

# ISSUE NEWS

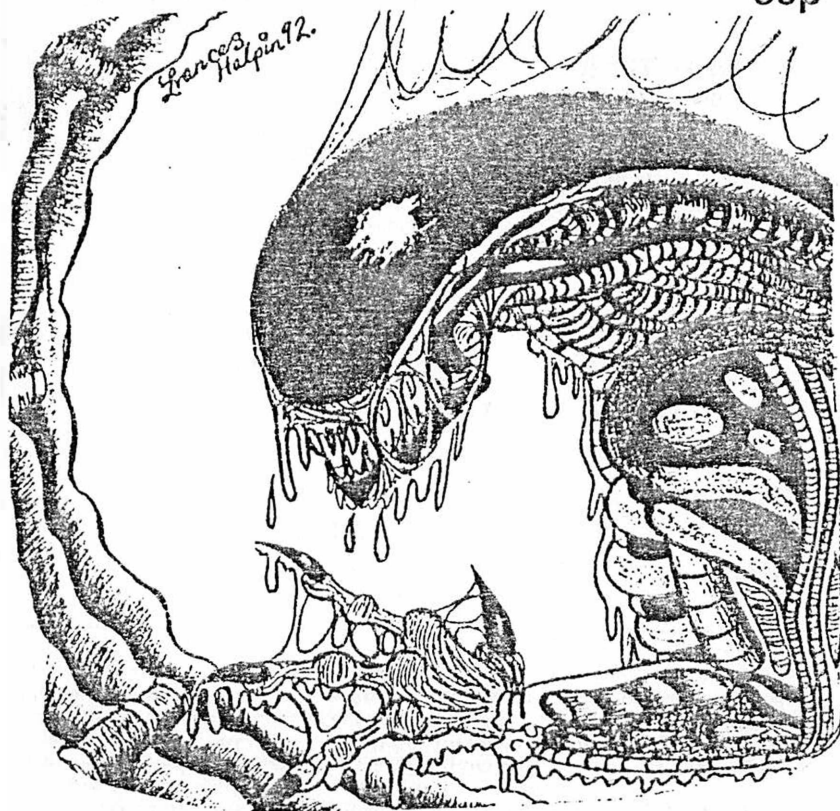
NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

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50p



ELLISON SURVIVES BLOOD CLOT OP  
ALIEN<sup>3</sup> - NOT SUCH A SUPER SCRIPT?

Megaquiz

ESSENTIAL READING

A guide to the best books ever written

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## So, What are You Reading at the Moment?

Supply one of these titles and  
gain instant entry into fandom's  
inner circles.  
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## Star Trek by Simon Webster

The TV review column that's funnier  
than Flann O'Brien and Myles Na  
Gopallen put together.  
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## Alien<sup>3</sup>

The film that separated the  
professional typesetters from the  
FAS trainees is a brilliant departure  
from the original concept, or a  
shoddy piece of work. Two reviews.  
The rest is up to you.  
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## Ramsey Campbell

The second part of Brendan  
Ryder's Interview with the author  
of, among other things, what  
Stephen King called "one of the  
three finest horror stories I have  
ever read."  
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### Please Note:

The temporary address for all  
correspondence, which supersedes  
all previous addresses both here  
and elsewhere is:

ISFA  
564 River Forest  
Leixlip  
Co Kildare.

We welcome unsolicited manuscripts of any kind, be they  
stories, articles, cartoons, comic strips, or anything that  
you feel readers might be interested in. There is no  
payment for contributors, but if you apprehend the editor  
on Grafton Street and utter the phrase "I wrote that  
excellent feature on Religious Symbolism in Land of the  
Giants" then he will buy you a sugar-free snack of your  
choice.

NOTE: OPINIONS EXPRESSED ARE NOT THOSE OF  
THE ISFA, EXCEPT WHERE STATED AS SUCH

Also please note that the  
illustrations for the meeting and  
workshop ads are by our esteemed  
chairman, Paul Sheridan.

## Ellison Undergoes Life-Saving Surgery

HARLAN ELLISON IS currently recovering from an operation to correct a 90% blockage of the right coronary artery. Evidence suggests that the 58-year old writer suffered a heart attack sometime since mid-1989. Ellison's doctor, upon examining him for chest pains, said that the clot was "about to close you down." Ellison immediately underwent an angioplasty and was discharged after two and a half days.

## Premiere Picks Ten Best Sf Movies

THE AMERICAN movie magazine *Premiere* this month enlisted a jury of prominent authors and directors in the field, "and one captain of the Enterprise", to pick the ten best sf movies of all time. Their top ten are, in order:

1. **2001: A Space Odyssey**
2. **Metropolis**
3. **The Day the Earth Stood Still**
4. **Invasion of the Bodysnatchers**
5. **Blade Runner**
6. **Star Wars**
7. **War of the Worlds**
8. **Forbidden Planet**
9. **A Clockwork Orange**
10. **Alien**

The jury included Ray Harryhausen, John Carpenter, Patrick Stewart, Martin Amis, and Terry Gilliam. Gilliam picked *Invasion of the Bodysnatchers* "because it's in black and white", and *Metropolis* "because it's in German.

Not one film from the last ten years made the list. This might have something to do with the age of the jurors, who have most likely chosen films they saw at an impressionable age.

TWO HORROR NOVELS by "Pauline Dunn" have been withdrawn from publication due to allegations that both contained sections plagiarised from *Phantom* by Dean R. Koontz. A fan alerted Koontz, who then took legal action against the publishers, Zebra

Books. Part of the settlement was that Zebra agreed to withdraw both books from publication. "Pauline Dunn" is a pseudonym used by sisters Dawn Pauline Dunn and Susan Hartzell.

THE PRESTIGIOUS *Locus* awards have been announced... Lois McMaster Bujold's *Barrayer* won Best SF Novel, Sheri S. Tepper's *Beauty* was awarded Best Fantasy Novel, and winner of Best Horror/Dark Fantasy Novel was *Summer of Night*, by Dan Simmons.

GOOD NEWS for those of you who have a pile of SF manuscripts sitting somewhere on the floor behind your bookcase... In September *Asimov's* and *Analog* will be relaunched. Due to some of the idiosyncrasies of American publishing, these will actually be the November issues. One major change is that the "Isaac" has been dropped from the title of *Asimov's* so that both mags can be stored under "A". The first issue of the relaunched *Asimov's* will feature tributes to *Asimov* by, among others, Harlan Ellison and Frederick Pohl.

FANS OF ORIGIN'S best-selling SF game *Wing Commander* will soon be able to switch of their PC, push back their keyboard, put up their feet and still be able to enjoy *Wing Commander*. How? Well, thanks to Mercedes Lackey and Ellen Goun, we now have *Wing Commander: Freedom Flight*, the first novel based on the classic game. This isn't the first time a computer game has been translated into a novel, Infocom did it with most of their adventure games (*Zork*, *Stationfall*, *Planetfall*, etc.), but it would well be the first time it's been done with an action game.

THE FIRST PROGRAMME in BBC 2's series of plays about imaginary meetings, *Encounters*, presented a drawing-room discussion between George Orwell and H G Wells. What could have been a fiery argument turned into a squelchy melodrama. The writers seem so concerned to make the characters sound authentically like themselves, that is, like their books, that they give them nothing of any interest to say.

## New Committee Members

Two new members take up their posts this month. They are Clare Godkin, who will be meeting and workshop co-ordinator, and Pádraig O' Mealoid, Public Relations Officer.

## Short Film Festival at the October Meeting

The title of the October meeting is **Visual Eyes**, and it will be a selection of short award-winning videos (and one film) with sf themes.

The shorts include **Nightmare**, written and directed by the star of **Willow**, Warrick Davis; **MAN (Matrix Adjusted Normal)**, the Fuji Award Winner in 1992, directed by Connor O'Mahony; **Domlnion**, an animated short by Kevin Hand of the Dublin Filmmakers' Club; **The Thing From Beneath the Bed**; and **The Shape**.

Special guests will be Kevin Hand, who is also from Don Bluth Entertainment, and Connor O'Mahony.

