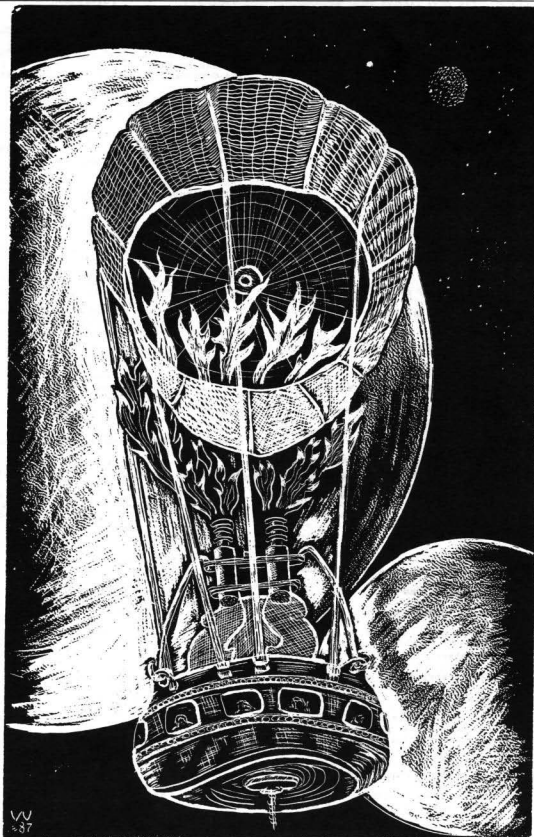


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THE · NEWSLETTER · OF · THE · BRITISH · SCIENCE · FICTION · ASSOCIATION



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Typesetting & production rumoured to be by Maureen Porter and Paul Kincaid, with help from Jess'n'Iver, Douglas Adams and a lot of tea.



# Red Shift

As I am attempting to write this editorial in what already feels like the early hours of the morning, and we haven't even hit midnight yet, I shall keep this short. An editor's lot is never a happy one at the best of times, but I really didn't expect to be complaining because I have too much material and can't work out what to leave out. Which is not, I hasten to add, a signal for you lot to slacken off - keep the news and articles coming, especially Soapbox material. On the other hand, I'm in the unhappy position of having to hold over several features until next issue, including the letter column. I'm not happy about this, and I daresay you won't be either, but I'm reluctant to sacrifice the large amount of news in this issue, so what does one do? I hope the rest of the magazine will go some way to compensating.

On a happier note, I recently received a message from the author David Garnett which went along the lines of 'Please tell Maureen Porter to make Matrix more boring.' I raised an eyebrow, naturally. David is apparently longing for the good old days when he could open his BSFA mailing and throw away Matrix without reading it. I gather he finds it so interesting these days that the house is piled with copies of Matrix which he can't get through fast enough. I've had some back-handed compliments but that is definitely the best. Still, as I lurch into my second year of editorial control, it's heartening to know I'm getting something right.

I am making no promises for the second year of editorship beyond saying that I shall continue working to improve coverage in every area of interest, improve production techniques, and so

forth. More of the same with added extras. More than that I think it would be dangerous to say, right now but keep reading, and of course keep contributing. Without the readers this magazine would be nothing.

\*\*\*\*\*

Several people have asked various questions about how I like work submitted to Matrix. Basically, I like it submitted legibly. Handwriting is fine (though it would help if names were printed), typed manuscripts are fine, I'll even accept submissions on Amstrad discs in Locoscript or ASCII files if they're compatible. Discs will, of course, be returned. We have no E-mail, we have no modem - we're not that hi-tech as yet. Otherwise, in any form you think will not hinder me too much.

\*\*\*\*\*

STOP PRESS: Following up the article on the Science Fiction Foundation (see p.12), I've some late news from George Hay. He's organising a conference on 'Science Fiction and its Applications'. It's a joint venture by the SFF and the International Science Policy Foundation. The chairman is Dr Maurice Goldsmith, and the subjects for discussion are introduced by Duncan Lunan, Alice Coleman, Tim Kindberg, David Brin and John Clute. The date is Thursday 9 July at Burgh House, Hampstead, London NW3, from 14.00 to 17.30. Tickets are £3.50, and are available from Pauline Fleasance, Burgh House, Tel: 01-431 0144.

\*\*\*\*\*

Deadline for next issue: Friday 17 July.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Walking On Glass

### CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

by Paul Kincaid

It's not going to be a long BSFA column this issue, mostly because of the amount of material we have to include, but also because we're saving ourselves for next time. I'm planning a big column next time about the BSFA past, present and future, especially for all those people who will, we hope, be seeing *Matrix* for the first time at Conspiracy 87. But there are two important things I want to let you know about now. The first, with Worldcon very much in mind, is:

#### The BSFA AGM

I've already mentioned that we will be holding our AGM at the Worldcon this year, but I want to take this opportunity to announce it officially. The date is, Sunday 30th August. The place is Brighton. The time is provisionally arranged for 11 am. We're still waiting for the Worldcon to confirm our room booking, so it is possible that the time may have to be moved to the early afternoon, but the date is fixed and I don't really expect the time to change. I'll be giving final details in my column next time, which should

be in everyone's hands well before the convention itself. Incidentally, since our AGM will not be in the main convention hotel, but in one of the other hotels nearby, there will be no problems if anyone wishes to attend the AGM without joining the convention itself.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### The BSFA goes into book publishing

That's the exciting news about a new offer we are able to make to you. Many of you will know of George Hay, author, editor, founding father of the Science Fiction Foundation, and a fellow judge on the Arthur C. Clarke Award. One of the many things that George turns his hands to is finding and republishing long out-of-print books for the English Language Society. Now he is offering those skills to the BSFA.

Are there long out-of-print books that you have virtually given up searching for? If so, let us know. If there is sufficient interest, George will search out the book, negotiate the tricky fields of copyright for us, and together we will make the book available to BSFA members at a special low rate. I think this is the sort of service that the BSFA should be offering to its members, but it all depends on you. Let me know if you are interested, and above all let me know of your suggestions for our first venture into publishing.

# NEWS

Compiled by Paul Kincaid, Stan Nicholls and Maureen Porter (with a little help from Locus and other sources)

James Tiptree Jr (the pen name of Alice Sheldon) killed her husband on 19th May, and then committed suicide.

We have no further details at the time of going to press, but look out for a full report and obituary in the next issue of *Matrix*.

\*\*\*\*\*

## AWARDS

The first Arthur C. Clarke Award has gone to Margaret Atwood for *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The Award was announced at Becon over Easter. Margaret Atwood herself was not there to receive the scroll and the cheque for £1,000, indeed there was some question whether she even knew about the award since even her publishers had been unable to contact her for some weeks. Harriet Spicer, Joint Managing Director of VIRAGO who are publishing the paperback edition of the book in June, had intended to be there to accept the award but was prevented at the last minute by family reasons. Instead she sent this message:

"We are delighted and honoured, both for Margaret Atwood and ourselves, that *The Handmaid's Tale* has been awarded the first Arthur C. Clarke prize. As the writer of outstandingly imaginative and intelligent science fiction, there is no better name than his to be associated with this book. We are also glad that the book will be brought to the attention of science fiction audiences, as they are particularly committed to upholding the traditions of creativity and daring which *The Handmaid's Tale* shows to be so important. Thank you."

The Award will now be presented to Margaret Atwood at a reading she is to give at the Shaw Theatre, London at 8.00pm on Thursday, 4th June.

The Arthur C. Clarke Award was chosen by representatives of the BSFA (Mike Moir, Paul Kincaid), the Science Fiction Foundation (John Clute, Edward James), and the International Science Policy Foundation (Dr. Maurice Goldsmith, George Hay). When the panel came to their final deliberations they were evenly split between *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Ragged Astronauts* by Bob Shaw. In the end Bob Shaw lost by the narrowest of margins, but there was to be compensation, since it was also announced at Becon that *The Ragged Astronauts* had won the BSFA Award.

\*\*\*\*\*

The full list of BSFA Awards was as follows:

NOVEL: *The Ragged Astronauts* - Bob Shaw  
SHORT FICTION: 'Kaeti and the Hangman' - Keith Roberts  
MEDIA: Aliens  
ART: 'The Clocktower Girl' - Keith Roberts

\*\*\*\*\*

There were problems with the Nebula Awards ballot. Apparently the accounting firm who handle the ballot forgot to include 'The Girl who Fell into the Sky' by Kate Wilhelm on the final ballot form. All the ballots had to be discounted, and new ballot forms sent out, with an extended deadline.

• TIPTREE KILLS HUSBAND, COMMITS SUICIDE  
• BSFA / CLARKE / NEBULA WINNERS  
• HUGO NOMINEES  
• BARRINGTON BAYLEY COURT VICTORY  
• RANDOM HOUSE TAKE OVER CAPE  
• LANDIS TRIAL UPDATE

Despite this delay the winners have now been announced, as follows (winners in bold with the full short list following):

## NOVEL

*Speaker for the Dead* - Orson Scott Card  
*Count Zero* - William Gibson  
*Free Live Free* - Gene Wolfe  
*The Handmaid's Tale* - Margaret Atwood  
*The Journal of Nicholas the American* - Leigh Kennedy  
*This is the Way the World Ends* - James Morrow

## NOVELLA

'R-R' - Lucius Shepard  
'Dydetown Girl' - F. Paul Wilson  
'Escape from Kathmandu' - Kim Stanley Robinson  
'Newton Sleep' - Greg Benford  
'Glimpesh in the Outback' - Robert Silverberg

## NOVELETTE

'The Girl Who Fell into the Sky' - Kate Wilhelm  
'Aymara' - Lucius Shepard  
'Hatrack River' - Orson Scott Card  
'Listening to Brahms' - Suzy McKee Charnas  
'Pernafrost' - Roger Zelazny  
'Surviving' - Judith Moffett  
'The Winter Market' - William Gibson

## SHORT STORY

'Tangents' - Greg Bear  
'The Boy Who Plaited Manes' - Nancy Springer  
'The Lions are Asleep this Night' - Howard Waldrop  
'Pretty Boy Crossover' - Pat Cadigan  
'Rat' - James Patrick Kelly  
'Robot Dreams' - Isaac Asimov

In addition, Isaac Asimov was made a Grand Master of SF by the SFWA.

It is presumably no more than coincidence that the Kate Wilhelm novelette which was the cause of the ballot problems actually went on to win the award.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ballot problems have also beset the nominations for the Hugo Award. Close to the original deadline for receipt of nominations it was discovered that the ballot forms had not reached anyone in Australia, and that many American members had also not received them. Investigations revealed that this was due to unofficial strike action at a London sorting office. To give everyone the chance to vote, the nominating ballot was then mailed again to every member of the convention, and the deadline extended until 1st May. As a result the accountancy firm handling the Hugo ballots (OK, it's really Paul Kincaid and an Amstrad) has received roughly as many nominations as the last Worldcon, despite a somewhat smaller membership.

The short list for the Hugo Award is as follows:

## NOVEL

*Speaker for the Dead* - Orson Scott Card  
(Tor/Century)  
*Count Zero* - William Gibson (Gollancz/Arbor House)  
*Black Genesis* - L. Ron Hubbard (Bridge/New Era)  
*The Ragged Astronauts* - Bob Shaw (Gollancz/Baen)  
*Narrated in Realtime* - Vernor Vinge  
(Analog/Bluejay)

Total votes cast: 475

## NOVELLA

'Eifelheim' - Michael Flynn Analog 11/86  
 'Escape from Kathmandu' - Kim Stanley Robinson  
 IASFM 9/86  
 'R+R' - Lucius Shepard IASFM 4/86  
 'Gilegash in the Outback' - Robert Silverberg  
 Rebels in Hell/IASFM 7/86  
 'Spice Pogrom' - Connie Willis IASFM 10/86  
 Total votes cast: 208

## NOVELETTE

'Thor Meets Captain America' - David Brin F&SF  
 7/86  
 'Batrack River' - Orson Scott Card IASFM 8/86  
 'The Winter Market' - William Gibson Stardate  
 3/86, Interzone 15, Burning Chrome\*  
 'The Barbarian Princess' - Vernor Vinge Analog  
 9/86  
 'Permafrost' - Roger Zelazny Omni 4/86  
 Total votes cast: 242

\*The Gibson novelette previously received limited distribution in the Vancouver area in 1985, but 1986 was the first year in which it received general distribution.

## SHORT STORY

'Robot Dreams' - Isaac Asimov Robot Dreams, IASFM  
 Mid-Dec 86  
 'Tangents' - Greg Bear Omni 1/86  
 'Still Life' - David Garnett F&SF 3/86  
 'Rat' - James Patrick Kelly F&SF 6/86  
 'The Boy Who Plaited Hanes' - Nancy Springer F&SF  
 10/86  
 Total votes cast: 281

## NON-FICTION

*Trillion Year Spree* - Brian Aldiss with David  
 Vining (Gollancz/Atheneum)  
*Science Fiction in Print: 1985* - Charles W. Brown  
 & William G. Contento (Locust Press)  
*The Dark Knight Returns* - Frank Miller et al.  
 (Warner/Titan)  
*Industrial Light and Magic: The Art of Special  
 Effects* - Thomas G. Smith (Del Rey)  
*Only Apparently Real* - Paul Williams (Arbor House)  
 Total votes cast: 192

## DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

*Aliens* (20th Century Fox)  
*The Fly* (20th Century Fox)  
*Labyrinth* (Lucasfilms)  
*Little Shop of Horrors* (Geffen)  
*Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (Paramount)  
 Total votes cast: 344

## PROFESSIONAL ARTIST

Jim Burns  
 Frank Kelly Freas  
 Tom Kidd  
 Don Meitz  
 J.K. Potter  
 Barclay Shaw

(W.B. Michael Whelan, received enough nominations to be included on the shortlist, but had already declared he did not wish to be nominated before the ballots went out.)

