

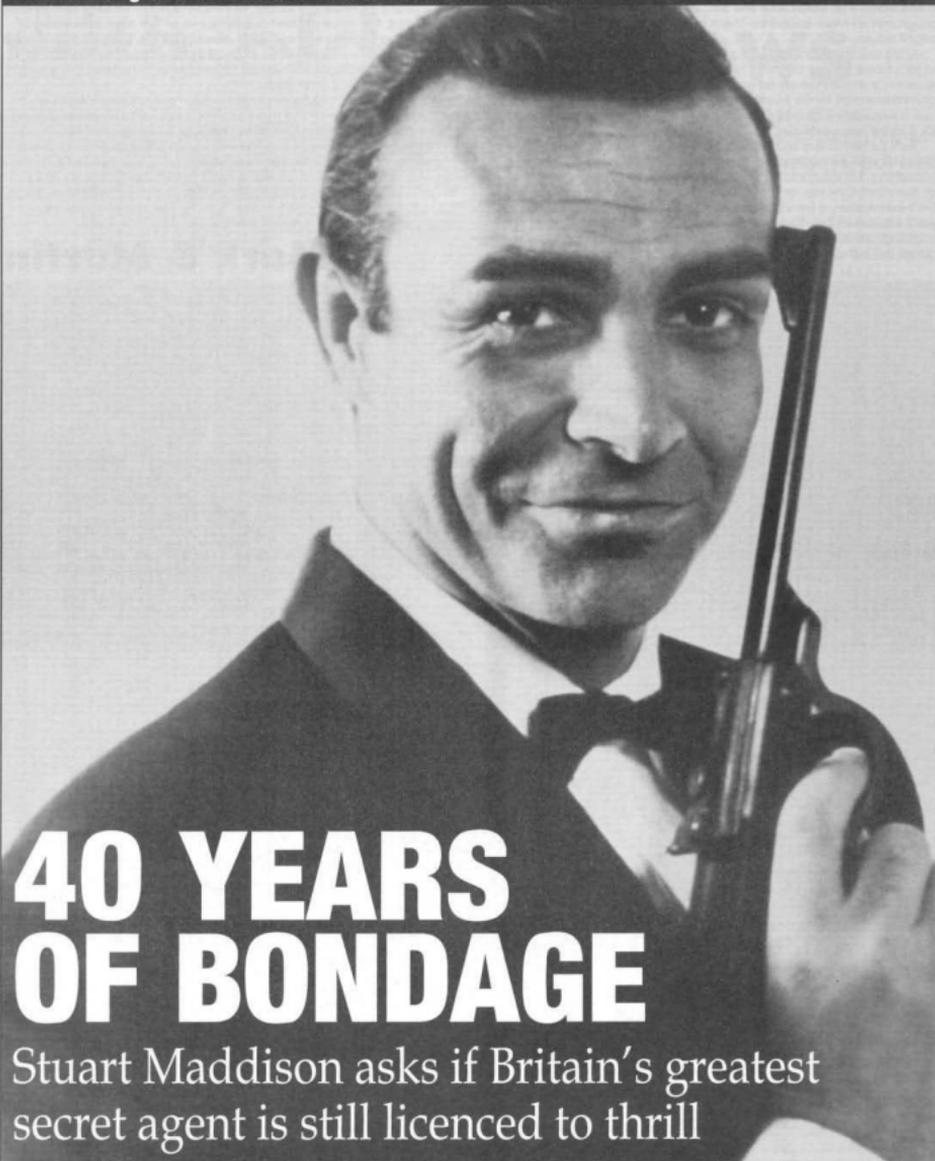
matrix

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The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association



40 YEARS OF BONDAGE

Stuart Maddison asks if Britain's greatest secret agent is still licenced to thrill

matrix

The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association

Welcome,

On a Saturday evening, one of us [Mark] still likes nothing more than to settle down with a *Dr Who*, *UFO* or *Space 1999* video or DVD. While he's happy to allow *UFO* and *Space 1999* to remain in the early '70s, each time the BBC announces the new TV season's programmes Mark examines them carefully for any hint that *Dr Who* might return.

Mark wears his anorak with pride. But *Rage* this issue asks whether Mark's hope for the doctor's return is good for the future of SF more widely. Or should we invest our time and energy getting new material commissioned? While Mark's head agrees with this issue's *Rage*, he has a suspicion that he left his heart in the *TARDIS* too many years ago for it to be rescued now.

Fortunately, there is a plethora of new ventures to ease his discomfort. New technology seems to be revitalising fanzish publishing, for example. In the first of a series of features, we look at *The Alien On-Line*, one of a new generation of on-line fanzines. TAO exemplifies a trend towards on-line fanzish publishing that we'll explore in the next few issues. The days of photocopied or mimeographed fanzines that arrived erratically in the post seem long gone. But is the move to virtual fanzines always a 'good thing'? The

next *Rage* slot could be your opportunity to state your case for or against on-line publishing.

On the other hand, modern technology also makes small press publications increasingly viable, with PayPal, internet sites, DTP and so on. Indeed, the small presses publish some of the most interesting SF, fantasy and horror. Yet they don't always get the sales, recognition and publicity they deserve. So in another new series, we've asked some of the leading small presses to introduce themselves. We begin in the US, with *Small Beer Press*.

We've also been lucky enough to gain an exclusive interview with Kim Wilkins, one of the most exciting dark fantasy writers around, review some of the latest releases and look at SF elements in *James Bond*. A mix, that we hope, will leave you shaken and stirred – especially to contribute. We need more LoCs, more reviews, more *Rages* and, in particular, an editor for all things fanzish. Just get in touch with Mark either by e-mail or snail mail. In the meantime, we'd like to run a fanzine review section. So any websites or hard-copy fanzines are welcomed, again through Mark.

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RAGE against the...

...fans' obsession with old TV shows

Roderick Gladwish says its time for science fiction fans to get over it. *Blake's 7* are dead. *Doctor Who* has gone to a new time continuum. *Babylon 5* is never coming back. Watch the repeats, if you must, but stop trying dig up the corpses of past glories. Instead, he says, put all that energy and commitment into making great science fiction for today.

I watch too much SF TV, and want to watch more, but not old SF. I want fans to stop wishing, hoping and lobbying for the resurrection of old TV shows. Push for new shows with new ideas. Blake is dead. *Doctor Who* is exploring a different time continuum. Leave him there and get on with something fresh.

SF examines the new: potential futures and alternate pasts. Old ground is not for those passionate about SF. The passion that makes SF culture such fun can also be its greatest curse.

Don't bring back old SF shows. Turn the energy from hounding the BBC to bring back *Doctor Who* or *Blake's 7*. Desist from communicating with Warner Brothers about *Babylon 5*. They're gone. Cherish their memories, but don't dig up their corpses and drag them around like rotting marionettes. Focus all that energy on getting new stuff commissioned. Face a challenge worthy of your talents.

Before anyone starts pushing the Green Death through my letterbox, let's look at *Blake's 7* and *Doctor Who* and why they should be left alone.

Blake's 7 ran for 52 episodes from 1978 to 1981 and I watched every one. When the repeats come round I happily catch another dose of eyestrain. Smart writing made it work, the protagonists gripped, going along begrudgingly with the leadership. The villainess wasn't evil for the sake of it. Servalan had a set of objectives that clashed with those of the heroes. Best of all was that the Federation won. How could seven people (Perspex boxes with disco rope intestines are people too apparently) and a flash spaceship overcome the resources of a galaxy-spanning fascist state? It was a hopeless cause that ended in death.

There is nothing wrong with fan fiction. Examining alternatives, filling in the backstory, wishing Blake hadn't sold out and Avon's



Lost in Space. Thank god!

brilliant mind got him out of the inevitable end is fine. Just don't waste airtime on it. I've heard rumours of a 20 years on programme being developed, if it happens it will wreck the concept. The story arc worked and it concluded. No dissatisfying fade like so many series, such as: *Babylon 5 Crusade* (funding death), *Lost in Space* (ran too long Will Robinson) or *Starcom* (no one watched it).

To convince moneymen (or women) to invest in bringing back 70's space opera insults the original version the fans claim they care about. It will not and cannot be the same. The budget for special effects alone would be crippling as only pastiches can have wobbly sets now. To get back the investment, it would have to appeal to a wider market. That means non-SF fans.

Rolf's animal-popstars audiences won't watch it, even if Villa is a

covert vet. The real fans will hate it because one good spacecraft got to Valhalla will cost weeks of write-time and they'll be the wrong writers whoever they are. Look at *Farscape*. It has a strong audience but has "been unable to grow beyond its core fan base" to quote the SCI.FI Channel and that means payback for investment isn't happening. It's clever. It's cool. It's going to crash and burn.

What about the venerable *Doctor*?

Doctor Who is a powerful franchise. Books, web and audio productions, much of good quality, are sanctioned by the Beeb to take your money. When things flag, rumours abound that they may make another series. Books and the other stuff don't need the investment nor have the risk of a TV show so don't be fooled, it is not going to happen. When the BBC had money

for time travelling SF what did they spend it on? *Crime Traveller* (1997) a truly awful soap star vehicle made a year after the Paul McGann, Americanised *Doctor Who* film. Funny that, the film didn't satisfy investment in the US, but audience figures in the UK were good, so the BBC commissions something else. The good *Doctor* hasn't a hope.

So, what should we do?

Sun Tzu in *The Art of War* says, "Never fight a battle you can't win." Choose your battleground, prepare your forces and execute your strategy.

We can learn from that. Instead of fighting hopeless battles over lost causes from the past, why can't we use fan-fiction imagination to produce new ideas? Turn the lobbying effort and connections to selling the best new idea. As I understand, it is hard to get a SF TV show on air, but you're smart, energetic and persistent. There are lots of digital channels hungry for material. Now is the time of opportunity, seize the day.

Consider the success of *Red Dwarf*. Doug Grant and Rob Naylor sold the programme as a sitcom not SF. Also take it as a cautionary tale. They are trying to turn it into a film. I kept hearing rumours over the last year or so that production was imminent, however, according to www.redwarf.co.uk crewing will not start until March 2003 for release in December 2003. Wasn't that supposed to be December 2002? Maybe after seven series (the standard *Star Trek* lifetime), they should be looking for something new too?

RAGE against the...

Don't sit there quietly fuming. Get it off your chest. Rants, raves or rational arguments between 750 and 1000 words please to Mark Greener at the editorial address opposite.

Telos loses licence...

Despite publishing a critically acclaimed series of hardback *Doctor Who* novellas, Telos Publishing announced that BBC Worldwide declined to extend their licence beyond March 2004.

"We are shocked and of course deeply saddened by BBC Worldwide's decision, which we know will greatly disappoint the thousands of regular readers of the *Doctor Who* Novellas," said David J Howe of Telos. "However, having discussed this with BBC Worldwide, we are resigned to the fact that there is nothing we can do to persuade them to change their minds."

So he warned people to sign up now. "I would therefore urge everyone who wants to collect the novellas to place a subscription or order in good time, as it is likely that the later titles in the range will be quite scarce in years to come. Remember what happened when Virgin Publishing lost their licence to publish *Doctor Who* novels: some of the later titles in their *New Adventures* and *Missing Adventures* ranges are now fetching silly money on eBay!"

...but announces new dark fantasy

In April, Telos are publishing *King of all the Dead* by Steve Lockley and Paul Lewis. Telos say this is an "accomplished and terrifying book from two authors who are making great waves in the independent press". In the June they promise "a startling novel" by Stephanie Bedwell-Grime. Telos compare *Guardian Angel* to Laurell K Hamilton's *Antia Blake Vampire Hunter* novels. In the book, angel Porsche Winter loses a client to the Devil "with all manner of consequences".

Clone Wars animated

According to *Ain't It Cool News*, Lucasfilms have agreed a deal with The Cartoon Network to produce sixty animated episodes telling the story of *The Clone Wars* to fill in the time between *Episode II* and *Episode III*. The story will be presented in serialised shorts, in keeping with the *Star Wars* Saturday-morning-cinema style, and will be screened prior to the release of the *Episode III* in 2005.

Clone Wars books

If you can't wait until episode III, LucasBooks aims to fill the gap with a plethora of comics, adult novels, middle-grade fiction, audio books, and short stories chronicling the Clone Wars. Dark Horse's comic

White Award heads West

Julian West recently won the James White Award for his short story 'Vita Brevis, Ars Longa'. West receives a cash prize and a trophy. Interzone will publish the winning story.

West says 'Vita Brevis Ars Longa' was inspired by a visit to the Irish Museum of Modern Art in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham and in particular by a series of works by Janine Antoni. "I saw a series of busts in chocolate and soap and the artist had cast her nipples in gold. This led me ask 'how far can you go with this?'"

Commenting on the winning story, judging panel member Orson Scott Card said, "While the

premise is outlandish, all the surrounding characters, attitudes, and - above all - reviews, are dead on. This omni directional satire leaves no victims standing in the international arts scene. Yet

the satire is always deft, the writing smooth and clear, so that even if you don't 'buy' the premise, you're still swept along to the inevitable - but satisfying - end."

Source: www.jameswhiteaward.com



Julian West, winner of the 2002 James White Award receives the trophy from Sinead Larkin (left), granddaughter of James White, and Ian McDonald (right) at Novacon 32.

Star Wars: Republic will focus on the Clone Wars starting with the double-sized issue 50. A series of one-shots will chronicle the exploits of several Jedi Knights during the war. There's also several hardback and paperback novels planned including Matthew Stover's *Star Wars: Shatterpoint* (Del Rey) featuring Mace Windu. Scholastic explores Boba Fett's childhood and adolescence in a series, including *The Fight to Survive*, *Crossfire* and *Maze of Deception*. <http://sci-fi.com/sciwin>

Muzzinland out

Stephen Palmer's third novel *Smeuzinland* is now out from Wildside Press. In *Muzzinland*, two African princesses journey across a far-future Sahara. During their journey they try to understand their origins and wrest control of their lives from their mother, the Empress of Ghana. Palmer's novel is due for a summer 2003 release.

Endeavour for Le Guin

Tales From Earthsea by Ursula K. Le Guin won the fourth Endeavour Award. The book is the first collection of stories to win the Award and is Le Guin's second Endeavour win. Le Guin wins \$1,000 and an engraved glass plaque. The annual Endeavour Award honours a science fiction or fantasy book, a novel or a

single-author collection, created by a writer from the Pacific Northwest.

Tharg, camera, action!

2000 AD Films plc has been set up to develop and produce live action films based on a selection of the magazine's characters and stories. 2000 AD's most famous character, Judge Dredd, is the only strip so far from the magazine to have ever made it to the big screen, in the 1995 *Judge Dredd* movie, starring Sylvester Stallone, though the British sci-fi film *Hardware* was based on a story from 2000 AD. A deal with Shoreline Entertainment will see two Judge Dredd movies, *Dredd* *Reckoning* and *Possession* be produced back to back. The films are promised to be more in keeping with Dredd's comic book persona than the Sylvester Stallone outing.

Sci-fi to do Forever War

Joe Haldeman's *Forever War* is one of the most critically lauded novels in science fiction. Now this epoch spanning tale of the horrors of war is set to get the mini-series treatment from the Sci-Fi Channel after years of failing to get made as a movie.

