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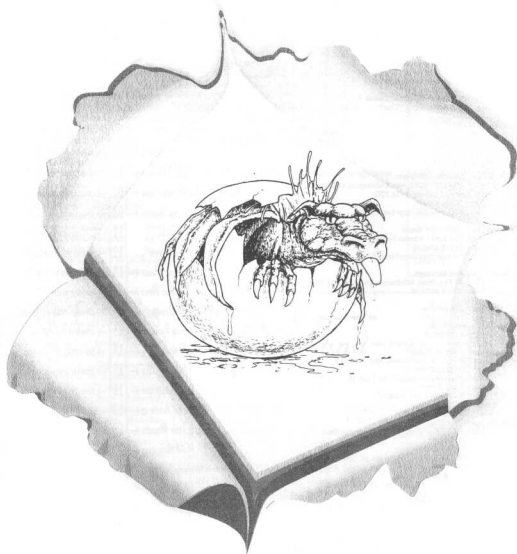
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The News Magazine of the
British Science Fiction Association

Issue 120

July / August 1996

— THE REBIRTH OF THE BSFA —



Cold Lazarus . . Dr Who . . UnConvention96 . . Books . . Videos . . Films

matrix

the news magazine of the

BSFA

British Science Fiction Association

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BSFA Membership

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renewals, address changes,
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This costs £16 per year for UK residents, £12 for unwaged. Please enquire for overseas rates.

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Sawyer Gets Nebula

Canadian writer **Robert J. Sawyer** heads up this year's Nebula Awards, presented on 28 April on board the converted cruise ship *Queen Mary*, just off the coast of Los Angeles. The full results:

Novel: **Robert J. Sawyer** *The Terminal Experiment* (a.k.a *Hobson's Choice*)

Novella: **Elizabeth Hand** "Last Summer at Mars Hill"

Novelette: **Ursula K. le Guin** "Solitude"

Short Story: **Esther M. Friesner** "Death and the Librarian"

Grand Master: **A. E. van Vogt**

Author Emeritus: **Wilson Tucker**

Sawyer also received a brace of 1996 **HOMER Awards**, one for the same novel. HOMers are voted on by the users of the Compuserve sf Special Interest Group on the Internet, and the full results were:

Novel: **Robert J. Sawyer** *The Terminal Experiment*

Novella: **Mike Resnick & Susan Schwartz** "Bibi"

Novelette: **Mike Resnick** "When the Old Gods Die"

Short Story: **Robert J. Sawyer** "You See But You Do Not Observe"

Dramatic Presentation: "The Coming of the Shadows" (*Babylon 5*)

The membership of the Compuserve sf SIG totals over 30,000, so it's possible that the HOMers – now in their sixth year – are the most representative popular-vote awards in existence (the Hugos usually attract fewer than a thousand votes). However, it's been suggested that the heavy presence of some of the winners on the net may be reflected in the results.

OTHER AWARDS

• The Philip K. Dick Award went to the cybercomedy *Headcrash* by **Bruce Bethke**, originator of the term 'cyberpunk'.

• The Bram Stoker Awards for horror writing went to:

Novel: **Joyce Carol Oates** *Zombie*

Collection: **Jonathan Carroll** *The Panic Hand*

Nonfiction: **Mike Ashley & William Contento** *The Supernatural Index*

Novelette / Novella: **Stephen King** "Lunch at the Gotham Café"

Short Story: **Harlan Ellison** "Chatting With Anubis"

First Novel: **Lucy Taylor** *The Safety of Unknown Cities*

Life Achievement: **Harlan Ellison**

Gollancz Editor Dies

Richard Evans, the editor of Gollancz's sf and fantasy lines, died on 26 May of septicaemia brought on by pneumonia. He was 46. Trained as a historian, he joined Penguin in 1972 and followed this with stints at the Open University, and Fontana, before specialising in sf at Futura and Orbit and later, Headline, finally joining Gollancz six years ago. He started the published careers of many of today's leading sf authors, including Paul McAuley, Michael Scott Rohan, Mary Gentle, and many others. The funeral – a 'secular celebration of his life' – was held on 31 May at Kensal Green, and many authors, editors and agents were present, including Brian Aldiss, Christopher Evans, Harry Harrison, Robert Holdstock, and Christopher Priest. Jo Fletcher, Richard's editorial colleague at Gollancz, delivered the main address.