Total votes cast: 317

## PROFESSIONAL EDITOR

Terry Carr  
 Gardner Dozois  
 Ed Ferman  
 David Hartwell  
 Stan Schmidt

Total votes cast: 257

## SEMI-PROZINE

*Interzone* Ed David Pringle & Simon Ounsley  
*Fantasy Review* Ed. Robert A. Collins

*Locus* Ed. Charles W. Brown  
*Science Fiction Chronicle* Ed. Andrew Porter  
*Science Fiction Review* Ed Richard Geis

Total votes cast: 269

## FAN WRITER

Mike Glycer  
 Arthur Hlavaty  
 Dave Langford  
 Patrick Nielsen Hayden  
 Simon Ounsley  
 D. West

Total votes cast: 226

## FAN ARTIST

Brad Foster  
 Stu Shiffman  
 Steve Fox  
 Taral  
 Arthur (ATOM) Thomson

Total votes cast: 213

## FANZINE

*Ansible* - Dave Langford  
*File 770* - Mike Glycer  
*Las's Lantern* - George Laskowski  
*Texas SF Inquirer* - Pat Mueller  
*Trapdoor* - Robert Lichtman

Total votes cast: 269

## JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD

Lois McMaster Bujold\*  
 Karen Joy Fowler\*  
 Leo Frankowski  
 Katherine Eliska Kimbriel  
 Rebecca Brown Ore  
 Robert Touzalin Reed

\* Second year of eligibility.

Total votes cast: 217

\*\*\*\*\*

The winner of the 1987 Philip K. Dick Memorial Award has been announced. It is James P. Blaylock for *Homunculus*. Blaylock wins \$1,000. The runner up, who wins \$500, was Jack McDevitt for *The Hercules Test*. The award is for the best original paperback novel of the year, and is chosen by a panel of judges who, this year, consisted of Raymond E. Feist, Tim Powers, Marta Randall, Lewis Shiner and Gary K. Wolf.

Coincidentally, both novels were published by ACE, which has so far published all five winners.

The Judges for the 1988 Philip K. Dick Award have also been announced. They are: James P. Blaylock, Lisa Goldstein, Russell Letson, Rudy Rucker and Vernor Vinge.

\*\*\*\*\*

And yet more awards. The shortlist for the 1987 Compton Cook Award has been announced. The award, for the best first novel of the year, consists of a cash prize given by the Baltimore SF Society at their convention Balticon. The nominees are:

*Shards of Honour* - Lois McMaster Bujold  
*The Game of Fox and Lion* - Robert R. Chase  
*The Cross-Time Engineer* - Leo Frankowski  
*A Hidden Place* - Robert Charles Wilson  
*The Doomsday Effect* - Thomas Wren

\*\*\*\*\*

Harlan Ellison has won the 1987 Screenwriters Award for 'Paladin of the Lost Hour', an episode in the most recent series of *Twilight Zone*.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Always Coming Home* by Ursula K. LeGuin has won the Janet Heidinger Kafka Award for the best novel by an American woman in 1985.

\*\*\*\*\*

Arthur C. Clarke is the recipient of the 1987 Lindbergh Award presented by the Charles A. Lindbergh Fund. The annual award is given to an individual whose lifetime's work has contributed to the balance of technological advancement and preservation of the environment. The award was made at the Fund's annual Awards Dinner on 20th May, which was this year held in Paris as part of the 60th anniversary celebration commemorating Charles Lindbergh's flight from New York to Paris.

Clarke is the tenth recipient of the award, which has previously been given to people like Jacques Cousteau and Thor Heyerdahl.

\*\*\*\*\*

And now there's a chance for you to win an award. The Royal Exchange Theatre Company in Manchester has announced the latest *Mobil Playwriting Competition*. The first prize is £10,000; second prize £5,000; third prize £3,000; International prize for a play by a foreign writer £3,000; Michael Elliott prize for a writer resident in the North West of England £3,000; and a special prize for a writer worthy of special recognition £1,000. The competition is for a full length play (estimated playing time 100 minutes or more) on any subject, and the deadline for entry is 16 January 1988. For full details of the competition contact: The Mobil Playwriting Competition, The Royal Exchange Theatre Company, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7DH. Our correspondent Roy Gray reports that the competition receives thousands of entries, but the Literary Manager cannot remember seeing any science fiction.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### PEOPLE

Barrington J. Bayley has been awarded £5,000 damages against publishers ALLISON & BUSBY by Westminster County Court. It is the culmination of a legal battle that began in June 1985 when Bayley charged Allison & Busby with non-payment of royalties on seven of his books. The High Court ruled in his favour in October of that year and Bayley received the money and the copyright on the books was returned to him. Then in April this year Bayley returned to the fray, charging A&B with infringement of contracts by failing to offer him first refusal on copies of his books sold on the remainder market. At the hearing in May it was claimed that 2,851 copies of four titles - including *The Soul of the Robot* and *The Fall of Chronopolis* had been sold to the book trade without reference to Bayley. Michael Moorcock and David Tate (former manager of Forbidden Planet) gave evidence on Bayley's behalf, and there were affidavits from Rog Peyton of Andromeda and Michael Butterworth of Savoy, all establishing the ability of SF authors to handle the sale of their own remainders, and the market that exists for them. Before the hearing A&B had gone into receivership, owing an estimated £100,000 in royalties alone, and the case was unopposed. Bayley was awarded the maximum amount of damages allowed by law, but with other creditors chasing A&B's assets it is unclear how much he will eventually receive. Though his expenses are covered by legal aid, Bayley reckons the delay in coming to court and the legal limit on damages have cost him £7,000. "The crooks managed to crawl out from under in the end," he commented.

\*\*\*\*\*

Douglas Adams is suing his former accountant for professional negligence in respect of money set aside to meet taxes.

For the past few years Adams has earmarked a slice of his earnings from *Hitch Hiker's Guide* books and spinoffs to cover his tax obligations. In April his solicitors were granted a Consent Judgement against the accountant, Lawrence Barnett, totaling approximately £342,000. They have also lodged a complaint with the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants, which will consider mounting an official investigation once the outcome of the legal proceedings is known. Meanwhile HM Inspector of Taxes insist their assessment is still outstanding and are demanding payment.

Adams, said to have been paid an advance of between \$2 and \$3 million for his two forthcoming *Dirk Gently* novels, is quoted as saying "I know I'm lucky to have to pay so much tax; it seems a bit much to have to pay it twice over, though."

For the time being he has abandoned plans to build a swimming pool beneath the garden of his North London house.

\*\*\*\*\*

Horror writer James Herbert has cancelled a promotional tour in Ireland in the paperback edition of *The Magic Cottage* following a close encounter with a bonfire on 25th April.

He was trying to light a pile of old wood in the garden of his Sussex home and managed to set fire to himself in the process. He lost his eyebrows and lashes, scorched his face and burnt his arm. "I was really terrified," commented the author of *The Rats* and *The Fog*. "My shirt melted and I'm in a bit of a state. I still can't shake hands but I'm lucky it wasn't worse."

Meanwhile, HODDER are to publish his new novel, *Sepulchre* this summer. A proposed TV series about a psychic detective based on Herbert's stories may now become a BBC TV movie instead this Christmas.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gene Wolfe has just delivered the manuscript for his next novel, *There are Doors*, a dark comedy about a department store clerk who falls in love with a goddess which seems to have distinct overtones of Thorne Smith. He also has a contract for *Soldier of Arete*, the sequel to *Soldier of the Mist* and second volume in what is intended to be an open-ended series. Meanwhile *The Urth of the New Sun* will be coming out from GOLLANCZ in time for the Worldcon, and the paperback rights have already been sold to FUTURA.

\*\*\*\*\*

Frederik Pohl will be spending at least part of the time in London next spring. His wife, Elizabeth Anne Hull, has just been promoted to full professor at Harper College and will be teaching in London between January and April 1988. Pohl will therefore be dividing his time between London and their home in Illinois.

\*\*\*\*\*

Garry Kilworth, as noted in the last issue, suddenly seems to be very prolific, so it wasn't really all that surprising to find him contributing articles on Mecca and Ayers Rock to the newly published *The Atlas of Mysterious Places*.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bob Shaw had an article in *The Independent* on Tuesday 26 May, explaining the nightmarish side effects he suffered when he took the drug Ponderax to help him lose weight. One result of the drowsiness, headaches, giddiness, depression and murderous, unreasoning anger was that he got seriously behind with work on his new novel. Fortunately he discovered what was happening in

time and he is now off the drug (and keeping his weight down), and his writing is back on course.

\*\*\*\*\*

David Pringle, recently appointed SF consultant to SIMON AND SCHUSTER UK, is currently at work upon a sequel to his *Science Fiction: The 100 Best Books*, selecting the 100 best fantasy novels since 1945.

\*\*\*\*\*

Barely two years late, it appears that Samuel R. Delany has finally delivered the manuscript for *The Splendour and Misery of Bodies, of Cities*, the second volume of his 'diptych' which began with *Stars in my Pocket Like Grains of Sand*.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gwyneth Jones has come up with a good excuse for possibly missing the Worldcon this year - she is expecting her first baby that weekend. Meanwhile another of her children's books under the name Ann Halam, *The Daymaker* has just been published by ORCHARD BOOKS.

\*\*\*\*\*

Robert Silverberg married Karen Haber at a ceremony in Oakland on 14th February - St Valentine's Day.

Authors Diane Duane and Peter Morwood have got married in ceremonies on the East and West coasts of America, and in Ireland. I wonder if they thought one wasn't binding enough?

Meanwhile Bruce Sterling's wife Nancy gave birth to a daughter, Amy Joyce, on 31st March.

\*\*\*\*\*

Paul J. McAuley, the *Interzone* discovery who has gone on to have stories in a number of American magazines, has just sold his first novel, *Four Hundred Billion Stars*, to Del Rey Books in the US. Estimated publication date is the middle of 1988.

Neil Gaiman's *Don't Panic: The Hitchhiker's Guide Companion* is due out from TITAN this autumn.

The new novel from J.G. Ballard is to be called *The Day of Creation* and is set in contemporary Africa.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### OBITUARIES

Terry Carr died on 7 April aged 50. He had apparently had a long history of ill health, including diabetes, and chronic respiratory and circulatory problems, and had been in hospital in early March for tests. He was at home convalescing when he died.

Terry Carr was one of the most respected and well liked people in the science fiction community. Like many of the writers of his generation he began his career as an active fan, winning Hugos in 1959 for his fanzine *Fanzac* (edited with Ron Elik), and in 1973 as Fan Writer. In fact a collection of his excellent fanwriting has just been published under the title *Pandom Harvest*. As a professional writer, particularly during the 60s and 70s, he made his name with a number of superbly crafted, witty and effective short stories, notably 'Hop-Friend', 'The Dance of the Changer and the Three', 'Ozymandias' and 'They Live on Levels'. He is also the author of one very fine novel, *Cirque* (1977). However it is as editor that he has had the most lasting effect upon science fiction, having been responsible for the *Universe* series of original anthologies, the annual *Best Science Fiction of the Year* collections which are surely among the best and



most intelligent of that breed, and the two series of Ace Specials.

\*\*\*\*\*

Theodore R. Cogswell died on 3 February aged 68. He was a fine but far from prolific short story writer who has not, therefore, achieved the sort of reputation that stories like 'The Wall Around the World' clearly deserve. One of the most notable features of his work is a sharp sense of humour, shown off in stories like 'Probability Zero! The Population Implosion' which 'proved' that the population of Britain has been declining steadily since 1000 AD. But he was also adept at a number of literary styles, and wrote a number of acclaimed horror stories. Born in 1918, he lied about his age in order to join the Republican forces in Spain, serving as an ambulance driver throughout the Spanish Civil War. Later he became an academic, founding and editing the *Proceedings of the Institute of Twenty-First Century Studies*, one of the first instances of serious academic study of science fiction.

\*\*\*\*\*

John D. MacDonald, the prolific writer of mysteries and other novels, died on 25 December 1986 from complications following a heart bypass operation. He was 70. While serving with the OSS during World War Two, he wrote and sold his first story. Following the war he established himself as one of the most prolific of all pulp writers, producing some 77 books and 500 stories. Though best known as a mystery writer, particularly for his Travis McGee novels, he also wrote a number of SF stories and at least three SF novels. The best of his science fiction is collected in *Other Times, Other Worlds* (1978).

\*\*\*\*\*

Richard Wilson, Nebula Award winning author, died of cancer on 29 March, aged 67. A long time fan,

he was a member of the Futurians during the late 30's and early 40's. His first short story, 'Murder from Mars', appeared in *Astonishing* in 1940. A steady stream of stories followed, including three novels between 1955 and 1960, generally satirical and humorous. In the novel *The Girls from Planet Five*, for instance, Texas is the only state in America not to have fallen to a matriarchy, then they face an alien invasion, by women. His later stories preserved the humour, but also exhibited a growing seriousness and sensitivity, culminating in the gentle tale of the end of the world, 'Mother to the World', which won the Nebula as the best novelette of 1968.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ejler Jakobsen, former editor of *Galaxy* and *If*, is reported to have died early in 1966, though here are no details of date or cause. Born in Finland, he emigrated to America in 1926 and became an editor pulp magazines during the 1930s. At various times he worked on *Super Science Stories*, and *Astonishing Stories*, and in 1959 he succeeded Frederik Pohl as editor of *Galaxy* and *If* when the titles were sold to Universal Publishing. In 1973 he handed over the reins of *If* to Jim Baen, and in 1974 Baen also took over *Galaxy*. Jakobsen retired shortly after. He was 75 at the time of his death.

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Polly Freas, wife of award winning artist Frank Kelly Freas, died of cancer on 24 January. A long time fan, she met Kelly Freas at an SF club meeting in 1949 and married him in 1952, she was his only model for nearly 20 years.

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Ben Mahaffey, who was variously editor and managing editor of the magazine *Other Worlds* between 1949 and 1956, died of emphysema on 28 March, aged 60.

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## PUBLISHING

The biggest news in publishing at the moment is that JONATHAN CAPE, CHATTO & WINDUS, and THE BODLEY HEAD have been taken over by American publishers RANDOM HOUSE. Graham C. Greene the chairman of the embattled publishing group whose financial viability has been seriously questioned recently, will join the board of Random House, as will the Cape chairman Tom Maschler.

All three publishing houses have brought out occasional science fiction and fantasy titles. Cape authors include Christopher Priest and Doris Lessing, while Chatto includes Lucius Shepard and Tim Powers on its list, and Garry Kilworth's non-SF novels are published by Bodley Head. It is obviously too soon to predict how this will affect the plans of the three publishers, though one director of Random House has already stressed the continuing editorial independence of each outfit.

The take-over comes as the culmination of months of serious financial and creative problems for the group, and for Cape in particular. These problems first became public when Liz Calder, one of Cape's most successful editors, left to found BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING. There was speculation at the time that many of the authors she worked with would leave Cape after that, and indeed Brian Aldiss among others did leave, going to GOLLANCZ by way of KEROSINA. Things came to a head, however, when Graham Greene publicly denounced his nephew, Graham C. Greene, and threatened to move to another publisher unless 'necessary changes in administration' were made. Since the Cape list in particular contains some of the most acclaimed and respected of contemporary authors, it remains to be seen what effect the Random House take-over will have.