Following the commercial success of *Dune*, also produced by the Sci-Fi Channel, *Forever War* is set to appear as a four part mini-series. No news yet on casting or when production

will start, but the producers promise that they will retain the original story's unflinching portrayal of war.

Out of the Shada

A never before produced *Doctor Who* script by Douglas Adams is being made into an audio production and will be released on the internet to celebrate *Who*'s fortieth anniversary next year. The script, entitled "Shada," was originally in production in 1979 but was never finished because of industrial action. The new version will, according to the BBCi website, feature the voices of Paul McGann as The Doctor, Lalla Ward as Romana and John Leeson as K9 and it will be illustrated by Lee Sullivan. Also lending their vocal talents will be James Fox, Andrew Sachs, Hannah Gordon and Melvyn Hayes. The story is being produced for the webcast by Big Finish.

The BBC previously released the story, using original television footage and specially produced linking sequences, in the 1980s.

SF writers protest against war

Ursula LeGuin led a march in Portland, on December 6 to deliver a writers' and artists' petition against war on Iraq to Oregon congressman David Wu. More

than 225 writers signed the petition including Terry Bisson, Jeffrey Ford, James Patrick Kelly, SCI FICTION editor Ellen Datlow, Karen Joy Fowler, Michael Moorcock, John Kessel, Lisa Goldstein and Kelly Link. <http://scifi.com/schwine>

Internet SF and Fantasy bestsellers

Perhaps not surprisingly, R.A. Salvatore's *Star Wars: Episode II, Attack of the Clones*, was Amazon.com's top-selling Science Fiction & Fantasy book during 2002. Laurell K. Hamilton's *A Caress of Twilight*, Morganaur (Terry Brooks), *The Salmon of Doubt: Hitchhiking the Galaxy One Last Time* by Douglas Adams, Christopher Cerf (Editor) and *Diplomatic Immunity* by Lois McMaster Bujold made up the top genre bestsellers.

The editors picked China Mieville's *The Scar* as their top book. *The Years of Rice and Salt* (Kim Stanley Robinson), *Stories of Your Life and Others* (Ted Chiang), *The Golden Age: A Romance of the Far Future* and *Diplomatic Immunity* made up the next four.

Books sold and delivered

Butcher, Jim - The next three Harry Dresden (Roc) novels, to number eight in the series.

Butcher, Nancy - *Beauty* (Simon & Schuster), a Snow White retelling. Constantine, Storm - *The Thorn Boy and Other Dreams of Dark Desire* (Stark House).

Crowley, John - *Lucifer: Lord Byron's Undiscovered Novel* (Marrow).

Di Filippo, Paul - *Neutrino Drug*, humorous SF short stories (Four Walls Eight Windows).

Duane, Diane - the next three in the *So You Want To Be A Wizard* series,

taking the total to nine. The next two are *Wizard's Holiday* and *Wizards at War* (Harcourt).

Duncan, Dave - The sixth in the King's Blade series (Eos).

Goulart, Ron - *The Comic Book Encyclopaedia* (HarperEntertainment).

Green, Simon R - *Deathstalker Returns* (Roc & Gollancz) *.

Klasky, Mandy - *The Grassnight's Test* (Roc), the fourth in the series *.

Levinson, Paul - *The Pixelated Eye* (Tor), a Phil D'Amato novel *.

Marshall, Michael - *Wild and The Ideamaker*, sequels to *The Straw Men* (Berkley & HarperCollins).

Martin, George RR - *GRRM: A Retrospective* (Subterranean Press).

McAuley, Paul - *White Devils* (Earthlight), a thriller *.

Metzger, Robert - *Casp and Tube* (Ace), hard SF.

Niven, Larry - New and reprinted Draco Tavern stories (Tor).

Paxson, Diana - *Sword of Jupiter*, a Westria story (Tor)

Sagan, Nick (son of Carl) - *Idlewild*, an SF trilogy (Putnam).

Silverberg, Robert - *Phases Of The Moon: Stories from Six Decades* (Subterranean Press).

Simmons, Dan - *Ilium* (Eos) *.

Simmons, William Mark - *Born with the Dead* (Baen), the third Christopher Csejthe novel.

Turtledove, Harry - *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* (Roc) *.

West, Michelle - *A New Sun Sword novel* (DAW).

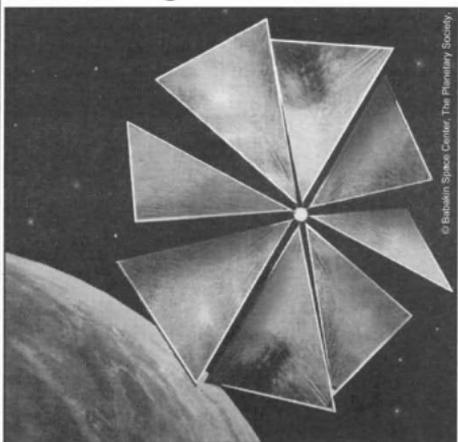
* Indicates delivered. Source *Locus* November 2002

Mad Max again

How business bible *Variety* claims that star Mel Gibson and director George Miller will team up for a new Mad Max movie, provisionally entitled *Fury Road*. There is no reliable plot news, as yet, but filming is expected to start in May next year.



Solar sailing takes off



© Babakin Space Center/The Planetary Society

Early in 2003 a spacecraft demonstrating solar sailing will be launched. Built by the Babakin Space Center in Russia, *Cosmos 1* will reach orbit on a converted submarine launched missile. *Cosmos Studios* is the project's main backer. Its chief executive officer, Ann Druyan, widow of Carl Sagan, has worked to make his dream a reality. Last year a prototype failed to separate from its booster, but that has not stopped her because the potential for solar sailing is great. Without fuel supply limitations, propelled by the continuous gentle thrust from the sun, theoretically a solar-sail craft could reach one-tenth the speed of light. With its large reflective sails *Cosmos 1* will be naked-eye visible, even during the day.

"It will be as bright as the moon, although not as large. It will be like a new star in the sky," claims *Cosmos Studios*. Source: www.carsagen.com and www.planetary.org

Digging up UFOs?

Archaeologists have been examining a region near Roswell, New Mexico for evidence of the supposed UFO crash in 1947. The SCI FI channel have hired professional diggers for their new programme *The Roswell Crash: Startling New Evidence*.

Bill Doleman from the University of New Mexico led a team of archaeologists and volunteers who studied the site in September 2002. Doleman says his team was directed to use purely scientific methods, such as geophysical prospecting and archaeological testing of anomalies, to find any evidence of a crash. He told Reuters, "We found things - some things I still don't know what they are - but they surprised me." He won't say any more until the programme is broadcast in November 2002.

SCI FI channel claim they have a "smoking gun", what that means remains to be seen. Source: Reuters & www.scifi.com

SCI-FI-LONDON™
THE LONDON SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY FILM FESTIVAL

2003 film festival announced

The UK's only dedicated science fiction and fantasy film festival, SCI-FI-LONDON, will run between Thursday 30th January - Sunday 2nd February 2003 at The Curzon Soho and The Other Cinema.

The programme includes documentaries on Philip K. Dick and Douglas Adams, workshops on scriptwriting, DV editing and lo-no-budget effects. The festival will also screen several classic movies - such as *Quatermass and the Pit*, *The Man in the White Suit*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *Sleeper* - and host several UK premieres including *Hypercube*: *Cube 2*, *The Inside Story* (Twilight Zone meets *Harry Potter*) and the "high camp spoof" *Don't Ask Don't Tell*. See www.sci-fi-london.com



Matrix Missives

This is England ...

I've not seen 3SF yet, but I'd like to correct a point in the review of John Whitbourn's piece in it.

I'm afraid it is a "fact" that the Saxons (along with the Angles and Jutes) were the first "English", giving their name to the country they conquered. It's more than a linguistic nicety, since in some kingdoms the previous inhabitants were wiped out or ran first while elsewhere they were enslaved. In the same way, the Welsh - a Germanic word meaning the same as Slav (slave) - as Brythonic Celts were the first "British" and the Scots - Goidelic Celts from Ireland - the first "Scottish".

I don't know what the Beaker people, the New or Old Stone Age folk called the place they occupied - nor the Picts in the north for that matter. The Vikings didn't come looting and pillaging from Scandinavia to any of the islands - including Ireland, Dublin - until a few hundred years later. The Saxons would've used the same word, Wicing, about themselves on their early raids I guess.

Nationality versus race is a matter

of what you take your words to mean. The using of one for another is just a pseudoscientific attempt to account for the human need to divide the world into us and them. It's kept going today because skin colour makes a more obvious distinguishing feature than accent or religion. Of course either of these will do.

My father was Scotch, my mother Welsh. I come from London, so there'd probably be some Saxon blood in there if you looked hard enough. However, although I like bagpipes and the corries I am "English", not even British, since that would have to include the Welsh (and other breeds outside the law). That's why I don't say Dad was Scottish - and why I love being told of something else we can blame the French for, since hating them is an essential part of being English!

The reverse also works of course. But perhaps if we tried stressing that they did beat us once (if only at Hastings) they'd lose some of their sense of inferiority. Mind, I'm not sure they find it as much "fun" as we do - better not tell 'em the Normans

were in fact Scandinavian Vikings (northern), close relatives of the Saxons who'd also conquered a bit of France...

Paul Campbell

Martin replies...

My point in the 3SF review was that nationality and race are emphatically not interchangeable and attempts to tie them together should always be resisted. The one nation, one race (ein reich, ein volk) lie has caused repeated suffering and it must be laid to rest. The truth is that all modern European nations are the product of immigration and migration, invasion and seignat. We are all mongrels and possess over-lapping identities that cannot and should not be reduced to "them" and "us". Claiming primacy for one ancient people over those who came before and after makes nationality about race not citizenship.

I don't want to deny the importance of the Anglo-Saxons but they should be seen in context, as one set of people amongst many who shaped, and who continue to shape, what we think of as *England*. The process of "creating" *England* preceded Alfred and Henry, and

it continues today. The English of 1900, of Victoria and empire, didn't just live in a different time, they had a different conception of what England meant. And their England is hardly less distant to us in 2003 than that of Alfred. England, all nations, are constantly being remade.

For the sake of historical accuracy, the French won The Hundred Years' War but, since popular British history passes at Agincourt, most people seem blissfully unaware of this fact. Some historians credit that struggle with creating the idea of a nation. It created, in France, a common purpose which encompassed royalty, nobility and commoner based on a sense of "being French" shared equally by all and transcending local or blood loyalties. Nationalism is a relatively modern invention and care should be taken when applying it to the past.

Finally, Paul's assertion that the Normans weren't really "French" but Vikings while insisting that the Saxons are the "real English" is just inconsistent.

We welcome letters on any issue discussed in Matrix - or any issue in SF, Fantasy or Horror more widely. Send letters by e-mail or snail mail to Mark Greener. We reserve the right to edit for clarity or length.

Obituaries

Cult horror fans mourn

Actress Peggy 'Queen of Scream' Moran, most famous for the cult B-movie *The Mummy's Hand* died at 84 years of age. In the 2000 documentary *I Used to Be in Pictures*, she introduced herself with her trademark scream. Cheryl Rainbeau Smith also died in October from complications arising from hepatitis. Smith starred in many low budget films including *Massacre At Central High*, *Revenge Of The Cheerleaders*, *Caged Heat*, and *The Incredible Melting Man*.

Jerry Sohl

Jerry Sohl died recently aged 88 years following a long illness. Sohl grew up in Chicago and worked as a photographer, police reporter, critic and reviewer for several Midwest papers. His SF books include *The Transcendent Man*, *The Mars Monopoly* and *The Altered Ego*. He also wrote for *Star Trek*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *The Twilight Zone* and *Outer Limits*.

Nathan Juran

The name you might most readily associate with the films *20 Million Miles to Earth*, *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and *First Men on the*

Moon was the special effects wizard Ray Harryhausen. But the man who tied the model work into the live action was the director Nathan Juran. Unfortunately, he was also responsible for the terrible *Hellcats of the Navy* that brought Ronnie Reagan and his wife together for their only onscreen appearance. The two camp classics *The Attack of the 50ft Woman* (1958) - "see a female colossus, her mountainous torso, skyscraper limbs, giant desires" - and *The Brain From Planet Auros* (1958) - "the incredible space brain invades a human body with its destructive evil power" - were so risible that the ashamed director hid behind the pseudonym Nathan Hertz.

Nathan Hertz Juran was born in Austria, but emigrated to USA aged six. After studying architecture he worked as a draughtsman for RKO then became art director at 20th-Century Fox in 1937. He shared an Oscar for John Ford's *How Green Is My Valley* after transforming California into Wales. After the war, when he worked as a photographer for the Navy, he eventually graduated to director with the gothic horror *The Black Castle* (1952). Juran made several well-received low-budget westerns before moving

on to *The Deadly Mantis* in 1957 the first of many sf and fantasy pictures featuring Harryhausen's model work. He made his last film in 1973, *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf* before returning to architecture.

He once said of himself: "I wasn't a born director. I was just a technician who could transfer the script from the page to the stage, and could get it shot on budget. I never became caught up in the romance of the movies." Gary Wilkinson

André de Toth

De Toth directed the first horror film in 3D, *The House of Wax* (1953), the irony being he only had one eye so he never appreciated the film's full effect. He lived a life that was, allegedly, as adventurous as any of his films. Married seven times, including for eight years to Veronica Lake, he had a total of nineteen children. He managed to break his neck four times, the first in a skiing accident. At one point, de Toth was taken for dead during a student riot in Vienna and woke up in a morgue. Possibly he was involved with clandestine anti-Nazis during the war. De Toth also claimed that while scouting for locations in Egypt in 1973 he was kidnapped and

interrogated by a group of young men who, due to his eye patch, thought he was the Israeli minister of defence Moshe Dayan, until he dropped his trousers to prove he wasn't even Jewish. As well as skiing, hobbies included racing cars, polo, painting and sculpture.

De Toth once described himself as a "Hungarian born, one-eyed cowboy from Texas." He made five films in Hungary before the war, then moved to England to work with Alexander Korda on *The Thief Of Bagdad* (1940) as second unit director before moving on to Hollywood for *Jungle Boy* (1942). He went on to helm several prominent westerns and film noirs including *Day of the Outlaw* (1959) and the influential *Crime Wave* (1954). De Toth also did uncredited second unit work on David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*. His last film was the war movie *Play Dirty* in 1968 starring Michael Cane from a screenplay by Melvyn Bragg. De Toth's motto was: "Don't be careful. Have fun. I did." Gary Wilkinson

Matrix passes with sadness the notice of author Charles Sheffield. A full obituary will be in our next issue.

Sequel-free 2003 movie preview

Lucy Liu in trouble in *Cypher*.



While the biggest science fiction movie releases for next year look set to be dominated by sequels (see: *They're back!*) there are some films slated for release that aren't part of an existing franchise or feature superheroes.

One of these is *The Core*. The premise is preposterous. Earth's magnetic field has disappeared and a group of "terranauts" must descend through the mantle and use nuclear explosions to restart the rotation of the planet's core. But scriptwriter, John Rogers, told *IGN Filmforce* that he was aiming for something closer to *The Andromeda Strain* than *Armageddon* and that, as far as possible, he would be keeping the science credible.