Richard Evans leaves a wife, Alison, and two children.

Full obituary next issue

W and philip K dick

The Watersone's bookshop chain is staging a special summer promotion of sf, part of which is the republication, in conjunction with *Voyager*, of Philip K. Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (£5.99 pb, 204pp) with a new introduction from **Fay Weldon**. Ten new and recent books are being promoted – all but two by non-British authors – and purchase of any of these gets you £2 off the Dick title.

Watersones claim that *Three Stigmata* is their biggest-selling sf import title; in fact, Dick appears twelve times in their top 100 imports. Despite this, *Voyager* had no plans to re-issue it, so the bookshop chain entered into a one-off deal. *Voyager's* apparent disinterest in publishing what is one of Dick's most 'cultish' novels (Paul Williams once recommended it to John Lennon) may be connected to the mooted movie, now being considered by Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope Pictures.

Box of Delights?

Broadcast magazine reports that production company Satel Doc is to make a £2 million six-hour series on the history of sf, to be called *The Sci-Fi Files: The History of Science Fiction*. The host will be Patrick Stewart, and production will start next year for delivery in 1998. It appears that it will concentrate on media sf, and will feature "classic sci-fi films with animated segments and state of the art computer graphics".

Foundation Sequel

The contract of Andy Sawyer, Librarian and head of the SF Foundation collection at Liverpool University, has been renewed. This ensures the survival of the Foundation for some time longer, and indicates that the University is still strongly supportive. Recruiting for the MA course in science fiction is strong, with considerable overseas interest (something which brings a smile to college administrators, whose hunger for fee-paying students is ever-growing).

• As part of his *Blue Mars* publicity tour, **Kim Stanley Robinson** paid a visit to the Foundation on 30 April, when he gave a lecture on some of the social, political and utopian elements underlying his fiction. Before the lecture he met students on the MA course and looked around the extensive Foundation Library.

The Big Push is given to:

Wilhelmina Baird *Cligjaint*
Iain M. Banks *Excession*
David Eddings *Belgarath the Sorcerer*
Peter F. Hamilton *The Reality Dysfunction*
Robert Jordan *Crown of Swords*
Nancy Kress *Beggars and Choosers*
Kim Stanley Robinson *Blue Mars*
Neal Stephenson *The Diamond Age*
Bruce Sterling *Holy Fire*
David Zindell *The Mind*

IN THE STUDIOS

✱ **Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio**, the team who wrote the excellent script for the recent adaptation of Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* (what do you mean you missed it? – go and rent the video now!) have been commissioned to write a script based on *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*.

✱ Meanwhile the cameras are already rolling on the huge-budget version of *Starship Troopers*, produced by **Paul Verhoeven** and **Ed Neumeier**, who made the original *Robocop* movie. It'll be all over our cinemas this time next year. Is it gonna be just another bug-hunt? Well, it is being produced under the banner of a company called Big Bug Productions. . . .

✱ Before then, get set for the re-emergence of *Star Wars*. The original movie has been digitally remastered – again – and this time they've used modern state-of-the-art computer tech to upgrade the special effects and restate some cut scenes. So, come February 1997, you'll get to see *Star Wars* again, for the very first time, looking the way it would look if they made it today instead of twenty years ago. Apparently all three will be rehashed and re-released before the too-long-awaited fourth film finally puts in an appearance. Has no one made flogging dead horses illegal in Marin County?

✱ Of potentially more cerebral interest (and therefore considerably less likelihood of ever seeing the light of day): **Philip K. Dick's** *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* has been bought by American Zoetrope Pictures for adaptation into a film by Francis Ford Coppola. Most likely he will produce rather than direct, as he did with Branagh's *Frankenstein*. Let's hope the end result is better.

✱ And while we're on the subject: Dick's "The King of the Elves" has been bought by Jim Henson Productions, hopefully for *Labyrinth* treatment rather than being Muppetised.

✱ Twentieth Century Fox (I wonder what they'll call themselves in four years time?) has bought Dick's "Minority Report" in order to beat it senseless then release it as *Total Recall 2*.

✱ And finally on matters Dickian, unconfirmed rumours persist that **Ridley Scott** is about to embark on a sequel to *Blade Runner*. I find this prospect both unlikely and, given his recent track record, deeply undesirable. However, an sf film that isn't a sequel to *BR*, now that might be worth looking at. . . .