## Artists and Writers Workshop

The next workshop on Tuesday 15 September will feature artwork for three stories selected by the writers at the previous meeting. Also, storyboards for the Alien Landscape slide-comic.

All are welcome, including those who can neither write (stories) nor draw (a straight or crooked line), and indeed photographers and modelmakers as well.

## Conventions

O3 - Octocon '92, 16-18 October, the Royal Dublin Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin.

Guest of Honour Orson Scott Card.

Prices: Attending £13, at the door £17

Children: £6, or £8 at the door.

Other confirmed guests: Gill Alderman, Graham Andrews, Catherine Brophy, Diane Duane, Martin Duffy, Nicholas Emmett, Katherine Kurtz, Scott McMillan, Anne McCaf-

## Cliché Corner

This month sees the start of a new segment in which we survey the latest books, films, and programmes to extract the hoariest, most dirt-encrusted, most overdone old clichés, those barmy, bottom-of-the-slush-pile twists that we can hardly believe are still being foisted on us discriminating punters.

Choc-a-bloc with chestnuts was *Alien*<sup>3</sup>. To name two, we had:

A big explosion which sends stuntment flying towards the camera;

The Company, a big faceless conglomerate (does its lack of a name mean that there is only one company in the future? What happened to Bob's Gaskets? What happened to Domino's Pizza?) which "wants the creature for its weapons division". Why didn't they use Sigourney Weaver in this bloody weapons division instead (seeing as she made a career of kicking alien bottom)?

If you spot any similar offences in current sf/horror, please send them to the address on page 2, with the name of the perpetrator and the location of the incident. The sender of the best cliché will win an excellent, totally non-senile prize.

frey, Peter Morwood, Geoff Ryman, Michael Scott, James White.

"Green" theme, and a Tolkien celebration. Progress report 1 now available to members only. Membership etc. available from:

O3

30 Beverly Downs

Knocklyon Road

Templeogue

Dublin 16.

Telephone 934712.

Please note anyone wishing to help out on the organisation of the con ring the number above anytime - it's a big job!

# So, what are You reading at the moment?

A practical guide to books that will thrill, startle, amuse, and perhaps even convert the average reader who likes Arnie, sure, but, you know, spaceships and dragons all that?

**News** asked three members of the ISFA - who have also contributed fiction and articles to several of its publications - to choose about ten books each that would make their all-time greatest list.

The contributors' initials stand for: Editor (Michael Cullen), Robert Elliott, and Anne-Marie Nugent.

## The Brentford Triangle

Robert Rankin

Part of the "read them in any order" **Brentford** trilogy, this is an hilarious tale of darts, black magic, alien invasions and strange inventions. The funniest book ever written, bar none.

RE

## Brothers in Arms

Lois McMaster Bujold

I shouldn't really mention two books in the same series, but **Brothers in Arms**, though not primarily intended to be a humorous book, is a great laugh in places. It continues the adventures of Miles Vorkosigan, and includes his attempts to prove that he didn't murder himself. Can't be recommended too highly.

RE

## Buy Jupiter

Isaac Asimov

I can look back now and scoff, but when I was 17, this collection and **The Bicentennial Man** represented the summit of sf's achievement. Preachy, juvenile, but I know of no other writer except King who has a better grasp of the language, and the needs of the reader. The introductions remain fascinating.

ED

## The Conglomeroid Cocktail Party

Robert Silverberg

Among other treats, "The Far Side of the Bell-Shaped Curve", in which Silverberg takes the mechanics of time travel as a given, and constructs a tense, humanistic tale of two men competing to win a woman by going further and further back in time to ensure the other doesn't meet her.

ED

## The Dead Zone

Stephen King

One of the few books I've read twice, and I enjoyed it even more the second time. And every time I see the film it makes me want to read the book again. I gasped, cried, laughed. It may wear off one day, but I really love it. Blub!

ED

## The Door into Fire

Diane Duane

This is about a man trying to achieve his full magical powers, and trying to help his friend achieve his kingly inheritance. It is set in a slightly unusual world. Their culture is totally bisexual, but Duane does not overdo or underdo this point. In the end what strikes you most is the story.

AMN

## Downward to the Earth

Robert Silverberg

A compelling story of a man on a journey to find out who he was - and who he is now. He has returned to a planet where he was

once in authority. Now the beings who live there are in charge. Their roles are reversed, and there are truths he must learn.

AMN

## **Faces of Fear** Douglas E Winter

Probing, informative interviews with Barker, Campbell, King, Blatty, and 14 more. This is excellent, so why was it on sale, new, at my local book kennel for 99p? Replete with facts: did you know that the author of **The Exorcist** wrote film comedies with Blake Edwards? Or that Peter Straub went to UCD?

ED

## **Guardians of Time** Poul Anderson

These four stories are about a man called Mans Everard: he is one of the men and women who patrol time. Frequently, they must intervene in an "incident". The stories are not so much about what happens as about Everard's reactions to what happens. He is an honourable hero.

AMN

## **Hounds of the Morrigan** Pat O'Shea

A young brother and sister get involved with a fearsome Celtic goddess, the Morrigan. This funny children's book has a lot of accurate mythology included. I enjoyed the way that the gods and goddesses adjusted to the modern times - for example, the evil goddess travelled on a Harley Davidson motorbike!

AMN

## **Lord of the Rings** J R R Tolkien

What I love about this book is its immense scope. And yet the details are so carefully taken care of. The small gentle hobbit who saves the world is someone with whom we can easily empathise. We follow his adven-

ture just as much as the epic story of Middle-Earth.

AMN

## **The Movement of Mountains** Michael Blumlein

A bit of a weird book, this, that has been virtually ignored over the years, probably because of its really crap cover. For strange but excellent science fiction, you need look no farther.

RE

## **The People Collection** Zenna Henderson

This volume includes all the stories of the The People. These aliens who resemble us have come peacefully to seek refuge on Earth. They try not to interfere with us but cannot bring themselves to ignore people in trouble. It is a warm happy book, that cheers you up.

AMN

## **Polar City Blues** Katherine Kerr

I was wary of this book, thinking it would be deep and down-hearted. I was pleasantly surprised. Polar City is alive and full of interesting characters. A psychic called Mulligan is asked to help solve a series of crimes. He and his friends are soon deep in events that have far-reaching results.

AMN

## **Something Wicked This Way Comes** Ray Bradbury

The funfair that comes to a small American town promises people their hearts' desires. Will Hathaway and his friend Jim see a more sinister side. One by one unfulfilled people form the town are lured and captured. With Will's father the two boys fight to save themselves and the other townspeople.

AMN

## **Spock's World**

Diane Duane

Duane has managed to combine this story with a fascinating look at the planet Vulcan's past. There is a referendum held to decide if Vulcan will stay in the Federation, and Kirk, Spock and McCoy are asked to join in the debate. The flashbacks explain the referendum, and a lot about Vulcans.

AMN

## **Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers**

Harry Harrison

If you've ever read EE Smith's *Skylark* series, you'll know the true definition of camp space opera. If you've read *Star Smashers* you'll know the ultimate example of parody thereon.

RE

## **A Swiftly Tilting Planet**

Madeleine L'Engle

Earth will soon be destroyed in a nuclear war. To prevent this a boy called Charles Wallace Murry is sent back in time with a unicorn to help him. By going within people's minds and lives he tries to discover and change the instant that caused the war.

AMN

## **Sword in the Stone**

D H White

The more usual image of King Arthur is of a high and noble king who is perhaps taken a bit too seriously. Here Arthur, known as the Wart, is a small boy. In this amusing book Merlin, his tutor, helps him go on all kinds of magical adventures for his education.

AMN

## **The Time Machine**

H G Wells

Although Twain's Connecticut Yankee had visited King Arthur's Court, Wells' traveller had control over his journeys, and went forward instead of back. The first proper time travel story includes some now-standard de-

vices: the drawing-room discussion, the switch from third to first person narrative, the present-future romance (see *The Terminator*). And it's exciting, to boot.