"This is just a fun, big budget, sci-fi movie written by a sci-fi fan with a science degree," he said. "With indie cinema regulars Hilary Swank (*Boys Don't Cry*) and Aaron Eckhart (*Erin Brockovich*) leading the cast, this might have a chance of being more than the average Hollywood blockbuster.

Cube was an unexpected pleasure, a low budget movie that turned its limitations into positive advantages. Director Vincenzo Natali's follow-up, *Cypher*, premiered at the 2002 Sitges Film Festival in Spain. Starring Lucy Liu (*Charlie's Angels*) and Jeremy Northam (*Mimic*), *Cypher* is a complex thriller about a man caught up in a conspiracy involving commercial espionage. The response from audiences at Sitges was positive but, as yet, there is no UK release date.

You either like or loath Roland Emmerich's work. He has been responsible for a string of divisive

genre films, including *Independence Day* and *Godzilla*. He returns to SF with his next movie, *The Day after Tomorrow*. Dennis Quaid (*Enemy Mine*) plays a climatologist trying to save the world, and his son, from a new ice age.

Lawrence Kasdan (writer of *Empire Strikes Back*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* etc.) will direct the adaptation of *Dreamcatcher*, a Stephen King story. The atmospheric trailer suggests similarities with *The Thing* - shape-shifting alien, a freeing climate and a small group of men struggling to stop it escaping into the wider world.

Veteran genre director, Richard Donner (*The Omen*, *Superman*) returns with Michael Crichton's *Timeline*. Billy Connolly plays a time-travelling archaeologist trapped in fourteenth century France. His students, led by Paul Walker (*Pleasantville*) attempt a rescue, but also become trapped and they all have to struggle to survive.

Equilibrium has a premise that can

only be read in the voice of the man who does all the trailers. "In a fascist future where feelings are illegal, a man, charged with enforcing the law, rises to overthrow the system." Star, Christian Bale, can act, but it is directed by Kurt Wimmer, the man behind the execrable *Sphere*.

Jim Barrie fans get both *Peter Pan*, PJ Hogan's (*Muriel's Wedding*) live action adaptation and *Neverland*, the story of the writing of the lost boys' tale, starring Johnny Depp and Kate Winslett. Also coming is Roberto (*Life is Beautiful*) Benigni's *Pinochio*.

As if *Planet of the Apes* wasn't bad enough, Hollywood studios will continue to pursue the pointless "re-imagining" of classic stories next year. Disney will do *Treasure Planet*, transferring Stevenson's yarn to space. *Around the World in 30 Days* will add Jackie Chan to a "version" of Verne's classic. In *Underworld*, Kate Beckinsale is a vampire Juliet in love with a werewolf Romeo. Add your own joke about doing it doggy style here. *The Diary of a Young London Physician* sounds better. David Mamet (*Glenory Glen Ross*) retells the story of Dr. Jekyll with Jude Law.

Other titles to look for include: *Below*, David Twohy's (*Pitch Black*) monster movie on a submarine; *Intacto*, a Spanish film about people with the power to control luck; *The Singing Detective*, a Hollywood remake of the Dennis Potter classic; and *Bruce Almighty*. God (Morgan Freeman) gets so annoyed at criticism of His work that He challenges Bruce (Jim Carrey) to do a better job or He will destroy civilisation. Bruce help us!



They're back!

By the time you read this, two of the big science fiction and fantasy franchises will have launched their latest sequels. *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* will fill cinemas over Christmas while *Star Trek: Nemesis* is due for release in January along with Soderbergh's remake of *Solaris*.

And the big sequels will keep coming throughout the year. In May *X-Men 2* and *The Matrix Reloaded* will go head to head. *Tomb Raider 2: Lara Croft and the Cradle of Life* opens in July and *Terminator 3: The Rise of the Machines* bursts upon us in August. The end of the year sees the end of two trilogies. *The Matrix Revolutions* promises to light up November nights while next Christmas will bring Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* epic to a conclusion with the release of *The Return of the King*.

Spandex all over



As well as the *X-Men* sequel there will be no shortage of escapees from the pages of comics on the screen next year. From Marvel,

Jonathan Hensleigh will direct vigilante anti-hero *The Punisher*, Ang Lee will bring *The Hulk* to life and Ben Affleck will dress in red leather as *Daredevil*. *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man* should all go into production for 2004 releases. From DC/Wildstorm, Alan Moore's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, starring Sean Connery, will be released next year, though rumours of huge bust ups on set do not bode well. And work might finally start on *Batman* and *Superman* movies.

Time of the month?

In *28 Days Later*, Danny Boyle delivers a post-apocalyptic vision of London peopled by wild-eyed lunatics infected with pure rage. They chase ordinary folk through the streets howling in pain and anger and are prone to projectile vomiting. It doesn't sound too different from the West End on a normal Friday night, says **Martin McGrath**.

Zombies were never scary. They lumbered and crumbled and wobbled towards the hero in such predictable ways that dying of boredom should have been more of a risk than actual contact with the living dead.

In *28 Days Later*, however, the 'infected' sprint like Olympians. They bound over obstacles. They leap headlong through plate glass. And all the while they howl like wounded animals. These are monsters.

I stand in a tiny minority because I was never much of a fan of director Danny Boyle's first two movies, *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*. Indeed the only Boyle film I have previously had much time for (excluding the *Inspector Morse* episode "Masonic Mysteries") is the widely reviled *A Life Less Ordinary*.

Sweaty-palmed fright

There is nothing in Boyle's past, though, that prepared me for *28 Days Later*, an effective, entertaining sci-fi action movie that, while not perfect, does marry a fantastic aesthetic with real, sweaty-palmed fright.

Let me start with the problems. There is no denying the stupidity of the science behind the film's premise. Chimpanzees infected with "pure rage" are released by hapless animal rights activists. The infection spreads to humans and across the nation, wiping out the vast majority of the population within weeks. It is silly, but it doesn't spoil the film.

Boyle has said that the script appealed to him because anyone who has been to London knows what it is to feel rage. Travelling by car, or on a crowded train, or even walking down Oxford Street, the sheer mass of people in a city like London raises hackles. I agree. I lived and worked in London and know exactly what he means, but it didn't need the distraction of the pseudo-scientific introduction to make that point.

Still, the viewer can take the spread of "rage" as an allegorical device or ignore it and just enjoy an adrenaline packed movie.

Alex Garland's script is also occasionally clunky. One speech by Hannah (Megan Burns) is so



Everyone else sneaked out and left Jim with the job of clearing up after the party.

wooden you expect her to sprout branches and roots. Also, early in the film there is too much exposition through shouting. This is normally a sign that a writer isn't confident in his material and doesn't want to take the risk that the audience might stop and think about what the characters are saying.

Most crucially, though, the second act sags dramatically and about half way through you begin to wonder whether the film has shown you all that it has to offer. Persevere. The final showdown between the infected and a ragtag band of British soldiers delivers thrills aplenty.

Despite these weaknesses, *28 Days Later* also has enormous strengths.

It looks amazing. The opening sequence in a deserted London has been much discussed and deservedly praised. The use of handheld digital cameras gives every frame a muted, grainy look that simply hasn't been seen before in mainstream cinema. It isn't beautiful, but harnessed tightly to expert story-telling, it adds immensely to the atmosphere.

Boyle showed with *Trainspotting* that he could use music to brilliant effect. *28 Days Later* is, if anything, even better in this regard. The slow building music that accompanies Jim (Cillian Murphy) through the deserted streets of London comes to an ear-battering, screeching conclusion as he realises the scale of

the disaster. And the spine-tingling version of "Abide With Me" ranks alongside *A Night to Remember* as all time best use of this hymn in a movie.

Praise should also go to the sound engineers involved who have created a complex and multi-layered soundscape that still manages to remain clear and sharp, so that the howling of the infected echoes across and empty London.

And some of the performances are excellent. Relative newcomer, Cillian Murphy, as the film's hero Jim, manages the transition from innocence and terror to murderous determination while retaining the audience's sympathy. Naomi Harris, as Selena, has a harder time with a part that asks her to perform wild emotional flips, but she too is very good. And Brendan Gleeson (*The General*) is a fine actor who quickly and convincingly become the father figure for all the main characters.

Infected

But the real stars of this film are the infected. They are swift and fierce and furious and they continually keep you on your toes. Some horror movies descend into predictable jump-out-of-the-dark scares. Boyle avoids this and he keeps you caring for the central characters even in the action sequences. By the end you might even find yourself cheering for the monsters. I know I was.

There is no denying that *28 Days Later* has flaws. For hardcore horror fans, it may lack the shocks and gore to really get them going. But as a piece of entertainment it is the kind of science fiction film that, frankly, I thought British cinema no longer capable of making.

Made for the (relatively) modest sum of £10 million, *28 Days Later* proves that the making of genuine blockbuster science fiction does not need to be the sole preserve of Hollywood studios. With imagination and talent, it is possible to make films that beat the Americans at their own game.

Clever and tense and filled with foreboding, *28 Days Later* deserves your attention. Like the infected, I predict this one will run and run.

Potter charms again

Struggling against the knowledge that you've all already made up your minds about *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* even before he begins, **Marlin McGrath** recommends it as a funny, slightly scary, adventure that is much better than the first in the series. Go on you miserable muggles, hand over your galleons, sickles and knuts and enjoy.

What is the point of reviewing *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*? It isn't as if, when I tell you that this film is far superior to *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, that thousands of you who, previously, were going to stay at home will now rush to the cinemas, cash in hand begging to be allowed to watch.

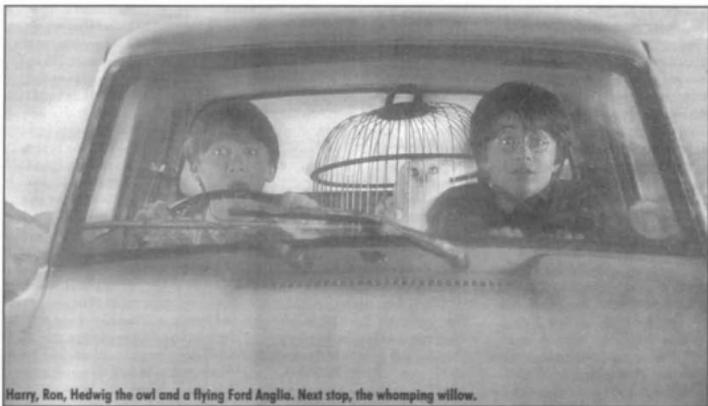
Nor, for that matter, if I tell you that while good, it still doesn't quite capture the magic or excitement of the novel, will those who have been desperate to see it suddenly decide to avoid the film.

The truth is, no matter what any reviewer says, everyone already has an opinion on Potter's second cinematic outing and will already have made up their minds about whether they are going to see it. But, review it I must - if only because I can't resist challenging the stay-at-home cynics to consider whether a little light-hearted wizardry might not be good for their souls.

So, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is a very good movie that isn't quite as good as its source material. For the record, I was underwhelmed by the first film, *The Philosopher's Stone*, but enjoy the books in a relaxed, non-fanish, way.

This second instalment has several advantages over the first Potter movie. It is, for a start, based on a much better book that not only contains a coherent and exciting plot but also features some of the most cinematic set-pieces in the Potter-cycle so far. So, for example, the flying car, the journey into the dark wood and the final confrontation

with the basilisk all convincingly and



Harry, Ron, Hedwig the owl and a flying Ford Anglia. Next stop, the whomping willow.

effectively make their way to the screen.

Another significant advantage is the remarkable maturity of the young cast. Daniel Radcliffe, the eponymous hero, was rather wooden in the first movie but in the sequel he is a revelation. He comes across as stronger and more at home with the gritty determination and rather darker side to the young wizard's character on display in this story. This bodes well, as the transfer of books three and four to the screen will demand more in this vein from the young actor who seems to revel in the part of neophyte action hero. Also much improved is Emma Watson (Hermione Granger), she was simply unbearable in the first movie but is better here. Slightly disappointingly, Rupert Grint's Ron Weasley, so good in the first film, is rather reduced to gurning and whining this time.

Ron, the heart of the Potter books, deserves better treatment.

A further strength of the Potter movies is the quality of the supporting casts, featuring the very best of British acting talent. Richard Harris (may he rest in peace, or in a pub - if he prefers) is again sonorous and reassuring as Dumbledore. Maggie Smith and Robbie Coltrane have relatively little screen time but add depth

and quality every time they appear. Jason Isaacs arrives for this movie as the supremely nasty Lucius Malfoy and does a wonderful job but is overshadowed by a hilarious and perfectly judged performance by Kenneth Branagh. Branagh gets the mix of charm and cheese just right and almost steals the whole show. My only complaint is that more of the book's conflict between Lockhart and Alan Rickman's underused Severus Snape didn't make it onto the screen. I would have paid extra to see these two thespians really hammering it up against each other on the big screen.

Finally, it seems to me, that Chris Columbus has taken a significant step forward in the quality of his direction since the first film. Action sequences are much more clearly and dynamically presented - this difference is nowhere more obvious than in the Quidditch match. In the first movie Quidditch was presented in a muddy, confused and rather static way. In this sequel Columbus puts the game on the screen as I imagined it. I really do hope they can keep this up, because I am longing to see Ireland become Quidditch world champions in the fourth movie.

Not only are the action sequences better, Columbus seems to have developed the knack of presenting a fabulous environment that is lushly and beautifully realised without letting the scenery get in the way of telling a tight and exciting story

- Peter Jackson should take note.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets has, then, an awful lot to recommend it - but a few words of caution. First, in the audience at my screening some of the very small children freaked out at the scarier aspects of the film. One sensitive child didn't get beyond the first hissing of the basilisk's voice. Others couldn't cope with some of the really rather creepy and frightening moments in the forest. So, I would exercise caution in taking very small children. Also, at two-and-a-half hours, the film edges towards being too long, although I have to say that most of the audience of children and adults remained gripped by the film throughout so that far fewer than I feared felt unable to restrain their bladders during the screening.

I much preferred this to the first Harry Potter movie. JK Rowling's books, in my view, dramatically improve as the series progresses and, if this film is any indication, the same trend may be true of the big screen interpretations of Harry's story. Enjoy it for what it is, diverting family-friendly entertainment that is largely without pretension or guile. Certainly *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* converted me to the film series and I can honestly say that I am already looking forward to seeing what promising Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón can do with the next instalment, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*.

Second rate variety?

Martin Lewis looks at *Screamers*, the 1995 film based on Philip K. Dick's story 'Second Variety'.

The third Philip K. Dick adaptation to jetison his original title, *Screamers* is based on his short story 'Second Variety' (1952). The screamers are autonomous weapons of war; intelligent, feral circular saws. Dick's story is set in Europe ravaged from World War Three, where the screamers provided the Americans with a technological edge that resulted in stalemate. In deference to a modern audience, the film transposes the action to an extra-solar planet. The Russian and American adversaries become the New Economic Block and the Alliance, divorced from any real world associations. Perhaps a good idea in theory, this is scuppered by the silly backstory to the NEB/Alliance war, including a tortuous, scrolling prologue a la *Star Wars*.