✱ Oh, and on a distantly related matter: *Alien 4* – to be entitled *Alien Resurrection* – goes into production in the autumn, featuring **Sigourney Weaver** (who's not letting the fact that she insisted on dying at the end of *Alien 3* get in the way of a good franchise) and directed by French idiosyncratic **Jean-Pierre Jeunet** (hall of the team which brought us the *OK Dilettantes* and the wonderful *City of Lost Children*). The film is budgeted at \$70 million and will, like its predecessors, be shot in Britain.

— John Ashbrook

Baxter, Clute, Burns Up For Hugos

Stephen Baxter's acclaimed *The Time Ships* heads up the nominations for the 1996 Hugo Awards, to be presented in August at LACON III, this year's Worldcon in Los Angeles. Other British nominees are **John Clute**, **Jim Burns**, *Interzone*, the *Attitude* team, and **Dave Langford**. The full list:

NOVEL: Stephen Baxter *The Time Ships*; David Brin *Brightness Reef*; Robert J. Sawyer *The Terminal Experiment*; Neal Stephenson *The Diamond Age*; Connie Willis *Remake*.

NOVELLA: Nancy Kress "Fault Lines" (*Asimov's* Jul); Ursula K. Le Guin "A Man of the People" (*Asimov's* Apr); Ursula K. Le Guin "A Woman's Liberation" (*Asimov's* July); Mike Resnick & Susan Schwartz "Bibi" (*Asimov's* Dec); Allen Steele "The Death of Captain Future" (*Asimov's* Oct). A clean sweep for *Asimov's* there.

NOVELLETTE: Greg Egan "Luminous" (*Asimov's* Sep); Greg Egan "TAP" (*Asimov's* Nov); James Kelly "Think Like a Dinosaur" (*Asimov's* Jun); Mike Resnick "When the Old Gods Die" (*Asimov's* Apr); Allen Steele "The Good Rat" (*Asimov's* Dec); Harry Tuttlewood "Must and Shall" (*Asimov's* Nov).

SHORT STORY: Michael A. Burstein "TeleAbsence" (*Asimov's* Jul); Tony Daniel "Life on the Moon" (*Asimov's* Apr); Esther M. Friesner "A Birthday" (*FSF* Aug); Maureen F. McHugh "The Lincoln Train" (*FSF* Apr); Michael Swanwick "Walking Out" (*Asimov's* Feb).

NONFICTION: Isaac Asimov ed. Stanley Asimov *Yours*; Isaac Asimov; Burnett & Fenner (eds) *Spectrum 2*; John Clute *SF: The Illustrated*

Encyclopedia; Bob Eggleton *Alien Horizons*; Joanna Russ *To Write Like a Woman*.

DRAMATIC PRESENTATION: *Apolo 13*; "The Coming of Shadows" (*Babylon 5*); "The Visitor" (*Star Trek: Deep Space 9*); *Toy Story*; *12 Monkeys*.

PROFESSIONAL EDITOR: Ellen Datlow; Gardner Dozois; Scott Edelman; Kristine Kathryn Rusch; Stanley Schmidt.

PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: Jim Burns; Thomas Carly; Bob Eggleton; Don Maitz; Michael Whelan.

ARTWORK: Bob Eggleton, Oct-Nov cover *FSF*; Bob Eggleton, Jan cover *Asimov*; James Gurney *Dinotopia*; *The World Beneath*; George H. Krauter, Mar cover *Asimov*; Gary Lippincott, Jan cover *FSF*.

SEMPROZINE: *Crunk*; *Interzone*; *Locus*; *The New York Review of SF*; *SF Chronicle*.

FANZINE: *Anisble*; *Apparatchik*; *Attitude*; *FOSFA*; *Lan's Lantern*; *Mimosa*.

FAN WRITER: Sharon Farber, Andy Hooper, Dave Langford, Evelyn C. Leeper, Joseph T. Major.

FAN ARTIST: Ian Gunn; Teddy Harris; Joe Mayhew; Peggy Ransom; William Rotter.

• The John W. Campbell Award will also be presented in LA, and the nominees are: Michael A. Burstein; David Feintuch; Felicity Savage; Sharon Shinn; Tricia Sullivan. And for the first time the **Retro Hugos** will be awarded to those who should have won a Hugo 50 years ago, in 1946, had the awards been around then.

