Having seen three issues of *Realms of Fantasy* now, I feel a bit more qualified to review this glittering example of the genre. It is, I must admit, very pretty in a glossy, eye-catching way. The artwork is quite often stunning and I was quite smitten with the December 2000 issue's cover (Michael Whelan's *Eltri*). In terms of the stories and features, the quality is much higher and the range much broader than I expected. So, although it is a sister publication to the now-defunct *Science Fiction Age*, it definitely isn't a direct clone in spite of the fact that it has a recognisably similar format. What does mar the magazine somewhat is the irritating lack of attention to fundamental editorial matters. The latest issue not only sports a correction box containing the last few lines of a story that were missed out of a previous issue, but to add insult to injury completely destroys anyone's enjoyment of a story in the current issue by repeating several paragraphs at the beginning. Perhaps they should look up the definition of "proofreading" in the dictionary and take it from there. In the end I was left slightly shocked and disappointed. A bit like when I saw sexy *grande dame* of the cinema Sophia Loren turn up for a television interview with

huge holes and ladders in her tights. Glamour is so much more impressive when it looks flawless to us mere mortals. (Subscriptions are US\$21.95 for 1 year (6 issues) available from: PO Box 1623, Williamsport, PA, 17703, USA.)

Weird Tales. Now there's a name to conjure up the exciting, "pulpy" days of yesteryear. Founded in 1923 by J.C. Henneberger and J M Lansinger, early contributors included such stellar names as H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. Not only were its early fans terrified by tales of Cthulhu and his cronies, but they were also scandalised by dubious eroticism including the controversial necrophilia horror story "The Loved Dead" by C.M. Eddy with H.P. Lovecraft. (The latter arguably being the story that made the magazine's name when attempts were made to wrest the offending issue from the news-stands, thereby giving it much needed publicity.) The 1930s were undoubtedly *WT*'s heyday. As well as Smith and Lovecraft, regular contributors included August Derleth, Robert E. Howard (including the Conan series), Frank Bellnap Long, C.L. Moore (the Northwest Smith series), and Jack Williamson. Until its demise in 1954, *WT* continued

to be the magazine of the supernatural.

Although regular attempts were made to revive it, none met with any real success until Terminus Publishing took up the gauntlet in the late 1980s, appointing Darrell Schweitzer, among others, editor (a position he now shares with George H. Scithers.) Now a quarterly, the latest issue is numbered 321, which unusually, but nevertheless logically, takes into account the issues published in all its previous incarnations. Boy, was I delighted to get hold of a copy whilst on holiday in the US recently.

From its darkly sinister colour cover (complete with garish orange and yellow title and titillatingly macho hunk (that's right, no scantily clothed girlie) being menaced by a monster) to the cheap, divinely pulp-like recycled paper, this is one tremendous trip down memory lane. Criekey! Even the smell evokes memories! The stories within its covers include: a haunting fairy tale entitled "Girls in Green Dresses" by Tanith Lee; "I Don't Tell Lies" by Richard A Lupoff with its ambience of smoky bars and the *noir* feel of the 1940s even though it has a modern setting; "Haunted Shadows" by Keith Taylor, a creepy tale of ancient

Egyptian curses; "Mr Darkmore's Neighborhood" by Kiel Stuart, with its novel way of dealing with the neighbourhood bully; and the downright scary ghost story "Three-Legged Dog" by Ian Watson. There is also a variety of poetry from contributors who include Joanne Morecom, Kathleen Youmans, Steve Eng, Darrell Schweitzer and J.W. Donnelly. Features include 'The Eyrie' which cleverly (and informally) combines editorial with readers' letters and comments, and 'Shadowings', which is a serious exploration of Clive Barker's influence on the film *God and Monsters* and vice versa. All in all, brilliant stuff and I can't recommend it more highly to those people like me who crave the occasional taste of the good old days.