The film proper opens with a NEB soldier trying to make contact with the Alliance command to broker peace. He is shredded by the screamers before he can do so, but

his message makes it through intact. The war weary Alliance commander Hendriksson (Peter Weller) decides to investigate the offer of truce and heads off to NEB command with a green private, Jefferson (Andrew Lauer). Along the way they come across a young boy, David (Micheal Caloz), in the wasteland of an industrial city. He begs them to let him come with them and Hendriksson grudgingly allows it.

When they arrive they discover that there only three NEBs left alive; two soldiers, Becker (Roy Dupuis) and Ross (Charles Powell), and Jessica (Jennifer Rubin), a spiv. The screamers have evolved, become more deadly and virtually



wiped out the NEBs. They have developed the ability to imitate human form and they are no longer loyal to the Alliance. Though Hendriksson and the NEBs band together they are all strangers and it is not long before tempers flare and suspicious fingers are pointed at one another.

'Second Variety' is a fairly basic story, Dick's first exploration of his grand theme, and in places *Screamers* offers improvements. The arrival of Jefferson at the beginning of the film and his revelation that the Alliance communications have been corrupted wonderfully foreshadows the main theme. The relationship between Becker and Ross improves

immeasurably on Dick's brisk characterisation. However, when the script departs too far from the source material it all starts to go wrong.

The first problem is the expansion of the role of Jessica to the love interest. There is no place for a relationship to blossom in these grim, paranoid circumstances. Needless to say, it is handled unconvincingly and Weller, as the other half, looks particularly uncomfortable. The other problem is the shoe horning of copious action into Dick's rather staid story. Dick's effective ending is dumped for a hotch-potch of twists, clichés and fistfights. On top of this, the final shot provides us with an unlikely image of terror that is simply laughable.

Viewers should perhaps quit while they are ahead and stop watching after the first two-thirds of the film. Of course, then they wouldn't know what the second variety was, but at least they wouldn't feel cheated.



Martin McGrath delves into his video and DVD collection and takes a fresh look at some historic SF. This issue, *20 Million Miles From Earth*



What do you call a movie where the most expressive, intelligent and emotionally engaging character is a lump of clay?

Simple. It's a Ray Harryhausen flick.

What is *20 Million Miles to Earth*?

Venus. More or less. Actually Venus never gets closer than 25 million miles to Earth, but that's Hollywood. The first American mission to Venus ends in disaster as the ship crashes into the Mediterranean. A strange piece of wreckage is found by a young boy and delivered to a touring biologist. Soon, a creature has hatched and is growing faster than the national debt of Argentina.

So far, so typical fifties' monster movie, why is this DVD worth buying?

Well it is a typical monster movie and it was made in 1957. But Ray Harryhausen made the monster so, from the time it emerges blinking and confused until the final struggle in Rome's Coliseum it engages the viewer in a way that is beyond any of the actors in the film. Highlights include the struggle in the barn and the fantastic battle through a Roman zoo with a clay elephant. Proof that, no matter what the technology, it is artistic imagination that really matters when creating imagery on the big screen. The DVD features a superb documentary (from 1997) on Ray Harryhausen and his life's work. It includes a lengthy, and fascinating, discussion with Harryhausen himself and with his lifelong friend, Ray Bradbury plus unseen clips of Harryhausen's early works - one of which was "Evolution", an attempt to show the

whole of the planet's history using stop-motion effects. It is clear he never lacked ambition but...

There's a "but"?

Well, yes. There is always a "but" with Ray Harryhausen's films. If only once the man had been able to work on a film where the other creative aspects matched his own ability then, well, that movie would have been a genuine masterpiece. As it is, this film is stuck with the usual mediocre plot, weak script and plodding acting. And the dumbest moral in movie history.

Why does the film have a moral?

This is a King Kong rip-off, someone must be profound at the end.

What do they say?

"Why is it always, always, so costly for man to move from the present to the future."

What's dumb about that? It sounds quite thoughtful.

It's dumb because the alien is dragged from it's home, locked in a cage, attacked by a dog, poked with a stick, stabbed in the back with a pitchfork, shot, burned, probed, electrocuted, attacked by an elephant, shot at some more, bombed and killed by a tank. And then the watching scientist has the nerve to complain how tough things have been for man. What about the monster?

Any interesting facts from the documentary?

Loads. Try this. During the seven-skeleton-scene in *Jason and the Argonauts* Harryhausen managed to animate only 13 frames (half a second) a day.

Right here, right now

Glenda Pringle reviews the first issue of *Here & Now: The Magazine of Urban Fantasy* from Brandon Press. Will it succeed in its goal of bringing fun back to the fantasy market?

Contra to what you may have read in a previous issue of *Matrix*, I'm still here and I'm afraid you'll still have to endure my scribbles for a while yet. This is my penultimate column before I step aside to make way for my replacement, Roderick Gladwish. Though I've enjoyed sharing my love of genre magazines with you, I don't want to overstay my welcome and, like the rest of you, I look forward to reading a new point of view.

Amid all the well-deserved fanfare for a certain new magazine (well done, Ben and team!), let us not forget another newcomer. I bid you all to give a warm welcome to *Here & Now: The Magazine of Urban Fantasy*. Although not as big and glossy as *3SF*, it is, nevertheless, a worthy enterprise on the part of its editors, Jan Wilson and Jenny Barber.

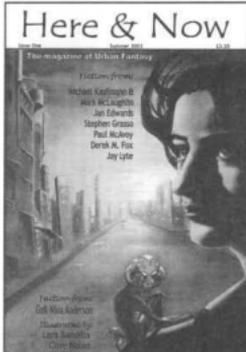
Although *The Third Alternative* sprang to mind when I first picked it up, I was soon disabused of this notion when I started reading it. True, both magazines serve a similar niche (i.e., urban/surreal fantasy), the similarities end right there for me. *TTA* is altogether a more established and professional affair.

However, this is not to denigrate *Here & Now*. On the contrary, this is a magazine produced by fantasy fans for fantasy fans – a sentiment

enthusiastically reflected in their mission statement: "Now we could say that we want to inject a little magic into your lives, or that we're ever alert for funky new fantasy tales, and both would be true. But what this is mainly about is having fun." Can't say fairer than that.

As someone who worked in publishing for a lot of years, I cynically could point out that 'having fun' doesn't really make business sense, but as a SF fan, I can only applaud such an aim. Fun is often the missing element in the products of the 'big guns' in the magazine business and it's nice to see someone trying to re-inject it into the genre.

My reactions to the contributions in the first issue are, I must say, mixed. "The Monsters of Enlightenment" (Michael Kaufmann & Mark McLaughlin), with its comical take on the old mad scientist



scenario; "Asleep in the Wheel" (Paul Murray), a brooding and engrossing tale of a climactic battle between necromancers; and

"Razzamatuzz" (Derek M. Fox), where a pinball game serves to blur the distinction between reality, fantasy and religion, all worked very well for me. Less successful were

"Kinmont Billie" (Jan Edwards), which reminded me of a *Nancy Drew* mystery (sorry!); "Penny Dreadful" (Stephen Grasso), with its beautiful use of language and (to me, I'm afraid) completely incomprehensible plot; and "Readymades" (Jay Lyte), ditto. In fact, in the *About the Authors* section (charmingly entitled "The Guilty"), the author of the latter story even admits to writing "bloody stories which don't make no sense". No doubt, he was being tongue in cheek, but in this case it was alarmingly accurate. Finally,

the one factual article ("That's Why the Lady is a Vamp" by Gail-Nina Anderson) was a quite interesting exploration of the allure of the *femme fatale*, but personally I would like it to have been a bit longer and more in-depth – perhaps along the lines of a *Vector* article!

The overall production is pretty darn good for a first effort. The typeset is easy to read and the layout clear. The cover artwork (by Lara Bandilla) is eerily moody and beautifully executed. However, more attention should be paid in future to correcting typos and missing paragraph indentations, as well as using italics rather than underlining (it really does look better, honest!) and rectifying short lines being stretched across the columns. All of these things can be extremely distracting to the reader, and they also detract from the otherwise high quality of a magazine I have no hesitation in recommending to those of you who are fans of urban, surreal, even comic fantasy.

A 4-issue subscription is £11 in the UK (£13 Europe, £15 USA/Canada & £17 RoW). Cheques should be made payable to 'Brandon Press' and sent to 3 Tamworth Close, Lower Earley, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 4EQ. Website: www.brdnpress.co.uk and Email: JanW@majorarcana.demon.co.uk

Highly Analogical

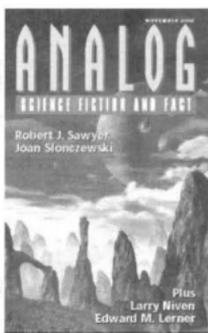
Matrix's magazine editor-in-waiting, Roderick Gladwish, looks at the November's *Analog*.

For those of you who haven't read *Analog*, the physical act of reading the magazine is like time travelling. Its A5 size, the quality paper and print give it an aura reminiscent of the Golden Age. If a 2002 copy ended up on a newsstand in 1940's New York it wouldn't get a second glance. A pulp fan might buy it to see if it rivaled *Astounding*, *Analog's* name back then.

With *Analog*, it is the technology that matters and that is definitely twenty-first century. Proudly displaying the subtitle "Science Fiction and Fact", its stories are hard SF. It's classically American, in the optimistic, can-do mould. Characters succeed; the World changes for the better and science is the key. All the stories will satisfy hard SF fans – me included – but many lack edge.

Science can easily dull the drama; for example: a recent tale began with half a page on the fall of a raindrop through Titan's atmosphere. Good scientific speculation, but no drama. Stories should grip readers by the throat from sentence one.

It regularly braves SF humour too. This is often when the stories fail – maybe it's a UK/USA thing – but at least they try. Then there is the serial. Often a cut down novel will be broken over several



issues. Earlier in the year it was *Hominids* by Robert J. Sawyer (reviewed in *Vector* 225) and in October and November issues it was *Survival Instinct* on Als developing through evolution by Edward M. Lerner.

There is always at least one science fact article in each issue, an excellent complementary element to the fiction and an antidote to global dumbing-down.

Contributors include: Stephen Baxter, Ben Bova, Timothy Zahn

and Rajnar Vajra. Vajra is a personal favourite because, with him, humanity shines strongest through the technology.

The editors by Stanley Schmitz are considered and insightful. He has a talent for encapsulating an issue. His one covering the September 11, 2001 and the US reaction were particularly well reasoned. A scientist's analytical view of an emotionally booby-trapped event. If you like upbeat stories with structure and logic buy this magazine.

Have I implied there are no surprises? Well, there are. What other SF mag, especially a Hard SF one, includes a Classified Section selling *Psychic Enhancers*.

For subscription details see www.analogsf.com.

His name is Bond...

As the latest James Bond film, *Die Another Day*, celebrates 40 years of Bondage by taking the series firmly back into sci-fi territory, **Stuart Maddison** points out that it's never belonged anywhere else.

There have now been 20 official Bond films spanning four decades. And while the books they were initially adapted from were, for the most part, straightforward thrillers, 007 has long been a science-fiction hero. This, I'm sure, is a major factor in his enduring appeal.

The series' pattern was established with the first film, *Dr. No*, in 1962. Although creator Ian Fleming's sixth novel was chosen because it was the most recently published, it is of no small consequence that it was also his most fanciful. More to the point, the screenwriters - including one Richard Maibaum - tipped the story's fantastical content considerably. Out went the wicked Doctor's bird-guano business and eventual demise beneath a mound of the stuff. In came a vast nuclear plant with a convenient reactor pool for him to drown in.

Producers Albert R 'Cubby' Broccoli and Harry Saltzman were behind this change of direction; Fleming died within two years having sold them exclusive rights. It was these two men who set the agenda and put together the team behind the Bond we know today. Maibaum went on to at least co-write all but three of the movies until his death in 1991. Almost equally long-serving was production designer Ken Adam, creator of that instantly recognisable, futuristic Bond-film look. While *Dr. No* director Terence Young helmed only two further Bonds and went on record as saying that they'd become too fantastic, Adam revolved in the free hand - and the increasingly enormous budgets - he was given to come up with ever more awe-inspiring sets.

From the very start, then, the series was destined to tread the sci-fi path. Even near-immediate sequel *From Russia With Love* (1963) and later espionage-thriller entries, such as *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) and *Licence to Kill* (1989), are dotted

Goldfinger introduces Bond to his new laser. No chatting required.



with the genre's trappings. Bond films are formula pictures. Someone long ago coined the word 'Bondian' to describe the key elements. You can do a lot within the framework, but certain things are guaranteed to audiences every time. And isn't that why, after 40 years, we all still line up at cinemas? Why the arrival of each new entry in the series is always treated as an event, rather than just another film release?

I love the ending of *Live and Let Die* (1973), as a previously dispatched villain reappears, apparently the voodoo spirit he claimed to be all along. The supernatural in a Bond film? Just this once, for this is the formula's first tenet: nothing is ever taken too seriously. Fleming wrote serious novels; EON makes comedic films. Baron Samedi's laughter riding on the train is our laughter at the end of another wonderful thrill-ride of a movie. Such self-mockery - plus gentle satire and, of course, gloriously crass innuendo - is humour vital to the franchise's success. And that of sci-fi in general.

Defining 'Bondian': it's not everyday or small-scale. Bondian

is exotic and larger than life. The villain is richer and more powerful, more megalomaniacal than anyone actually is (we hope). The girls are more attractive and more susceptible to our hero's charms than anyone really could be. Events in the globetrotting plot move faster than is possible in real life. And the action - the action is *outrageous*. The stunt-packed set pieces don't so much push the bounds of reality as shove them off a cliff (often literally).

Writing a Bond screenplay is a process of distillation. The characters are quintessential: the perfect secret agent, the ultimate fantasy women and the last word in mad, bad and dangerous to know. Even the world we live in is distilled. World-famous locations are made digestible for travelogue-hungry audiences. In *Octopussy* (1983), Bond flies to Delhi and takes a helicopter over the Taj Mahal - 100 miles southwest - to his hotel in Udaipur - a further 320 miles southeast! In *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), Bond answers a call from Moneypenny at the Ministry of Defence in Central London. He's in Oxford (in bed, naturally,

with a professor who we know is actually a supermodel). 'I'll be there in an hour,' he offers. 'Make that 30 minutes,' she replies. It just doesn't matter that this is all ridiculous.

The Bond producers have said that the films are set 'two minutes into the future'. They're always strictly contemporary, but everything is taken that little bit beyond.

