

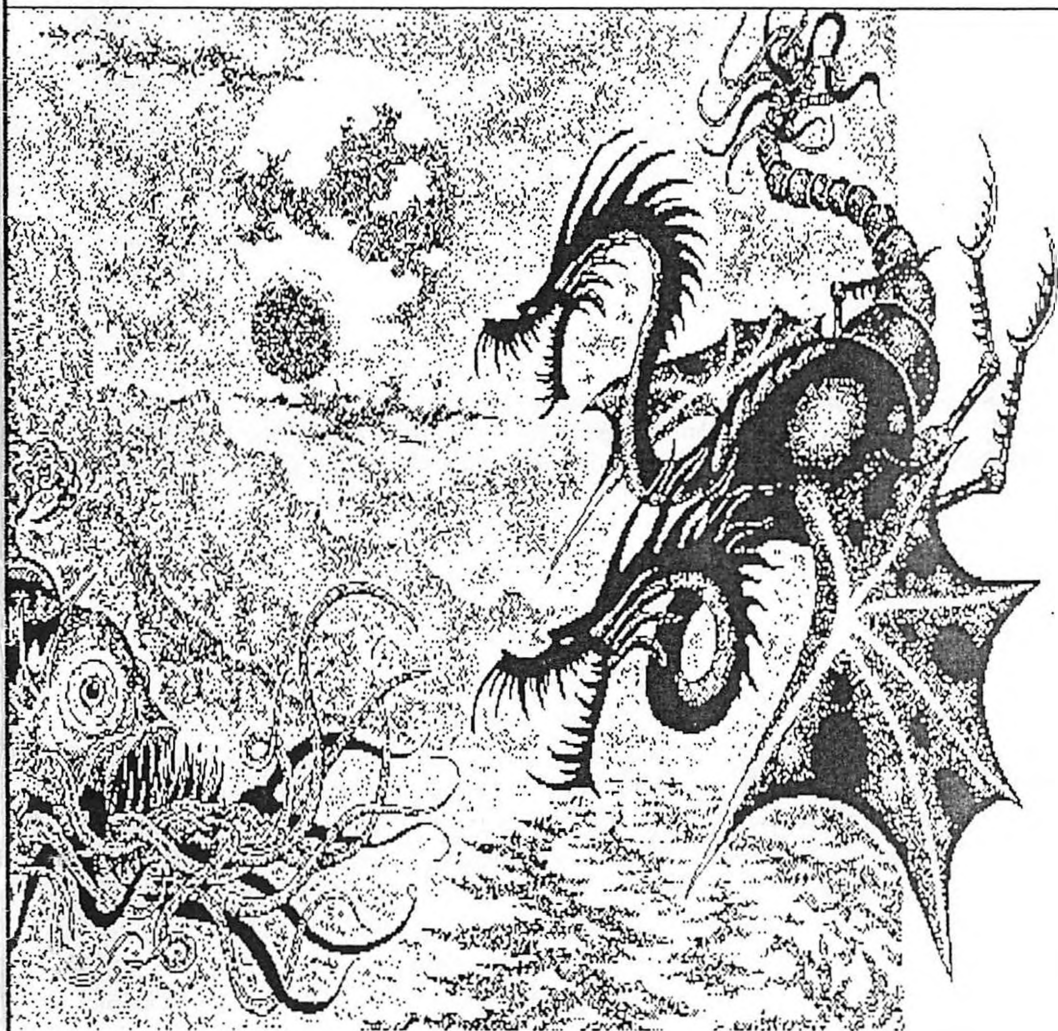
FIRST CONTACT

The Newsletter of the Irish Science Fiction Association

Volume 3, Number 1

January 1995

ISSN 0791-3966



Roberto Schima

Book reviews, Anime, Film and Video, ISFA Questionnaire 50p

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first First Contact of 1995. This is also the first newsletter under the new committee and me, or at least it would be were there a committee at the moment. However, there isn't, but I'm sure Brendan will have words on that subject on the remainder of this page.

You'll have noticed by now that this isn't the same slick, glossy and really coolly published newsletter you've been used to for the last year. Sadly, the resources are no longer available at an affordable price, so for the time being we're going back to the humble, less expensive means of production that have stood us in such good stead over lo, these many years. But not without a word of thanks to Ceri, who last year not only chaired the ISFA but typeset and printed this noble organ, giving it a professional look that's been universally acclaimed.

As always, though, the contents of the newsletter are up to you, the reader and you, who's looking over his shoulder. As a humble editor I merely place the words of others into meaningful form, packaging it in such a way that will be pleasing to those who read it. Articles or reviews on any sf or fantasy related subject are welcome, and I especially look forward to your letters on any subject. Be it feedback on previous newsletters or comments on last night's news. I've always felt that the letters column was the pivotal part of any newsletter. I especially value comments on the state of the newsletter; whether it's layout, content or the number of silly fonts I use. Remember that none of us who works in the ISFA is a professional science fiction fan; what we do, we do in our spare time and very often without any training, so any forgive us our trespasses, and let us know about them.