VIRAGO, who were a member of the Cape, Chatto, Bodley Head group, escaped the take-over by way of a last minute management buy-out. This leaves Virago as one of the very few independent publishing houses remaining in London.

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The Random House take-over is just the latest in a string of transatlantic publishing manoeuvres. Last year PENGUIN took over VIKING and NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY, and on the last day of last year the successful American SF publishing house TOR was bought by ST MARTIN'S PRESS, a subsidiary of MACMILLAN (UK). Meanwhile BANTAM and SIMON AND SCHUSTER have both set up operations in this country. The Bantam list, and the appointment of David Pringle as SF consultant for Simon and Schuster, could mean that the immediate effect of all these changes will be a bonanza for science fiction fans.

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Meanwhile Rupert Murdoch took over HARPER & ROW recently for \$300 million, and news is just in that his old rival Robert Maxwell has launched a \$2 billion takeover bid for HARCOURT, BRACE, JOVANOVIICH. How this is likely to affect the publishing world in general, or science fiction in particular is unclear. HBJ were responsible for the short-lived JOVE imprint which included the Harlan Ellison Discovery Series.

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UNWIN HYMAN have finally announced that their Unicorn fantasy imprint and Orion SF imprint have been axed. The Orion imprint has only been in existence for a year, but all fantasy and SF will now be published under the general Unwin imprint. It is hoped that the new arrangement will allow them to broaden the scope of the work they will be publishing, and editor Jane Johnson is working hard to expand their list. As reported in the last issue of *Matrix*, their latest acquisition is Garry Kilworth. In September UNWIN will be publishing the paperback of *Theatre of Time*, and they have also bought the paperback rights to *Songbirds of Pain*, as well as his new novel *Cloudrock*. Jane Johnson further reports that she is still "on the look out for a high-flier."

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HEADLINE, the new publishing house which has Jo Fletcher as its adviser on SF and fantasy, has finally announced its autumn list. Titles include: *The Power* - Ian Watson, *The Folk of the Air* - Peter Beagle, *Shadows II* - ed. Charles L. Grant, *The Forest King* - C. Edwards, *Who Made Stevie Cry?* - Michael Bishop (with illustrations by J.K. Potter), *The Timekeeper Conspiracy* - Simon Hawke, *Soulstorm* - Chet Williamson, *Daughter of the Bear King* - Eleanor Arnason and *Between the Strokes of Night* - Charles Sheffield.

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ORBIT are planning a big promotion to coincide with the Worldcon. Instead of their usual three titles a month, their list for August includes nine books: *Star Rebel* - F.M. Busby, *Man of Two Worlds* - Frank & Brian Herbert, *The Bus* - Paul Kirchner, *The Ragged Astronauts* - Bob Shaw, *The Planet on the Table* - Kim Stanley Robinson, *Downtide* - Sydney J. Van Scyoc, *Knight Moves* - Walter John Williams, *Soldier of the Mist* - Gene Wolfe and *The Orbit Poster Book*.

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## NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

ARROW *The Unlikely Ones* - Mary Brown, *The Silver Vortex* and *Guardians of the Tall Stones* - Moyra Caldecott, *God Game* - Andrew M. Greeley, *Speaking of Dinosaurs* - Philip B. High, *The Quest for Saint*



Camber - Katherine Kurtz, *Delusion's Master and Night's Master* - Tanith Lee.

BANTAM *Master of the Sidhe* - Kenneth C. Flint, *Saraband of lost Time* - Richard Grant.

CENTURY *Speaker for the Dead* - Orson Scott Card.

CHATTO *Fireworks and Love* - Angela Carter, *The Shore of Women* - Pamela Sargent.

CORGI *The Wordsmith and the Warguild* - Hugh Cook, *Queen of the Lightning and Ghost in the Sunlight* - Kathleen Herbert, *Shape Changers* - Jennifer Roberson, *The Isle of Glass* - Judith Tarr.

FONTANA *The Ring of Allaire* - Susan Dexter, *The Prophet of Lamath* - Robert Don Hughes.

FUTURA *Soul-Eater* - Dana Brookins, *Wintermind* - Marvin Kaye & Parke Godwin, *Fool's Run* - Patricia McKillip, *Imaginary Lands* - ed. Robin McKinley, *Silverglass* - J.F. Rivkin, *Tom O'Bedlam* - Robert Silverberg, *All Judgement Pled* - James White.

GOLLANCZ *The Gollancz/Sunday Times SF Competition Stories, A Goose on your Grave* - Joan Aiken, *The Fall of the Families* - Phillip Mann, *The Legacy of Horror* - Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle & Steven Barnes, *Star of Gypsies* - Robert Silverberg, *Hegira* - Greg Bear, *Angel With the Sword* - C.J. Cherryh, *The Other Side of the Sky* - Arthur C. Clarke, *Mission of Gravity* - Hal Clement, *Bye Among the Blind* - Robert Holdstock, *Flowers for Algernon* - Daniel Keyes, *Witch World and Web of the Witch World* - Andre Norton, *Eight Walk* - Bob Shaw, *The Masks of Time* - Robert Silverberg, *The Faceless Man* - Jack Vance.

GRAFTON *Replay* - Ken Grimwood, *The Alternate Animovs* - Isaac Asimov, *Cold Print* - Ramsey Campbell, *Worm* - Simon Ian Childers, *Radio Free Albemuth* - Philip K. Dick, *The Swords of Goran* - Michael Moorcock, *Dinner at Deviant's Palace and The Drawing of the Dark* - Tim Powers, *Green Eyes* - Lucius Shepard, *Fade Out* - Patrick Tilley, *The Seven Altars of Dismarra* - Lawrence Watt-Evans.

GREENHILL *Master of his Fate* - J. MacLaren Cobben, *The Blind Spot* - Austin Hall & Homer Eon Flint. HEINEMAN *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* - Douglas Adams.

KEROSINA *Grainne and A Heron Caught in Weeds* - Keith Roberts.

MACDONALD *The Eyes of the Dragon* - Stephen King, *Ambulance Ship* - James White.

METHUEN *The Shift Key* - John Brunner, *The Marathon Photograph* - Clifford D. Simak.

MORRIGAN *Death Arms* - K.V. Jeter.

NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY *The Magic Cottage* - James Herbert, *Emergence* - David R. Palmer.

ORCHARD *The Daymaker* - Ann Halam.

PAN *The Deceivers* - Alfred Bester, *The Exile Waiting* - Vonda McIntyre.

PAPER TIGER *Elric at the End of Time* - Michael Moorcock (illus. Rodney Matthews).

PICADOR *Castle of Crossed Destinies* - Italo Calvino.

PENGUIN *The Book of Imaginary Beings* - Jorge Luis Borges, *The Wanderer* - Fritz Leiber, *Kiteworld* - Keith Roberts, *War of the Twins* - Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman, *Men Like Gods* - H.G. Wells.

PUFFIN *Children of Morrow* - H.K. Hoover, *High Deeds of Finn Mac Cool* - Rosemary Sutcliffe.

SEVERN HOUSE *Gabriel* - Lisa Tuttle.

SPHERE *Magician's Law: Tales of the Bard* - Michael Scott, *Iron Master* - Patrick Tilley, *Nicor!* - Peter Tremayne.

UNWIN *The Dream Wall* - Graham Dunstan Martin, *The High Kings* - Joy Chant, *A Storm of Wings* - M. John Harrison, *The Summer Tree* and *The Wandering Fire* - Guy Gavriel Kay.

VIKING *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* - H.F. Saint.

VIRAGO *The Handmaid's Tale* - Margaret Atwood.

WOMEN'S PRESS *The Incomer* - Margaret Elphinstone, *Woman on the Edge of Time* - Marge Piercy, *Star Rider* - Doris Piserchia, *A Door into Ocean* - Joan Slonczewski.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

Mary Whitehouse has called for Dungeons and Dragons to be banned.

The clean-up TV campaigner and head of the National Viewers and Listeners Association, made her call on 26 May. She claimed that D&D has so far caused the deaths of 90 teenagers in this country. She says they have committed suicide because they have become too caught up in the game.

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Fantasy games are said to be behind a series of bombings in America.

Two students of Hudsonville High School, Michigan, were charged on 9th March with causing a series of explosions in the area. Hudsonville Police Chief Richard Honholt said the teenagers, Joel Gras (17) and Jeffrey Schmidt (18), were fans of Dungeons and Dragons, horror movies, and what he described as "blood cults". Honholt added that he suspected "these type of things were the motivation" behind the bombings of a telephone booth in downtown Hudsonville and a wooden ticket office near their school. No-one was hurt in the explosions.

Schmidt and Gras were arraigned on two counts of placing explosives with damage resulting. The charges carry a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison.

The case has given succour to various "moral majority" groups in America, which have been campaigning against what they see as the "pernicious" influence of fantasy adventure games and comic books.

\*\*\*\*\*

Britain's first 3-D cinema opened at Easter.

Supercinema 3-D is a new attraction at the Flambard Theme Park in Cornwall. It employs state-of-the-art technology, with 70mm projection and six-channel stereo sound. There are no seats in the auditorium, as the 50' long by 40' high screen is wraparound, and viewers have to wear the familiar red and green glasses.

At the moment the programme on offer consists of a twelve minute compilation, including a roller coaster ride, gymnasts, a high-speed car chase and a tour of a haunted house.

Initial reaction has been good, and the owners hope to present longer features in future. Although asking audiences to stand, and the dislike most people have of wearing the glasses for long periods, are obvious limiting factors.

Flambards say they are already looking to the next generation of three-dimensional cinema, based on holography, which would have the advantages of high resolution images and no need for glasses.

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Britain has lost out to France in its bid to provide the first Disneyland outside the USA.

After 16 months of negotiations with the French government, Walt Disney Productions signed a contract in late March to build Europe's biggest theme park 20 miles east of Paris at Marne-la-Vallée. The project will cost \$1.25 billion and provide 20,000 jobs. It is expected to be finished in 1992. Disney estimates 10 million people a year will visit the attraction. American companies, including Disney, will have a 40% share in the construction consortium, with European interests holding the remaining 60%. The deal includes the extension of existing road and rail systems to service the new Disneyland, which should open at about the same time the Channel tunnel is finished. The project is the result of a three-year search by Disney for a suitable location in Europe. Several places in England were considered, and at one time Barcelona was a serious contender. French will be the official language on the site and an area will be provided for an exhibition of French cultural achievements. The sale of alcohol is forbidden at the Disney parks in California and Florida, but it looks as though a concession will be made in this direction too, with French wines being made available.

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George Lucas' innovative *Star Tours* space flight ride opened at Disneyland in January to praise from veteran astronaut Deke Slayton. Slayton said: "It was amazingly like the real thing. If I had an ejection handle when we started to go down, I think I would have pulled it."

Lucas predicts that his attraction is the forerunner of even more elaborate rides to come. "The prospects are very exciting," he states. "The technology is just about developed to bring some of the effects on this ride to full-size movie theatres." *Star Tours*, created by Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic Company, in association with the Disney Imagineers Department, carries 40 riders on a trip through the heavens on a mock spaceship. The craft itself moves from side to side and these movements, coupled with filmed images projected on interior screens, gives a very realistic impression of actually racing through space. It is already the top attraction at the California leisure park.

\*\*\*\*\*

Parents and consumer groups in America are troubled by the latest big money-spinner for toy manufacturers: interactive toys.

The leading toy makers in the States sponsor a whole series of children's TV shows, which are really nothing more than glorified puffs for their products. Now, new technology has enabled them to link the two in what they hope will be a very profitable way. Interactive toys, such as Mattel's Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future and Axlon's Tech Force, are activated by subliminal signals carried in the cartoon programmes both on air and via video cassettes. The toys, which move in response to these signals, are not cheap - the Captain Power components add up to more than \$100, and Tech Force costs around \$250. Opponents of the new toys object on two grounds. First, they are worried that such pricey products will create two classes of children - those whose parents can afford them, and those who can't. Second, they are concerned about the possible effects on children's imaginations of toys that respond to television signals instead of the children themselves. The American toy industry achieved retail sales of more than \$12 billion last year.

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American 'anti-cult' groups have expressed fears that L. Ron Hubbard's *Kriya Earth* series of ten science fiction novels may add \$10 million to

Scientology's income this year. In a deal signed by Hubbard shortly before his death, Scientology was nominated as the main beneficiary of royalties from the series.

The novels, although generally poorly received by critics, appear to be selling well, with editions now available in 41 countries. This may have much to do with a massive advertising campaign by publishers BRIDGE and NEW ERA. A spokesman for the Los Angeles company who handle Hubbard's literary affairs said "We have a very hot property."

In the 60s a High Court judge branded the Church of Scientology: "corrupt, immoral and dangerous."

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#### MEDIA

The trial of John Landis and five others for the deaths of Vic Morrow and two children during filming of *The Twilight Zone* movie continues in Los Angeles. 167 people have been subpoenaed as witnesses by the prosecution but one, co-executive producer Frank Marshall, seems to have evaded his legal obligation to testify.

It is standard practice in Los Angeles to send subpoenas through the mail, with recipients telephoning in to acknowledge they have been served. However, according to Gerald Loeb, Senior Investigator for the LA District Attorney's Office, "Some people squawked". Among these was a man who managed to avoid the DA's office for several months, but was eventually forced to accept the order under threat of arrest. About half those served were actually called to testify. But Marshall refused to co-operate in any way, and as the document requiring him to give evidence had to be served on US soil, he has simply spent most of the time since the tragedy in Europe. Last August, US authorities discovered that Marshall was staying at the St James Hotel in London. In an elaborate plan to serve the papers, Sgt Tom Budd of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department was dispatched to confront him. The idea was to lure Marshall into the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square. But when embassy officials asked him to call in and discuss an unspecified matter he got wind of the plot and fled to Paris. There has been speculation that Marshall was so determined to avoid appearing because his evidence would have been detrimental to the defendants.

The LA District Attorney's office has no plans to take the matter further. "That's it," says Loeb, "he's evaded service." Asked if it was common for people to escape this way, Loeb stated, "If you have money, it's common."

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A macabre detail concerning the pirate video of Elvis Presley's autopsy, which we mentioned last issue, has come to light. It seems the video had a music soundtrack, consisting of Elvis singing ... *Wooden Heart*.