ED

## **The Uplift War**

David Brin

The third book in Brin's *Uplift* series (you don't have to read the rest, but everyone should), *The Uplift War* concerns a group of chimps "uplifted" to sentience by humanity, and their involvement in galactic society.

"A bleeding great book" - Robert Elliott

## **The Warrior's Apprentice**

Lois McMaster Bujold

One of my favourite authors, and very few people have heard of her. This is her first book starring Miles Vorkosigan, and is a manic, fun read that will have you scouring the country for more of her books.

RE

## **The Wizard of Earthsea**

Ursula LeGuin

Sparrowhawk is a young impetuous student of wizardry who casts a spell he should not have attempted. He summons a murderous creature who is intimately connected with himself. On one level he is trying to defeat the creature. On another level he is confronting himself and his considerable magical powers.

AMN

## **The Zombies that Ate Pittsburgh: The Films of George A Romero**

Paul R Gagne

Combines my favourite topics in a non-fiction book: horror, movies, and biography. Full of anecdotes about extras, censors, reviews, financing the movies, plus asides on Stephen King, make-up artist Tom Savini, et al. I couldn't find it in the library so I bought it new. Need I say more?

ED

## QUIZ PART TWO

This month the topic is authors and books.

1. What sf author said about Ireland "The Church was deplorable. The weather was dreadful. The poverty was inadmissible. I would have none of it"?

2. What is unusual about the book **Under Heaven's Bridge**, a collaboration between Ian Watson and Michael Bishop?

3. Which author has published books of poetry including **Hard Words and Other Poems**, and **In the Red Zone**?

4. What is the connection between Heinlein's story "All You Zombies..", Bob Shaw's **Who Goes Here?**, and Michael Moorcock's **Behold the Man**?

5. What happens if you find the Nine Billion Names of God?

6. Where was Roald Dahl born?

7. What French fantasy author lived from 1619 to 1655?

8. Most of the comments by Stephen King which appear on various paperbacks come from which book?

Here are the answers to last month's questions:

1. Morphing was first used in Ron Howard's Willow, starring Val Kilmer. 2. The film was Child's Play 2. 'Jack', or James Spader as a latter-day Jack the Ripper, came back around the same time as Chucky. 3. 'We're back!' comes from Gremlins. The first one, not the sequel. 4. 'Here's Johnny!' 5. The Great God Pono appeared in Flesh Gordon. 6. Across the 8th Dimension. 7. Freddy Krueger. 8. Terminator II. 9. Krull. 10. The 'totally lethal alien' came from Dark Angel, also known as 'I Come in Peace'. 11. Nightflyers. 12. Edward Scissorhands. 13. Bill and Ted, or Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter. 14. Darkness. Neeson was a Darkman, Dolph fought a Dark Angel, and Bannion drove Dark Star. 15. If the rumours are to be believed, Robin Williams will be the Riddler. 16. Annette Bening, but she was having kittens. 17. 18. The Revenge of Billy the Kid. 19. Phil Collins. 20. Any of the films based on The Man from UNCLE.

9. What did James Joyce contribute to nuclear physics?

10. In what year was **The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy** first published?

11. What is James Hogan's middle name?

12. What event on October 30, 1938 took an sf story into headlines around the world?

Next month: Pure Fantasy

## We Welcome Everyone

THE ARTISTS AND  
WRITERS  
WORKSHOP

NOT JUST FOR  
ARTISTS AND  
WRITERS. WE WANT  
TO HEAR FROM:



PHOTOGRAPHERS  
VIDEO ENTHUSIASTS  
COMPUTER BUFFS  
ANIMATORS  
MODEL-MAKERS  
SFX MAKE-UP FREAKS  
COSTUME DESIGNERS  
SCULPTORS  
CALLIGRAPHERS

Next meeting: Tuesday 15 September at 8pm. The Vintage, Camden Street



## Dianetics Flyer

**Dear Editor**

Lest it go unremarked, I would like to draw to the attention of your readers something that came through my letterbox the other day: a flyer claiming that "We use only 10% of our mental potential".

Yes, those sad people in Middle Abbey Street are still trying to flog *Dianetics* the book (at £6 a throw) by pretending to be psychotherapists. Even if they use the full 10 per cent, I doubt that they see the irony in (mis)quoting Albert Einstein, a man who fought his whole life against pseudoscience, from the eugenics of the Nazis onwards.

I quote from the leaflet:

"The world famous physicist Albert Einstein made a startling statement, "we use only 10% of our mental potential", however he could not prove this or tell how we could improve [sic ad nauseam]."

Dianetics may expand your brain but it seems to do nothing for your English.

I would trust that sf fans, apart from knowing that Hubbard was a mediocre writer who was disowned for his charlatan schemes by his editor John W Campbell, would be sensible enough to stay clear of this garbage, which makes the appliances sold on late-night television look positively useful. And I trust that they would warn their friends about it too.

If Albert Einstein was alive, he could sue. But he isn't. Then again, neither is L Ron Hubbard, which means that we can say pretty much what we like about the power-crazed, moneygrabbing old fart. [Surely "talented, generous old humanitarian"? - ed]

**Eugene Duffy  
Stillorgan**

**Dear Michael,**

Regarding the August newsletter - very interesting. I really enjoyed the Twilight Zone article, even the "Sixteen things you didn't know" of which I already knew, erm, sixteen. Ah well; there's always one. An entertaining article nonetheless.

I get worried when I find myself agreeing with Mark Bagnall, but for the first time we seem to agree on something. His reviews seem to be getting better as well; a lot better than previous 'I didn't like it so it must be awful' offerings. However, there's no reason to go abusing people who buy Youngblood 'because they think it's a good comic' - it's the

first issue and people buy it for one of two reasons - a) to see what it's like, or b) because it's by Rob Liefeld, who is much overrated in my humble opinion. And printing one of the stories upside down doesn't mean that Image have no faith in their readers' intelligence; it means 'hey wouldn't this be a good idea' from the marketing division.

The letters page, and particularly Mr Ferguson's glowing report on the Trincon committee, raised a smile. Can this be the same committee who brought their entire library to signings, pissing off the people with only one book who had to wait?

Or how about the comics talk, where the moron chairing the panel took to abusing members of the audience? I'm not getting at the whole committee, some of whom did a great job, but at least three of them were obnoxious in the extreme.

There were organisational problems, but this is inevitable when none of the committee had any experience in this sort of thing, and kudos to them for running it. However, being on the committee does not automatically put one on a level higher than people who pay money to attend. This is something some of the Trincon people obviously had trouble understanding.

Yet again, we have complaints about Star Trek. I recognise the type; he can't go a whole page without mentioning that he doesn't watch Star Trek.

Gosh, thanks Tommy. If he doesn't like Trek, fine; Mr Ferguson and his ilk seem to go beyond dislike, however. The feel it is their moral duty to point out that only idiots watch it.

By denigrating the programme to this extent Mr Ferguson is proving himself to be just as ridiculous as the people who go to such hideous lengths to show their devotion to the program. Listen, everybody, Star Trek is a television program, and a few films. That's all. Some episodes are good (some are excellent), some are bad, but most are average. It's worthy of neither apotheosis nor outright condemnation. As for there being too much ST in the newsletter; that's crap, and just a result of Mr Ferguson's anti-Trek paranoia. Given the level of support Trek has, there's actually an argument for more, rather than less. I personally wouldn't be in favour of this, but if that's what people want, that's what they should get.

Yours

**Robert D. Elliott  
23 Rushbrook Court, Templeogue,  
Dublin 6W**

# REELSPIEL

## Box-office verdict on the Summer movies

### Harrison Ford in Patriot Games sequel

### The long wait for movies to cross the pond

Now that we're into September the Great Summer Blockbuster War can be officially declared over. There were a few surprises in the performance of the top contenders, but for the record here's the Summer's Top 10 in terms of US domestic box office gross (figures as of August 20th)

1. **Batman Returns** (Warner Bros) \$155m
2. **Lethal Weapon 3** (Warner Bros) \$138m
3. **Sister Act** (Buena Vista) \$117m
4. **A League of Their Own** (Columbia) \$82m
5. **Patriot Games** (Paramount) \$79m
6. **Boomerang** (Paramount) \$62m
7. **Beethoven** (Universal) \$55.5m
8. **Far and Away** (Universal) \$55.2m
9. **Alien<sup>3</sup>** (20th Century Fox) \$54.9m
10. **Housesitter** (Universal) \$53m

Interesting to note that two films made in this country also performed quite admirably over the summer in the States. **The Playboys** took a very impressive \$3.5m, convincing The Samuel Goldwyn Company to bankroll the sequel **Tara Goes to America**. Shane Connaughton is already working on the script.