Finally, in the declaring of interests department: your editor is now the book buyer for Forbidden Planet, Dublin. He will do his darndest to keep himself impartial and refrain from using the newsletter to advertise his place of work, which is Forbidden Planet, 36 Dawson Street, Dublin 2.

Robert D. Elliott, Editor

A WORD FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

In March (or possibly earlier) there will be an Extraordinary General Meeting of the ISFA. At that EGM it will be my duty to wind up the Association after only six years in existence, unless a new committee can be found. Why? How can this be when there is so much happening in Irish science fiction? Currently I am aware of the following projects: Time warp, Octocon, Visicon (all conventions); *albedo one* (magazine); Starbase Ireland (Star Trek group), Mascon Productions (video production), The Infinity Effect (radio programme). What have they all in common? They all started as a result of the ISFA being there to provide a meeting place, free advertisements and support. It is possible that some of these projects may have started without the ISFA - it being there enabled them to start a lot more easily.

All of the above projects are currently running successfully, independently of the ISFA. So

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The Irish Science Fiction Association
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*This newsletter was brought to you
by the letter C and the editor
Robert, Man of Destiny.*

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Good Evening. And here is the

News

Pratchett on TV

Johnny and the Dead is set to become the first live action adaptation of Terry Pratchett's work. Coming this year is a two-hour television film based on Pratchett's book about rights for the dead. *Truckers*, you may recall, was made into an animated TV series, but despite myriad rumours, there's still no sign of it coming out on video.

King on TV

If you're reading this before the 8th January, there's still time to set the video for Sky News' *W.H. Smith Book Show* at 18:30. The show will be a Stephen King special, and will feature the first televised interview with the Maine man in, oh, ages. In a brilliant piece of scheduling, this show manages to clash every week with BBC2's *Bookworms*, the only other book show on television at the moment. RTE, naturally, believe that nobody in the country reads books.

While I'm talking about Stephen King, you may be interested in this week's adaptation of one of his stories. The latest in an apparently plot-starved Hollywood is *The Langoliers*, four hours worth of mini-series based on one of the stories in *Four Past Midnight*. It will be scripted by one Tom Holland, the man responsible for *Psycho 2*.

Dr. Who on, er, Radio

Coming soon to a radio near you, *The Ghosts of N-Space*, the second *Dr Who* story to be made for radio. Jon Pertwee will play the Doctor, and the original *First Contact Page 4*

actors will be reprising their roles as Sarah Jane (Elizabeth Sladen) and the Brigadier (Nicholas Courtney). The six-part show will have the same writer (Barry Letts) and producer/director (Phil Clarke).

Of course we've all heard about Amblin's forthcoming *Dr Who* series. Although a lot of people aren't looking forward to it, I'm optimistic that it'll be a good film, especially now that Amblin have made a deal with Terry Nation, creator of the Daleks. However, Steven Spielberg is reported to be not at all happy with the script, and Leonard Nimoy, who was approached to direct the pilot, is less than delighted with things.

If you can't wait, then you might be interested in *Shakedown - Return of the Sontarans*, a *Dr. Who* movie put together by such people as Terrence Dicks and Kevin Davies and starring Sophie Aldred and Carole Ann Ford. Expect the sell-through video, which was financed by *Dreamwatch* magazine, in January in a specialty shop near you; no word on rental as yet.

Film News 2 : The Recap

I've been noticing a trend in the forthcoming film releases; there's a remarkable number of sequels and adaptations, even for Hollywood. Elsewhere in these pages you'll find mention of *Star Trek : Generations* and *The Langoliers*, but there are lots more. In no particular order...

Highlander III is wisely pretending the second film never happened. I know I am. Mario van Peebles plays a magician who goes up against a man with ultimate power; never a wise thing to do, in my humble opinion. If that doesn't

what your appetite, you may be interested in *Highlander : The Animated Series*. However, as far as Highlander is concerned, for me there can be only one.

Alien 4 is go. **Sigourney Weaver** will be in it, which may surprise some people given the remarkably final way she ended up in *Alien 3*. Current rationalisations for her return are a dream (I kid you not), a VR simulation or an android Ripley. I'm currently working on a script that shows that the Ripley in *Alien 3* is really Newt in lots of make up.