Signed Ringworld

When the NASA / ESA Cassini spacecraft is launched towards Saturn next year, it will carry a CD-ROM containing scanned signatures. And until the disc fills up the overseers of the Cassini project – the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California – will accept your signature too. Your name will orbit Saturn for the foreseeable future, even surviving the eventual break-up

of the spacecraft after its attitude control fuel is exhausted.

All you have to do is sign the non-address side of a plain postcard in dark ink, and send it to:

Cassini Program
JPL
4800 Oak Grove Drive
Pasadena
CA 91109-8099
USA

Signatures will be accepted up until 1 Jan 1997, or the disc is full.

Scribble, Scribble, Scribble

• **Terry Bisson** has been contracted to complete the sequel to **Walter M. Miller's** classic story *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, left unfinished on his death earlier this year. Publication is expected in 1997.

• **Colin Greenland** has delivered his collection *The Plenty Principle* to HarperCollins for March 1997 publication. It includes the "Plenty"-associated "The Secret Origin of the Zodiac Twins" as well as 18,000 new words about Tabitha Jute. Colin's still hard at work on the final "Plenty" novel, *Mother of Plenty*.

• **Orbit** have bought the sequel to **Stephen Palmer's** debut novel *Memory Seed*, called *Glass*, for 1997 publication. And he's just finished a new, unrelated novel called *Muezzinland*.

• **George Alec Effinger**, victim of long-term ill health, is being sued by a hospital to which he owes "many tens of thousands of dollars", and may lose control of all the books and stories he has written.

• **Hodder & Stoughton** have bought **Brian Lumley's** *Necroscope: The Lost Years, Vol. 2* for October publication, and **Ben Bova's** *Moonrise*, out in November.

• **Peter F. Hamilton** has completed his next novel, *The Neutronium Alchemist*, and **Jim Burns** is hard at work on the cover.

• The much-delayed fourth issue of *Beyond* magazine will, according to editor **David Riley**, appear later this year.

• . . . and the next issue of **Chris Reed's** *BBR* should be out Real Soon Now.

• Meanwhile, there's a new media-oriented sf magazine due in August. Called *Infinity*, it's being launched in response to the success of *SFX*.

• A collection of **Dave Langford's** nonfiction is due from NESFA Press in the US. It will be called *The Silence of the Langford*, and is a hugely expanded version of the same publisher's previous Langford collection *Let's Hear It For The Dear Man*.

• **Simon Clarke**, whose *Darker* is out in July, is working on his fourth novel, *King Blood*.

TOLKIEN goes WALKABOUT

Over the summer the English Playbour Theatre Company has been touring its open-air promenade version of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and there's still time to catch a few of the northern dates. "Bring a picnic, something to sit on, and wear sensible shoes; you'll walk approximately 1-2 miles during the performance, which will attempt to continue whatever the weather, though alternative performances will be offered in the unlikely event of a cancellation." The dates and venues are:

1-4 Aug **Sandall Beat Wood** Doncaster (A18 Leger Way)

8-11 Aug **Duncombe Park** Helmsley, N. Yorks.

14-18 Aug **Yorkshire Sculpture Park** (M1, J38)

22-25 Aug **Calke Abbey** Ticknall, S. Derbyshire

All performances start at 7pm and cost £6, £5 concessions, £2 children (weekdays); and £7, £6 and £2 at weekends.

Contact: English Playbour Theatre, Sarah's Gallery, Castlegate, Tickhill, Nr. Doncaster, DN11 9QU Tel: 01302 751169

Tor Publishing

Robert Holdstock is one of this year's judges for the sixth annual short story and poetry competition run by The Library of Avalon, a community-based specialist library in Glastonbury. Entries can be on any subject; stories must not exceed 500 words in length, and poems 50 lines. Closing date is 30 Sep. The top prizes are a minimum of £200 for the best short story, £100 for the best poem, and publication in an anthology to be produced in 1997. The prize money is partially generated from the modest entry fees (£4 for the first and £2 for subsequent stories; £3 and £1.50 for poems), so more entrants means the prizes will be proportionately higher.