Technology is a case in point, as the very latest advances are taken slightly further forward. The result is that many of the speculative gadgets go on to become genuine innovations within a few years. The phone in Bond's Bentley in *From Russia and the navigation system in his Aston Martin in *Goldfinger* (1964) are now everyday items. Meanwhile, to counterpoint this, there are the references to recent events, anchoring the story in the here and now. SPECTRE's consultation fee for the British Great Train Robbery in *Thunderball* (1965) and the mention in *Tomorrow* of the Tokyo subway gas attack, for example. So Bond films are futuristic, but not actually set in the future.*

Gadgetry is *definitely* Bondian. From *Russia* introduced Desmond Llewellyn's Q and his gadgets. It could be argued that the standard-issue attaché case was entirely feasible - but not with a straight face. A knife popped out of it. There was a tear-gas grenade in a tin of talc. It breezed through customs with a folding sniper rifle inside... 24 years later, *The Living Daylights* (1987) saw Timothy Dalton taking Bond in a 'gritty' new direction - and had him driving into the Soviet Block with rockets behind his sidelights and rocket propulsion in the boot. Never mind the 'burglar protected' Lotus Esprit in *Eyes Only*, which memorably takes out the villain trying to break into it by spectacularly exploding. Good job 007 hadn't parked it at Safeway, then.

Goldfinger - the third and generally regarded as the 'blueprint' Bond film - isn't strictly sci-fi, despite the much-loved DB5 arsenal-on-wheels. The most obvious genre element in it is the laser. Everyone remembers the scene: Bond on the table, off-quotedly expected to die



rather than talk. But did you know that Ken Adam's very sci-fi laser gun replaced the novel's circular saw? This was actually the first depiction of a laser in cinema. The science was barely a year old and, at that point, capable of producing a barely detectable, microscopic beam. It's another case of applying the Bondian concept to reality – and to Fleming's writing.

While retaining its essentials, the series has evolved. By 1979, due to the phenomenal success of *Star Wars* opposite *The Spy Who Loved Me* two years earlier, Moonraker had been moved up the order of 'adaptations' – though that word, and Ian Fleming's strapline, had long been rendered laughable. You can count the elements of Fleming's *Moonraker* that made it into the screenplay, by Christopher Wood, on the fingers of one of Bart Simpson's hands. The book simply wasn't sci-fi enough. *Moonraker* the film definitely was,

though too much so for the critics, who dismissed it as a children's film. Though the box office proved huge, they argued that the Bond films had taken a wrong turn: this was a science fiction film, not a Bond film!

You have to laugh. I think I've made my case for celebrating 40 years of 007 on screen as a moment science fiction fans can savour. For my money, though, those Bonds that remain just a little coy about their sci-fi credentials are by far the better films. I'll take *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) or *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974) over *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971) and *You Only Live Twice* (1967) any day. When

none other than Roald Dahl – not Richard Maibaum – was given a paperback of Fleming's *You Only Live Twice* to adapt a couple of years after the author's death, the first thing he did, patently, was reach for the lighter fluid and a match. The result is a great sci-fi film, but it's as far removed from the real Bond as I care to get.

No matter how fantastic 007's adventures become, it's important not to forget the basics. Extrapolate, distil, go Bondian by all means, but don't forget your fundamental starting point. Richard Maibaum would know what I mean. Thankfully, EON Productions' latest team do, too. This is why some unused characterisation from

Fleming's *Moonraker* cropped up in *GoldenEye* (1995), and now in *Die Another Day*, just as the neglected corners of his *Live and Let Die* were mined back in the 1980s (specifically for *Eyes and Licence*) when the unadapted novels finally ran out.

In addition to all the futuristic paraphernalia, some essential qualities of the literary character and his world remain integral to the James Bond films. So, in celebrating their 40 years, I hope we'll not be writing his creator out of the equation as thoroughly as did certain screenwriters. Though indubitably not a sci-fi writer, Ian Lancaster Fleming did give us perhaps the most enduring science fiction phenomenon of them all.

So, raise your vodka martini glasses please. No stirring, thank you. The toast is: 'Happy birthday Commander James Bond 007 – the world's favourite sci-fi hero. And to absent friends, too.'



We've been expecting you

From gritty, Flemingesque nastiness to overblown sci-fi, *Die Another Day* throws everything into 007's birthday cake mix. But, **Stuart Maddison** asks, how palatable is the result?

Die *Another Day* purports to offer something for everyone. The first half is more like an Ian Fleming novel than we've become used to, departing radically from the Bond film formula. The traditional teaser triumph and opening titles are effectively sacrificed as Bond is captured in North Korea and tortured for 14 months. Yet, as the plot progresses, grittiness gives way to a distinctly Moore-era sense of fun.

Brosnan's very good at this now and, if anything, even more is demanded of him than in his previous outing, *The World Is Not Enough*. As a prisoner and in the aftermath of his return to a satisfying ruthlessness (splendid Judi Dench), we see Bond as we've never seen him before: as a victim. He loses his cool. He loses his looks. For the first time, he actually loses. This makes his regaining control all the more enjoyable. Better still, he's cast out, forced to rely on his resourcefulness and be a believable spy. Somewhere around the first appearance of Jinx (Halle Berry), though, credibility packs its bags and leaves the film. From here onwards, the plot, the gimmickry and even the action go further into fantasy than ever before.

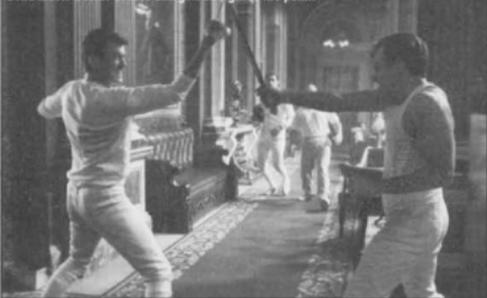
This is yet another Bond plot revolving round an orbiting satellite weapon. In

many ways it's a remake of *Diamonds Are Forever*, which saw a jewel-encrusted super-laser quaintly superimposed over various bits of stock footage. The lazar satellite appears far more convincing as it focuses the sun's rays to devastating effect. Unfortunately, this is not the most we're expected to suspend our disbelief in a film that offers us gene transplants for altering appearance, an invincible car and a ludicrous para-surfing sequence with CGI that is neither special nor effective.

While *Die Another Day* may be an over-egged pudding, there are many tasty ingredients. The characters are a lot of fun, if underdeveloped, and there are many enjoyable 'Bond moments' of scripted and visual wit. The sword fight of Blades club and the much-vaunted gadget-mobiles showdown are terrific. Diamond king Gustav Graves is a Bond villain archetype; Toby Stephens enjoys himself both maintaining a sneering facade and losing control. Hanchman Zoo (Rick Yune), once you accept him at gem-studded face value, is a memorable creation, exuding danger. Both quickly convince us that they must die – spectacularly. And so they do.

Then there are the ladies. The hype about Jinx was just that: we've had tough Bond girls for decades and this one's required to be the maiden in

Bond meets Gustav Graves and gets straight to the point.



distress as much as any. More interesting is Miranda Frost (Rosamund Pike), who appears the traditional English rose, but gets out her thorns to thrilling effect. Somehow, room is found for all the regular elements, including a standout John Cleese as the new Q. There are too many missed opportunities, though. Bond is given a gadget ring but no mileage is made of his feelings about wearing a wedding band again.

Tamohori's direction, with its undercranked Judders and random sub-*The Matrix* tricks, is too pop-video. And the breakneck pacing means that the celebrated Bond cinematography isn't given much of a chance. The keenest loss, though, is the stunt tradition. Essentially, Bond films have always 'done it for real'. Here,

stuntwork is too often eschewed in favour of poorly done effects. Finally, that Money-penny scene – though it's baring the house-down hilariously – is pure sacrilege!

Bond films have been overly silly before. All in all, this one doesn't even take itself as seriously as did *Moonraker*. After that film's excesses, the fantasy was reined in – to great effect. I hope this can happen again, though while the critics derided *Moonraker*, they seem to be loving this. All in all, I'm left wondering where on Earth (or more likely off it) the producers will take the franchise next. Further refinement of the script by another writer (call me, I'm free) – to insert more jokes and weed out the *Star Trek* implausibilities – and a less indulgent director, and this could have been a far better film.

Kim Wilkins: New Gothic Splendour

Mark Greener interviews Kim Wilkins and considers whether it is really possible that the Gothic genre can be relevant in the modern world.

Kim Wilkins' books came as a revelation. When *Vector* sent me *The Resurrectionists* to review, I admit that I didn't have high hopes. I avidly read gothic fiction - Polidori, Shelly, Le Fanu - even Walpole. But I regarded the genre as, largely, a literary remnant of time past. To paraphrase De Quincy's remark of *Blackwood's Magazine*, which published many Gothic tales, the genre reflected "the shifting passions of the day". And contemporary passions have shifted profoundly in 150 years.

Gothic elements pervade and enliven dark fantasy and horror, of course. But pure Gothic as a genre couldn't still be relevant - I thought. To take one example, Morrison and Baldick comment in the introduction to Polidori's *The Vampire* (Oxford World's Classics) that the condemnation of libertine debauchery formed a large component of the moral impetus behind much late Gothic fiction. Such considerations hardly play a major part today. In fact, many Goths seem to reveal in, at least, an image of libertine debauchery.

So the 'classic' Gothic vision of ruined castles, subterranean passages, wild windswept landscapes and distressed damsels smouldering with unreleased sexual passion seemed passé - even anachronistic. You could appreciate gothic stories. But they weren't relevant. In the same way, I could appreciate Constable's landscapes but they don't feel as relevant, for instance, as the work of Damien Hirst or Tracy Emin.

The *Resurrectionists* blew my prejudices aside as powerfully as a wind sweeping over those Gothic moors. In *The Resurrectionists*, and her latest book *Fallen Angel*, Kim Wilkins manages to fuse elements from classic narratives with modern literature in way that revitalises the genre. "*The Resurrectionists* is essentially my attempt at writing a modern version of classic Gothic," Kim says. "I spent a great deal of time as an undergraduate, and then as a Masters student, reading 18th century Gothic novels and they've impacted hugely on my work." The result of this synthesis is a remarkable series of dark fantasy (rather than horror

per se) novels that are powerful, evocative and compelling.

The re-interpretation and re-definition of traditional narratives struck me as a hallmark of Kim's work. There's the gothic in *The Resurrectionists*. And, for me at least, elements of *Fallen Angel* seemed reminiscent of Cinderella - in several places the story seemed to have almost a fairy tale feel. So I wondered whether this re-interpretation of traditional narratives was deliberate. "Not in *Fallen Angel*, though I'm very interested that you've identified it," she told me. "But my next three books are very deliberately re-interpreting traditional narratives. *The Autumn Castle*, which I've just finished, is my version of a Brothers Grimm fairy tale. I love the resonances in re-using a traditional narrative; I love the frisson of uncanniness that you can achieve. It's very exciting to me. My next book will trade in on Scandinavian mythology, so I'm madly reading all I can about that now."

Indeed, Kim fuses several literary influences to produce a voice that is almost unique in modern dark fantasy. "My literary influences are diverse," she told *Matrix*. "I'm a great lover of pulp - I love Stephen King, Barbara Erskine, big pulpy crime novels, anything that's a real page-turner, which I can get lost in for hours and hours. But I also adore poetry, and read a lot of it. So I love Tennyson and Keats and Eliot. In fact, the way that those poets use language has been really influential; I'm always aspiring to those peaks of sensuous imagery and rhythm. In terms of the genre in particular, I seek out anything that's strange and beautiful. So I would consider Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as much part of my genre as Stephen King's *The Shining* or Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* or Barbara Vine's *The Bristonstone Wedding*." Certainly, she writes compelling page-turners; at times, can evoke some impressive imagery; the war in heaven in *Fallen Angel* for example.

Such books, Kim comments, "allow me to surround myself in the strange and beautiful. I just can't get interested in a book idea unless



I've always been obsessed with haunted house stories. They push my buttons the way other stories simply can't. I think it's innate.

Kim Wilkins

there's something supernatural happening in it. You don't choose your genre, your genre chooses you. I've always been obsessed with haunted house stories. They push my buttons the way other stories simply can't. I think it's innate."

Many horror and dark fantasy writers and readers seem drawn to the genre for its cathartic potential. And, Kim accepts that this could be one reason why the genre appeals. She admits to repressing some of her past - her high school years, for example. And Kim says that writing is "Better than therapy. Without being too glib, in my first book I killed my father, in my second book I killed my father, in my third book I killed my father, in my fourth book, I finally saved him. I don't write about my father anymore."

On the other hand, Kim isn't especially comfortable with the horror label. "I don't like the word 'horror' and I'd be happy for it to die. People who might otherwise like my books are often turned off by the term, because they think it's 'here's Johnny' and skeletons with eyeballs and so on. Certainly, in the cinemas 'horror' is alive and well: *The Sixth Sense*, *The Others* and so on. But nobody calls it horror. They're packaged as class thriller, and I'd like my work to be promoted the same way."

Kim fuses other elements into her unique style - for example, the fact that she was raised and still lives Down Under. "Perhaps my Australian sense of humour has bled into my work," she adds. "We've got a thing over here called

the 'tall poppy' syndrome, where we all keep a careful eye on each other to make sure nobody gets too full of themselves, so I guess that influences my work in that I would never write anything hugely stupendously ludicrously grand. I do tend to think that my work, as far-fetched as it is sometimes, always has a low-key feel."

Furthermore, her books' mixture of sensuality, romantic imagery and dark fantasy obviously appeal to Goths. However, she denies that this is an overt influence. "I was a Goth in the 80s, and I loved Sisters of Mercy, The Cult and The Mission and all those other bands. I still like the drama of black clothes and pale skin. But I'm too old to belong to a subculture now. I doubt that it's had any influence on my work; just my fashion sense."

As a reader, I'm not sure I agree with that. For example, one Goth website (www.cydhe.com) summarises the philosophical elements that define the subculture. These include a desire to strike terror into the hearts of mortal man, a romantic sense of the fantastic, the desire for pleasure in extremes, a fascination with supernature, the macabre. All these are important, if not central, elements in Kim's fiction. I suspect the Goth influence might be more pervasive in her fiction than, perhaps, she consciously realises.

At least we agreed that Kim's deep interest in history is another element that set her books apart. For example, she clearly finds moving from the modern age to the past a compelling narrative device. "I love history, I love reading it and I love writing about it," she says. "I think history and the gothic really go together, because a haunting is really just a moment where history refuses to stay history. So, you might say, the historical subplots haunt the present in the same way that the supernatural haunts the characters. I like a narrative form that reflects the content of the plot like that."

Well-drawn characters are one of Kim's great strengths and a reason why, for me, she's a level above most other dark fantasy writers. "A story is always somebody's story not an abstract thing," she says. "I've always felt that my books, while they are described as being about the supernatural, are actually about relationships. In each book, there is a very intense relationship at the heart of the story. That's what I want to write about. I couldn't do one of those 'cast of thousands' fantasy novels. I like to select a very few viewpoint characters and see the story through their eyes. And I get to inhabit that viewpoint in a very intense way. If that means that my characters become well-drawn, well thank you, it's a lovely compliment."

One the other hand, many of

the historical characters a modern psychological feel. For example, the heroines in *Fallen Angel* (the daughters of Milton) seem remarkably intellectually and socially liberated for their time. Especially if you compare their attitudes with those in the writings of Mary Shelley, Fanny Burney, Dorothy Wordsworth and other women romantics several decades later. But Kim argues that the underlying psychology, behind the sociological veneer, hasn't changed that much. "We sometimes consider them as though they are a different species. I don't know that my characters have a particularly modern psychology. I mean, read *Hamlet*. That was written 400 years ago, and *Hamlet* was very similar to us in his psychology."