The Clone Wars is a film that everyone must know about by now. Chapter one in the *Star Wars* saga, rumours are abound, even though the film isn't scheduled for release until 1999, two years after the twentieth anniversary re-release of the new, improved director's cut of *Star Wars* (now called *Star Wars 4 : A New Hope*). Look for **Kenneth Branagh** as Obi Wan Kenobi and **Mark Hamill** as Anakin Skywalker, but neither of these has been confirmed as yet.

Hellraiser II' is being made despite the third one, which only six people liked (I don't know who the other five are).

Indiana Jones V may see **Harrison Ford** lose an eye, but that's just a guess.

Stargate 2 is the sequel to a film that hasn't opened here yet, so I'll forebear on commenting.

Candyman 2 : Farewell to the Flesh will give new director **Bill Condon** a chance to depict the hookmeister. I really liked the first, but am a trifle dubious about the sequel.

Jurassic Park 2 was inevitable. **Michael Crichton** scripts.

Then, of course, the adaptations...

Tales from the Crypt will feature the Cryptkeeper (or whatever he's called) in three movies, of which the first has just been finished.

The Avengers may star **Patrick McNee** and **Diana Rigg** as cameos, but we're all praying that **Mel Gibson** doesn't play John Steed as rumoured.

Contact is based on the book by **Carl Sagan BhA**. A story of First Contact, it has nothing to do with this noble organ.

Weaveworld is being done, as far as I know, by somebody who isn't **Clive Barker**, which would be a pity. It'll appear as eight TV movies, so I suppose there's some hope for it.

Dinner, dinner, dinner, Spidey!

The ever-innovative Marvel seem to have been paying close attention to DC's Batman lately. Following in the caped crusader's batprints, Spidey's movie is soon to be made (finally), and a cool new-look cartoon series is already production, with computer graphics and 3D backgrounds galore. No word as yet as to who plays his sidekick, Robin.

A Man for all Seasons

Out on video now are the first two volumes in the adaption of the cyberpunk series *Tekwar*, with **William Shatner** executive producing as well as acting as script overseer (a job he'll be well familiar with after the novels) and director. For those of you who're fond of Heather Locklear's former co-star, he's signed a deal with Pocket Books to write two *Star Trek* novels. There's no word yet as to whether **Ron Goulart** — or, indeed, anyone else — will

be getting a special thank you on the acknowledgements page.

Star Trek II

Speaking of *Star Trek*, which we sort of were, let's get all the Trek news out of the way at once. All doubtless know that the seventh movie, *Generations*, is scheduled to hit the screen in February. However, for reasons unknown, the date was put forward to end of January. It's been rumoured that the reason for the shunt was that the film distributors had an argument with a London *Star Trek* convention which will be showing the film. Just so the film wouldn't be the first official showing, everyone gets to see it early.

If you're bitterly disappointed by this, you'll have to console yourself with the knowledge that the convention will now feature all seven principal actors from *ST:TNG*. Executive Producer **Rick Berman** and subordinate honchos **Ronald D. Moore** and **Bannon Braga**. There'll also be a workshop given by a *ST:TNG* writer and script editor.

Actually, it's my opinion that everybody in this country knows four people who've already seen the movie; I meet more every day. In fact, if you can't wait, you'll probably already have one of the videos of the film that's currently floating around the city. I've also been offered for sale *Natural Born Killers*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs*. Doncha love the free market economy?

Star Trek III

By the time you read this, I'll be dead sick of hearing about *Star Trek : Voyager*. However, for the 28.4 people out there who don't know all the details, the latest *Star Trek* spinoff will be premiering in

America on January 16 with a two-hour pilot (that's one and a half hours, European time) called *Caretaker*. Expect to see it on Sky One in November; there's been no word as to whether RTE's bought the program.

Lest We Forget (to set the video)

A couple of series you may not have heard of and probably haven't seen; here are a few programs airing or in production in America that may be here in 1995. There's *Sliders*, a Parallel Earths type of thingy written by **Tracy Torme**, who was a writer on *ST:TNG*; **Gerry Anderson's** *Space Precinct*, a program that can't possibly match the BBC's wonderful *Star Cops*; *seaQuest DSI* you may have seen, but now it's got a new crew, a new submarine, new everything, but apparently it still sucks dolphins; *Earth 2*, another Amblin effort that's getting rave reviews (pardon the cliché) about colonisation of another planet; and finally, *Space*, from the people who brought you the so-good-it's-unbelievable *X-Files*.

I'd buy that for a dollar

Universally acclaimed as Your Humble Servant's favourite movie of all time, *Robocop* was bitterly disappointing in its sequels. However, hope is at hand in the latest **Robert Heinlein** adaptation, *Starship Troopers*. One of Heinlein's shorter (and therefore readable) novels, the gung-ho actioner will soon be appearing on the big screen courtesy of director **Paul Verhoeven** and writer **Ed Neumeier**, both of whom were responsible for the Greatest Story Ever Told to Me.