And Don Bluth Entertainment's **Rock-A-Doodle** took almost \$12m, making it the most successful of the independent animated fea tures. Let's hope their next film **A Troll In Central Park** will see them out of their financial difficulties.

Of course the above list gauges success in purely financial terms and not by artistic

merit. The choice of that top 10 I'll leave to yourselves.

Fresh from the success of **Patriot Games**, it seems that Harrison Ford has signed one of the most lucrative contracts ever given to an actor. The deal signs him to a further three sequels, as the character Jack Ryan from Tom Clancy's books, and is worth an estimated \$50m. Producer Mace Neufeld, who holds exclusive first option on all Clancy's books wants to turn the Ryan character into a Bond for the 90s, as well as opening up a goldmine of a franchise for himself. Ford will reprise the role next in **Clear and Present Danger**.

The upcoming selection of movies due for release here in September will include most of those from the above top 10 as European dates are pushed further and further behind those of the States. For a film like Robert Zemeckis' **Death Becomes Her**, we'll have to wait until December. Personally I'm getting fed up with having to wait months or even a year (eg **Beauty and the Beast**) to get to see the films I want to see. What do you think?

Meanwhile in Hollywood production continues apace. Terry Gilliam has now parted company with Richard LaGravenesse (who wrote **The Fisher King**). The two had been working on a film called **The Defective Detective** but Gilliam has now signed to direct his own version of **A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court**. Shooting is due to start later this year.

Originally due to start next month, Spielberg's **Jurassic Park** has been put on short term hold due to his inability to find a suitable leading actor. Laura Dern and Richard Attenborough have, however, signed aboard. ILM have been working on the effects for the movie for almost a year now.



The Muppets are back this Christmas in a film called **The Muppets' Christmas Carol**. This version has Michael Caine as Scrooge and Gonzo as Charles Dickens. It has been co-produced with Disney, the apparent difficulties between Henson and Walt finally sorted [death becomes them - ed]. Mean-

while principal animation on Disney's **Aladdin** is now completed and the film is due for release Stateside on December 14.

In the business world, after almost bankrupting Carolco with the cost of **T2**, James Cameron has abandoned the studio and with his own company Lightstorm Entertainment has put together the most lucrative deal ever achieved by an independent production company. Signing a 12-slate, \$200m deal with 20th Century Fox, Cameron gave them US distribution rights only, and then travelled to the European and Asian markets to work specific deals with distributors there. For the rights to the films they will also have to contribute some money toward the negative cost, and allow Cameron a percentage gain on any business the film will do.

By the terms of the deal Cameron must write and direct at least four of the films. The first is expected to be his planned remake of the French film **La Totale**, with Arnold Schwarzenegger, while next year should see him tackling **Spiderman**.

Meanwhile Carolco are in debt up to their ears, unaided by the fact that **Universal Soldier** has performed below expectations. They have had to take a further bank loan to keep **Cliffhanger** in production. The Stallone film is being directed by Renny Harlin and is already \$15m over budget.

---

Kristy Swanson and Luke Perry are garnering quite good reviews for the rather offbeat **Buffy, the Vampire Slayer**. Although not setting the box office alight, the film does seem to be above average fare.

Steven Seagal, the actor who gives a whole new definition to the word "wooden" ["what does 'definition' mean?" - Steven Seagal], will be pitted against arch-villain Colm Meaney, from **ST-TNG**, in the upcoming **Under Siege**. The film is based on a script originally titled **Die Hard 3 - Dreadnought**. And speaking of enterprising young actors, Patrick Stewart has signed to play Daddy Warbucks in the non-musical sequel to **Annie**, titled **Annie and the Castle of Terror**. You think I'm joking, don't you?

In the strange world of casting, Daniel Day-Lewis and Julia Roberts star in **Shakespeare In Love**, a rather unusual take on the

Warning: **Reelspiel** is about to give away a widely-known secret about November Film Festival. If you wish to remain ignorant of the nature of the Mystery Movie, skip the postscript.

life of the Great Bard. Also in production at the moment is **Super Mario Bros The Movie**, with Bob Hoskins. How they are going to make a film out of that I don't know. Meanwhile one of Hoskins' earlier turns, that of Smee in **Hook**, will be available to buy from December 2, as Tri-Star have decided to go straight to sell-thru.

Although unconfirmed at this stage it is thought that **Batman Returns** will follow the same route around the same time. Now you know what to get me for Christmas. Till next time.

#### PS

The Mystery Movie scheduled for November as part of the Furslenberg Film Festival in the Savoy is almost definitely going to be the director's cut of **Blade Runner**. However, don't book your seats just yet as it seems that Ridley wants to take the prints back in for further alterations. In the meantime, we can see what the great man has been up to in October with the release of 1492, his version of the Columbus story, featuring Gerard Depardieu. Of course he could be in trouble as also opening that month is **Carry On Columbus**, the most likely Oscar contender in years.

**Reelspiel**  
By Des Doyle

# What Went Wrong?

The third instalment in the Alien series could have been, and should have been, a blockbuster. It inherited one of the great movie monsters from the first film, and a reputation for action and authenticity from the second. It turns out, though, that the makers have opted this time round for

a crate-load of second-hand ideas, a director who seems to have thought he was making a **subliminal** action movie, and a single, stupefyingly-repetitive alien which it's embarrassingly obvious is a man in a rubber suit.

Not that I had any high expectations, of course. Enough reviewers before me have used words like "boring", "amateurish", and "murkily directed through what looks like a bowl of oxtail soup". One member of the film's special effects crew is quoted in **Empire** as saying it was "a very silly movie to work on".

But if a film contains the word **Alien**, and has Sigourney Weaver in it, then you at least expect something along the lines of the last two.

What you get is more like the third **Jaws** movie, or the third **Friday the 13th**.

It defies understanding that this movie had eight writers - unless what happened was that William Gibson's first draft of the script was edited down successively by seven people, until all that was left was a trailer, which then had to be padded out.

How many writers did it take to come up with the comment when the prisoners in the canteen realise they're all in danger: "We're fucked!"?

I don't mean someone says that as an aside, or in the background. That, believe it or not, is the scene's **punchline**. Are these filmmakers **serious**?

It's also reported that the budget, after three years of chopping and dropping, was about

\$50 million. From what I can see on the screen, Fox has been sold a lemon.

I don't know how much of the money went on special effects, but whatever it was, I hope they kept the receipt. The special effects, apart from the aforementioned rubber suit, consist largely of:

blood dripping from the roof every 10 minutes or so;

a shot of two suns in the sky which they could have saved money on by using stock from **Star Wars**;

a dog covered in Golden Syrup;

a model of a spaceship which is probably larger in real life than it looks on the screen;

a scene where some "soldiers" in Battlestar Galactica-style costumes "arrive" on the "windswept planet", which is so obviously done on a small soundstage that you expect to see a kid with an autograph book hovering about in the background;

and a lot of "gory" death scenes which may or may not be exciting, I'll have to wait until it comes out on video so I can freeze the two or three frames that each shot lasts (but then if I had some really cheesy make-up and models I wouldn't let the camera linger on them either).

Perhaps for the fourth instalment they'll come to me - I already have a scene in mind where the alien has been killing at random, and after a brief discussion of how desperate the situation is, the main character turns to the camera and exclaims "Cor blimey, if we ain't in a right stew!"

Fifty million dollars? From what I can see on the screen, Fox has been sold a lemon

# Alien<sup>3</sup>

Directed by Ken Hiller

Starring Sigourney Weaver, Charles Dance,  
Lance Henriksen.