Other judges this year include raunchy poet **Fiona Pitt-Kethley** and writer of *Arthurianna* **Geoffrey Ashe**.

Each entry must be accompanied by an entry form – send an SAE to:

Library of Avalon

2-4 High Street
Glastonbury
BA6 9DU

Tel: 01458 832759 (office hours only)

Arvon Calling

The Arvon Foundation runs writing courses in three remote and beautiful locations in the UK, and on offer this year is a 'Science Fiction and Fantasy' course tutored by **Colin Greenland** and **Gwyneth Jones**, with US editor **Terri Windling** as guest. It takes place at Tottleigh Barton in Devon from 26-31 August and costs £275, which includes all food, tuition and accommodation. There are also a limited number of bursaries and grants available for the unemployed, students, pensioners, and others on low incomes.

• Arvon run a wide variety of courses. This year's include 'Starting to Write', 'Situation Comedy', 'Popular Fiction', 'Scriptwriting', 'Poetry', 'Writing for Radio', and 'Creative Translation', among many others. Tutors include Geoff Ryman, M. John Harrison, Alison Lurie, Margaret Elphinstone, Brian Patten, Will Self and Sebastian Faulks.

Contact:

The Arvon Foundation

Tottleigh Barton
Sheepwash
Beaworthy
Devon
EX21 5NS

Tel: 01409 231338 Fax: 01409 231444

Meanwhile In Europe

Gone Elsewhere?

The world's only publicly-funded sf museum, **Maison d'Ailleurs** ('House of Elsewhere') in Switzerland, is in danger of closure. As reported last issue, a temporary reprieve from funding cuts was granted by the town council of Yverdon after they received a 1,000-signature petition, but the subsequent council meeting decided to confirm the cuts, leaving the museum with a fraction of its former funding. The Amis ("Friends") of the museum have started a one-off appeal to keep things going until circumstances change.

Contact: Amis de la Maison d'Ailleurs, CCP 10-3172.1, 1401 Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland.

Eurocon Awards

This year's Eurocon was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 25-28 April – the first time an ex-Soviet state has hosted a Eurocon, and the first time the event has been combined with Balticon, the annual Baltic states convention. Despite guest problems – the Guest of Honour apparently wasn't informed he was – the con was judged a reasonable success, particularly by the locals. Unsurprisingly given their history there was some celebration of nationhood, with the souvenir booklet containing a history of Lithuanian sf.

The Eurocon Awards presented included: Best Author **Andrzej Sapkowski** (Poland); Best Artist **Denis Martynetz** (Ukraine); Best Journal **Allen Contact** (Germany); Best Fanzine **SF-Journals** (Ahvrid Engholm, Sweden); Best Publisher **Eridanas** (Lithuania).

• The next Eurocon will be held in Ireland, in conjunction with Octocon, the national Irish convention, on 24-27 October 1997.

Contact: Euro-Octocon, 211 Blackhorse Rd., Dublin 11, Ireland, Email nawchugh@tcd.ie

snippings

...news...gleanings...rumours...cuttings...

◆ **TUOOR ERA** Congratulations to **Martin Tudor**, who won the TAFF race this year and will go to the Los Angeles Worldcon in August. Martin edits the sf newszine *Critical Wave* and the fanzine *Empties*, and is the Chairman of the Birmingham SF Group. He beat his rival **M. J. 'Simo' Simpson**, staff writer on *SFX*, by 138 votes to 9, the largest majority in recent years. Simo was a gallant loser: 'I can't believe that nine people thought I was better than Tudor. Somebody must have voted for me twice.'

• Martin wants to take British fanzines to the US to auction for TAFF, and would be interested in any donations, particularly of the rarer British zines. Contact: Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX

◆ **YOU'RE NICKED** The **Reconvene** bid for the 1999 Eastercon had its cashbox and records stolen at Evolution, this year's Eastercon. If you were a pre-emptor or have any information please contact: Reconvene, 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ

◆ **HAYDEN** Incoming American writer **Terri Nielsen Hayden**, author of the Hugo-nominated *Making Book*, is recovering after being injured when her car was rear-ended last April.