Picture, if you will, a humorous science fiction novel. The latest in a series, it enjoys a huge following that is rivalled only by its now-legendary tardiness. Did I mention that its two-word title begins with 'Mostly?' Well, rest assured. The third Red Dwarf novel, *Mostly*

Human, has been completed a mere fifteen months behind schedule. Various rumours have it coming out either this month or in April, but I'd probably bet my lunch money on the latter.

The latest word on the **Craig Charles** saga is that he's been released on bail, three months after being arrested for rape, a charge he's denying. *Red Dwarf VII* is set to go ahead regardless of the outcome of Charles' trial in March, and it seems that the ten-episode series will have Lister in it. However, the absence of Charles would be a great blow, especially if **Chris Barrie** pulls out; he's said to be having grave doubts about doing another series.

He has his father's eyes

Albert Einstein, it seems, should have been more careful when signing donor cards. After his death nearly forty years ago, his eyes were removed and kept in a bank vault, awaiting auction. If you have over \$3.3m you might be interested in outbidding Michael Jackson for the peepers.

Best Sellers

For those of you who like to keep track of such things, the best-selling books during the month of December in Forbidden Planet, Dublin, were...

Paperbacks

1. Men at Arms, Terry Pratchett
2. Against a Dark Background, Iain M. Banks
3. Fires of Heaven, Robert Jordan
4. A Plague of Angels, Sheri S. Tepper
5. Isle of Women, Piers Anthony

Hardbacks

1. Star Trek : Federation, G & J Rees-Stevens
2. Star Trek : Generations, Jan Michael Friedman
3. Interesting Times, Terry Pratchett
4. Taltos, Anne Rice
5. The Ghosts of Sleath, James Herbert

A WORD FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR (CONT.)

the Association has succeeded, in some way, in its stated aim of promoting science fiction and related genres. So does this mean that it's no longer needed? That's what the Questionnaire on page 16 is all about. It attempts to define just what is important to members and nonmembers, what the Association should do next. If the response is to just hold monthly meetings then any potential committee members will know that they have an easy task for the next year. To provide a newsletter is added work and expense. (Regarding this: my thanks to Robert Elliott for stepping in to edit the Newsletter at short notice - he has agreed to edit for the foreseeable future, until a new committee appoint somebody else, if they so wish.) And to provide a quality magazine such as Phase or FTL is extra again. The questionnaire is intentionally brief and to the point - there is no mention of the Aisling Gheal, an Art Show or Video Competitions. Let's define just what we want the Association to be doing after six years of reasonable success - perhaps then committee posts may not seem so difficult.

The results of the Questionnaire will be published next month, but if you wish to apply now to serve on the ISFA committee please contact me at the address below.

The ISFA Administrator, 30, Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road, Templeogue, Dublin 16

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Con Review

The Elstree Star Wars Day, November 13th 1994, Elstree, North London.

Not knowing what to expect, I set out on a sixteen-hour journey to get to the venue in Elstree where this convention, the first of its kind since the early eighties, was to be held. On arrival I realised I was in for more than I thought; outside the venue people were trying to buy tickets for at least eight times the original price. The actual price of a ticket for the one-day convention was only £8, so I considered myself luck that I'd booked in advance. The organisers told me that the 700+ tickets sold out in just fifteen days.

First I should describe the convention site. Basically the venue, which is across the road from Elstree studios, is a large hall with a stage at the front. Half way down the hall there was scaffolding set up to form a staircase. In the hall which had a screen at the stage there were over seven hundred cinema-style chairs; this hall was where the main events took place. Adjoining this was a much smaller room where all the original Star Wars props were. Then there was a bar [no! - RDE] and dealers' room and also a corridor where it was planned to have all the signings.

I arrived at eleven o'clock on the Saturday morning, expecting to have missed the odd event as the convention was scheduled to start at 9:30, but due to events beyond the organisers' control, the events started rolling late at about 11:00, so I was lucky. The first thing was an introduction to the guests of the convention. First out was Kenny Baker, the man who played Artoo Detoo for the three movies. Then came David Prowse, the giant who was Darth

Vader. Then came Mike Edmonds, who played an Ugnaught in *The Empire Strikes Back* and Logray in *Return of the Jedi*, and he did all the movements of Jabba the Hutt's tail. Then, last but not least, came Jeremy Bulloch who played the bounty hunter Boba Fett. After the initial introduction it was announced that the profits would be quartered and go to the charity of choice of each guest.

After that, there was a showing of the trailers that were released for the three Star Wars movies. At first I thought that it might be boring, but some of the trailers were hopelessly funny and others showed shots that weren't in the movies, so it was much more entertaining than it sounded and I particularly liked the trailers for *Return of the Jedi*.