So... The long-awaited third instalment in the *Alien* series finally reaches our screens. And is it worth it? Well, we get to see the newest generation of aliens, we find out a lot more about "The Company" and what they're really up to, we get a lot more special effects and we get to see Sigourney Weaver bald.

The movie opens an untold stretch of time after *Aliens*. The military ship *Sulaco* carries the four survivors from *Acheron*... And more. Somehow, the *Alien Queen* from the end of the last movie has managed to lay a couple of eggs on board the *Sulaco* (even though she seemed to leave her egg-laying equipment on the planet and we watched the queen from the time she emerged from the Dropship until she was blown out into space). These eggs, as is traditional, contain the crab-like face-huggers, which - during the opening credits of this new movie - promptly attempt to get at the human survivors currently in stasis chambers.

One of these face-huggers inexplicably cuts itself on the glass of a stasis chamber, and a spurt of its acidic blood splatters on to the floor, burning through it as easily as tippex thinning fluid through a sheet of polystyrene which it strangely resembles.

A fire ensues, with which the *Sulaco* defence mechanisms are mysteriously incapable of dealing, and threatens the safety of the ship. So the stasis chambers are ejected into a sort of escape craft, and sent to a nearby planet, by which the *Sulaco* luckily happens to be passing.

Ripley is the only survivor... Which is a shame because I thought that Hicks was by far the best character in the last movie.

It turns out that this planet has a mining facility run by a group of twenty-five or so male prisoners, and the escape craft lands

very near it. Gosh, that was lucky!

Ripley is rescued by the prisoners, and all looks peaceful for a while, but a dog is attacked by the second face-hugger, and, of course, a new alien is on the way.

Ripley refuses to tell her story, shaves her head because the prison is overrun with headlice (odd that... How can the headlice survive if everybody shaves their head?) and sleeps with Charles Dance.

So pretty soon the alien is up and about and killing people, more along the lines of the first *Alien* movie than the second. Ripley attempts to organise a hunt for the creature, but is informed that the prison doesn't have any weapons... That's forgivable (just about), but I couldn't believe that the escape craft from the *Sulaco* was unarmed.

Then suddenly, etc. You can probably guess most of the rest of the plot from here. Reports over the past year have informed us that the original ending of this movie was scrapped and reshot... You can see the join quite clearly.

Oddly enough, I enjoyed *Alien<sup>3</sup>*. It doesn't fit in with the continuity of the previous stories as well as I'd have liked, and there are holes in the plot big enough for a whole platoon of aliens to hide in, but it was good fun. I didn't have any particular expectations on the way in, so it was a pleasant surprise to find that the film was fairly well acted, more-or-less packed with special effects, only marginally silly and - in my opinion - a worthy successor to the first two movies.

Strangely, it seems that more SF fans are disappointed with *Alien<sup>3</sup>* than were disappointed with the abysmal *Predator 2*... Perhaps this is because *Alien* and *Aliens* were such good films to begin with. Personally, I was most disappointed that the movie totally invalidates comic publisher Dark Horse's continuation of the story.

Well, we're told that an "Aliens versus Predator" movie is in preparation. Oh dear.

Michael Carroll

### PALE BLOOD

Starring George Chakiris, Wings Hauser

"Gripping supernatural thriller" is what it says on the video case. I find it very difficult to believe that they were referring to *Pale Blood* with a comment like that. This is a badly-made film, with a poor script, even poorer acting, and some extremely awful camera work. In fact, this is the worst vampire movie I've seen since *Near Dark*!

The story such as it is has a vampire searching for others of his kind. The plot is padded out with numerous radio traffic and weather reports, and even an ad for their own film!

As far as I'm concerned, the best acting is to be found in the clip of *Nosferatu* which appears in the film. Come to think of it, the clip has better dialogue too.

### THE UNNAMEABLE

Starring Charles King

The movie begins with the 17th-century Boston minister, Cotton Mather, writing an account of the incident in which some poor

soul has had his heart ripped out by a fiend who dwells in one of the houses in the village of Salem. Those who leave the house alive do so in a state of total insanity.

The scene switches to present-day Salem, where the house still stands. Sitting under a tree near the house, Randolph Carter, a young horror author, relates the spine-tingling history of the house to his friends. Naturally, like the average American teen-ager, they decide that the house would be a great place to spend the night.

This is one of those films which has a video case that you cannot ignore - and then you wish you had. There is a fabulous photo of the Unnameable on the back cover, and the overall image is one of horror at its best. Don't be fooled. The story is excellent, the effects are stomach-churning. Unfortunately, most of the time it's too dark to see anything, and I even found myself dozing off at times, simply because there was nothing happening. And as soon as the action picked up, it was time for the closing credits! Lovecraft fans will hate it, and I'm sure the author himself is turning in his grave.

THERESA O'CONNOR

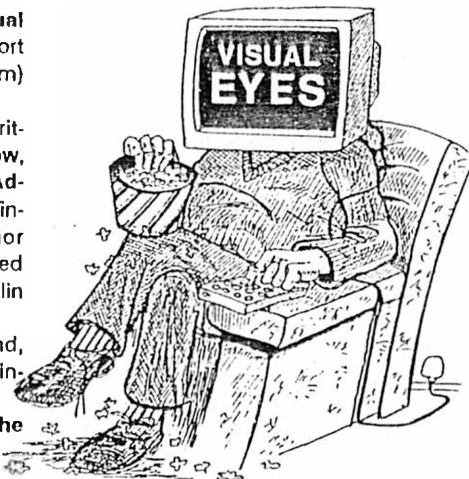
All videos kindly supplied by Videotown, Leixlip.

The October meeting is titled **Visual Eyes**, and it will be a selection of short award-winning videos (and one film) with sf themes.

The shorts include **Nightmare**, written and directed by the star of *Willow*, Warrick Davis; **MAN (Matrix Adjusted Normal)**, the Fuji Award Winner in 1992, directed by Connor O'Mahony; **Dominion**, an animated short by Kevin Hand of the Dublin Filmmakers' Club.

Special guests will be Kevin Hand, who is also from Don Bluth Entertainment, and Connor O'Mahony.

**Tuesday, 6 October, 8pm, at the Horse and Tram, Eden Quay.**



"Ireland is like a second home to me. My first is more the size of France."  
William Shatner, Dublin, after a few pints (he didn't get them, though)

## "Star Trek's Not Just Science Fiction, It's History"

### A Retroview of Star Trek's "The Cage"

MARQUIS DE SADE. Born 1740, a French soldier who was imprisoned for sexual offences and eventually committed to an asylum. His novels and plays are abhorred by many, concerned as they are with various explicit intimate practices. The very one after whom Sadism is named. Such a surprise it was, then, that Sade should release "Smooth Operator" upon an unsuspecting public, making it known there and then that he should be locked up with the key and thrown away. An evil, evil song which reveals a secret Satanic message when played forwards.

It was with such thoughts that I believed Wednesday 16th was going to be

like any other Swiss Bank holiday. My coat was on and was about to accompany me to Crazy Prices, when I felt a sudden sadder down my spine, and a cold shiver in my fridge. I thought I could hear a banshee, and, for some eerie reason - don't ask me why - I spontaneously decided to check what was on the telly.

Lucky I did! Because it was only then that I noticed the Trek epic "The Cage". Now this episode, if a few Treksters don't know, they'll pretend to, is the Pilot's Pilot (a bit like *Biggles* but without the drama), and it was going to be shown in three minutes! Wow, I thought, it's going to be heavily edited, then. Thank-

fully, I realised my error before it was too late, and went shopping.

It was as I was congratulating my tiptop timing, and contemplating an investment in a tin of peas, that my mind drifted to

memories of when I saw "The Cage" for the first (and fourth) time on Sky One. Gee, life was sure innocent in those days. Back then you could say to a bartender "I don't want a frothy head" without so much as a broken jaw, and still have change from a five-pound pint. The days when TNG was

only almost shite. Still, that's progress. But, is progress always progressive?



**RELENTLESS**  
Gene Goganlarry



**CLUELESS**  
William Shatner as  
Jeffrey Hunter

Still, that's progress. But is progress always progressive?