One thing's certain; you'll hear more of Kim Wilkins over the next few years. Her first three books have all been optioned for movies. ("Who knows if they'll ever get made? I just take the money and buy shoes.") She's just had a baby ("Having a tiny person reliant on you certainly teaches you to live in the moment!") and finished the first book in a dark fantasy trilogy called *The Europa Suite* based on myths and folktales. "I'll be starting the second in December when my partner is on holidays and able to be full-time dad for six weeks," she adds. "But baby Luka comes first. And I'm happy about that. Being a parent is the extreme edge of human experience."

"I see my work as a lovely diversion, something to get lost in and get a bit of a shiver from," Kim concludes. "Nothing that will last for centuries. And as for themes, they're very simple human themes: forgiveness, trust, betrayal, memory... that kind of thing."

Like all good gothic fiction, Kim's books build on the strengths of the past to remain relevant given today's shifting passions. From a foundation based on these "simple human themes" and strong characterisation, Kim's building an impressive dark fantasy repertoire that is not only revitalising the gothic genre, but is also propelling her into the upper flights of dark fantasy writers. It will be fascinating to see how her work develops over the next few years.

Competition

To win copies of all Kim Wilkins' published novels simply turn to the competition on page 24 of *Matrix*.



by Simon Morden

When I started out on this long and tortuous road called writing, I didn't know any other writers, except by what they wrote and what I had read. And when I call it a road, I mean more of an intermittent track running through the darkest part of *Witwood*. Obviously, I didn't think of myself as a writer back then. More like some bloke who did some writing. Writers were demigods who could subdue both the English language and their publishers long enough for books to magically appear.

Writers, were of course, all good, kind, clever people, modest and liberal. Even John Norman (Gor), whose misogynistic sadomasochism was just a necessity, the result of having to support his family.

So it was that the first ever live author I met was Stephen Lawhead, and yes, he was good, kind and clever. It's probably a blessing he wasn't Harlan Ellison.

Now that I'm a 2-3rd writer, I get to rub shoulders with all sorts of literary types. I won't spend the rest of this column during the day, despite the temptation to do so. What I mean, however, is that I get to meet other writers at a more-or-less equal level, despite blotting my copybook with a somewhat drunken account of a well-known bald award-winning fantasy writer at last year's Clarke Awards. For which I sincerely apologise.

So who are these people? It lurks out that writers are just like us, only more so. Every vice exhibited by humanity can be detected in a room full of writers. Pride? Especially where fat contracts and awards are concerned. Envy? Look at those people who find out just how much that nobody from nowhere has been offered - for their first novel. *Giuliano*? Books, must have more books! We won't go into just, it's just too unseemly.

The reverse is also true. There is kindness, genuine humility, and a camaraderie born of having fought the same fights and struggled with the same enemy publishers, marketing departments, stupid reviewers, and plucky proof readers. There's lots of talk about books

and markets, and kids and cars and computers and politics, and more often than not, the consumption of vast quantities of beer.

All right, I'm leading up to say that readers cannot necessarily expect their author-heroes to be demigods. There are going to be times when they've got a cold, an acrimonious divorce, or any other good excuse not to be witty and charming. Sometimes, they're just going to be plain disagreeable, because that's how they are. Sometimes, like Tolkien, they're fed up that more wannabe elves are starting in through the study window.

There's also the problems with moral, religious and political subplots. I'm pretty sure that Stephen Donaldson has reaped his tall share of grief due to the more unpleasant acts of one Thomas Covenant, Unbeliever.

There's no entrance exam, no interview panel, no moral guardians who sit in judgement over which right-thinking individuals can be published and those who can't. What sells is the first chapter of *haste*.

No matter how much of a fanboy I might be, how much I owe to any of the authors I grew up with, I have to face the fact that I might not like them in the flesh. So, imagine me (friendly lefty, sustainable resources sort of bloke - Composting Man) and say, Larry Niven (right wing, pro-nuclear, big bang), or which I've happened. Maybe it never will. Can you imagine us getting on? Other people would be taking bets on how long it takes us to start arguing. Perhaps he'd get Jerry Pournelle to help beat me up, I adore Niven's earlier work, and I'd give like an idiot, but seriously - this is the real world and not *Known Space*.

The corollary of this is realising that my readers might not like me. Because I want to be loved by everyone, this is hard to take. The people who read my stories are just that: People. I can't choose what they're like, any more than they can choose what I'm like. Nothing in this world is ever easy, or straight forward. Respect is often due, but not worship. Writers make poor gods.

Simon Morden is the editor of *Focus*, the BSFA's magazine for writers. His first collection of short stories *The Kingdom Come* is available from Lone Wolf Publications (www.lonewolfpubs.com) or in the UK from the author ... the first novel *Heart* is out now from Razorblade Press - order through amazon.co.uk or via any good bookshop.

How we got to Northampton

Despite publishing some of the most innovative SF, fantasy and horror, the small presses rarely receive the acclaim, publicity and sales they deserve. So at *Matrix*, we've asked some of the leading small presses to describe their experiences on the cutting edge of fiction. We begin in New York, with **Gavin J Grant** co-founder of the Small Beer Press.

As a kid (growing up in Ayrshire and Argyll), I read a lot. Sometimes I'd be lucky - with, say John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids* - sometimes not. Years passed, I learned how to drive, books got more expensive, and the percentage of good books I read never seemed to improve - even while I worked for one of the best used bookshops in Boston, Mass., Avenue Victor Hugo Bookshop.

When I left the bookshop - looking, as a person in the city will often do, for more money - I temped for large corporations where they were happy that I could keep a seat warm and wear a tie. But I was bored, very bored...and surrounded by thousands of dollars of office equipment and software and soon I had very definite ideas of what I could do. I started a zine: *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet* (LCRW).

I asked friends and family for contributions and was happily surprised (that surprise would soon disappear) to receive enough for a decent-sized zine. (Zines come from many traditions. There are science fiction fanzines, punk zines, little magazines, etc. I used the term because LCRW is a little magazine, with all that that implies.)

One of the surprising aspects of producing a zine is that people expect you to

do it again. So, six months on, with more help from my then-girlfriend (now, wife) Kelly Link, we produced a second issue of LCRW. I was still publishing some of my own fiction (groan), but Kelly had begun soliciting stories from writers and friends so the quality of work - and production - was a step up. That second issue included fiction from Nalo Hopkinson, as well as one of Kelly's stories.

LCRW gave us an introduction into the print world. We'd seen the customer's and bookseller's point of view, now we saw what happened when you tried to publish and sell your product. Not much. We were printing 200-300 copies of LCRW (we still print less than 1,000), sending them to stores we liked, dropping them off when we travelled, and sometimes being surprised when people parted with their hard-earned cash for subscriptions.

In 2000, we published two chapbooks, *4 Stories* by Kelly Link and *Five Forbidden Things* by Dora Knez. The chapbooks - deliberately designed as low-priced editions to introduce new writers and give them a step up between publishing stories and books - gave us confidence in our design and production capabilities. At about the same time we set up a half-decent website (oddy

enough, we still have a half-decent website, www.lcrw.net, but it's larger now) and, with the advent of Paypal, our zine and the chapbooks were suddenly available to anyone who had the urge to look us up.

We decided to move to Brooklyn, NY, to see what kind of work we could find in the big city. LCRW was still growing, but we didn't want to turn it into a glossy, perfect-bound magazine - we'd seen what national distribution (and huge returns) could do to someone's bank balance. So through long conversations with Bryan Cholfin (who had published *Crunk!*), Steve

Pasechnick of Edgewood Press, the late Jenna Felice of *Tor* and *Century* magazine, and others, we worked out what we could and couldn't (and should and shouldn't) do if and when we published books.

A Brief Manifesto: To publish books - especially short story collections - that were slipping between the cracks. At conventions (Readercon, Wiscon, World Fantasy), we kept hearing about books we'd have liked to read but that no one was willing to publish. Just as so many other small publishers have done, we thought we saw a niche.

By this point, Kelly had won a World Fantasy Award and the James Tiptree, Jr. Award for her short fiction, but publishers weren't interested in a collection. They wanted to see a novel - so we decided to put her book out ourselves. (Kelly won the James Tiptree Jr Award in 1997 for 'Travels with the Snow Queen' and the 1999 World Fantasy award for 'The Specialist's Hat'. Both are included in Kelly's Small Beer Press collection *Stranger Things Happen* - Mark.)

This is where our bookshop experience paid off. We knew if we gave busy booksellers an easy reason to ignore our books (bad cover design, no ISBN, poor distribution, etc.), they would. (Of course, we couldn't do anything if they just didn't like the books!) We also realised it might be difficult to believe that we were serious about publishing if we only had one book in print. Then one day Kelly looked up from reading a story by Ray Vukcevic (she'd loved his stories for years) in *The Year's Best Fantasy & Horror* and wondered if he'd published a collection.

In 2001 we published debut book-length collections of short stories by Kelly (*Stranger Things Happen*) and Ray Vukcevic (*Meet Me in the Moon Room*). Both books went back to press very quickly.

This year, 2002, we published two books by Carol Emshwiller



- readers might know The Women's Press edition of her novel *Carmen Dog*. Report to the Men's Club and Other Stories collects 19 wonderful short stories, and her novel, *The Mount*, went back to press immediately. We also published two chapbooks: *Rosetti Song: Four Stories* by Alex Irvine and *Lord Stink and Other Stories* by Judith Berman.

We're still keeping LCRW small and fun. The latest issue, Number 11, includes fiction from Benjamin Rosenbaum, Theodora Goss, Neil Williamson, and Molly Gloss.

In 2003, we'll publish Mark Rich's chapbook, *Foreigners and Other Faces*, and Kelly is editing an anthology, *Trampoline*, of (mostly) original fiction. We are in the negotiating stage on another book - I wish I could talk about it, but I shouldn't.

We recently moved into an old farmhouse in Northampton, Massachusetts, and with luck we'll be able to publish more books, chapbooks, and zines in the future. (Or we may just work on the house and the overgrown garden.)

The Moral of the Story: Consider your actions carefully. When I started LCRW I was wondering whether I'd ever do anything really interesting. Now I happily wonder if I'll ever have time for anything else.



Thriving in the hottest of climates

Stephen Baxter looks at the unlikely evolutionary advantage of the bacterium *Deinococcus* and speculates on how life could develop even in the most inhospitable environment imaginable and immune to even the most dramatic cosmic events. Meet the bug that resists radiation and imagine where that could lead.

For all the marvellous diversity of life on Earth, it's remarkable how few fundamentally different ways to make a living have been invented.

You can either live off the heat and minerals exuded by Earth's interior. Or, like the green plants, you can draw your energy from sunlight. Or you eat somebody else that gets by in one of those primary ways - or you eat one of those, and so on.

And that's pretty much it. It seems peculiar to me (a non-biologist who has written a whole novel about evolution) that Earth's own most plentiful energy source has never been exploited by life. Radioactivity, natural or man-made, has always been something to be resisted. But maybe that will change.

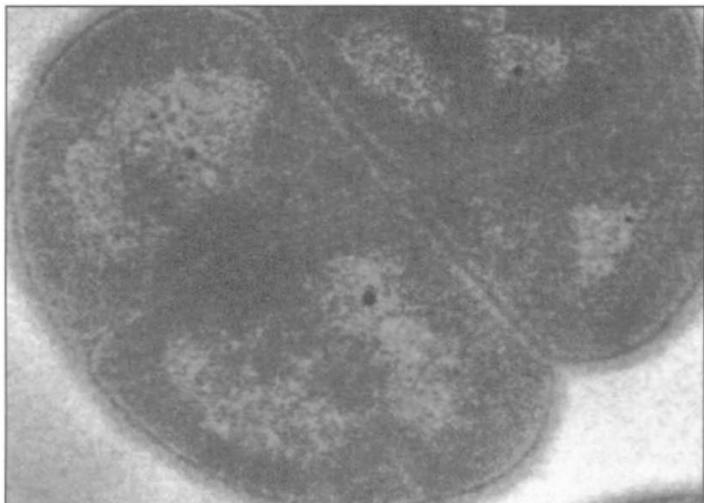
Life can withstand radiation. Some simple bacteria, like *Deinococcus*, are quite radiation-resistant. But could a living thing actually exploit the energy of radioactivity?

Old bomb test craters and leaky power stations provide conditions ripe for mutation. And there have always been 'natural' nuclear reactors, like the famous Oklo deposit in Gabon, formed when radioactive ores concentrate in fortuitous geological formations. Perhaps an ancient Oklo triggered the adaptation of *Deinococcus*.

Imagine 'neutron flowers', then. They don't need light; they grow underground, safe from herbivores' teeth. Their leaves, unfolding in the dirt, contain watery fluid that capture the fleeing particles of radioactive decay, and exploit their kinetic energy.

Radiation is a dangerous fountain from which to sip. Perhaps the leaves themselves would be modular: if one of their components were knocked out, there is always another to take its place. Even the flowers' genetic sequencing must be robust - but *Deinococcus* has specialised enzymes to repair damage to its genome.

Once established, the neutron flowers would be difficult to dislodge. Any would-be competing species would have to become



resistant to the radiation and more efficient than the flowers.

Of course, somebody would eventually learn to eat the flowers. I imagine creatures something like marine iguanas, digging up the flowers and nibbling at their thick leaves. Every so often these creatures would spit out a jet of sticky fluid. Organs in the herbivores' throats will isolate toxins, and their spitting will get them out of their bodies as rapidly as possible. No such process is totally efficient, and the flower-eaters will be prone to mutations and

tumours. But like the flowers they will have a niche all to themselves. And they will have no predators: no other animals would swallow down these packages of concentrated toxin.

What of the future? Humanity's nuclear waste is a scraping compared to the natural radioactivity generated in the Earth's deep core.

Colonies of flowers could work their vegetable way through cracks and faults in the deep crust - very slowly, successive generations adapting to the new conditions of temperature and pressure. But soon

the first of them would be swimming in the glowing fluid of the mantle, where the radioactive isotopes run rich. Down there, the flowers could long outlive man: by the time all the residual radioactivity left behind by man's brief tenure had decayed away, they would have no need of it.

And, perhaps, they could outlive the death of the Earth itself.

The Earth's surface is a dangerous place to live. Extinction events caused by meteorite strikes and other causes have several times depleted surface life. And, a billion years from now, the relentless, epochal heating of the sun will trigger the last extinction event of all.

But perhaps there will be survivors in the deep rocks below: the neutron flowers, steadily burrowing their way towards the radioactive core of the planet, oblivious to the cosmic drama unfolding beyond.

Deinococcus pictures: M. Daly, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences



Off we go, into the wide blue yonder!

Fireworks? Pah! Get ready for next November now by taking a look at some rockets that will really give you bangs for your buck. **Marin Sketchley** trawls the net looking for things that go rumble, whizz and crash and comes back with enough technology to get anyone into competition with NASA.

Any *Matrix* readers with children will know how inquisitive the little blighters are and will have experienced the delights of showing them something us cynical adults take for granted, but which to them is a marvel, such as rubbing a balloon on your head and sticking it to a wall. It happens all the time in our house, you know. So, in this issue of *Matrix* I'll be looking at a few educational and entertainment websites, which give your precious offspring experience of the science behind, among other things, rockets.