Other films shown included *The Making of Jedi* and the Premiere of *The Making of Empire*. Also premiered was a short film by Warwick Davies, who played Wicket, which showed the story of a youngster (himself) looking for a job, in doing so asking most of the main cast and going round the back scenes at Elstree studios.

In the dealers' room there were four dealers, all doing phenomenal trade in Star Wars stock. This was also the bar area so many people relaxed here. There to my shock and horror I met a most beautifully sinister person. Her name was Louise Turner and she was wearing an Imperial commander's

uniform. I couldn't believe how accurate the uniform, which was scratch built, appeared. She wasn't the only one in uniform; there was a Tantive IV officer, X-Wing pilots, storm troopers and Boba Fetts abound.

The prop room, as I mentioned earlier, wasn't very big, but its contents were magnificent. On the walls of this room were thumbnail sketches, blueprints, design drawings and storyboards, all from the three movies. There was a power droid, a Y-Wing helmet, tie fighter helmet and a storm troopers helmet. On a guarded table was every weapon conceivable from the movies, from light sabres to blasters. I was dumb struck. And then in the corner, the magnificent bulk of Darth Vader. Yes, the whole uniform inches from me, and it was breathing!

As I'm sure you could imagine, I was quite weak-kneed at this stage, so I decided to go for a quick meal. I was advised to go to the Green Fields cafe. The place was jam packed with Star Wars fans. I had to join a few others at a table just to get a seat, and when I read the menu I could see why. Everything was Star Wars oriented. From Star Destroyer Starters to Bantha Burgers, from Porkins Pizzas to Princess Leia's cherry cream (yum yum), everything had a Star Wars description, and it tasted excellent too. Evidently the organisers arranged with the cafe owners to have a special menu done and it worked well both ways. The place was packed, and everyone was having a great time.

At the convention site, the signings

which I missed were running late. One or two people weren't too happy about this, so while queuing for the signing I explained to these con virgins that it was totally amazing that the guests had agreed to give everyone a signature. Yes, they were convinced.

Anyway, I got my signatures and shook hands, and I must say that the guests were brilliant, total gentlemen and very easy-going.

After that I went to the auction. The most extraordinary things were sold off. Pieces of the Tantive IV, jump suits, posters, film pieces and the most amazing, an Empire Strikes Back cast and crew card, signed by over thirty of the crew and cast which went for over £300.

After that was a question and answer session with the guests, when we found out lots of things like the fact that Jeremy Bulloch spent a day and a half filming inside Slave I which was never shown in the movies. It was immensely enjoyable. Everything wound down at around eight or nine. It was a fun-packed day and even though I left work to go directly to the con and would be arriving back just in time to go to work, over thirty hours traveling, with was worth it.

My thanks must go to two people, Jason Joiner and Arnaud Grunberg. They are the ones who organised the whole event, with a little help from the lovely Andrea. Thank you.

There is another Star Wars day planned for early in '95.

I forgot to mention the Program book, which was a small glossy magazine with a high standard of writing, and as good as the rest of the convention (oops).

James Bacon.

Stuck for something to read? Stick no longer, with our easy, quick-to-prepare, pocket sized

Book Reviews

The Glass Dragon -- The Dragon Nimbus
= I Irene Radford (D.A.W. Fantasy, pb,
pp350, £4.99)

In the land of Coronnan where Magicians draw their power from dragons, who are (mysteriously, of course) dying out, the final female dragon, Shayla, is about to lay a brood. Shayla and her young must be protected at all costs, they are the fount of the land's communal magic and also intricately linked to the ruling royal family. Bound by a quest to protect Shayla is Jaylor, a young apprentice magician, with his own brand of magic. During his quest he meets Brevelan, a young (pretty, of course) witchwoman, who proves against common belief that magic CAN be worked by women. Mix in a few enchanted animals, a band of thieving nomads, a drug addicted rogue magician and some revolting peasants and you have an average sword and (mainly) sorcery novel.

After a very slow beginning the book finally got started. The story line seemed rather patchy in parts, plot devices which were even at first fairly obvious became pretty damn boring before they were finally revealed (supposedly to the readers' great surprise). The female characterisation was fairly wishy-washy, even though the other characters seemed to be convinced that the Witchwoman was "the strongest of us all", an opinion I feel quite justified repudiating. The book was riddled with inconsistencies (which had me groaning and grinding my teeth), characters who kept contradicting themselves in

words and actions, characters who had soliloquies in italics one time and in normal text the next, it was all too confusing for words (or even reviews for that matter).

Having said all that, I have to admit that I liked the book. I don't know why, it's extremely irrational, and against my better judgement. For a first novel (which I have been assured it is) it wasn't bad, just not very good. The "#1" which appears on the cover worries me though, I'm not sure that the subject matter will stand up to countless novels, but we'll just have to wait and see. Finally, all I can say is that *The Glass Dragon* is not a book I could recommend or denounce, it is just a book that I've read.