A man, nay an actor, who said himself when I saw him at the shops, "I look less like me now than Jeff Hunter did then."

Call me Simon, but in the days before progress, special effects had a clearly defined **je ne sais quoi**. And it's this precise **boff** that rivals the effects in any bloody **Dune** or **Alien X Allen X Allen**. In a sentence, the "talking into the foldaway make-up mirror" had style, it had glitz. It gave Kirk a certain sexual ambiguity Sade could only write about.

But effects are not the be-all and bradawl of everything, you know! Acting should nearly always be considered sometimes too. And what is a gardener without a decent plot?

Take **2010** as a case in point. See? Now, there's a film with great special effects, superb acting and a gripping story.

But, it's rubbish.

It doesn't work because it's too good. Art imitates Life, but if it becomes Life it's just Life and by definition cannot be Art anymore. *Ipsa Facto*, *Warp Facto* *Ipsa*.

Nevadaless, William Shatner's ability as an actor goes unquestioned. His proficiency as a palindrome goes unnoticed, and his endowments as an East European erotic dancer goes unpaid. But it's only in "The Cage" that we can see Shatner's professional off-screen presence.

William Shatner: a man so dedicated to Loganberry's creations, that he played Kirk in all his own non-Trek roles. A man, nay an actor, who said himself when I met him at the shops: "I look less like me now than Jeff Hunter did then."

Yet during the making of "The Cage", it seems Rene Goddenberry closed the wooden door of Hollywood and wouldn't let Shatner join in. There's gratitude! Seventy-nine episodes of Star Trek (counting "The Menagerie" as two episodes) and nearly as many spinoff films, and Dingleberry raised the back of his cassock and, almost appropriately, mooned. Tragically, if not chronologically, correct. Despairingly, if not actually, true.

Still, Shatner kept his head, donned a wig and a false nose (that was to hold him in good stead for the circus years to come (which haven't come yet!)), and landed the

roll of a nearby fisherman who was having his lunch.

Leonard Nimoy, on the other ear, has often visited Ireland, I am reliably making up, but sadly he is no longer with us.

As applicable\*, "The Cage" came at a good time for him. He had a difficult childhood that started in 1931 and ended in 1943, starting up again briefly in 1945. With failing eyesight, his mother would frequently confuse him with the linen. "Wow, mum!" Boy Nimoy would often cry, "What's the point of flax? I'm really flummoxed!"

But the trouble was only started when she confused him with the linen so much, she hung him on the line to dry, and took the bedsheets to school. So it was with large stretched ears and little education that Young Man Nimoy began the only career suitable for him.

Soon discovering that there was no money in attempting to fly unaided, he decided to try acting instead. Actually, this isn't true. There's only no money in flying by ear, if you fail.

At acting, "The Cage" was about his fourth attempt. But, hold that against him, don't you dare. Success he real a was.

I'm sure the energy he no doubt wanted to inject into this apex of his celluloid career didn't go unchequed. However, this month's Golden Star for Flexibility goes to Nurse Chappell who played a very convincing Number One (pre-beard).

Boyl I'm really looking forward to next Wednesday. I forgot the peas.

SIMON WEBSTER

Star Trek, BBC 2, Wednesdays, 6pm

\* Delete as applicable



# Ramsey Campbell

## An interview by Brendan Ryder

(continued from last month)

BR: You mentioned that Lovecraft was an influence on you -

RC: Very profoundly....

BR: - and the early 'Weird Tales'.

RC: 'Weird tales'. Now, this is the other big anecdote of my childhood! No more than six years old, I was walking along one day with my mother and I saw an issue of 'Weird Tales' in a - it wasn't even a bookshop - it was a newsagent's window. This would have been '52, '53, no later - and I remember seeing this, reading the logo and looking at the cover and thinking "I want this". What the cover appeared to depict was a black desert with a bird-like creature in the foreground looking extremely frightened and in the background two ...things... which appeared to have very large skulls for heads and not much in the way of bodies, which were somehow managing to make their way towards our unlucky bird at the front of the image. I said "Murnmy, I've got to have this, buy me my 'Weird Tales'" and at six years old, your mother says "Go and buy the Beano", so I didn't get it. It hung around for years so when I had enough pocket money to spend on remaindered magazines I bought every 'Weird Tales' I could get my hands on. And that was the start of my collecting. So from 'Weird tales I graduated to buying Arkham House books when they were being still published. Still, in a way all this was a kind of quest for this one issue which was still in my mind - ten years later I found a copy. What the cover actually shows - it was a November '52 issue - is some bones and a vulture perched on a heap of bones in the foreground and a couple of skeletons in the background, and that's it!

I knew I wanted to  
read more of this guy  
but you just couldn't  
find them

BR: We'd better fast-forward a bit. Perhaps you could give us a rundown of your books. When did you first get published?

RC: I first got published - I'll tell you how I got published. Fourteen years old, I discovered Lovecraft in a big way. I'd already been reading Lovecraft in anthologies and I knew I liked this stuff: I'd read 'The Dunwich Horror' and 'The Rats in the Walls' in **Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural**, a huge and still very good anthology you can still find. I knew I wanted to read more of this guy but you just couldn't find them. All of a sudden one day in another newsagent I saw a copy of a complete Lovecraft book, **Cry Horror** - it was actually a collection that Don Wollheim had done in America for Avon - and it was half-a-crown. I remember actually rushing two miles off home because I hadn't got half-a-crown, and borrowed half-a-crown and come shooting back to this newsagent, quite convinced that someone else would have got there first and I would have never seen it again. I bought it, and having bought it I knew perfectly well that I couldn't stand going to school and thinking 'This is at home'. The next day I actually said "I feel

bad, I feel bad", and I took the day off school and I spent the entire day reading this Lovecraft book. Having done that I was completely immersed in Lovecraft and at fourteen I thought that he was not only the greatest horror writer I had ever read, he

was **the greatest writer** I'd ever read. I don't think so now, though I admire him greatly - I still re-read him a lot. I thought, I want to do this too, I want to see if I can't use some of these ideas and give myself some of the pleasure I got from reading him, by writing something similar.

I'd been writing short stories already for years but they were just patched together from everything around, absolutely at random. Here was somebody who actually gave me a focus and something very specific - there was a style to model yourself on, there was a vision. I don't think there is anything wrong with taking a model to learn your craft while you're learning what you want to write about. Later you need to kick all that stuff away and do it your own way; in a peculiar sense it is looked down on in writing much more than it is in painting, or composition. It is perfectly acceptable to do studies of other artists.

A correspondent of mine, Pat Kearney, published a fanzine - and we were in correspondence because we were among the few horror fans in the British Science Fiction Association back then in the early sixties - and he said why didn't I send them off to Lovecraft's publisher, which was Arkham House in America. It was run by August Derleth pretty well as a one-man operation. So I sent it off - I think I first wrote saying, "Would you like to see these stories?". Derleth wrote back saying, "Yes, I'd better had because we have copyright on all Lovecraft material, so you can't just go and imitate it just like that, you need our permission". And so I sent them off to him, I think basically just hoping that he would say that these were all right and yeah, you can publish them in some fanzines, which was my intention at the time.

BR: But you got a better response than that.

RC: Well, Derleth sent me back this two-page, single-spaced, fully-typed letter (small type), telling me what was wrong with these stories. Which was a whole lot. Like no dialogue, like no characters, ludicrous overwriting, like setting them in New England instead of where I knew. At the end of this long and detailed

put-down he said 'This book clearly needs a lot of work, but if you're prepared to do it, Arkham House might be prepared to publish it'. At fourteen years old, that's about as good as you get! So I did indeed do a whole lot of that work, and I basically went and rewrote those stories pretty thoroughly. He

then published one in an anthology, though he quite rightly said he wanted to do editorial work on it if he bought it, so he did duly do some more tightening up. I think it was his way of showing me how to do it, which worked extremely well.

So that was eighteen. This was 'The Inhabitant of the Lake', this first collection. Pretty well as soon as I had finished that I actually ex-

perience this feeling of 'Okay, I've done that. Now I want to do something else.' So violently did I experience this that I turned my back on this very thoroughly. I thought 'This is no good, Lovecraft is no good, the entire field is no good - I've got to do the stuff that nobody is doing'.