Firstly, we visit The Space Place, where your kids can make and do spacey things, and marvel at Dr Marc's Amazing Facts, such as how satellites maintain a geostationary orbit. The site offers a wide range of interesting and educational projects, including the ability to discover the mysteries of the night sky and find some of the constellations using a Star Finder. Patterns for these are available to print out via an Adobe Acrobat file.

There are also instructions on how to build a rocket using nothing more than some paper and a few indigestion tablets, with not a bit of sticky-back plastic in sight! How does this work? Well, Dr Marc's very helpful in this respect, telling us that when the indigestion tablet is placed in the water, the tiny bubbles of escaping gas rise to the surface and break open. The gas that has escaped pushes

The first step into space is a model rocket. So NASA, beware!



on the sides of the canister, until eventually all the water and gas rush down and out, pushing the canister upwards - and along with it the attached rocket! Dr Marc tells us that real rockets work in "kind of the same way", but that instead of using fizzy tablets they use rocket fuel. So that's how they do it. The next shuttle launch is apparently to be sponsored by Alka-Seltzer.

This is a very interesting and

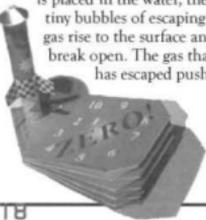
informative site, with lots of activities and easy-to-understand explanations of how things work, such as the Space Shuttle Radar Topography Mission, and why you should "be glad you're not a Cyclops!" I know I certainly am.

Alternatively, Georg Eggers' website offers advice on building a paper rocket - complete with pneumatic launch pad! Powered by nothing more than pressurized air, this rocket has

the potential to reach an altitude of five meters. This might not sound too high, but is actually quite impressive, particularly if you're only five years old. As no explosive products are used the rocket is allegedly perfectly safe for launching indoors. However, it's important to put the launch pad on a robust and unbreakable surface, remove all sharp objects nearby and ensure that the airspace above the pad remains free from faces at all times! You might want to contact air traffic control to make sure this is the case.

Once your rocket's been flown you're invited to submit your flight data to the site. Someone from Bradford claims to have attained an altitude of 17 meters with one of these babies. He says: "It really was 17 metres, I sellotaped a load of metre sticks to the wall of my house and got a few mates to help me out with the rest." However, Mr Eggers isn't sure whether the person in question doesn't know his meters from his feet. Or perhaps it was his arse from his elbow...

However, if your kids are really serious about building a rocket then you might want to consider sending them to The Rocket Camp, which gives "kids of all ages" the opportunity to learn to make rocket motors and rockets. Rocket Camp is a hands-on, classroom/workshop experience, in which students can learn about rocket history, as well as the maths.





Tired of getting cut up on the school run, Mrs Smith decides her MPV needs more firepower.

science and engineering behind them. Students can assemble and test their rockets alongside engineers and technicians, all of which culminates in a graduation ceremony.

The Rocket Camp offers a range of different courses. Junior Rocket Camp is for rocket engineers aged of 9-10 years, teaching them the fundamentals of designing and building rockets, and giving them the opportunity to design, build and launch their own rockets. Course 1 - for those aged 11 and 12 - enables students to design, build and launch solid fuel rockets up to an altitude of 1,500 feet, while Course 2 allows students aged 13 years and over to make a powerful rocket capable of reaching an

altitude of almost a mile! Course 3 enables students to learn about and design solid rocket motors, and how to mix and cast solid propellants safely. If you've taken

Course 3 you can go on Course 4, which gives you the opportunity to learn how to electronically deploy a small drogue chute at the rocket's apogee, and a large main chute at a preset altitude, as well as design and build a composite solid rocket motor.

The site also has links via which you can download and watch rockets being launched in Windows Media format - I have to say those I watched were pretty impressive, and should be more than enough to motivate any aspiring rocket scientists to make a start!



If you have any specifically web-related news that might be of interest to Matrix readers, or ideas for future articles, please send me an e-mail at the address below. Be sure to include the relevant URLs.

This Ironing Board was written to the sound of Woman's Hour (www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/).

Martin Sketchley

www.msketchley.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
msketchley@blueyonder.co.uk

Spinnerets

Christopher Priest's online presence continues to develop apace, being updated almost daily. Why not pay a visit to www.christopher-priest.co.uk, and see what's going on?

His new novel, *The Separation*, was published in August 2002 and is an counterfactual history story following the lives of twin brothers living very different lives in a world where Britain and Germany made peace in 1941. Lotus called Christopher Priest's eleventh novel "a major work of alternate history, masterfully conceived and written."

As well as information about his published fiction, the website also includes a selection of Christopher Priest's non-fiction - reviews, essays and memoirs.

Looking for an alternative form of transport? Sick of struggling to find a parking place? Your prayers are answered at www.tankforsale.co.uk, which has a wide selection of ex-military vehicles on offer, with which you can crush anything already parked in your desired spot. Vehicles you can buy range from the Josef Stalin Russian WW2 tank (pictured below and nicknamed the Tiger killer) to the OT64 SKOT eight-wheeled armoured car, and the thoroughly impressive Zil 135 - F.R.O.G. launcher, which is powered not by one but two V8 engines! Go on, count 'em!



URLs of relevance

spaceplace.jpl.nasa.gov/rocket.htm — The Space Place.

www.space-rockets.com — Home of Wickman Spacecraft & Propulsion Company, and The Rocket Camp.

www.missileworks.com — Your Home for "Everything Rocketry" (hopefully there's no rickety rocketry!), including "a wide collection of accurate semi-scale military missiles and research rockets, along with high performance rocket kits."

The TAO of science fiction on the web

Since first going live in June 2001 The Alien Online has established itself as an essential website for anyone interested in SF, Fantasy, Horror and Comics. Offering news, features and reviews, The Alien Online is now a Goggle approved site. So in the first of a series of features by the people running the sites, The Alien Online's editor **Ariel** describes his vision of an on-line fanzine.

Well, obviously I was immensely flattered when Mark Greener asked me to write a profile of The Alien Online (www.thealienonline.net) for *Matrix*. Jump at the chance? Hell, yeah! If ever there was a target audience that TAO was designed to reach, then the readers of *Matrix* are it.

Then it occurred to me – how best to write the piece without turning it into one long, rambling, brochure-style sales pitch for the site? I tried to get Mark to interview me, but he told me to write it myself and called me names [*serves you right for making me HTML code my reviews – Mark!*]. So, after some deliberation, I decided that in the time-honoured tradition of webmasters everywhere, I'd put together a FAQ sheet. I have to confess, not all of these questions are 'frequently' asked. In fact, some of them haven't even technically been 'asked' by anyone but me, just now. But anyway...

Q Why 'The Alien Online'. I can't see any UFOs on there...

A Well... long story, short version – I used to work for Waterstone's in Manchester, and while I was there, I edited a fanzine called *The Alien Has Landed!* (to which a whole bunch of other folks contributed reviews and other material, much like the site), so when I decided to set up an Online version of the 'zine The Alien Online 'seemed to be the obvious thing to call it. Plus, as a concept, 'the alien' rather neatly encapsulates the whole ethos of genre fiction if you ask me – exploring the non-mundane, the out-of-the-ordinary, the 'other-worldly'. So when you think about it, it's actually pretty deep.

Q What's the Alien Online Philosophy?

A Pagan Hedonism. Do what thou wilt, but harm none. I think Crowley rather glossed over the second part of this aphorism but...

Q No, I mean, what's the philosophy behind the presentation and content of the site?

A Ah, Well, basically, while anyone with an interest in sf, fantasy, horror or comics is more than welcome to visit the site, we're not trying to be all things to all people. That's why you won't see endless e-reams of *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and other TV sci-fi stuff on the site, unless it's something particularly quirky, interesting or important. There are plenty of great websites out there who provide that sort of stuff in spades (www.sfn.com for a start). Neither are we trying to corner the market in serious, literary, sf (www.lcsunq.com) or provide an outlet for original fiction (www.infinityplus.co.uk). Instead, I'm aiming for the middle ground that's occupied by the hundreds of thousands of people who buy, read and enjoy sf, fantasy and horror books but don't necessarily devour sci-fi on tv, or consider themselves to be Fans with a capital 'F' (www.onsible.co.uk).

Q Do you do all the work yourself?

A Hell, no! There's a team of about thirty and forty regular contributors who send material in on a regular basis. Some of them are published authors, some of them follow web or print journalists, writers or just people who love reading sf/f/h and want to share their love of the genre with the world. They're an absolutely superb bunch of people and I'm totally indebted to them. Without them, there wouldn't be a site for me to edit. I have a full-time job, a wife and a cat to look after when I'm not manically hand-coding html, so actually writing content is something of a rarity these days...

Q What sort of content mix do you aim for?

A I like to keep a steady flow of news items, reviews and columns going up on the site as often as I can, and intersperse those



with longer feature pieces – extracts, interviews, feature articles. Variety being the spice of life and all. The actual genre-blend of the items that appear is the result of an individual contributor's personal choice and interests, but again, I try to keep a good mix going.

Q So how much money have you made from the site?

A Very, very little so far. I'm happy to fund the site out of my own pocket, as a hobby. I wouldn't say no if anyone out there wanted to advertise though...every little helps.

Q Why don't you have any pop-up ads on your site? I hear they're all the rage...

A Because I hate them. I make it a matter of pride to close the little bastards down before they've even rendered their html, and hey, I've got a broadband connection, so I'm pretty handy with that 'close window' tab by now.

Q I like the site, and I'm interested in writing for it. I understand that it's not a paying gig, but I'd like to have somewhere to voice my opinion to like-minded fans. How can I join the review crew?

A Well, as I said, we already have thirty or forty folks writing for us, so the books are

stretching a little thin these days. But if you're serious, and don't mind reviewing your own material from time to time, send an email to editor@thealienonline.net with a sample of your work and I'll get back to you once I've checked it out. I'd like to get some more web comics up on the site, but if you don't mind working for free, reviewers and feature writers are always welcome.

Q What are your plans for the future?

A Well, I plan to keep the site going for as long as I enjoy editing it, and as long as there are enthusiastic volunteer contributors to send in material. I'd like to continue to give coverage to new published authors in particular, and generally mouth off about the books I've enjoyed reading. I'm going to make an effort to run more author interviews, because they're often among the most interesting pieces to read, as long as the interviewer gets the questions right. And as long as the author puts some effort into replying...

So, more of the same, basically. Oh, and the message boards should be ready by Christmas. Although our programming Guru didn't say when they're...

Thanks for reading folks. And I hope you enjoy visiting the site. That URL again: www.thealienonline.net.

Don't miss your last chance to nominate

The closing date for nominations to this year's BSFA Awards is 31 January 2003. So, if you haven't done so already, its time to pick your favourites and get in touch. **Tanya Brown** presents another look at the runners and riders so far.

As I write, it's the run-up to Christmas ... but by the time you read this, the shortlist may already have been announced! (If not, vote now!) Nominations are not exactly flooding in yet - I assume that a lot of you are stacking up books to read over Christmas - but there are a satisfactory number of books, short fiction, artwork and what the Hugo committee call 'related material' being nominated.

It seems increasingly common for US novels not to receive publication here - and for respected British authors to be published in other countries, but not at home. Independent publishers, such as the esteemed Big Engine, are reprinting genre classics as well as publishing new novels, and those which have already appeared in America - Liz Williams' *The Ghost Sister*, for example. Meanwhile, it's

taken seven years for Garth Nix's acclaimed *Nix* to appear in a British edition. Diversity is to be applauded, but there's sometimes a sense of missing out!

Nominations for the 2002 BSFA Awards (which will be presented at next year's Eastercon, Seacon '03 in Hincley) as at 20th November 2002 are listed below. Items nominated since the previous issue of *Matrix* are marked with an asterisk.

Voting forms will appear with the next mailing - once the shortlist has been announced, and the deadline for receipt of these will be in early April. If you are attending the Eastercon in Hincley, you may vote there instead of voting by post - thus giving yourself extra time to catch up on your reading!

Nominations

Novel:

- *Aharat - Clive Barker
- *Kil'n People - David Brin
- Schild's Ladder - Greg Egan
- *Conline - Neil Gaiman
- Effendi - Jon Courtney Grimwood
- Taylor Five: The Story of a Clone Girl - Ann Halam (Gwyneth Jones)
- Light - M John Harrison
- The Iron Grawl - Robert Holdstock
- Castles Made of Sand - Gwyneth Jones
- The Scar - China Miéville
- Altered Carbon - Richard Morgan
- *Sabriel - Garth Nix
- *The Separation - Christopher Priest
- *Redemption Ark - Alastair Reynolds
- The Years of Rice and Salt - Kim Stanley Robinson
- *The Atrocity Exhibition - Charles Stross (serialised in Spectrum 7-9)
- Fallen Angel - Kim Wilkins

Short Story:

- *The Turning Test* - Chris Beckett (Interzone 183, September 2002)
- 'Singleton' - Greg Egan (Interzone 176, February 2002)
- 'Social Dreaming of the Frin' - Ursula le Guin (Fantasy and Science Fiction, October / November 2002)
- 'If Lions Could Speak' - Paul Park (Interzone 177, March 2002)
- 'The Drive-In Puerto Rico' - Lucius Shepard (Fantasy and Science Fiction, October / November 2002)
- *Router* - Charles Stross (Asimov's, September 2002)
- 'Five British Dinosaurs' -

- Michael Swanwick (Interzone 177, March 2002)
- *Tales of the Golden Legend* - Robert Wexler (The Third Alternative 30, June 2002)

Related Publications:

- Age of Chaos: The Multiverse of Michael Moorcock - Jeff Gardner (British Fantasy Society, 2002)
- *The Interrogation* - Nick Gevers interviewing Christopher Priest, Interzone 183, September 2002
- Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction - Rob Hitchen and Edward James (Continuum, 2002)
- Dave Langford's introduction to Maps (Big Engine, 2002)
- The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction - Justine Larbalestier (Wesleyan University Press, 2002)
- Lucius Shepard's review of *The Time Machine* (2002), www.electrictory.com/reviews/timex.asp
- 'Once There Was a Magazine', Fred Smith

(Becon Publications, 2002)

Artwork:

- Clive Barker, cover of *Aharat* - yes, he's artist as well as author!
- Peter Gric: 'Experiment 1' - cover of *The Third Alternative* #31, July 2002
- Dominic Harman: 'Five British Dinosaurs' (cover of *Interzone* 177 March 2002)
- Fraser Irving: page 1 of *Judge Death: My Name is Death*, 2000AD Prog 1289 (1 May 2002)
- Joachim Luetke: illustration for 'The Routine' in *The Third Alternative* #31, July 2002 (also appeared as cover of the Fix, #4)



Clive Barker's *Aharat* cover. See the last issue of *Matrix* for the other artwork nominated for this year's award.

Rules & Regulations

Up-to-date news on the contenders can be found on the BSFA web page (www.bsfa.co.uk), and there'll be an update in each issue of *Matrix* between now and the deadline at the end of next January.