Leonia Carroll

Brother to Dragons, Companion to Owls, Jane Lindskold, (AvoNova, pb, pp220, £4.99)

You'd imagine, would you not, that a book with the above title would be fantasy? Especially if the front cover has a woman asleep on the cover, with an ephemeral dragon and owl watching over her? Well, think again, mateys.

Brother to Dragons, Companion to Owls is a novel about Sarah, an autistic girl who is able to communicate with others only through the vast array of quotes she's picked up over the years, thanks to her phenomenal memory. Her autism combined with her apparent lack of family means that she's spent most of her life in an asylum, until cutbacks force her onto the street. Once there, she's forced into the Jungle, a bizarre structure wherein can be found legions of street people, all ruled over by the Head Wolf. But there may be more to Sarah than there seems. She goes nowhere without her toy dragon, a two-headed

beastie named Betwixt and Between who seems able to talk, but only to Sarah. So, is she nuts or is something afoot? I won't spoil the surprise, but those of you who think she's gaga don't expect much from your science fiction.

Despite some of the language, some of the settings, *Brother...* is a cute book. I knew this as soon as I read about a rubber dragon called Betwixt and Between. Fortunately, I've nothing against cute books, and so I read on, and finished one of the most enjoyable books of the year for me. There are some jarring aspects; the Jungle, which one would expect to be something straight out of a gritty cyberpunk novel, is instead a place where the inhabitants are happy, and even Head Wolf rules through sheer popularity and ability; I wouldn't mind moving there myself. This isn't a cavil as such; it just seemed a little strange to me.

The only other thing about the book I didn't like was the treatment of Sarah's autism. Even though we're told that 'autism' is just a handy term to describe her condition, it seems that her only problem lies in her inability to speak normally. Her perceptions of reality, her ability to deal with people, all are totally normal.

But these are minor niggles, hardly even worth mentioning. But I'm not erasing all that typing now, so they'll have to stay. Let us just say that these niggles aside, I found *Brother to Dragons, Companion to Owls* a highly entertaining book. I suspect that this is Jane Lindskold's first book; I've searched and found no others. In any case, I look forward to reading more by her in future.
Robert Elliott

The Outskirter's Secret, Rosemary Kirstein, (Del Rey Discovery, pb, pp333, £3.99)

This is part of Del Rey's Discovery series, featuring thier newest SF and fantasy authors. The American editions are distributed here with the addition of a big sticky label on the back with the price in pounds, bar code, and ISBN.

Somewhat irritatingly this novel (like a couple of other Discoverys) is really a sequel to another book already published by Ballantine, DelRey's parent house. However I didn't feel I was missing anything in this story by not having read the previous book; salient details are recapped in the first couple of chapters.

Rowan is a Steerswoman, a member of a guild which explores and maps the surrounding lands, makes notes on peoples' lifestyles, the regional flora and fauna, and generally records whatever they come across. Her investigation into the source of certain blue gems has brought her and her friend Bel into conflict with wizards. The wizards are a deliberately mysterious bunch who refuse to deal with the Steerswomen, much to the latter's annoyance. It appears that the jewels are part of a fallen Guidestar, a body which once orbited the earth. The wizards use the jewels and the Guidestars in their spells and don't want anyone else to have knowledge of them.

The Guidestar fell deep in the Outskirts, uncultivated grasslands where nomadic tribes roam with their herds of goats. Bel is one of these Outskirters, a martial and poetic people. Rowan and Bel travel into the Outskirts to search for the fallen Guidestar and to investigate the wizards' purposes.

Despite the mentions of wizards, spells, and later goblins and demons, this is not a fantasy novel at all; think of Arthur C. Clarke's comments on magic. Rowan and the Steerswomen gain all their knowledge from detailed and rigorous observation, and part of the puzzle of the Guidestars is an ecological cycle which goes a long way towards explaining the lifestyle of the Outlanders.

This is a satisfying tale of discovery and deduction, culture shock, battles, mysterious weather, death, love and betrayal; and all for four quid.

Eimear Ní Mhéalóid

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Comics Review

*Neil Gaiman's Mr. Hero #2, Tekno Comix
X-Men #41, Marvel Comics*

Neil Gaiman is one of the hottest comics writers today. Therefore you'd expect a comic called Neil Gaiman's Mr. Hero to sell in truckloads to his myriad fans. And so it did. I wonder, though, how many of them realised as they paid their £1.75 that they weren't getting a comic written by Neil Gaiman? Well, I knew, so I wasn't feeling ripped off as I sat in my comfy chair, coke can held lightly but firmly in the left hand, and read a comic written by a gentleman called James Vance, based on a concept by Neil Gaiman.