◆ **PLANETARY LANDINGS** Upcoming signing sessions at London's **Forbidden Planet** include:

10 Aug: Harry Harrison (*King and Emperor*) and Brian Aldiss (*Heliocopia*)

7 Sep: Ken MacLeod (*The Stone Canal*), *The Star Fraction*

14 Sep: Robert Llewellyn (Kryten in *Red Dwarf*, signing *Thin He Was and Filthy Haired*) and Rob Grant (*Son of Soup*)

19 Oct: Stan Nicholls and Gerry Anderson (*Gerry Anderson: The Authorised Biography*)

26 Oct: Michael Marshall Smith (*Spare*)

2 Nov: Michael White (*The Science of the X-Files*)

All held on Saturdays at 1pm, Forbidden Planet, New Oxford Street. Some signings may be held in the nearby Conservatory pub (behind Centre Point), so check with the shop first. Post-signings, fans and sometimes the authors gather in the Angel pub on St Giles High Street.

◆ **CYBERWEDDING** Congratulations to **Pat Cadigan** and **Chris Fowler**, who were married in Harrogate, London on 9 May. US author Cadigan has won two Clarke Awards, and Fowler – the original, not the horror writer – is a reformed Vector editor.

◆ **DAN DARENT** The new *Dan Dare* strip came to an abrupt end when *The Planet* on Sunday vanished after one appearance.

◆ **SPEAK UP** The 'Speaking Science Fiction' conference at the University of Liverpool was held on 11-13 July, and was generally considered a great success. Organised by the Science Fiction Foundation's **Andy Sawyer**, it attracted speakers from all parts of the globe, from South Korea to Hull. More next issue.

◆ **DISCONTENT** Also successful was June's Discworld Convention, the genesis of which was described last issue by its chairman and originator, **Paul Rood**. Terry Pratchett has judged: 'I am now prepared to say that Paul Rood can leave very high marks on tall buildings.'

Many thanks to

John Ashbrook, Brum SF Group, Elizabeth & Paul Billinger, Claire Bisle, Andy Butler, Alison Cook, Tony Cullen, Carol Ann Green, Colin Greenland, Steve Jeffery, Paul Kincaid, Alan Kitch, Dave Langford, John Ollis, Stephen Palmer, Peterborough SF Group, Roger Robinson, Andy Sawyer, Maureen Kincaid Speller, Martin Tudor, Kirsty Watt, Bridget Wilkinson, Waterstones in Leeds, and The Cheese Cellar in Folkestone

IMPORTANT!

● Musical chairs in Folkestone

Virtually the entire BSFA Committee trooped down to Folkestone at the start of June, for what was probably the longest Committee meeting in the organisation's history. Much was accomplished – see opposite for a fuller report – notably a total rethink of the management structure. Over to Maureen:

In the wake of the committee meeting, there have been a few personnel changes.

Alison Cook, Membership Secretary, tendered her resignation just before the meeting, and the committee accepted this, not without regret. Alison has done a great job in the last few years and we're sorry to lose her.

• **Paul Billinger** has now taken on the job of Membership Secretary, and is busy sorting out the membership database at the moment. All enquiries about subscriptions and renewals should go to him at 82 Kelvin Road, New Cumbington, Leamington Spa, CV32 7TQ. Likewise, please send him any changes of address.

• Very important from my point of view, **Steve Jeffery** has agreed to become our Publications Manager; he'll be making sure that the magazine editors keep to a proper schedule and get their copy to the printer in time, ensuring that the mailings arrive more frequently. He's also going to be keeping a close eye on printing and mailing budgets, which will in turn enable us to think about advance planning.

• **Kev McVeigh** took a very active part in discussions concerning the BSFA Awards at Eastercon, canvassing opinions, and later volunteered to become our Awards Administrator. As you can see in his piece opposite, we're trying a new approach to soliciting nominations for next year's Awards; you'll be hearing a lot from Kev in future.

• Last but by no means least, **Paul Hood** will be taking on the organisation of the London meetings.

— Maureen Kincaid Speller

● Matrix

You may have noticed some changes in this *Matrix*. I particularly – and warmly – wish to welcome **John Ashbrook**, who will be handling media st, an area in which his expertise is matched only by his enthusiasm. But *Matrix* and the other BSFA publications have no intention of becoming media-saturated, and will continue to concentrate on written st. John's contributions will bring some knowledge and critical savvy to an area of which I am woefully ignorant. We'd value your thoughts on media coverage; if we get the balance wrong, let us know!