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The film version of J.G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* - currently being shot in Trebujat Spain - has run into trouble with local union officials. They have filed charges of discriminatory hiring against director Steven Spielberg's production company. The union claims the company is biased in its policy of seeking to employ only "the lame, disabled and Orientals" as extras, at the expense of a large pool of unemployed in the region. Warner Bros says 300 extras will be required for the film, set in a Japanese prisoner of war camp during the Second World War.

\*\*\*\*\*

A new fantasy-oriented sitcom, *The Charmings*, is currently being aired by ABC in America.

The programme is the latest addition to a plethora of SF and fantasy TV shows including *Starman*, the new *Twilight Zone* and *ALF*. The concept is similar to that used in *Star Trek IV*, where the fun is derived from having the *Enterprise* crew visit present-day San Francisco. The switch in *The Charmings* is that the principal characters are from the past. Prince Charming (Christopher Rich) and Snow White (Caitlin O'Heaney) have slept for a thousand years as the result of a curse placed on them by evil Queen Lillian (Judy Parfitt). They awake in 1987 and most of the humour is built around the way the innocents react to contemporary America. Prince Charming dons armour and rides to job interviews on his white stallion, their mirror image on the wall (the voice of Paul Winfield) spends all day watching *The Price is Right*, and so on. Most critics seem unimpressed, with such comments as "asinine", "feeble" and "a stupid, well-worn idea" being bandied about. As yet, there are no plans to show *The Charmings* in Britain.

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Dan Dare and his sidekick Digby have been recruited by Mobil Oil.

By the time this appears, two TV advertisements featuring the Pilot of the Future should be a familiar sight on British screens. The campaign was conceived by advertising agency Lowell, Howard, Spink, Marshall and is targeted at the 35-45 age group. The ads are designed to highlight the Mobil corporate image in general and their unleaded petrol and synthetic oils in particular. Described as having "an element of the tongue-in-cheek", the commercials show Dan and Digby having trouble with their spaceship and calling in to a Mobil garage for help. The producers have gone to a lot of trouble in recreating an authentic look in the ads, with the opening shot resembling the first panel of the old strips.

Dan Dare, created by comic artist Frank Hampson, first appeared in issue one of *Eagle* in 1950. Since then the character has had various

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COMPETITION CORNER  
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By Elizabeth Sourbut

Hello, and welcome once again to the BSFA conundrum. The *Matrix* 69 Puzzle drew more entries than of my previous efforts, no fewer than 37, but that still leaves about 963 of you who are missing out on the chance of winning that £5 book token, so come on, let's hear from you. Thank you to everyone who did enter, and particularly to all those who included encouraging notes. It makes me feel this job is really worthwhile!

There were a lot of very good entries, but no-one scored full marks. Come on you lot, there must be someone out there who knows more about SF than I do! Special mention goes to the following: on 51 points: P. T. Ross, Steve Bailey, Simon Walker, Nicholas Mahoney, Azizul Namin, Steve Malone, and Rob Freeth & Mark Hewlett; on 52 is Steve Tew, on 54: Jack Stephen, S. C. Hatch, and Valerie Housden; and tying for first place on 57 points (all stumbled by no.11 incidentally) are: Alasdair Montgomery, Michael Gould, Roger Robinson, K Marsland, and John Fairley. As we can only afford one prize per competition, an impartial, non-BSFA member drew the winning name out of a hat. And the winner is: Roger Robinson. Congratulations! A £5 book token is on its way to you. May I suggest you spend it on a copy of *Behold the Man*?

The complete answers were: 1. Stranger in a Strange Land - Robert A Heinlein; 2. The City and the Stars - Arthur C Clarke; 3. The Dispossessed - Ursula K LeGuin; 4. The Rose - Charles L Harness; 5. Neuromancer - William Gibson; 6. Inverted World - Christopher Priest; 7. City - Clifford D Simak; 8. The Shadow of the Torturer - Gene Wolfe; 9. The Day of the Triffids - John Woodland; 10. The War of the Worlds - H G Wells; 11. Behold the Man - Michael Moorcock; 12. 1984 - George Orwell; 13. Dying Inside - Robert Silverberg; 14. Flowers for

incarnations, including a Radio Luxembourg programme, several novelisations, and a generally unsuccessful revival in 2000 AD. A film version was announced a few years ago but came to nothing. However the holders of the film rights, Dan Dare Ltd, have recently indicated that they are looking into the possibility of a TV series.

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If further proof were needed that SF imagery sells the Manpower Services Commission is currently running a newspaper campaign utilising stills from the 1956 film *Forbidden Planet*. Featuring Robby the Robot, the idea is to draw attention to the MSC's High Technology Training Scheme.

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A complete tape of *The World in Peril*, the last of three Jet Morgan radio adventures from the 50s, has been found in a BBC basement. Once thought to have been lost for good, the tape is probably the only existing recording of the serial. *The Journey Into Space* trilogy, written by Charles Chilton, was broadcast between 1953-55 and was enormously popular at the time. The three segments - *Journey Into Space*, *The Red Planet* and *The World in Peril* - were later turned into novelisations by Chilton. The total of 54 episodes featured the adventures of ace pilot 'Jet' Morgan and his crew Lemmy Barnett, Steve Mitchell and Dr Matthews.

At the time of writing the BBC have no immediate plans to broadcast the serial.

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The Bonzos, aka The Bonzo Dog Band, aka The Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, have recently reformed with most of their original line-up. The group who brought us *Urban Spaceman*, *The Humnoid Boogie*, *Beautiful Zelds* and the best version of *Monster Mash*, are back with a new record called *No Matter Who You Vote For, The Government Always Gets In*. And we'll know who that is by the time this sees print.

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Algeron - Daniel Keyes; 15. 20,000 Leagues under the Sea - Jules Verne; 16. More Than Human - Theodore Sturgeon; 17. Stand on Zanzibar - John Brunner; 18. Heliocopia Spring - Brian W Aldiss; 19. Ringworld - Larry Miven; 20. Dune - Frank Herbert.

I apologise slightly for No. 15; it is, of course, a translation, and other editions differ from mine in wording, but of course you all realised that, didn't you?

Now, for your chance to have another go at winning that £5 book token, here is the:

#### Matrix 70 Puzzle

This month we turn to films. Below are the names of 20 characters from famous SF films (I apologise for the poor showing of women; SF films seem to be even more sexist than SF literature). For each one I would like you to give me the title of the film in which the character first appeared (if more than one), the date of the film, and the name of the actor/actress. One point each for title and date, two for the actor/actress. The entrant with the most points wins.

- |                  |                             |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Han Solo      | 11. John Cabal/Oswald Cabal |
| 2. Morbius       | 12. Thomas Jerome Newton    |
| 3. Rotwang       | 13. Zed                     |
| 4. Miles Bennell | 14. The Gill Man            |
| 5. Iliia         | 15. Andy Rusch              |
| 6. Pinback       | 16. Fireman Montag          |
| 7. David Kessler | 17. HAL 9000                |
| 8. Frau Blucher  | 18. Billy Pilgrim           |
| 9. Klaatu        | 19. Charles Forbin          |
| 10. Dr. Who      | 20. Roy Neary               |

Send all entries, by the next mailing deadline please, to (new address): Elizabeth Sourbut, 31 Barfield Road, Muncastergate, York YO3 9AW

Following the announcement of the winner of the first Arthur C. Clarke Award, I thought we should look at the two organisations who have joined with the BSFA in running this prize. We start with an article about the Science Fiction Foundation, and we'll be following up next issue with one on the International Science Fiction Foundation.



## What the Science Fiction Foundation is all about

by Edward James (Editor of *Foundation*)

The Science Fiction Foundation (henceforth, SFF) began its birth-pangs in 1970, the midwife being George Hay, one-time sf writer and anthologist, and (to this day) full-time man of ideas. Discussions among writers such as James Elish and John Brunner along the lines: "Wouldn't it be nice if there was an institution devoted to the study and teaching of sf?" were transformed into action. Such an institution needed a base and universities were unlikely to provide one; polytechnics, however, were relatively new, more flexible, and more eager to espouse subjects that could be seen as 'relevant'. George Hay persuaded George Brosnan, Director of the North East London Polytechnic (NELP), that sf was indeed relevant: as Brosnan wrote in 1972, "the importance of science fiction is the freeing of the mind that occurs and which makes many of its readers more willing to change."

A similar idea was expressed, in rather more apocalyptic terms, by George Hay himself in his article "What the Science Fiction Foundation Ought to be About", in volume 5 of the SFF's own journal, *Foundation*, in 1974. "In a Caesarian work such as ours, one increasingly falling under the influence of intellectual and political thugs, it is inevitable that increased responsibility must accrue to any body insisting that futures exist, or can be created. By its very terms of existence, the Foundation is to act as a communication channel for what is undoubtedly the most responsible literary genre still surviving." When American institutions of higher education deigned to take notice of sf, it was usually brought into Departments of English; at NELP, however, the SFF was taken within the Department of Applied Philosophy (in effect a Department of General Studies). The SFF was thus solely for the literary study of sf; promoting sf as a way of expanding the horizons of all of us, and most immediately students in science or the social sciences in NELP, has always been an element of its activities.

The SFF was, and is, part of NELP; but it is also partially autonomous. It has always had the active cooperation and assistance of sf writers. Brunner and Elish were in at its birth; Arthur C. Clarke agreed to be its Patron (to be joined by Ursula K. LeGuin a few years later); and writers who have been actively involved since include Christopher Priest, Brian Stableford and Ian Watson. The SFF is run by a Council which meets three or four times a year, and which is drawn from its ordinary members who are invited to an AGM once a year. According to the SFF's constitution, ordinary membership is restricted to: those who have rendered notable service to sf (as writers, critics, teachers, editors or publishers); and members of the staff of NELP. The SFF has been lucky to find people in various departments of NELP who have been prepared to support it and to offer practical advice and assistance; the Chairman of the SFF Council for several years, for instance, has been Dr John Radford, former head of the department of Psychology.

In the early years the SFF was run on a day-to-day basis by an Administrator. In 1972 this became a full-time job and, as the SFF became an established and accepted part of NELP, it was given senior lecturer status. Peter Nicholls held the post from 1971 to 1977 (when he resigned to put the finishing touches to his *Encyclopaedia of*

*Science Fiction*); the second Administrator was Malcolm Edwards, from 1978 to 1980 (subsequently, of course, becoming sf editor, and now director, at Victor Gollancz Ltd.) In addition, there have been from time to time other members of the SFF staff: a research assistant, Colin Lester; a research fellow, David Pringle; and a writer in residence, Colin Greenland.

Sadly, the contraction of the entire higher educational system since 1979 has affected the SFF as well. It has survived, but in a much reduced form. Malcolm Edwards was not replaced as a full-time Administrator: the present Honorary Administrator, Ian McPherson, is a former member of staff at NELP who took early retirement, and his work is part-time and entirely unpaid. There is no research fellow. All NELP can provide, apart from overheads, is the salary of a part-time secretary, Joyce Day. She keeps her head above water only with the voluntary help of other NELP staff and students, for instance, in cataloguing the books and magazines in the SFF's collection. Most notable of these is a retired NELP librarian, Ted Chapman, who puts an immense amount of time into keeping the now considerable library of the SFF in order. But the keystone of the edifice is Joyce Day. She arrived just before Easter 1978, blissfully unaware of the sf world. She has now become well-acquainted with the foibles of sf types, very adept at dealing with them. It is she who fields the many enquiries of all kinds which come into the SFF, and if she doesn't know the answers herself, she usually knows who will.

In 1976 Peter Nicholls summarised the aims of the SFF as follows: "a. To promote a discriminating understanding of the nature of science fiction to the public at large, and especially to the media; in short to publicise it. b. To disseminate information about science fiction. c. To provide research facilities for anyone wishing to study science fiction. d. To investigate the usefulness of science fiction in education." It is no doubt too early to say how far the SFF has lived up to those aims. But much has been done. The SFF has organised lectures and lecture-courses (most notably in 1975 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, which was published by Peter Nicholls as *Science Fiction at Large*, paperback version as *Explorations of the Marvelous*). It organises conferences, on its own bat and in collaboration with others. It has supervised dissertations. It supplies information about sf daily to the media, to publishers, to the scholarly and the curious.

Perhaps its most lasting achievement will be seen to have been the establishment of an sf library. The British Library may (perhaps) have larger holdings, but there is nowhere else in Europe, or outside North America, where so much sf is gathered together in one room and made available to serious researchers (who come from all over Europe to use it). Its holdings include a large collection of bibliographical and critical work, many thousands of sf books of all kinds, both hardback and paperback, extensive runs of all the major sf magazines, American and British. There is a sizeable collection of Russian sf, of fanzines, of original manuscripts donated by sf authors, of books on fringe science, even (something which has often caused embarrassment) the papers of the defunct British branch of the Flat Earth Society.

The task of looking after the collection, and trying to fit it into what must once (after the



4. Original and unused fiction by younger members who have never or rarely written, or failed with what they have written, for a new, for the moment one-off, zine called *Midnight Who* (please don't be put off by the title!). Go on, as many as you like! BUT not over-long 'cos I want to give other people a chance as well.

Contact: Sean R Friend, The Mill House, 177 Challymead, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 8LH

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I am interested in the work of C L Moore but have only been able to find two short story collections - *Shamblau* (Sphere Books, 1976) and *Northwest Smith* (Ace Books, 1982). If anyone has any other material by or about her, please contact: Sarah Gamble, 1 Eastgrove Rd, Sheffield, S10 2NW.

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Information/contacts requested, regarding science fiction costumes, badges and masks. In particular, I am interested in buying

- Costumes Specially designed, dark coloured space pilot jackets - particularly those used in past TV/film SF
- Badges Sew-on colour flashes, numbers and space insignia for futuristic space uniforms. Also, metallic lapel badges bearing futuristic space insignia. Must not bear any tv/film logos.