To be honest, I expected this to be terrible. However, it came as a pleasant surprise, as did its sister title, Leonard Nimoy's Primortals (but more on that another time). Mr Hero is not a sandwich but an android, and one who was quite good at boxing in Victorian times. A trifle too good perhaps, as a little of the old ultraviolence caused him to be dismantled and stuck in a box until modern times, when he was unearthed by a lady named Jenny, who seems a nice lass despite the fact that she walks the streets in pursuit of her despicable profession (she's a mime artist). She reactivates our epony-

mous chum, who proceeds to talk like a loveable Victorian cockney and trounce evildoers whenever he meets them.

But no superhero he, and just as well as he has problems of his own, that he doesn't know about... yet. For the Teknophage has become aware of Mr. Hero's revival, and plots evil deeds.

I've become disillusioned in recent times about comics, considering the vast majority to be execrable tripe mass-produced by greedy corporations and bought by eight-year old speculators. Therefore it's a pleasure come across an entertaining, well-written, well-drawn comic. Mr. Hero is such a comic. Although there's the threat of the Teknophage kicking the door of the universe in and upsetting all, Mr. Hero is primarily about ordinary human beings and their reactions to strangeness. The artwork -- pencils were by a chap named Ted Slampyak -- are crisp and detailed, and the colour is up to the standards set by Image comics. All in all, I can find little to say about this comic that I don't like, with the possible exception of the letters page. Tekno Comix have apparently been active on the Prodigy on-line service, and the letters all come from net surfers. I've got nothing against an on-line lettercol -- although having the users referred to as 'netbabies' grates a tad -- but the whole

point of on-line communication is that it eliminates the need for hard copy reproduction. I'd be happier to see letters from comics readers, and not just two pages of proving that Tekno Comix are hip 'n' trendy. I will say, however, that the letters have improved greatly over the first issue's.

Neil Gaiman's Mr. Hero is one to buy.

Remember what I was saying about greedy corporations and junior investors? Let me introduce you to X-Men 41. I've been an X-fan for many years, but gave up about three years ago when it became apparent that the comic was just a cynical rip-off of plots gone by, and had no redeeming features. Since then, I've been keeping an eye on it, and noticed no particular increase in quality.

Now we have the last ever issue of the X-Men. Professor X is dead, killed back in time before he could form the X-Men. So there are no X-Men, there never were. Suits me. But the story doesn't end there.

X-Men 41 is the final part in the Legion Quest storyline, which has Professor X's son, Legion, travelling back in time to kill Magneto, still a pal of the good professors. Will he do it? Will he change history so that there was never a brotherhood of evil

mutants? Will the assassination herald a new age of peace and co-existence between humans and mutants?

Don't be silly. Of course it won't. Legion screws up and kills Xavier by mistake.

It's possible that this could be a moving story. It's handled well, with various X-boys and girls knowing about their imminent erasure from existence. The problem is similar to that of the death of Superman; it's been announced so far in advance that all possible emotion or tension has been taken from the story by the fact that we all know exactly how it ends.

As I said, there's no way the X-Men are finished. Marvel are launching about six new titles, all with the magic X, to show us the aftermath of Xavier's death. No word, however, on how the universe will survive things like the destruction of the m'kraan crystal in X-Men 108, as there's now no Phoenix to save it. Or any of the other times the world was saved. The problem with the X-Men is that they've saved the universe/world/next door's cat so many times that there's no way a parallel team could hope to do the job. Therefore, the only logical course for these X-titles to take is the destruction of the universe and the cancellation of every Marvel comic. I'm not sure whether they plan to do this, but you can be sure that if they do, the next month there'll be twice as many comics, each of them a #1 collectors' item costing twice as much. X-Men #41 is a comic for X-fans and suckers only.

Robert Elliott

Anime Review

Urotsukidoji III - The Return of the Overfiend Box Set, Kiseki, 110 Mins
AD Police Volume 1, Manga, 26 mins

I'll say this for Kiseki; they really know how to milk their most notorious title. The Urotsukidoji saga has been generating controversy since the first part was released by Manga a couple of years ago, and just to make sure people keep talking about it, Kiseki have released the third chapter -- The Return of the Overfiend -- in many different ways. First of all, it was in four parts, each dubbed. Then in four parts, each subtitled. Then the dubbed box. And now the definitive edition, subtitled in widescreen and on one cassette. Of course, they've managed to fit all four fifty-minute episodes onto one 110 minute cassette, but we'll let them keep their mysteries of compaction for the moment.