You can nominate a piece of work for the award just by sending me an email (awards@smoorth.net), and there's a handy link on the web page too. Nominate early and often! Remember, the items with the most nominations are those that will appear on the final shortlists in the spring; unlike the jury-based Arthur C Clarke Award, the BSFA Awards are democratically bestowed. If you like something, nominate it for the relevant award - even if others have already done so.

The closing date for nominations is 31 January 2003. The rules of eligibility are as follows:

Best Novel. for the best novel first published in the UK in the calendar year 2002. This award is (in theory, at least) open to any work of fiction - not just adult-oriented science fiction.

Best Short Fiction. for the best short fiction that first appeared, regardless of country of origin, in the calendar year 2002. Stories in non-UK magazines, anthologies, and even on the web are eligible. Please let me know where the story appeared (anthology title and editor, magazine name and number, URL) as well as the author and title of the short story.

Best Related Publication. for the best single piece, anthology or full-length critical work to appear in the UK in the calendar year 2002. Please give author or editor, title, and magazine / journal details if applicable.

Best Artwork. for the best single piece of artwork that appeared in the calendar year 2002. Where possible, please give the artist's name and the title of the work, and where the item appears (magazine name and number, website URL and so on).

Please note that 'advance votes' are not eligible; the book, short story, critical essay or piece of artwork must actually have been published, not just be due for publication.

If you're not sure whether something qualifies, send in the nomination anyway: I'll check eligibility and let you know.

Event Horizon

Future conventions and other gatherings.

22 Feb 03 Picocon 20

Annual con organised by Imperial College Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Society at Imperial College Students Union on Prince Consort Road, South Kensington, London, SW6 2BB. The nearest tube stations are South Kensington and Gloucester Road (District, Circle and Piccadilly lines). Registration starts at 10am and events will run from 11am through to 6pm, when a film will be shown in the Union cinema. Guests include Dr Jack Cohen and Gwyneth Jones. Website: www.icstf.org.uk or e-mail: picocon@icstf.org.uk

21-23 Feb 03 Redemption (B5/B7)

Ashford International Hotel, Ashford, Kent. £45 reg, rising to £50 on 1 September; £55 at door. Day: £30, £35 at door. Children £15 or £10/day. Concessions 10% off weekend, 5% day. Contact 26 King's Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX. Website: www.conventions.org.uk/redemption/



18-21 Apr 03 Season '03 (Eastercon)

Venue confirmed as the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics (same as 2001 Easter event). Guests of honour: Chris Baker (artist known as Fangorn and involved in Spielberg's AI), Chris Evans, Mary Gentle. £40 full attending membership. Contacts: www.seaon03.org.uk or 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR, UK



9-12 Apr 04 Concourse (Eastercon)

Blackpool Wintergardens. GoH Mitchell Burnside Clapp, Danny Flynn, Christopher Priest, Philip Pullman, Sue Mason. £25 register, £15 supporting, £15 children (5-17), infants (0-5) free. Rates to rise in June if not before, except that full reg for the unwaged will be held at £25 until the con. On-line credit card payment facility planned. Contact 479 Newmarket Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8JJ.

1-3 Aug 03 Finncon X Eurocon 2003

Turku, Finland. Contact Turku Science Fiction Society, PL 538, 20101 Turku, Finland.

5-6 July 03 ConStruction (Convention running con)

Cardiff. Info: ConStruction, 37 St Peters Street, Duxford, Cambridgeshire, CB2 4RP, ConStruction@DragonEvents.ltd.uk, www.dragonevents.ltd.uk

28 Aug-1 Sep 03 Torcon 3/Worldcon

Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Canada. Guests of Honour: George R. R. Martin, Frank Kelly Freas, Mike Glycer. Membership: C\$200. Info: Torcon 3, Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1A2, Canada, info@torcon3.on.ca.



10-12 Oct 03 Grissecon 1

(Wraeththu)

Tillinghall Hall Hotel, Stafford. GoH: Storm Constantine. £40 reg to 30 Dec 02, £50 to 31 Aug 03 (booking closes). Contact 6 St Leonards Ave, Stafford, ST17 4LT.

20-23 August 04 Discworld Convention IV

To be held at the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leicestershire. Guests to be confirmed. Website: www.dwoon.org

2-6 Sep 04 Noreascon 4 (62nd Worldcon)

Boston, Mass. Guest of Honour: Terry Pratchett, William Tenn, (fan) Jack Speer and Peter Weston. \$120 reg (kids: \$85), \$85 supp conversion, \$35 supp. Mastercard and Visa accepted. Contact PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.



The 63rd World Science Fiction Convention
4-8 August 2005, Glasgow

4-8 Aug 05 Interaction (63rd Worldcon)

Glasgow, UK. Guests of Honour: Greg Pickersgill, Christopher Priest, Robert Sheckley, Lars-Olov Strandberg, Jane Yolen. £75 attending, £30 supporting. Contact Interaction, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S2 5HQ, UK, www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk, info@interaction.worldcon.org.uk



Take Note

For those attending:

- Always include a stamped, self-addressed envelope when contacting conventions by post.
- Please mention Matrix when responding.
- We do our best to ensure the accuracy of this information, but always check the details with the conference organisers. Never make a journey to a convention without checking first.

For those organising:

Please forward updates, corrections and any information on new events to the main editorial address.

Get out more!

Local groups and other gatherings.

Belfast Science Fiction Group

Alternate Thursdays, 8:30pm at the Monico Bars, Rosemary Street, Belfast. Contact Eugene Doherty: 02890 208405; tinman@technologist.com; www.terraon3000.org.uk/sfgroup.htm

Birmingham: Brum SF Group

Second Friday of the month on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel, New St. Membership is £15/year. Contact Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Willenhall, W. Midlands W/W 13 1HX. bdfg@bortas.demon.co.uk

Cambridge SF Group

Second Monday of the month in The Cambridge Blue, Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

Cardiff SF Group

First Tuesday of the month 7:30pm in Wellington's Café Bar, 42 The Hayes, Cardiff.

Colchester SF/F/Horror Group

Third Saturday of the month at 12:30pm in The Playhouse pub, St John's Street. Contact Des Lewis 01255 812119.

The Croydon SF Group

Second Tuesday of the month, 8pm in The Dog and Bull, Surrey Street (by the market), Croydon, Surrey. We are sometimes upstairs or out in the garden. Contact Robert Newman on 020 8686 6800.

Glasgow SF/F Writers' Circle

Alternate Tuesdays at 8:00pm, The Conference Room, Borders Bookstore, Buchanan Street, Glasgow (actual dates are publicised in Borders' events guide, available in store, or ask at the Information Desk). All genres and standards of proficiency welcome. Contact: Neil Williamson 0141 353 2649, or e-mail: neilwilliamson@btinternet.com

Hull SF Group

Second and Fourth Tuesdays, 8.00 to 10:30pm at The New Clarence, Charles Street, Hull. Contact Carol & Steve on 01482 494045 or Dave and Estelle on 01482 444291. Please note that the pub room is not always available so if you intend to come along, please phone first to check on venue, or see: www.mjckah.demon.co.uk/hullsf.htm for the current list of events.

London BSFA meetings

Fourth Wednesday of the month (except December) from 7:00pm at the Rising Sun, Cloth Fair (off Long Lane), EC1. Barbican/

Farrington tube. Check Ansible for details and guests, or organiser, Paul Hood on 020 8333 6670; paul@ouden.demon.co.uk

London Circle

Changed: First Thursday of each month from around 5:00pm (downstairs bar booked from 7:00pm) at the Silver Cross, Whitehall opposite the Whitehall Theatre, thirty yards south of Trafalgar Square. Nearest tube stations are Charing Cross (the closest), Embankment, Leicester Square, Piccadilly Circus and Westminster. Charing Cross rail station is nearby. Waterloo is about ten minutes' walk away (over the new Hungerford footbridge).

Manchester: FONT

Changed: FONT meets on the second and fourth Thursday of the month now at the Crown & Anchor, Hilton St from about 8.30pm onwards. Info 0161 355 0599.

North Oxford

Last Thursday of the month at The Plough, Wolvercote from 7:30pm. Irregular and just starting, so contact Steve and Vikki on 01865 371734 or general@aol.com for details.

Norwich Science Fiction Group

Second & fourth Wednesdays from 8:00pm at the Cellar Bar, Ribs of Beef, Fye Bridge, Norwich. Contact 01603 477104; RSFG@owcom.net

Peterborough SF Group

First Wednesdays at the Bluebell Inn, Dogsthorpe and third Wednesdays in the Great Northern Hotel, opposite station Contact Pete on 01733 370542.

Portsmouth/South Hants SF Group

Second and fourth Tuesdays at the Magpie, Fratton Road, Portsmouth.

Reading SF Group

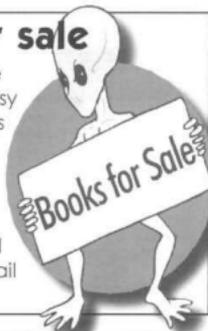
Changed: Now at nine o'clock every Monday in the Brewery Tap in Castle Street, except for the third Monday of the calendar month, when we meet at seven thirty in the Corn Stores in Forbury Road. See www.rsf.org.uk for details or contact: M.Young@twinfair.co.uk

Southampton: Solent Green

Every third Thursday, 7:00pm, at The Duke of Wellington, Bugle Street. Contact Matt 01703 577113 werkhaus@tp.co.uk
Please forward updates, corrections and any information on new groups and gatherings to the main editorial address.

Books and magazines for sale

Recent donations and bequests mean that the Science Fiction Foundation has 100s of sf/fantasy books and magazines for sale. Income from this goes to support the work of the Foundation, including its sf library at Liverpool. For further details look at the website at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/sale.html> or contact Andy Sawyer, Special Collections and Archives, University of Liverpool Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA, UK (email asawyer@liv.ac.uk).



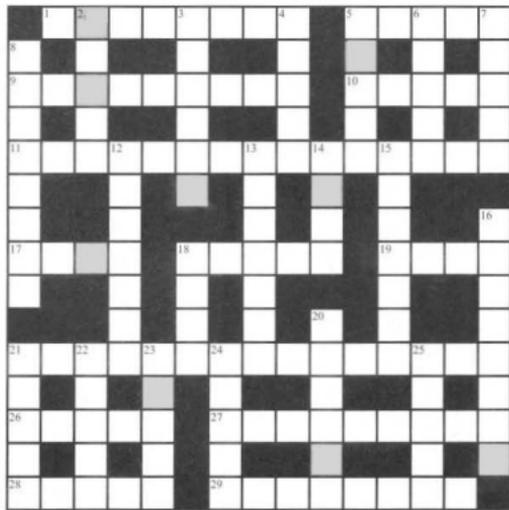
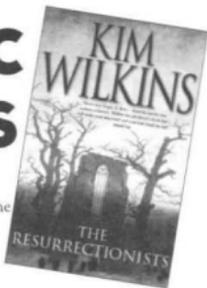
Contributors

All material remains
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News: Roderick Gladwish, Mark Greener, Martin McGrath, Simon Morden, Glenda Pringle and Gary Wilkinson
Flickers: Martin McGrath

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue.

Four tales of gothic horror up for grabs



To win, simply complete the crossword and then email the name of the horror film spelled out by the letters in the shaded boxes. Send your answer, name and address to: matrix.competition@ntlworld.com by noon on Wednesday 19 February, 2003. The first name drawn from the hat will win a copy of all four of Kim Wilkin's published novels. Read Mark Greener's interview with Kim on page 14 of this issue of *Matrix*.

Across

- Unlike most movies, this one started with a wrap (3,5)
- See 21 down
- Make obvious in advance, especially a punch (9)
- Looked after (5)
- 11 and 18 across. Leroux's music loving ghost (3,7,2,3,5)
- Goes nicely with toad in a spell (4)
- hTis is one (4)
- _____ *Slayer*, TV show (5,3,7)
- Give up (5)
- Kim Wilkin's homeland (9)
- The Devil _____ Out*, Hammer horror film (5)
- 29 and 16 down. Monster in *Sleepy Hollow* (8,8)

Down

- Cut in two (5)
- Fictional (6)
- Wild creature in *Gulliver's Travels* (5)
- Mad, like Michael? (5)
- 1989 novel by Piers Anthony (5)
- Refuse to decide, perhaps in a garden (5)
- Hats, ten gallons a piece? (8)
- Holy father (8)
- _____ of *Space*, Robert Silverberg novel (3,4)
- Pilot in *Farscape* (4)
- Carnivorous plant, from the second planet? (3,4)
- See 29 Across.
- Leave out (4)
- Raved (6)
- 21 and 5 across. Causes Tony's fright in the woods? (5,5)
- A parrot might pine for it (5)
- Himalayan monsters (5)
- Where Macbeth's three spirits meet him first (5)
- Lord of the _____*, novel by David Drake (5)

158 Xword solution

The winner of the Stone Tape DVD was Mark Yon of Nottingham. The answer was Nigel Kneale.

Across: 1 Island 4 Adolph 7 Again 9 Jovian 11 Darned 13 Pratchett 16 Thor 18 Horn 21 Elastic 22 Wallaby 24 Rope 25 Silk 27 Red planet 32 Oblong 34 Remark 35 Ultra 36 Saturn 37 Yeoman

Down: 1 Inject 2 Live 3 Dan 4 And 5 Long 6 Hidden 8 Abacus 10 Air 12 Act 13 Prosper 14 Auric 15 The Last 17 Hello 19 Rebel 20 Satan 23 Silent 24 Robots 26 Knaken 28 Eon 29 Eye 30 Blot 31 Balm 33 Gun 34 Ray

Timewaster 157 Results

Eight new entrants and a total of 93 poems, for which thank you all very much. Jack Smith's haiku:

Roger Robinson
Was better at this than thee.
Do you not agree?

While accurate, was not quite good enough, so the winner this month is Laura Sheridan, part of whose "So Many Worlds" follows; it sums it all up for me:

Since early days, I've heard the call,
watched Superman and Space Patrol,
to be an astronaut, I'd strive
and fly on Fireball XL5.

I never played with other kids
but spent my time with Chrysalids,
my weird ideas set me apart,
I learnt Robotic laus by heart.

I must say, I can't understand,
why most folks are mundane, offhand,
their narrowed vision stays unwarled -
while I live in so many worlds.

Jo's Timewasters

Competition 159

Take Stand on Zarzibar. Take the initial letters - SOZ. Reverse them - ZOS. Each sequence below comprises three titles by one author, either two forward and one reversed or vice versa. All titles are at least two words. Match each of the nine lists of initials to one of the ten authors, please - no need to list the titles.

Titles

- SHSHWH
- WIDAFFAIS
- SIOEPUETAHT
- TOTWRDTPTS
- TIMBTSITSA
- JCCOFGG
- JOOTSVPT
- MOFAEIRWR
- RMRMTTNP

Authors

- Aldiss
- Bradbury
- Clarke
- Dick
- Egan
- Harrison
- Priest
- Silverberg
- Sturgeon
- Wells

Answers to: John Ollis, 49 Leighton Road, Corby, NN18 0SD by three weeks from receipt of *Matrix*. (Note: please don't send computer disks - I don't have easy access to a computer.)