If you know someone who sells the above items singly, or actually makes them singly to specific design, contact: Patrick Lee, 24 Ousden Drive, Cheshunt, Herts, EN8 9RL

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#### FOR SALE

Dr Who Weekly: Issues 1-43 complete

Dr Who Monthly: Issues 44-52, 54-62, 66, 67, 69, 70, 72, 73, 76, 78, 79

Dr Who Summer Specials: 1981, 1982

Starburst: Issues 19, 21, 22

All items in very good condition (more details on enquiry). Will Split. Offers to:

Malcolm Kinnear, 30 Gladstone Place, Queen's Cross, Aberdeen, AB1 6XA

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(All hardback, all in mint condition) *Guardians of the West* - David Eddings - £5; *A Darkness at Sethanon* - Raymond E Feist - £5.50; *Killashandra* - Anne McCaffrey - £4.50; *Death is a Lonely Business* - Ray Bradbury - £5; *Daggerspell* - Katherine Kerr - £5.50; *Spiderworld: The Tower* - Colin Wilson - £5.50; *Arthur C Clarke's July 20, 2019* - Arthur C Clarke - £7.50; *The Isle of Glass* - Judith Tarr - £4.50; *The Golden Horn* - Judith Tarr - £4.50; *The Hounds of God* - Judith Tarr - £4.50; *Gildenfire* - Stephen R Donaldson - £3.00; *The Mirror of Her Dreams* - Stephen R Donaldson - £5.50; *The Swords of Coram* - Michael Moorcock - £5; *The Chronicles of Coram* - Michael Moorcock - £5; *The Chronicles of Count Brass* - Michael Moorcock - £5; *Rhialto the Marvellous* - Jack Vance - £5 (Bant Books)

(All paperback, all in mint condition unless otherwise marked) *The Eighty Minute Hour* - Brian Aldiss - £1; *Anthology* - Piers Anthony - £1.50;

2010: *Odyssey 2* - Arthur C Clarke - (Good) 75p; *The Wizards and the Warriors* - Hugh Cook - £1.50; *Silverthorn* - Raymond E Feist - £1.50; *Champions of the Sidhe* - Kenneth C Flint - £1.25; *Master of the Sidhe* - Kenneth C Flint - £1.25; *The Light of Eden* - V A Harbinson - £1.50; *Ghost in the Sunlight* - Kathleen Herbert - £1.50; *Mythago Wood* - Robert P Holdstock - £1.25; *Lady of Light* - Diana L Paxson - £1.50 (Timescape); *Lady of Darkneess* - Diana L Paxson - £1.50 (Timescape); *The Black Beast* - Nancy Springer - £1.50 (Timescape); *The White Hart* - Nancy Springer - £1.50 (Timescape); *The Sable Moon* - Nancy Springer - £1.50 (Timescape); *The Silver Sun* - Nancy Springer - £1.50 (Timescape); *Islands out of Time* - William I Thompson - £1.50; *Galapagos* - Kurt Vonnegut - £1.50; *The First Named* - Jonathan Wylie - £1.25; *The Sword of the Lictor* - Gene Wolfe - £2 (Timescape); *The Lure of the Basilisk* - Lawrence Watt-Evans - £1.25; *The Seven Altars of Dussarra* - Lawrence Watt-Evans - £1.50; *A Blackbird in Darkneess* - Freda Warrington - £2; *This Immortal* - Roger Zelazny - (Good Ace version) £1.

Postage & package free - David Wingrove, 47 Farleigh Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 7TD. Tel: 01 241 2994

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## Stars & Shadows

*Trancers* (aka *Future Cop*) - directed by Charles Band. (Entertainment in Video).

Reviewed by Mark Ogier

Angel City, 2247AD. Adjacent to now-submerged Los Angeles, the city is threatened by a mystic named Martin Whistler who causes chaos by enslaving weak-willed citizens and turning them into zombie-like 'Trancers'. Jack Deth is the cop assigned to stop his recruitment programme. Whistler escapes into the past, transferring his consciousness into the mind of one of his ancestors. His plan is simple: destroy the ancestors of Angel City's ruling council, thus preventing them being conceived. In a desperate attempt to save the present, Deth is despatched after Whistler.

Although it appears to be a spoof of several SF themes, *Trancers* is also very entertaining in its own right, with one or two marvellous lines and set pieces. Admittedly, some parts do leave more than a little to be desired (chiefly several scenes between Deth and Lenna, his 1985 girlfriend). But these are minor flaws in what is otherwise an affectionate parody of films such as *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator*; there's also an element of the TV series *The Invaders* in here - when killed the Trancers conveniently evaporate in a cloud of red dust.

Charles Band is well known for producing entertaining low budget pictures that seem to be aimed pretty firmly at the under-25s, and when viewed in that light *Trancers* works well. American comedian Tim Thomerson steals the acting honours for his wonderful portrayal of Deth, playing him perfectly straight as all good parodies should (although, how many times have you seen a cop light a match with his teeth?). The love interest is a bit superfluous at times, and the film is at its best when Deth is fighting off Whistler or one of his cronies. That said, the highlight occurs when Deth's superior returns to 1985 to summon Deth back to his proper time; the only ancestor the superior can find is a young girl, who Deth threatens with a 'spanking' when she interrupts a particularly promising scene with his girlfriend. The net result is that Deth is forcibly returned to 2247, and arrives back in our time having missed out on a night with Lenna. Good, unpretentious entertainment, and worth renting if you feel like a chuckle.

**Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home** - directed by Leonard Nimoy.

Reviewed by Colin Bird

The Star Trek success story continues in episode four of the movie series. All the familiar characters are back, most of them looking worse for wear. And I can report that all your favourite lines are in this film: phasers are on stun, the helm won't respond, and the engines 'canna' take it much more. The only disappointing omission? When Chekov is critically injured McCoy is not there to say 'He's dead, Jim'.

The story is an enjoyable mix of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* and *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* with a strong environmental slant. Earth is menaced by an alien probe which emits damaging signals in an attempt to communicate with hump-backed whales. Since this species is long extinct Kirk and the boys slip back through a time warp to present day San Francisco to steal a couple of whales from a Cetacean Institute (look it up in your dictionary). Their adventures in an unfamiliar time make for agreeable entertainment. Shatner and Nimoy have some marvellous comic scenes and the overall mood is of an upbeat romp. Full marks to director Nimoy whose lightness of touch has improved since the ponderous *Star Trek III*. Apparently William Shatner has signed up to direct *Star Trek V* and the film ends with the crew transferred to a shiny new USS Enterprise ready to boldly go ... etc.

My only complaint concerns that tribble hide that Kirk wears on his bonce. During the aquatic scenes I was so busy trying to figure out how it stayed on that I missed some of the story. The question is, were special effects used? Trekkies must be told or there will be hell to pay!

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Reviewed by Robt Matthews

*Star Trek IV* starts with a recap of what happened in the last film (like we now get in *Dynasty*) and the film continues the storyline started in *Star Trek III: The Wrath of Khan*. The crew of the Enterprise are returning to Earth in a Klingon 'Bird of Prey' to face court martial charges of mutiny and destruction of federation property. However an alien probe, looking remarkably like a chocolate swiss roll, beats them to Earth and starts sending messages no-one can understand and generally messing around with the elements. This is the excuse for the crew to follow *Back to the Future* and go back in time, since they are the ones who realise that the probe is talking to hump-backed whales, extinct in 23rd century Earth.

Back in 1987 San Francisco the film is played mostly for laughs, which makes it, in my opinion, the best of the Star Trek movies to date. Leonard Nimoy's direction is also less reverential than his last effort and I hope William Shatner does as good a job when he directs *Star Trek V*.

There are a couple of grumbles I would like to make, however; like why was Lt. Suvik left behind on Vulcan, and does William Shatner really need \$2000 a week just for new hairpieces?!

*The Hobbit* - adapted by Rory Robinson and Graham Watkins, directed by Graham Watkins. Production by 'The Theatre Royal Hanley' at the Liverpool Empire - April 1987. With Malcolm Dixon as Bilbo Baggins.

Reviewed by Roy Gray

I don't want to discourage potential visitors to a similar production in the near future, but I found this disappointing.

My feeling is that to make any reasonable sense of it, you must be familiar with the book. Even so

many characters, such as the band of dwarves, lose their individuality because there is simply no time for the actors to develop them.

Gollum, of course, comes over very well. Surely he is a dream rôle for any competent actor or, as in this case, actress. Bilbo is also reasonable, but there is some meat to this rôle (sorry). Gandalf was a letdown, appearing and disappearing without apparent rhyme or reason. Smaug, however, came over with the right degree of arrogant menace in his encounter with Bilbo.

I suppose anyone adapting *The Hobbit* for the stage must be on a hiding to nothing. Despite 22 scenes in three acts, the omissions are legion and the resulting lack of continuity is a major flaw.

The music was less melodic than one expects from JRR's original descriptions but the production was bright, colourful and cheerful. Enthusiasts will not be too disappointed, maybe.

*The Creature Beyond Torchies End* - directed by Roger Cheveley. ITV Dramarama, 11th May 1987.

Reviewed by Patrick Lee

This fantasy, written by Tony Haase and Robin Driscoll, is from the children's series *Dramarama*.

On the eve of his birthday, Henry's parents are arguing, and when he is woken by the entrance of his drunken father Henry hides under the bedclothes, only to discover that he can't find the end of his bed. Armed with a torch he finds that his bed is the entrance to a whole cave system made of cloth, and here he discovers the skeleton of Little Tim, the previous explorer of the caves twenty five years ago. Little Tim's diary becomes Henry's guide as he tries to find 'the creature of love'.

Meanwhile, next morning, Henry's parents are worried by his disappearance, and things aren't helped by the arrival of a blind Indian. This eccentric, who can obviously see, manages to enter Henry's room, and his bed, whereupon he reaches Henry himself who has found the creature at Torchies End ('where candles extinguish themselves and batteries corrode in your torch'). The creature is in fact an elephant which belongs to the 'blind' Indian, who rides it out of the caverns through invisible doors, while Henry returns to the real world and has the job of explaining where he's been to his parents.

The show left a lot of questions in my mind. Who was the Indian? How did he know about Henry's discovery of the tunnel entrance? Why didn't he rescue Little Tim sooner? And why did Little Tim allow himself to starve to death, believing there was no way out, just because his bedclothes had been removed?

Jacob Soper's performance as Henry looked a little artificial, and throughout the story we hear only a voice-over of his thoughts, in fact the only time he speaks is at the very end. David Dexter gave a better, if brief, performance as Little Tim. The bravery of the two schoolboys was a bit unbelievable, as was their vocabulary - do 9-year-olds use such words as 'ascertain'? Renu Setna as the Indian was more or less stereotyped in speech and dress, but Terry John was convincing as the bad tempered father, as was Eve Bland as the sympathetic mother. They demonstrate that low wages can lead to arguments, particularly if one member of the family wastes it on drink, with the only escape for Henry in the firing line being to another world.

*The Creature Beyond Torchies End* was a nice little adventure story, presenting excellently a nice original (?) concept, though I think a sequel should be made as there are too many questions and not enough answers.

**Deadly Friend** - directed by Wes Craven

Reviewed by Laurence Scotford

If someone was to ask me for a recent example of a formula movie, I wouldn't hesitate to put this one forward as a prime candidate. It is a classic combination of SF and horror resulting in an unoriginal and disappointing moneyspinner.

The plot concerns a young whizz-kid studying Neuronics. He has made tremendous advances in the field of artificial intelligence, having made a robot companion, 'BB', who displays all the abilities of a young child. Credulity is further strained when his girlfriend, Sam, is killed by her alcoholic father. Our hero implants the circuitry from BB (conveniently destroyed earlier in the film) into the dead girl's brain and revives her. She then becomes the deadly friend of the title.

This sort of theme was dealt with far more credibly by Michael Crichton in *The Terminal Man*. Only this weak SF element prevents the film becoming a boring variant on the zombie theme - a disappointing film from the man who made *Nightmare on Elm Street*. *Deadly Friend*, if there is any justice in the world, will spend the rest of its days along with the other also rans at the local video library.

**Flight of the Navigator** - produced by Randal Kleiser for Walt Disney films.

Reviewed by Roy Gray

One for the youngsters but enjoyable for adults. In many ways the perfect Disney film. I admit to enjoying it (as did my family) and being pleasantly surprised at that because press reviews (and *Film 87*) had not been particularly kind.

The film has a reasonably intelligent script with some nice wry and amusing one liners which pay homage to *Star Trek*, *ET* and their ilk.

Our hero, a 12-year-old played by Joey Cramer, arrives home after a heavy fall to find his four hours have been eight years for the rest of the world. Meanwhile NASA have caught a UFO and are vainly trying to find a way inside. Yes our boy has been on a 1000+ light year trip at relativistic + velocity, has just returned home and doesn't remember a bit of it.

Unfortunately the otherwise impregnable (but very impressive) spaceship has a brainache following a

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## Alien Christmas Terry Pratchett

Reviving an old Matrix habit, there follows a transcription of a speech made by Terry Pratchett at Eastercon this year. In case you think he is really have calendar problems, I should explain that the Beacon Committee have developed a habit of celebrating Christmas together in April/May, and having revived the Eastercon custom of the banquet, decided to make it Christmas dinner. This was the after dinner speech. Many thanks to Terry for kindly allowing it to be reprinted here.

This is a great idea, isn't it? So much nicer to have Christmas at this time of the year instead of at the end of December, when the shops are always so crowded. Reminds me of those clips you used to get in The Queen's Christmas broadcast to the Commonwealth back in the fifties, with the traditional shot of Australians eating chilled prawns, roast turkey and Christmas pudding on Bondi Beach. There was always a Christmas tree planted in the sand. It was decorated with what I now realise was probably vomit.

Last week I got this fortune cookie sort of printout which said Your role is Eater. I thought

close encounter with a power cable and can't remember the way home. Luckily young David has the data in his mind so the ship needs to contact its former passenger.

After a wild ride, a few nice jokes and a bit of drama, all ends happily ever after with David somewhat closer to his family than previously.

The special effects are excellent but not overwhelming. They compliment the action. The characters seem believable and sympathetic. Overall very pleasing.

**Crosstalk** - directed by Mark Egerton. BBC1, 3rd March 1987.

Reviewed by Mark Ogier

This Australian thriller begins by giving the impression that it is going to be a story of computer megalomania in the vein of *The Forbin Project* or *Demon Seed*. The scientist hero is working on the machine (known in this case as 'I 500') when he is involved in a mysterious car accident and confined to a wheelchair. Of course, we all know that the computer did it, and we wait with bated breath to see how the machine intends to use its former master. To no avail, for the film now reveals itself to be little more than a version of Coppola's *The Conversation*, with the central character convinced that his precious I 500 has recorded a murder in an adjacent apartment. As a sub-plot, the hero is himself in danger from his bosses, who fear that he is going to lose precious business by trying to trace an 'insignificant' malfunction in the computer.