For those of you who don't pay attention to such things, Urotsukidoji is the ultimate in nasty videos (*not* video nasties, I hasten to add). Featuring liberal amounts of sex, violence, tentacles, demons and sex and violence, it regularly gets some right-thinking asshole writing into the periodical of your choice complaining about children watching this filth. "But," we cry,

"it's art!" Maybe it's art and maybe it isn't, but it's enjoyable.

The plot, such as it is, concerns the imminent arrival of the Chojin on Earth to unite the three dimensions. But is he a good guy? We don't know. We think he is, but then his immortal enemy, Kyo-o, comes across as a good guy. The suspense keeps us wondering, and it'd be a great story if it weren't for the fact that so much of the plot explanations are missing. Sadly, demons tend to explain all when they're ripping some unfortunate virgin in have with those aforementioned tentacles, so we're left in the dark when the scene gets cut by the censors. Visually, Urotsukidoji III is stunning. It bares as little relation to number two as that one did to the first, but it doesn't really matter. When taken by itself it's a damn fine piece of animation. The dialogue is better than it was in the dubbed version, so all in all I'd say if you want the definitive version of U3, then this is the one to get. If you're at all squeamish, though, I'd opt for something cute like KO Century Beast warriors instead. At least in that all orifices remain tentacle-free.

But what of Manga? What have they done lately? Apart from the Guyver,

their latest project is the Cyberpunk trilogy, three series of three videos each jam packed with as many robots, blasters and bodies as you could wish for in your most fevered, pizza-induced dreams.

Just out is part one of AD Police, a sequel of sorts to Anime Projects' wonderful Bubblegum Crisis. This however, is a grittier, 18s version as opposed to the tame, sissy PG originals. This amounts to little, however, except more blood and gratuitous use of the word 'fuck'. Oh, and of course being from Manga, it's dubbed.

Those of you who've seen Bubblegum Crisis will be familiar with Leon, the AD Policeman who seems to do nothing but mess up against Boomers and chase after the Knight Sabres. Well, here we get the other side of things, with Leon the rookie cop being introduced for the first time to the AD Police, and we're also introduced to the more mainstream Boomers (called Voomers, here. Why? I don't know. Maybe someone was scared by a vat or something). Leon, in his new role, gets to kick some robot ass and generally be cool and violent. Basically, this is a short but entertaining video. It's interesting for all *Bubblegum Crisis* fans, as it shows another side of Mega Tokyo; one that doesn't involve huge Voomers with high-powered lasers and guns and rockets and knives and sticks; it shows that for the majority of people, Voomers are nice, well-programmed robots that usually do as

they're told. Bubblegum Crisis, for all its strong points (and they are many), concentrated more on the action and dealt superficially with the Knight Sabres outside their armour -- only Priss was given any decent characterisation -- but AD Police, while still very much action oriented, manages to give more background to the characters and, indeed, the city itself, which becomes more than just a lot of buildings to jump off when combatting the forces of Genom.

Of course, if you haven't seen Bubblegum Crisis, you can still have fun counting the Blade Runner references. If you thought having a group called Priss and the Replicants was a trifle unsubtle, pshaw! How about having an artificial person getting the crap beaten out of her, and then getting thrown through a shop window where she dies? It's *deja vu* all over again.

Basically, AD Police is a fun video. The story is engaging, the animation crisp and the dialogue, dubbed though it is, convincing, except that everyone tries to sound really mean when they use the word 'fuck.' I'm loathe to say anything nice about a dubbed movie, but AD Police is entertaining, and well worth a watch.

Robert Elliott

ISFA QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire below is to aid potential committee members in deciding just what may be required of them before they decide to volunteer for the ISFA committee. It may be useful in getting people involved who may not have the time to become a full committee member but who may, nonetheless, be able to help in some way. Bear in mind, before you tick a choice below, that someone is required to do the job/produce the publication - can you help them? The questionnaire is being handed out separately at the monthly meeting to get some initial responses for publication in next month's Newsletter - please send your comments to the Administrator's address as quickly as possible. Enclose your name and address if appropriate.

Should the ISFA have:

<i>Newsletter:</i>	<i>Approx. Cost</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Monthly, 24 pages, photocopied	£8.40	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bi-monthly, 52 pages, photocopied	£6.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Magazine:

with a quarterly magazine similar to Phase for an extra	£6.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with a twice yearly magazine, as above	£3.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No newsletter, but a large quarterly magazine incorporating elements of the Newsletter and Phase, quarterly	£10.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Meetings

General monthly (50p charge members, £1 non-members)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writers & Artists Workshops monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Can you help with aspects of the ISFA?

	Newsletter	Magazine	Both
Editing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Designing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Envelope stuffing and posting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distribution		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

General poster and flyer design, as required

Co-ordination of meetings: booking rooms, organising guests & topics

Your comments /do you want to volunteer as a committee member?