BR: You still wanted to write, then.

RC: I still wanted to write horror, very much so. But you're young, you get these surges. By then I'd got onto reading much more widely. I was reading Iris Murdoch, Graham Greene and particularly Vladimir Nabokov.

Nabokov was my next blaze of insight, and what you could do with language rather than the way Lovecraft did it, the way Nabokov plays with language and material.

I spent five years writing my second collection. I spent two-and-a-half years writing the first

drafts, and looking at them and saying 'Oh, these are awful', and then just throwing them away and taking them as an indication of what not to do. Then I started the entire thing again. For a lot of the time during those five years I found myself thinking 'Well, if

[Imitation] is looked down on in writing much more than it is in painting, or composition. It is perfectly acceptable to do studies of other artists.

I found myself thinking 'Well, if nobody else is doing this, doesn't that mean they are all right and I'm wrong?'

nobody else is doing this, doesn't that mean they are all right and I'm wrong ? - the shadow at my shoulder. So much so, when I finished my second book 'Demons By Daylight' I remember typing it out to send it off to the publisher, looking at this typescript and thinking 'This is awful, I've spent five years wasting my time and not even worth the postage.' But because I'd got this object, it was either throwing it in the fire or put it in an envelope, so I finally put it in the envelope and I sent it off.

BR: How was it received?

RC: Well, it got a couple of reviews immediately. the one it did get was a huge, ten thousand word review in *Niktoloops* which was Harry Morrison's semi-prozine, written by Ted Klein who became the editor of *Twilight Zone Magazine* a number years later. It was a huge exegesis of my second book which got everything that I wanted to put into it. He'd found it, so I thought I must be doing something right. On which basis, out of craziness (and the fact that my wife was working), I said "Okay, now I'm going to do it full time." So on the basis of two short story collections I chucked the library job and wrote. If Jenny hadn't been teaching then we wouldn't be sitting here talking.

In 1976 my first novel came out, *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*, and that did spectacularly badly, particularly in America. It sold, as my editor put it, dreadfully, which is not mincing her words. "But we're still going to publish your books, Ramsey," - she said - so I wrote another novel, *The Face That Must Die*, and she sent me a letter saying, "We can't publish this, it's too grim", which was a sort of a downer. For the only time in my career I decided that I was going to contrive a commercial success so I had a look round at what was doing well in the supernatural horror field and it seemed to me - which is quite foreign to what I do - is the kind of story where you have ordinary, uncomplicated, quite identifiable

I remember typing it out to send it off to the publisher, looking at this typescript and thinking 'This is awful, I've spent five years wasting my time and not even worth the postage.'

people who are being threatened by some sort of external supernatural force. Now this is exactly the opposite of what I normally do. I thought I'd try it, and I wrote a book called *To Wake The Dead* (it came out as *The Parasite* in every subsequent edition) and in a peculiar sort of a way I failed because in a way that book is still more like one of mine than it is like one of the standards because it's still about the protagonist being gradually taken over by her dormant male personality which is a sort of supernatural possession. I think I'm making too much of it, I think it's my worst novel by far. It's terribly overwritten. I like bits of it, but there are not enough bits that I like to make me very happy about it.

It did all right, that was the breakthrough, it was just about the right time. I learnt something from it, not least that it was far too long.

My editors expected me to be difficult about it, but I myself undertook to take about forty thousand words out of it, which I did without very much trouble. The next book, *The Nameless*, is a lot more succinct, a lot more controlled. While not a total success by any means, at least I was learning as I went along. I think I regard the writing process as a learning process, you never stop, you learn from your mistakes. Basically all your mistakes get published - that's the problem!

BR: Coming more up to date, you seem to be becoming more prolific.

RC: No, I'm becoming less prolific, funnily enough. I think a lot more has been reprinted. The real breakthrough book artistically - God, what a pretentious term! - was the one after *The Nameless*, which was *Incarnate*. Actually it was after *The Claw*, the pseudonymous book. *Incarnate* was important, I think, because I decided I didn't want to be scary for its own sake any more. If that what the book was going to do that was fine; but if it was going to be funny, if it was going to be disturbing, whatever, then

fine, I was going to let it do that, and let you sort it out. I wasn't going to tell you how to feel about the book, which I think I was doing far too much of in **The Parasite**.

**Incarnate** led to a whole bunch of books after that, which I'm pretty pleased with. Some have been difficult to write. **Midnight Sun** was an absolute sod. It took me eighteen months, which is not unusually long, but it was eighteen months of weeks on end of thinking "I don't know what I'm doing here, and if I ever knew what I was doing I've forgotten, and why am I doing this, and why don't I get a proper job!"

BR: To digress slightly, how do you write a book? Each author seems to have a different system.

RC: Always longhand, the first draft; get up at seven in the morning; go up to my workroom because I'm always at my best that early in the morning. I always figure out what my first sentence is going to be before I get there to start writing so at least I've got that, you don't have to stare at this horrible blank page. Go until noon, maybe a bit later, seven days a week, every day of the year! Christmas Day I get off a bit early, but I still do a couple of hours, otherwise I get very edgy, I feel I've not done it. **Midnight Sun** was really a struggle, and the only justification, which is enough of a justification, is that a lot of people seemed to like it, and seemed to get what I was trying to do. Which was trying to do the kind of book that had brought me into the field in the first place, a kind of supernatural horror -

BR: Back to Lovecraft?

RC: Back to Lovecraft, back to Blackwood, Macken: the sort of story which is trying to give you a sense of something supernatural, which is larger than the story can contain. I'm not very interested in gore and entrails and stuff. It's fun to watch in videos but it's not interesting to write. I just get terribly bored with it. So **Midnight Sun** was a struggle but it seemed to pay off.

**Needing Ghosts**, which was the novella I did after that for Deborah Beale at Legend

was amazingly easy. I found myself getting up in the morning thinking 'What happens next? I've got to find out what happens next!' and just letting it go, rushing away. It's the way it should be but it very seldom is. Twenty seven years since I started writing and I can still find this happen, this is the payoff you get.

**Needing Ghosts** goes for a sort of nightmare comedy, and the comic thing has now seemed to become more into the foreground of what I'm doing, so **The Count of**

**Eleven**, which is the latest novel is a comic novel. It made me laugh a lot while I was writing it, and more to the point, it seems to make people laugh when they're reading it. There was a great American review saying that Laurel and Hardy would have loved it. I can't

think of any finer praise than that, but at the same time I think it's a horror novel because it doesn't stop being funny when you think it should have stopped. It disturbs people. It's interesting, it's had equally good reviews as a comic novel as a horror novel!

BR: To wrap up - your next project?

RC: Let me see - Arkham House, just completing the circle if you like, are doing a **Best of 30 Years** retrospective collection next year illustrated by J.K. Potter called **Alone With The Horrors**. Potter is designing the book as well as illustrating it. I'm just in the middle of a new novel called **The Long-Lost** which is sort of a supernatural book, sort of a comic novel, and sort of a novel about people coming apart in everyday life; and you can tell I really don't know what the hell it is, can't you, because I never do until I've finished it!!

(With thanks to Helen Ryder for transcribing the interview)

## BOOK REVIEWS

### THE ELF-QUEEN OF SHANNARA

Terry Brooks

Legend, 433pp, £15.99 hb

Anyone who's ever read the Realmlore column in FTL (what's FTL?) will know that I am a big fan of Terry Brooks, and indeed last November had the great pleasure of meeting and interviewing the man [clang! - did somebody drop something? - ed]. This would lead one to believe that I would be rather biased in favour of this book. And the answer to that is that it's hard not to be biased when this book makes such entertaining reading.

However, I diverge. The story so far...is actually rather long and complicated, and if you don't know what it is don't read this review, read the first two books. You'll enjoy them!