Certainly the film does deliver its fair share of thrills (chiefly the scenes involving the severed head of a woman; initially glimpsed gazing sightlessly out of a washing machine), but I can't help feeling that it would have been even better had the producers followed the initial scenes of the computer carefully manipulating the scientist to their conclusion. The finale attempts to tie up all the loose ends by having the murderer revealed and promptly despatched himself, and the I 500 setting itself up for delivery to its prospective buyers; announcing the fact in a suitably 'computeresque' voice. Unfortunately, the fact that the machine has now learned to talk is not as earth-shattering as one might have expected. I was only surprised the 'revelation' had not come earlier. As a murder mystery, the film succeeds, but as a story of modern technology run wild, it misses the mark.

fantastic, I like role-playing games, I've never been an Eater before, I wonder how many hit points it has? And then I saw another printout underneath it which said that at 22:00 my role was After Dinner Speaker, which is something you'd expect to find only in the very worst dungeon, a monster lurking around in a white frilly shirt looking for an audience. Three hours later the explorers are found bored rigid, their coffee stone cold, the brick-thick after dinner mint melted in their hands.

The reminds me why I gave up Dungeons and Dragons. There were too many monsters. Back in the old days you could go around a dungeon without meeting much more than a few orcs and lizard men, but then everyone started inventing monsters and pretty soon it was a case of, bummer the magic sword, what you really needed to be the complete adventurer was the Marcus L. Rowland fifteen-volume guide to Monsters and the ability to read very, very fast, because if you couldn't recognise the monster from the outside you pretty soon got the chance to try looking at them from the inside.



Anyway, this bit of paper said I was to talk about Alien Christmases, which was handy, because I always like to know what subject it is. I'm straying away from. I'll give it a try. I've been a lot of bad things in my time although, praise the Lord, I've never been a Blake's 7 fan.

Not that Christmases aren't pretty alien in any case. It's a funny old thing, but whenever you see pictures of Santa Claus he's always got the same toys in his sack. A teddy, a dolly, a trumpet and a wooden engine. Always. Sometimes he also has a few red and white striped candy canes. Heaven knows why, you never see them in the shops, and if any kids asks for a wooden engine these days it means he lives at the bottom of a hole on a desert island and has never heard of television, because last Christmas my daughter got a lot of toys, a few cars, a plane, stuff like that, and the thing about them was this. Every single one of them was a robot.

Not just a simple robot. I know what robots are supposed to look like, I had a robot when I was a kid. You could tell it was a robot, it had two cogwheels going round in its chest and its eyes lit up when you turned its key, and why not, so would yours. And I had a Magic Robot...well, we all had one, didn't we? And when we got fed up with the smug way he spun around of his mirror getting all the right answers we cut them out and stuck them down differently for the sheer hell of it, gosh, weren't we devils. But these new robots are subversive. They are robots in disguise.

There's this sort of robot war going on around us. I haven't quite figured it out yet, although the kids seem incredibly well-informed on the subject. It appears that you can tell the good robots from the bad robots because the good robots have got human heads, a bit like that scene in Saturn Five, you remember, where the robot gets the idea that the best way to look human is hack someone's head off and stick it on your antenna. They all look like an American footballer who's been smashed through a Volkswagen.

They go around saving the universe from another bunch of robots, saving the universe in this case consisting of great laser battles. The universe doesn't look that good by the time they've saved it, but by golly, it's saved.

Anyway, none of her presents looked like it was supposed to. A collection of plastic rocks turned out to be Rock Lords, with exciting rocky names like Boulder and Nugget. Yes, another bunch of bloody robots.

In fact the only Christmas thing in our house was the crib, and I'm not certain that at a touch of a button it wouldn't transform and the Mary and Josephoids would battle it out with the Three Kings.

Weirdest of the lot, though, is Kraak, Prince of Darkness. At £14.95 he must be a bargain for a prince of darkness. He's a Zoid, probably from the planet Zoid in the galaxy of Zoid, because while the models are pretty good the storyline behind them is junk, the science fiction equivalent of a McDonalds hamburger. I like old Kraak, though, because it only took the whole of Christmas morning to put him together. He's made of red and grey plastic, an absolute miracle of polystyrene technology, and he looks like a chicken that's been dead for maybe three months. Stuff two batteries up his robot bus and he starts to terrorise the universe as advertised, and he does it like this, what he does is, he walks about nine inches ver-rry slowly and painfully, while dozens of little plastic pistons thrash about, and then he falls over.

Kraak has got the kind of instinct for survival that makes a kamikaze pilot look like the Green Cross Code man. I don't know what the terrain is like up there on Zoid, but he finds it pretty

difficult to travel over the average living room carpet. No wonder he terrorises the universe, it must be pretty frightening to have a thousand tons of war robot collapse on top of you and lie there with its little feet pathetically going round and round. You want to commit suicide in sympathy. Oh, and he's got this other fiendish weapon, his head comes off and rolls under the sofa. Pretty scary, that. We've tested him out with other Zoids, and I'm here to tell you that the technology of robot fighting machines, basically, is trying to fall over in front of your opponent and trip him up. It's a hard job, because the natural instinct of all Zoids is to collapse as soon as you take your hand away.

But even Kraak has problems compared with a robot that was proudly demonstrated to us by the lad next door. A Transformer, I think it was. It isn't just made of one car or plane, it's a whole fleet of vehicles which, when disaster threatens, assemble themselves into one great big fighting machine. That's the theory, anyway. My bet is that at the moment of truth the bloody thing will have to go into battle half finished because its torso is grounded at Gatwick and its left leg is stuck in a traffic jam outside Luton.

We recently saw Santa Claus, the Movie. Anyone else seen it? Pretty dreadful, the only laugh is where they apparently let the reindeer snort coke in order to get them to fly. No wonder Rudolf had a red nose, he spends half the time with a straw stuck up it.

Anyway, you get to see Santa's workshop. Just as I thought. Every damn toy is made of wood, painted in garish primary colours. It might have been possible, in fact I suppose it's probably inevitable, that if you pressed the right switch on the rocking horses and jolly wooden dolls they turned into robots, but I doubt it. I looked very carefully over the whole place and there wasn't a single plastic extrusion machine. Not a single elf looked as though he knew which end to hold a soldering iron. None of the really traditional kids toys were there - no Rambos, no plastic models of the Karate kid, none of those weird little spelling and writing machines designed to help your child talk like a NASA launch controller with sinus trouble and a mental age of five.

Now, I've got a theory to account for this. Basically, it is that Father Christmas are planet specific and we've got the wrong one. I suspect it was all the atom bomb tests in the early fifties, that warped the, you know, the fabric of time and space and that. Secret tests at the North pole opened up this, you know, sort of hole between the dimensions, and all the stuff made by our Father Christmas is somehow diverted to Zoid or wherever and we get all the stuff he makes, and since he's a robot made out of plastic he only makes the things he's good at.

The people it's really tough on are the kids on Zoid. They wake up on Christmas morning, unplug themselves from their recharger units, clank to the end of the bed (pausing only to fall over once or twice) playfully zapping one another with their megadeath lasers, look into their portable pedal extremity enclosures and what do they find? Not the playful, cuddly death-dealing instruments of mayhem that they have been led to expect, but wooden trains, trumpets, rag dolls and those curly red and white sugar walking sticks that you never see in real life. Toys that don't need batteries. Toys that you don't have put together. Toys with varnish on instead of plastic. Alien toys.

And, because of this amazing two-way time warp thingy, our kids get the rest. Weird plastic masters of the universe which are to the imagination what sandpaper is to a tomato. Alien toys. Maybe it's being done on purpose, to turn them all into Zoids. Like the song says - you'd better watch out.

I don't think it will work though. I took a look into my daughter's dolls house. Old Kraak has been hanging out there since his batteries ran out and his mega cannons fell off. Mr T has been there for a couple of years, ever since she found out he could wear Barbie's clothes, and I see that some plastic cat woman is living in the bathroom. I don't know why, but what I saw in there gave me hope. Kraak was having a tea party with a mechanical dog, two Playpeople and three dolls. He wasn't trying to zap anyone. No matter what Santa Claws throws at us, we can beat him...

And now your mummies and daddies are turning up to take you home; be sure to pick up your balloons and Party Loot bags, and remember that Father Christmas will soon be along to give presents to all the good boys and girls who've won awards.



## The Periodic Table

### CONVENTION NEWS

#### MEXICON 3 - after all

"At present there seems to be no Mexican in the pipeline", and so it was when the last Matrix went to press. Famous last words. After scenes of considerable acrimony during the 1989 Eastercon bidding session, and amid a general feeling that whatever conventions are about these days, it seems to have little to do with the written sf genre, Greg Pickersgill and various others have decided that the time is ripe after all for another Mexicon, in 1989. Tentative plans are for a convention at May Bank Holiday but there should be firm word on by Wordcon this year. Mexicon 3 is going out under the slogan 'the science fiction convention', and it is intended that the emphasis will be on the literary aspects of the genre.

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#### EUROCON 1987

I'm grateful to Ian Watson for the following information on the 1987 Eurocon:

'Between 29th October and 1st November 1987 the 14th Eurocon will be held in conjunction with the 14th French national SF convention at Montpellier, under the name *Comécon*. The city of Montpellier has declared itself a city of the future, and is strongly supporting the convention, which promises many attractions already: art shows and artists, dramatic performances, exhibitions, panels, music, video and role-playing games, book stands, signing sessions, and a lot of science fiction. Guests already invited include David Brin, John Brunner, Keith Roberts, Kim Stanley Robinson, Ian Watson and Gene Wolfe from the English-speaking world; from France Jacques Barberi, Philip Caza, Jen-Pierre Hubert, Michel Jeury and Joëlle Wintrebert; from Italy Renato Festrinero, from Romania Adrian Rogoz, and let's not forget Polish Wojtek Studmark who lives in France. As well as all else, the convention will be publishing four sale limited editions of two full-size books: one an anthology of stories and illustrations by guests, entitled *Divine Comédie*, the other a translation of Kim Stanley Robinson's book on Philip K Dick. Convention membership costs 150 French francs (attending) and 80FF (supporting) till 1st September, thereafter 200FF and 120FF. Cheques (made out to Science-Fictions) and communications go to Gilles Murat, 112 avenue de Toulouse, 34070 Montpellier, France. A substantial progress report has just been published.'

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I have news of a convention in Oxford called Conine, due to take place over the weekend of 5-7

August, 1988, with Terry Pratchett as Guest of Honour. As Ivan Towison has provided me with a comprehensive press release. I quote.

"Conine is the 1988 Oxford student convention. That is, it will be run in Oxford by Oxford students, though there is no intention whatsoever to restrict it to such students or even locals. We want to make this a convention for everybody, but with a definite Oxford flavour. And we want to echo the halcyon days of Unicorn 1, a highly successful con run by students with no previous organising experience.

That said, Conine is not a Unicorn bid. We are going to run a convention, but it will not be a Unicorn. The reason for this is twofold. First, in view of the quality and popularity of the WINCON bid, we see no point trying to push them out; and second, as WINCON's strength demonstrates, Unicorns ain't what they used to be - all they have in common with the original concept is that they are held in 'establishments of higher education'. This is fine - a consistent and continuing series of summer cons is a Good Thing - but it's left the enthusiastic student with nowhere to go. Conine is a first stab at doing something about that."

The convention is going to take place at Oxford Polytechnic, on the outskirts of Oxford but quite accessible by public transport. Those in charge are Ivan Towison, Maria Hamilton and David Bat, all stalwarts of the Oxford University SG Group.

Membership is £9 attending, £4 supporting, and room rates are £10 per night, excluding breakfast, but provision will be made. Info: Conine, c/o Ivan Towison, New College, Oxford, OX1 3BN

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I hear rumours of a mini-con in Coventry around Christmas or New Year, apparently called Conopoly. For further information, I suggest contacting Rev McVeigh, 39 Coundon Rd, Coventry, CV1 4AR

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Your roving convention reporter attended both Eastercon bidding sessions at Becon and can report that Pollycon won the bid for the 1988 Eastercon over Norwescon, and Contrivance, despite the late entry of two other bids (Confusion and Conviction) and a lot of argument about the convention's location in Jersey, walked away with the 1989 bid.

Pollycon have announced that their Guest of Honour is to be Gordon R Dickson, with Greg Pickersgill as Fan Guest of Honour, and fanroom programming by Jimmy Robertson. Other guests confirmed include Gwyneth Jones, Len Wein, Fox, Diane Duane and Peter Morwood.

Membership is £12 attending, £6 supporting to Follycon, 104 Pretoria Road, Patchway, Bristol, BS12 5PZ

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Contrivance have announced that their Guests of Honour will be Anne McCaffrey and M John Harrison, with fan room programming by Lilian Edwards, Christina Lake and Peterfred Thompson.

Unfortunately I neglected to pick up other details but suggest you contact Tim Illingworth at 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey, as I shall be.

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There is still only one bid for 1990, named Contravention, and I'm now in a position to quote from the flyer circulating at Becon over Easter.

"The Contravention committee has a wealth of convention organising experience. Between us we have been involved in both Mexicons, Unicons, Eastercons, the Eurocon, and Worldcon. We know all the things that can go wrong, and we know how to make it go right.

But Contravention won't just be another identikit Eastercon. We have no intention of following dull, well-trodden paths simply because that's what everyone else has done. Right from the start we have pooled our knowledge of convention committees to create a new and more flexible committee structure which takes into account the very different jobs required while planning a convention and at the convention itself.

That flexible structure represents a new attitude towards the Eastercon. The emphasis is on fresh ideas, and on service. The fresh ideas will be most obvious in the programme, of course. After all, with the Mexican and Worldcon programmes behind us, what else would you expect? But we intend to bring the same creativity, the same dissatisfaction with everything that's old and tired, to the whole of the convention.

As for service, it's all too easy for committees to forget that their sole reason for being is you, the attendees. We don't intend to forget that, and all our energies are devoted to providing a convention that you will enjoy."

#### COMMITTEE

Chris Donaldson	John Fairley
Jan Huxley	Rob Jackson
Paul Kincaid	Paul Oldroyd
Christie Pearson	Maureen Porter

Information from 35 Buller Road, London N17. Pre-supporting membership is £1.

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Becon - The Eastercon, 17-19 April, Metropole, NEC, Birmingham

Friday April 17 - Drove up from London, braving numerous traffic jams on the motorway and arrived feeling zonked. Started out feeling zonked, so what's new? Found my room was actually in the Metropole and not in the Warwick as I had expected. Went in search of convention. Found convention in Metropole. Helpful. Found South Hants SF Group in bar. Even better. Then found I had just taken out presupposing membership of Vincon (Unicon 88), the only convention chaired by a bear. Ah, well. Mine's a pint of Wilson's.