(Subscriptions to *Weird Tales* and any of its sister publications - *Dreams of Decadence*, *Fantastic Stories*, *Absolute Magnitude* and *Aboriginal Science Fiction* - are US\$35.00 each and available from: DNA Publications, PO Box 2988, Radford, VA, 24143, USA. However, it might be worth checking with them first if you want more than one of these publications in case a special deal is available.)

Finally, true to my promise made in a previous column, I've fired up my browser and had a look at another e-zine. *Quantum Muse* ([www.](http://www.quantummuse.com)

[quantummuse.com](http://www.quantummuse.com)) left me feeling so impressed I've added it to my favourites list (along with all those other things I look at once in a blue moon unfortunately). *QM's* editors tell us they are "committed to providing aspiring writers and artists with a free and open forum for expression", adding that "free" is the operative word as the contributors do not get paid for their labours (but neither, I suspect, do the editors, so fair is fair in what is obviously a labour of love). I was particularly struck by how easy and logical they have made it for readers to access the various sections. Instead of being assaulted by so many bells and whistles one doesn't know where to start, there is a straightforward table of contents. Hooray! And I didn't have to wade through blinky in-your-face advertisements either. Obviously two years of experience has taught them something.

I found that there were two things that especially impressed me. Firstly, when you initially access the short stories or art, you are presented with a few opening paragraphs as a taster in the first case, and a clear thumbnail in the latter. These successfully avoid downloads of things you find you don't really want. Secondly, there is a direct link to either amazon.com or enews.com for each individual book or magazine in the review section. Click on the picture and off you go.

With ordering made so easy, I think I'd better avoid that section as much as possible!

Categorisation is used in a sensible way to further break down some of the sections. For instance, "news" breaks down into general, zine, book reviews, author, artist, publishing, movie reviews and *QM* gallery and story reviews, with each item in the initial list containing a one-line description and a hotlink to the full news item. Other features include: a "web ring"; services like review/editing of readers' own work, an online workshop and web design advice; *QM* merchandise (mugs, t-shirts and their own anthology *Quantum Musings*); submission guidelines; and an archive of material which has appeared previously as well as links to 292 other web sites that readers might find of interest.

There is definitely a friendly feel to this site with readers as well as contributors actively encouraged to take part and generate feedback and constructive criticism. It's not often that a web site makes you feel so welcome and all those involved are to be heartily commended for doing so.

Magazines for review, including small press, should be sent to Glenda Pringle, 22 Mead Way, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 2BJ; email: chris@kidlington66.freemove.co.uk

JO's Timewasters Matrix Competition 147

COMPETITION 146

Entries (and results!) delayed due to problems with the previous mailing. Look out for further details next issue.

In the meantime, have a go at...

COMPETITION 147

I have a large collection of short stories, including many that appear in more than one book; the latter should therefore be well-known. I've selected 20 of these, all with two-word titles. Can you connect these forty words into pairs? If you can't complete it, do as many as you can. Don't bother with the authors' names.

Oh!	Occam's
Est	Savage
Est	Sonata
Leg.	Venice
Dark	Chicken
Jean	Delenda
Maru	Drowned
Blues	Obscura
Casey	Proxima
Cubed	Rorqual
Doing	Scalpel
Forst	Thropus
Pacem	Velinda
Tiger	Willie's
Camera	Centauri
Dupres	Ornithan
Icarus	Agonistes
Icarus	Automatic
Lennon	Pellucidar
Lisbon	Unaccompanied

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Credits issue 147

Matrix 147, the first issue of the (official) new millennium and that especially science-fictional year of 2001, was edited and produced by **Andrew Seaman**.

As always a big 'thank-you' to all contributing editors and everyone who supplied items of news – you know who you all are.

Special thanks again to Sean Russell Friend for supplying our cover art.



Printed by PDC Copyprint of Guildford (with thanks to Jon Davis for technical advice and commiserations for their recent troubles). Collated and mailed by Bramley Mailing Services.