For those of you up to date, this book is almost solely Wren's story. Taking the Adershag's advice, Wren and Garth [party on Wren! Eh, sorry about that. - ed] travel to Windhove where they meet up with Tiger Ty, a Wing Rider who tells them that the Elves have now made their home on the distant island of Morrowind. Convincing him to take them there, they find the once-beautiful island has been ravaged by foul magic and that the Elves have created a terror around them that they are unable to defeat.

It is also here that Wren learns the true identity of her parents, and more of her history and heritage, as well as the true nature of the evil Shadowen.

Once again Brooks has populated the story with likable and interesting characters, though none here match the wonderful Pell from the previous volume. There is a nice line in dry humour from Stresa the Splinter-scat (which reminded me of Edgewood Dirk, the Prism Cat from another Brooks novel), and action and adventure aplenty. The brief glimpses we get of what happens to Par, Coll, and Walker Boh are tantalising in the extreme as the build-up begins to the climactic fourth book.

There are however one or two small complaints. I did find Wren's heartsearching a little overplayed, and certain story ideas and

constructions reminded me of Clive Barker's *Weaveworld*. There was also absolutely no mention in the book of one of the major characters from the previous novels, which was a little annoying. Another major character was, to my mind, unnecessarily disposed of. However, the book did have the Wisteron, one of Brooks' best monster creations yet. All in all I can't help but recommend this book, and I'm obviously not alone in enjoying it, as it is currently in the top five bestsellers here, in the UK, and in the States.

Needless to say that I await Book Four - *The Tallsman of Shannara* - with bated breath.  
DES DOYLE

### CAT-A-LYST

Alan Dean Foster

Orbit, UK £4.50, pb

Jason Carter is an actor who wants to play shakespear but with his muscles and good looks he keeps getting cast in parts that require a bare chest and no talent. Finding a computer disk on the set of his latest epic leads Carter to darkest Peru where he and his companions find a gateway to another world, another world inhabited by the descendants of the Inca empire destroyed by the spanish 400 years ago. The Inca's have made some surprising advances in science in the last 400 years and they have not forgotten the Spanish. So now Carter has to stop an invasion by thousands of revenge-crazed Incas and all he has to help are his wardrobe lady and his cat.

All those who liked the spellsinger books will enjoy this tale where the only one who seems to know whats going on is the cat.

EDWARD STAFFORD

### BLOOD OATH

David Morrell

*Blood Oath* is a rather unconvincing thriller from the author of *First Blood* and *Rambo*. Pete Houston is a writer and teacher who travels to Europe to visit the grave of his father, who was killed in World War Two.

There is however no grave, and no records of his father's death. Houston sets about the task of finding the truth about his father's disappearance. There are numerous at-

tempts on his life, and plenty of deaths, and surprises. The reader, though, does not find these surprises as interesting as Houston. There's also a James Bond-type climax.

**Blood Oath** brought me on a journey around France I would rather not have taken. The book leaves me fairly disappointed in Stephen King's review of **Blood Oath** as "Colourful, fast-moving, and packed with tension from page one."

More like "Dull, extremely slow, and lacking action or tension."

DARREN WALSH

## THE GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

Gordon R Dickson  
Grafton, UK £4.50, pb

Jim Eckert leads a very mundane existence at Riveroak Collage, playing volleyball and studying for his doctorate in medieval history. But his nice, safe, normal life comes to a screeching halt when his girlfriend, Angie, disappears before his eyes during an experiment by Grottwold Weiner Hansen (Riveroak's resident mad scientist) and in an attempt to find and bring her back, Jim tries the same experiment. Jim's attempt succeeds ( sort of ) when he finds himself in medieval england where Angie is a prisoner in the loathly tower and jim has no option but to rescue her, just one problem Jim appears to have turned into a dragon!!

Not one of Dicksons Best books even if it did win the British Fantasy Award. The plot held no read surprises for me and even the name of the dragon GORBASH seemed very familiar.

I got the impression that this was a book for younger readers who would, I think really enjoy it.

EDWARD STAFFORD

## NIGHTSEER

Laurell K Hamilton

Foc, 303pp, \$4.99 (£4.99 in America's Best Books, Duke Lane)

**Nightseer** is a book that has received enthusiastic reviews, and zoomed up the American bestseller lists, so I thought it would be worth investigating.

It's basically the story of Keleios, a half-elf with far more power than is decent for one person to have: she's a sorcerer, a prophet, a herb-witch - and of course demon-tainted. The book opens with a prologue, in which the five-year-old Keleios dreams her mother's death. It then skips on to her studies in sorcery, aged 20, and she dreams the destruction of her school. After that, the book takes off into a succession of battles, treachery, blackmail, capture, escape, recapture, re-escape...with a liberal mix-in of lust, magical weapons, ancient relics, love (of sorts), demons of all kinds, from massively powerful things to weak imps, and several succubi for good measure. Events rush along so fast, you hardly have time to catch your breath, let alone stop and figure out what's about to happen.

**Nightseer's** main flaw is the opposite of the usual one. Most books take a very small story, and stretch it out to fill a great big fat book - or even three, or five big fat books.

**Nightseer** takes a large story and crams it down into a medium book, when there is easily enough material there for a trilogy - there are tantalising references everywhere to bits of Keleios' past, and the action is so fast, there isn't room for the world to be properly worked out, which is a pity, because the glimpses we get are interesting.

Overall, I'd recommend it, but I hope Ms Hamilton writes a prequel soon.

DORIAN GRAY

[In the words of the Bard of Avon, "yeah verily, asking a fantasy author to turn something into a trilogy is like asking Salman Rushdie to stay out of Dodge."]

### Note to Reviewers

Please ensure when submitting reviews that you include the title and author's name; price, length in pages and publisher (if possible); and your own name. It is also advisable to give a contact number so that details can be checked, if necessary.

# DRABBLES

Please note that due to a "technical" error, Nigel Quinlan's address in the last issue was cut short, and should have read The Garage, Co Limerick.

## Freshman

Terror had emptied the bars, and the collegiate quarter no longer resounded with the noise of Bohémian excesses. Students barricaded themselves behind the doors of their hovels and hung crucifixes from the walls.

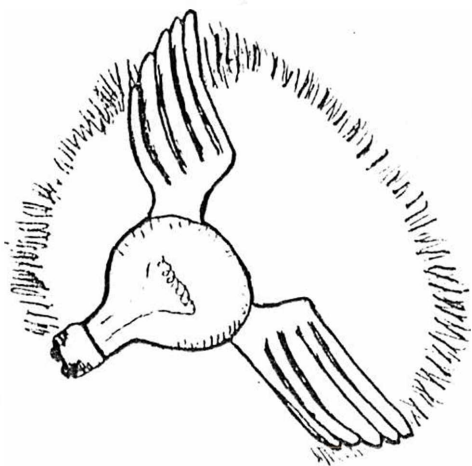
But the danger was over. Unbeknownst to them, Dr Frankenstein had all the parts that he needed and, beneath the streets, he was putting the final touches to his artificial student. A cunning scam to defraud the grants authorities, the misshapen beast was stretched out on a slab.

"My student is almost complete," cackled Frankenstein, "now to add four pints of cider and a plastic traffic cone!"



Jim Steel  
Govanhill  
Glasgow

Although "Freshman" is high on my list, the second prize in the Drabble Competition is awarded to this next one, which manages to be awfully clever and painfully silly at the same time. A £5 book token is winging its way by foot to the author of:



## The Importance of Earning Buttons

Huw Nabber sought divine help.

The author of *Sin: The Rasher Murders*, and *Sin II: Galtee By Suspicion*, was on his knees. He'd contracted for a movie version of the original book, then a mystery virus struck half the cast ing agents in Hollywood.

"How can I know who to engage to find me stars?" he asked, hands joined. "If they drop dead I'll lose millions!"

Suddenly the heavens parted, and an angel explained that the virus was caused by an infection in the gall bladder.

"It's easy," the angel added. "Let him who is without stones cast the first Sin."

Fergus Linehan  
Blackrock



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Co Kildare



In your Newsletter next month:

Worldcon News

The Limerick Competition takes over  
where the Drabble thing left off

Plus all the usual news, reviews, and  
features

Cover:

**Alien Cubed**

by Frances Halpin