Thus I was in no fit state for the writers' workshop I was programmed to take part in. This was a useful and worthwhile programme item, which took up three hours on Friday evening and two on Monday afternoon, and my only criticism is that I was too zonked to contribute usefully. Colin

Greenland was an excellent workshop leader. He had considered each entry in great detail and his criticisms were constructive. Thank you, Colin, we all learned a lot from your helpful comments. Con committees, please note: can we have more workshops at conventions in the future?

Saturday 18 April - Spent the morning exploring the National Exhibition Centre. Found the Maglev, an unmanned monorail linking the NEC to the airport. Fantasised about how, if people crowded over to one side of the car, it might topple over onto car park below. Nasty. Excellent venue for party. Was followed round NEC by a strange man. I should be so lucky!

Went to Jane Gaskell's session Fantasy - what is it? Sadly, she had not prepared the topic well; considered SF as space opera only; had, apparently, not read any fantasy more recent than C.S. Lewis and kept referring to a book rubbishised by one of the audience. Discussion was very lively and reasonably well-informed.

Keith Roberts' Guest of Honour speech was amusing, all about his forty-eight hours in the RAF, how difficult it is to get a signature to say you have returned kit to stores when stores have not issued you with it yet! He also gave the lowdown on the publishing times the writer will encounter on the road to having a novel published, including the reader who had majored in Coleridge and regretted the lack of albatrosses in what she was reading. It's enough to drive any aspiring writer to drink. Ah, well. Mine's a half of Wilson's.

The fancy dress was disappointing, low in numbers and in ideas. The silent movie performed by 42nd Squadron was fun, if stupid. The fireworks at midnight tried very hard and almost succeeded in setting fire to the hotel. Took my guitar and beer along to the folk singing. Admitted defeat and collapsed at 4 am.

Sunday April 19 - Surfaced after The Archers feeling zonked. Was therefore in the right frame of mind for the Ghost of Honour Speech given by Herbert George Wells borrowing Ian Watson's body. Was disappointed he did not invite questions from the floor before returning to address a meeting of the Young Fabians in 1932, as I had one prepared.

Then the 1988 bidding session. Had difficulty deciding whether Norwescon was a serious bid; they seemed to be working so hard to lose! They proposed a science fiction only convention, no gaming, fantasy, macabre, media, (not no filking?) etc, just straight sf. Fine by me. I'm an sf fan, but hard on those who are into other things as well. It's the variety of fans at Eastercons which that makes them such fun. Follycon won for Liverpool.

Retired most unashamedly to my room to listen to Lord of the Rings and awake to find the bar had run out of Wilson's, and Contrivance had won the bid for the 1989 Eastercon. During this bidding session the north-south divide had apparently reared its ugly head. Holding a convention in Jersey was unfair to poor northern fans, they said, since it was a cheap location which rich southern fans could get to cheaply. This upset poor southern fans who by 1989 will have paid dearly to travel to three Eastercons in a row in distant northern climes. However, I understand that a couple of enterprising fans are intending to prove that it's possible to HITCH to Jersey. Ah, well, mine's a pint of Mann's. Odd how quickly one acquires a taste for gaseous sugar-water.

Avoided the Christmas Dinner, a wise move by all accounts. Feeling quite zonked I found Terry Pratchett's after dinner speech *Allen Christmas* witty, amusing and wholly appropriate (reprinted in this edition of Matrix!) The awards ceremony was UNBELIEVABLY SLOW. Memo to future Eastercon committees, please stop trying to copy the Oscars

ceremony, it doesn't work. I voted No Award as the best new novel I had read was not on the BSFA shortlist, and felt vindicated when the aforementioned book, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood won the Arthur C Clarke Award. Ah, well, another half of Manns and onto the filk singing.

Monday 20 April - the business meeting was basically a lecture on how not to manage a hotel efficiently. The Metropole apparently has 73 chains of command and thus staff when kicked do not stay kicked. An interesting piece of trivia emerged - in Scotland they use 18mm film! Gene Wolfe in conversation with John Clute and A.N.Other was fascinating. Gene's assertion that Damon Knight's editorial rearranging of one of his short stories did improve it contrasted strongly with Keith Roberts' earlier comments to the contrary. Didn't win anything in the raffle (fix!). And someone actually borrowed from the *Fan in Distress* fund, the first time it's been needed since it was set up. Felt totally zonked at the end of it all. Ah, well, see you at the Worldcon. Mine's a half.

Valerie Housden

#### Beacon - The Eastercon

In the past, Beacon has traded on its luck. They have staged a convention small enough for their undoubted organisational skills to shine, and at a time of year when a convention is needed and the weather can generally be relied upon. When everyone is sunning themselves out upon the lawn beside the lake it doesn't really matter what's happening inside, people will enjoy themselves, it will be a good con.

But at Easter the luck ran out. In spades. To my mind there was so much wrong with this convention that it would fill up considerably more space than I have available here, but I will highlight some of the major points.

The location: It seems to be a Beacon habit to stage the conventions in hotels miles from civilisation, on the principle, one supposes, that no-one would ever wish to leave the hotel. Well this someone likes to leave the hotel - a change of pace, a breath of fresh air to clear the head, a wander around local bookshops, a meal out, are all vital to my enjoyment of a convention. At Beacon any chance to do that was a not particularly cheap train journey or an even more expensive taxi ride away. I couldn't afford to go out. Which left me feeling trapped. Now for once, and of a wonder, the hotel's cheap meals were both cheap and, incredibly, edible. But you can't survive a whole weekend on that alone, and the hotel's main restaurant would have required a second mortgage just to enter. Besides, I always have a craving for curry at conventions, and I missed it sorely at Beacon. So, being stuck in the hotel left me inclined to be ill-disposed towards what else was going on, and what else was going on did nothing to improve my mood.

The hotel itself is, I believe, a superb venue for a convention. There may have been odd murmurs of discontent about the staff, particularly at breakfast, but in the main the ones I encountered were no better and no worse than usual. And the hotel facilities were excellent for a large convention. Unfortunately it was not a large convention. I did not expect Beacon's much vaunted organisational ability to let them down, but it did, and very badly. Most notably they seemed totally unprepared for the effects of the Worldcon. In any worldcon year it is traditional, indeed inevitable, that the Eastercon will be smaller than usual. But Beacon seems to have decided that their Eastercon would be larger than usual, presumably drawing people in by an effort of will alone. Since most potential entrants would naturally be saving themselves for the worldcon, I'm surprised that the masquerade attracted as

many as 9 entrants, everyone else seemed surprised it was so small. And they went ahead with 6 - count them, six! - streams of programming, and seemed surprised when most items attracted no more than a handful of people. Even more ludicrous, they insisted on using every one of the hotel's vast halls. With a good proportion of the attendees permanently locked away in the dark of an unending film programme, the rest of us rattled around in a hotel several times too large for us. It would have required no more than a little ingenuity and inventiveness to shut off part of the hotel, which would at least have given the rest of the convention a more unified feel, but this never happened. Using a hall that can seat 500 for an event that attracts 20 is a madness that hardly inspires or reassures either panelists or audience, but move that same panel and the same audience to a much smaller room and you have an event that works. But Beacon seemed set on the notion that the bigger the hall the better the programme. In other things the planning seemed half-cocked as well: who in their right mind would try to stage a Fan Room programme in a place that serves as the main entranceway to the Con Bar?

If the organisation was poor, the programme was worse. This is, anyway, the traditional weak point of Becons, where they are not above re-using their previous programme with a few decorative alterations. But what was inflicted upon us at Easter seems to have been concocted with barely a flicker of creativity. They were lucky in their Guest of Honour, Keith Roberts is a good and amusing speaker and was excellent value all weekend. They were luckier still in the last minute arrival of Gene Wolfe. But neither was put to interesting or innovative use. And though I know that science fiction is a clear vote loser at Eastercon bidding sessions, an Eastercon programme that avoids all reference to the subject is surely a little off beam. Instead we got an excess of games, leading on at least one occasion to the ludicrous situation of one game being scheduled immediately after another. They had, as I say, six streams of programming, they had not the ideas to fill one stream.

In fact, other than an excellent Guest of Honour speech, and one occasion in which I found myself addressing a vast, echoing, and dimly empty hall, the only things I can remember about the Beacon programme are three items which threatened irreparable harm to Eastercons as we know them. One was an attempt to impose an Eastercon charter which, after a few sensible but hardly world-shattering ideas ("There will be an Eastercon", "Eastercon is the annual British Science Fiction Convention"), seemed like an attempt to impose the ideas of a few upon the rest of us. They even got as far as trying to dictate what should be on the programme, which I found intolerable. Let's face it, something like the GoH is a good tradition at Eastercons, but it is an honour, and if the committee feels there is no-one worthy of the honour why should they be saddled with the problem of having to provide one? And much the same can be said of quite a lot of the other things that one small group seemed intent upon imposing. At last, thankfully, the whole thing fell through.

A pity the same cannot be said for the two bidding sessions. I have no complaint over the selection of Follycon, though I was disturbed that the audience seemed to find the Norwescon claim that it was primarily about science fiction elitist and unwelcome to the majority of attendees of the 'annual British Science Fiction Convention'; whereas the Follycon bid, which made not a single mention of science fiction, sailed through with never a voice raised against it. Fine, I'll still be at Follycon. But the bidding for the 1989 Eastercon did disturb me. It was a one-horse race, and with people reluctant to hold the bidding session over until next year, the whole thing was a foregone conclusion. But the debate about the

bid was most unsettling. Suggestions by myself and others that the journey to Jersey involves either great expense (currently £82 return from London, over £100 from Glasgow), or a ferry crossing of 12 hours (to which you can add up to 8 hours travel to the port even from here on the South Coast in Folkestone) provoked howls of protest, it was said to be patronising to the poor, the north-south divide was mysteriously raised. Well, those howls won the day, but for once I am going to have to miss an Eastercon. I just cannot afford those extra two days. All I can say is, thank god the whole palaver provoked another Mexican for May 1989. Paul Kincaid

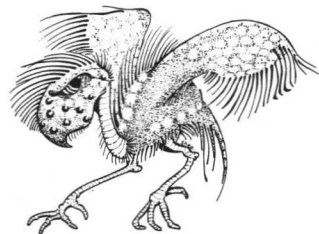
#### SOL III - 1-4 May, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool.

This annual convention, held in May, is the main Star Trek convention, although there are smaller ones at other times. Attendance this year, for the 23rd British Star Trek Convention, was 500+

There was no lack of entertainment in the main hall (doubling as a cinema) and two video rooms. 31 of the TV Star Trek episodes were shown, the Star Trek films *The Wrath of Khan* and *The Search for Spock* (the first movie isn't shown because it was such a disaster), and feature films such as *Starman*, *Ladyhawke*, *Enemy Mine*. Other 'cult' entertainment was shown, such as *Dr Who*, *Blakes 7*, *Outer Limits*, *Twilight Zone* and *Thunderbirds*. One of the most popular items is always the Bloopers - out-takes from the old series.

The guests were also very popular and the main hall was packed for the two talks they each gave. Walter Koenig's (aka Pavel Chekov) audience on Sunday persuaded him to perform one of his famous screams by raising £250 in a whipround! (All profits of ST Cons go to a charity - Greenpeace was chosen this year because of the theme of the new film.) We were all impressed with Walter who was a friendly, unassuming person. He mixed with the fans and even ate in the same dining-room - often guests keep away from the fans. But he did say that 'mixing' at British cons is easy and not so in America. Apparently the British are good at respecting other people's privacy! Katherine Kurtz spent hours talking about her Deryni books and answering many, many questions. Richard Arnold (Star Trek consultant to Paramount Pictures) was armed with a slide show and had an eager audience wanting to know more about the new TV series *Star Trek - The Next Generation*.

The Dealers Room was as well-frequented as ever. This is where the fanclubs sell their merchandise - some of it good, but a lot of it tacky and overpriced. A couple of book shops brought books and records to sell, and T-shirts abounded, especially a spoof Rock Concert Tour shirt, with the tour dates for the USS Enterprise Intergalactic Tour.



The emphasis of the whole weekend was to have fun. Star Trek fans do not take it too seriously, and the first to laugh at the ridiculous. Videos and films started early each day and finished after a midnight, there was a disco and a fancy dress party (with some very good costumes on the theme of Myths and Legends), drama competition, quiz, auction and adult auction (some zines are not for young eyes). If that wasn't enough, there was always the bar - or how about one of the Klingon hunts? A few people wore uniforms - some in the old style, some in the new, and there were even a few Klingons. All costumes are carefully made from pattern and embellished with insignia exactly the same as those worn in the films - sadly only a very few people managed to look as smart and military as Captain Kirk and his crew.

To go alone to an ST Con is no handicap. Everyone is friendly and they hate to see someone on their own. Age is no hindrance - there are children and pensioners at the cons. In fact, like the United Federation of Planets, no one cares who you are, what you are or what you look like!

My main criticism was the hotel. It was cold, the food was awful and the service virtually non-existent. The bar staff charged a variety of prices for drinks until a complaint was made to the hotel manager.

Jennifer Cobbing

## Store Wars

### RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCHIVES:

Some Mail Order Dealers - by Stan Nicholls

Life's imperishable truths include the fact that everyone looks terminally ill in their passport photograph, that it's obligatory for all American war films to include a character called Gorman (who gets killed), and that empty flats always smell of boiled cabbage and lino. There are constants in the world of science-fiction book order dealers. Trends may come and go, boom follow bust and megastores rise to dominate the scene, but mail order goes on forever.

Somehow the genteel pleasure of perusing a new bookseller's catalogue over breakfast seems a very 'British' pastime. With more than a hint of "Be so kind as to pass me the Bradshaw, Watson", it's a diversion that still has about it the air of a bygone and probably mythical age. But how is the pursuit of cosiness faring in the eighties, now that SF is Big Business? This month, I thought it might be instructive to look at a clutch of mail order dealers.

**Fantastic Literature** has been dealing in SF and fantasy since 1980, the business was started by Simon Gosden, who ran it single-handed for three years before being joined by Andy Richards. Simon explains his motivations for entering the field were to "combine pleasure with the prospect of making a little cash to buy books for myself. I also wanted to contribute something to book people in general; hence the chatty, informal and, I hope, entertaining lists. The profit motive is important but not our *raison d'être*."

As noted before in this column, many bookshops - including some specialists - have been known to employ staff whose understanding of their subject is less than perfect. (Or less than competent in extreme cases). This rarely applies to mail order companies, which by their nature tend to be run by one or two people whose business aspirations have grown out of their enthusiasm. Simon and Andy typify this approach. Both have been readers of SF, fantasy and macabre fiction since the year "dot", in Simon's words, and see their prime function as "... concentrating on building-up a

good mailing list of clients who are happy with our style and the quality of books on offer." This should be the aim of all the best dealers.