On a more personal note, I'd also be very interested in your thoughts on the slightly different look to *Matrix*. As always, your letters are extremely valuable to us: it's your BSFA, not ours! And as of this issue, the best letter wins a T-shirt. . . .

— Chris Terran

Awards Revamp

Kev McVeigh

As a result of the problems which culminated in the non-appearance of the BSFA Awards this Easter, the committee undertook considerable discussion on all aspects of the Awards. The first result of this discussion to appear is the appointment of a new Awards Administrator. Nicholas Mahoney has resigned after six years of service and the committee have asked me to take over. I would like, first of all, to thank Nicholas for his efforts over the past few years and for his valuable work in maintaining the status of the awards in competition with newer ones such as the Eastercon Award.

However, a change of administrator alone is insufficient to resolve the difficulties which have beset the BSFA Awards for many years. There are a lot of awards and popularity polls around the sf community, so how can the BSFA Award become one of the more prominent and significant of these? This was the basis of the discussions I had with the BSFA Committee and a range of interested fans and professionals including several past winners of the Award. The general consensus was that there are two aspects to the problem: first, the basic mechanics have caused problems for years; consequently the second, its promotion amongst fans and professionals, has been neglected.

Changes have therefore been made, which although not extensive, should increase the number of nominations and subsequently the number of votes, which in turn should increase the respect accorded the award.

1997 Awards

The 1997 Awards will be given to books, stories and artwork whose first UK appearance is this year, 1996. They will be presented next Easter, and the nominations process will be an open, rolling system whereby any BSFA member who wishes to nominate a novel, story or piece of artwork at any time during the year merely has to write the details on a postcard and send it to me. You can nominate as many different items as you like; multiple nominations for the same item are not allowed, and you will be caught! I will keep a record of all such nominations, and at the end of the year the top selections will form a shortlist for the final ballot, which will then be voted upon as previously, by BSFA members and members of that year's Eastercon. During the year *Matrix* will regularly list all the nominated titles, in alphabetical order so as to avoid weighting the ballot in any way.

1996 Awards

For this year's Awards (for works first appearing last year, in 1995), you should find the old-style nomination forms with this mailing. There have been years in the past when no awards were given, but nobody wanted to do that this year, and so please fill these forms in and return them to me as soon as possible. If, at this later than usual stage you are uncertain about the eligibility of a particular work, nominate it anyway. I am in contact with the various publishers in an attempt to ascertain the absolute eligibility of novels etc., but in the current circumstances a limited degree of flexibility will be allowed.

Some of you have already sent in nominations, for which I thank you; these will be counted with the second batch of nominations unless you specifically ask me to change your nomination. For the rest of you, please do not feel you haven't read enough to judge. Very few of us can claim to have seen everything, but if something you have read or seen made an impact on you, nominate it, please.

As for myself, I shall be refraining from the nomination and voting ballots as administrator; however, to get things rolling for the 1997 Awards, the box below contains a few suggested novels from the first half of 1996 that may be worth consideration. I'm sure there are many others that you will wish to nominate, and I look forward to hearing from you. When the new mechanisms are up and running I shall be working on ways to promote the Awards, but one thing I am already looking for is some ideas for a suitable and distinctive trophy. If anybody has any suggestions, in any form or area, let me know, preferably with relevant contact details, or even costs if known.

— Kev McVeigh

BSFA Awards 1997 Suggestions

Gill Alderman
The Memory Palace

Maureen F. McHugh
Half the Day is Night

Stephen Palmer
Memory Seed

Kim Stanley Robinson
Blue Mars

Dan Simmons
Endymion

Bruce Sterling
Holy Fire

All At Sea In Folkestone

Maureen Kincaid Speller

SO, YOU WANT to run the BSFA? Okay, you need a spare weekend, a flip-chart, a pack of jumbo felt-tips (dark colours preferable); a five-page agenda, divided into hourly sessions with tea-breaks, someone (anyone, preferably not you) to take notes, one large living room, twelve other enthusiastic people ... oh, and a fluffy black toy cat for when someone points out that you're about to open a meeting with thirteen people.

The garden for smokers is essential, the duckpond for walking around when thinking gets tough is purely optional, as is the demented moorhen chick swimming in circles, but it provides a handy metaphor. It also helps to have committee members who are willing to display their culinary prowess. I recommend Paul and Elizabeth Billinger (vegetable chilli), Andrew Butler (Chocolate Pudding), Tony Cullen (pizza), Steve Jeffery (something sticky involving bananas and ginger [see below!]).