*Fantastic Literature's* catalogues, which appear with refreshing regularity, now rank among the most comprehensive of any of the UK dealers. They are also attractive because of the listings are spiced with bits and bobs of news and gossip, and he occasional competition. There's humour too - they recently offered a copy of Ian McGregor's *The Enemies Within*, describing it as "an alternate Fantasy novel of the miners' strike of 1984/5".

I get the impression there is a slight trend away from SF in the collector's market. I asked Simon Godden about this and he was inclined to agree - "I have noticed a definite swing to fantasy and Dark Fantasy." He offers the opinion that "Possibly this is an indication of the pessimism with which people view the future." He adds that "hard" SF is current selling slowly.

Guy N Smith concurs: "I see the horror market leading the field, both in new and secondhand, for some years to come." Of course, there may be a small element of self-interest in this statement as Guy is perhaps best known as the prolific author of such macabre fantasy novels as *Werewolf by Night*, *The Sucking Pit* and *Night of the Crabs*, among many others. With his wife Jean, he also finds the time to run a mail order service called *Black Hill Books*, situated in a beautiful part of the country on the South Shropshire/Welsh border.

Bookselling is just one of a number of activities going on at *Black Hill*, which is actually a house surrounded by a 7 1/2 acre smallholding. For ten years the Smiths have been leading the "good life" there. They grow 100% organic crops and keep a variety of animals, including goats, turkeys, guinea fowl and donkeys. They support themselves by selling natural produce, Guy's writing income and the book business.

Given his reputation as a "horror" writer, you could be forgiven for assuming he deals exclusively in that type of literature. In fact his stock, which concentrates on first editions from the 19th century to the present, ranges from SF/fantasy to juvenilia and comics. Although essentially a mail order operation, visitors are free to view the stock - and avail themselves of the pleasures of the countryside - providing they write or ring in advance to make an appointment. Guy and Jean are in the process of putting together a selection of secondhand alternative lifestyle books "... for the benefit of customers interested enough in our way of life to visit us." Bearing in mind that those who keep donkeys just can't be bad people, a visit to *Black Hill* might be a good day out for *Matrix* readers with time to spare.

Fans of HP Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos school of fantasy in general will welcome the advent of *Dagon Press*. It started in January of this year and is the solo effort of Carl Ford, who has already published 16 issues of an impressive HPL fanzine called *Dagon*.

*Dagon Press* deals solely in small press publications devoted to Lovecraft and the coterie of writers loosely - and somewhat arbitrarily - bracketed with him, including Brian Lumley, Lin Carter, Clive Barker and the most accomplished of our Dark Fantasy exponents, Ramsey Campbell. All of the titles on offer are new, or collectors' items of recent origin. Most of the material is US-imported, mainly from outfits like Necronomicon Press and other amateur publishers.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Carl Ford is another dealer who believes the future will see a move away from SF. He observes "The direction of the market is definitely Dark Fantasy. I can see a surge in small press items relating to the modern

masters of the horror genre: Klein, Etchison, Campbell, Barker, etc."

*Dagon Press* is an example of a small-scale effort peculiar to our field, in that it's a fan project in the best sense of the word. Carl does not rely on it as a main source of income - he earns a living by working for a printing plate maker company - and the intention is to provide a service for like-minded enthusiasts.

Finally we come to *Fantasy Centre*, which differs from the others in being both mail order and shop. I should declare an interest at this point. *Fantasy Centre* is co-owned by Ted Ball and Dave Gibson, who formed their partnership in the early seventies. At that time I had a bookshop in West London called *Bookends*, and for a year or so Ted and Dave shared the premises, running an autonomous company called *Bookends Science Fantasy Service*. This was the seed from which *Fantasy Centre* grew, to become one of today's more respected and able specialist outlets. (Coincidentally, John Eglington, who went on to establish *Phantasmagoria Books*, was another denizen of our crowded basement. The field is incestuous if not thing else.)

Anyway, I'm pleased to have been associated, however tenuously, with a business which has gone on to achieve a reputation for its depth of knowledge and honesty - in a field not always noted for these attributes.

It amazes me that, with dealers and collectors combing every possible source of OP science fiction in the land, people like Ball and Gibson can still come up with the goods. Book finding has become extremely competitive in the last decade or so, and the situation is complicated by a general belief among the uninformed that everything is valuable. *Fantasy Centre* provides an excellent search service and is particularly strong on reference material and magazines. They also carry a line of OP mystery and detective fiction.

I've been in the position of both buyer and seller with *Fantasy Centre* and have no complaints about my treatment. Sadly, I can't say the same for some other dealers I've come across.

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Considering the pivotal rôle of the specialist dealers in science fiction I'm surprised how little attention is paid to their activities by readers and fans. As far as I know, *Store Wars* is the first systematic attempt to take an overview of the industry. And it is an industry, with some estimates putting the number of dealers in the UK at well over a hundred. Of course the majority of these are small operators, but their total turnover must be enormous.

Up to now I've featured businesses I consider to be doing a good job and worthy of recommendation. Most dealers, being fans themselves, are competent and serve their customers well. But some are not so good. A few are downright dishonest. In other retail sectors or professions there is usually some representative body to which the public can appeal. There is no such organisation in this field.

Perhaps we can help to expose the bad dealers in this column, if we can think of a way to do it without landing us all in court for libel. I want to hear from you if you have been poorly treated or ripped off by a dealer. Equally, I am open to suggestions on dealers you can commend to *Matrix* readers and would like to see covered here.

In any event, perhaps it's time for *Store Wars* to become just a little more contentious. I certainly want to address wider issues. For example artificial rarity and market manipulation - which have reached an insane level in the comics and

movie memorabilia markets in particular - are areas I intend exploring. Likewise it might be interesting to look at profit margins, pricing policies and dollar conversion rates. Does *Matrix* have *Whitch*-like function to fulfil as far as the dealers are concerned? Do ethics have any part to play in the SF marketplace. Write and let us know.

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When requesting catalogues, don't forget to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

*Fantastic Literature*: 25 Avondale Road, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 8NJ (0268) 747564

*Black Hill Books*: The Vain House, Black Hill, Clunton, Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 0JD Clun (056-84) 951

*Dagon Press*: 11 Warwick Road, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW2 6SW 01-894 6869 (The HPL magazine *Dagon* is available at £6 for a year's subscription of £1 for a sample issue. Prices include postage).

*Fantasy Centre*: 157 Holloway Road, London, N7 8LX 01-607 9433 (Shop and mail order).

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London's *Forbidden planet* bookshops look set to move into larger premises at the end of this year. The present shops in Deymark St and St Giles' Circus have long been considered too small for the volume of customers who pass through them, and a new venue has been a priority for several years. At the moment it isn't clear if the two branches will be reunited under one roof. One of the main thoroughfares in the West End - possibly New Oxford St - is the aim. We can expect an official announcement in July.

Stan Nicholls

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As luck would have it, having typeset Stan's article I immediately came across a letter from Malcolm Kinnear, drawing my attention to a mail order firm called *Bedlam*, dealing in TV and film merchandise, new and secondhand. Malcolm says "I feel they deserve mention, since in my transactions with them they have shown themselves supremely helpful and accommodating. Naturally, I have no connection with the firm except as a satisfied customer. An excellent range (if somewhat variable), prompt and friendly service, some rare items..."

The address is *Bedlam*, PO Box 152, Melbourne, Derby, DE7 1WB, and they cover the following categories: B, C, D, H, J

[A - Import comics, B - Back issue comics, C - film and tv books and magazines, D - merchandise, E - SF/fantasy: selection, F - SF/fantasy: specialist, G - mail order, J - standing order/reservations service]

Dave Hodson, better known to many *Matrix* readers as my predecessor in the editorial hotseat, has recently left Titan Books and is setting up business on his own account, selling US hardcovers, and not just SF and fantasy. For those of us starved of American children's books and detective fiction Dave could well turn out to be the man to see. Contact him at 104 Debden, Gloucester Road, Tottenham, London N7.

Karennia Fry has written to correct the address we gave for Margaret Perry in the last *Store Wars*. It is now 46 Taff Way, Tilehurst, Reading, RG3 2BA. Tel: 0734 428465. Coincidentally, it would seem from Karennia's letter that Margaret Perry also deals in detective fiction.

Further to my requests for information about *Eye* in the *Pyramid* and *Perilous Dreams*, I've received information from a number of sources to say that both are no longer trading. I'd appreciate it if people would also let me know about the demise of businesses, in order to keep the list up to date.

C E Nurse and H J Thornton comprise the somewhat surprisingly named *Peapod Books* and do a secondhand-sf-by-mail list, with about 500 hundred titles at present, mostly paperback. Contact: *Peapod Books*, 49 Station Rd, Haxby, York, YO3 8LU

I've also been told by Mike Brain that secondhand SF can be found at Chester Forum Market, Mold Indoor Market and Wrexham Market if you're around that way.

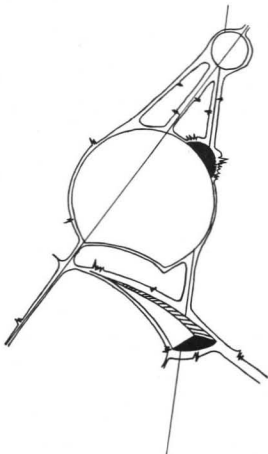
Brief name check to Ian Brookes for also letting me know about The Gallery and Skyrack Books, and to John Connor for informing me that the Sheffield Space Centre has moved:

Sheffield Space Centre, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield, S2 4HL. A, B, C, D, F, G, J

and apologies to the person who informed me likewise about Forever People:

Forever People, 35 Park St, Bristol. A, B, C, D, F, J

And, lastly, this month's special offer is that I'm happy to make copies of the complete book lists available to any reader who wants them for the price of a 1st class stamp plus a stamped addressed envelope, and a little bit of patience while I arrange photocopying.



# SOAPBOX

## THE ASSOCIATION WHOSE TEETH WERE ALL EXACTLY ALIKE

By Terry Broome

Once upon a time there was an association for science fiction. Based in a place called Neo-Britain, in a small house in the Metropolis, it had five members and a president. The president wisely moved to Sri Lanka where science fiction was taught in schools, picked up many literary prizes and was recognised as a serious literature because fans over there battled very hard to keep SF alive and to encourage promising new talent.

In Neo-Britain, SF was bought under the counter because no-one wanted to be caught selling or buying such a childish and unpopular genre. It was unpopular because fans had been too apathetic to encourage SF respectability and new writers.

Four of the members of the NBSFA were holding a clandestine meeting. The chairman had sent a note apologising for his absence (again). The others were not mollified, they were sure he couldn't be bothered to attend, but all agreed things were beginning to look up. "At least he wrote a note this time," said Morin, the editor of *Matrix*.

The membership secretary announced the new members: "Well, er, actually there aren't any." He sat down, flustered and ashamed. He remembered when the NBSFA did very well, but apathy had taken root and members began to think the association was run by millionaires. Brother Andrew, editor of *Paperback Inferno* reported: "The last issue contained only one book review - even foreign publishers won't send their books any more." Then Z, editor of *Vector*, said: "As only our president is willing to be interviewed, and we've already done that in the last 10 issues, there's no *Vector* this time." Finally Morin added: "*Matrix* contains 10 pages of foreign news supplied by our president, but the typewriter and duplicator have both broken down so I've only this one hand-written copy."

The membership secretary sighed: "So that's it then." They nodded. "I really don't see any point in meeting next year, do you?" They shook their heads. "Not worth the bother, is it." Morin and Andrew started to cry, Z wailed. "At least we get to meet each other once a year," one of them said, and at that they brightened.

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In a far-flung alternative reality, in Null-Britain, in a publishing house in the Metropolis, 50 people were busy producing the next mailing of the NBSFA. Every day sacks of mail arrived. A team sorted it into piles for the editors, membership secretary, chairman, Orbiter co-ordinator, Information Officer and Clubs Liaison Officer. Another team opened the letters, passed on some, wrote replies to others, thanking them for their support and encouraging them to write again.

The editors were busy preparing the mailings, which then went to production staff for lay-out and typesetting, printers, collators, and finally those who put it into envelopes and gave it to the postman. All on the goodwill of the 50 staff who were not paid for their work and who often put in

their own money. Because the association was run by a bunch of tireless millionaires.

The NBSFA did so well because its members realised *someone* had to actually write the letters featured in the magazines. The 50 staff were too busy to do all the writing themselves, they all had full-time jobs of their own and already spent many sleepless nights working for the NBSFA - but they would rather work than sleep due to the rewards of the job, the interest the members showed, the sympathy from their readers.

As a result, the NBSFA was a roaring success. But its proudest achievement was the encouragement of new British writers at a time when the industry needed this injection of originality, inventiveness and fresh enthusiasm. British SF was in a boom year.

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In reality, the BSFA is run by a handful of far-from-rich people working from their homes with the help of a handful of others. Without them there wouldn't be a BSFA. Articles, reviews and letters aren't magicked out of thin air. The BSFA doesn't have typists, receptionists, rooms full of eager writers with their pockets stuffed full of material for its publications.

Supposing this handful of people decided they wouldn't bother doing any more work for the Association. "There are a couple of thousand members out there," they might say, "that's many times our number. They'll manage. We'll let them get on with it this time." What do you think would happen? You won't get a thing, you say? Why not? Because no-one has written anything. So why haven't you? Don't think you're up to it? Well, I'm damned certain at least a hundred of you could write better reviews than I. You joined the BSFA as a consumer, you say? How long have you been a member? You must enjoy it, then, get something out of it. You do? So aren't you going to feel sorry when it's here no longer? And aren't you going to feel just a little guilty because you know if you'd written the odd letter or review, or sent in some art, you could have saved the Association?

One person can't make that much difference, you say. But there are thousands of you! Or don't you care about encouraging British SF? Are you really that apathetic? The editors won't mind receiving duplicated comments, even the odd short note. Just saying you liked or disliked something, even without a reason, tells them their work is read, they are heading in the right direction, or else crapping up.

Picture this: you're in a dark room, handing out pills to thousands of individuals. You know the pills will kill between 5 and 95% of those who take them. You are not allowed to ascertain whether the pill will kill any individual unless he or she says something. Those who don't ask are the ones who don't write into the BSFA; and it doesn't kill them, it kills the people manufacturing the pills and distributing them in darkened rooms: it kills the Association.

I've spent time and money writing this because I believe in the BSFA and want it to continue. Do you?