Distractions

The entire BSFA Committee rarely gets together; even when it does, generally at conventions, it's difficult to find time to discuss the subject dearest to our hearts when there are so many other distractions. Eastercon this year was even worse than usual with two of us also trying to be Fan Guests of Honour and thus more than usually committed to the convention itself. We got through the convention, and through the AGM, in something less than good order, feeling that we must have a proper Committee meeting as soon as possible. Paul and I offered our house as a venue because it's fairly large, and I like cooking for lots of people, so the invitations went out, accompanied by the draft agenda. Surprisingly, no one was deterred by this, and in the end only five people couldn't make it but they all sent comments and ideas.

A weekend of discussing BSFA problems may sound pretty grim – and let's face it, we were spoiled for choice – but it became clear that we were desperately keen to get things sorted out. The carefully scheduled breaks were pushed aside, lunch was brief, dinner was late; activity centred on the living room, the flip chart, the coloured diagrams which began to cover the walls, and the large 'NO' which Mark Plummer pinned up to save people having to say it after I offered to resign for the tenth time.

Still speaking

In the end, instead of devising yet more solutions to fix existing situations, we decided to start from scratch ... which led to many questions being asked, intermittently satisfactory answers being given, a good deal of BSFA history being chewed over, and the realisation that Paul Kincaid and I had better be careful about crossing the road for the next few months otherwise too much knowledge could go with us under the wheels of a car. It was clear that we had a lot of work to do, from sorting out a proper publications schedule to doing something about advertising and recruitment. By the end of Saturday we had isolated most of the problems, come up with solutions for some of them, and most importantly, we were all still speaking to one another.

John Birt

By Sunday morning we were pretty tired but we battled on for another couple of sessions, looking at the individual magazines, before retiring to the pub for lunch and then finishing off the afternoon in fine style, brainstorming some new ideas. Carol Ann Green had volunteered to write up the

minutes for the weekend's work, everyone was still bubbling with enthusiasm and we were definitely working as a team. Yes, there were still problems, but we knew what they were and could deal with them. In particular, I no longer felt haunted by the thought of all those things which needed sorting out, and people were already helping with some of the more onerous day-to-day jobs. Best of all, we all knew who we were and what we were doing and were talking. Communication is my watchword, though if Chris Terran describes me as the John Birt of the BSFA once more ...

A month on, the positive feeling generated by the Council of War still persists, and the Royal Mail and BT must be rubbing their hands with glee as the messages fly. Chris has instituted a committee newsletter to keep us all in touch with what's happening. Some days I just can't see the desk for papers, there's so much going on and I can't think when I last felt as happy with what the BSFA is doing as right now.

As members, you may not see the differences quite so soon as we do, but you will be seeing them ... with this mailing, for a start, which has finally brought us back to a regular publishing schedule (and I can't tell you how relieved I am about that), and also the revamping of the Awards. There's also a Members' Survey coming later in the year which will give everyone a chance to have their say about what the BSFA is doing and should be doing.

— Maureen Kincaid Speller



Foodie Corner

In between reorganising the BSFA and solving the world's other major problems, attendees at the recent Folkestone meeting were treated to some mouth-watering food. Here, courtesy of Steve Jeffery, is:

BSFA Bananas In Ginger

Serves six, or one if they're slow.

You will need:

- 2 oz butter
- 2 oz brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 inch fresh ginger
- 6 bananas

Peel the ginger and chop finely, melt the butter and stir in everything apart from the bananas; slice these in half lengthwise (er, peel them first, OK?) and lay in an ovenproof dish. Pour over the sauce, and cook for 15 minutes in an oven preheated to 375° (gas mark 5), occasionally basting. Drown in cream. Eat, and rediscover that sense of wonder.

Next up: Andy Butler's BSFA Chocolate Orgasm!

— recent & forthcoming books —

Orbit



Including Little, Brown, Warner

- ★ **Iain M. Banks** *Excession* (13 Jun; £15.99 hb, 455pp) — The first 'Culture' novel for six years. And certainly worth waiting for — it was very nearly my choice for the issue, a toss-up between this and Sterling's *Holy Fire*. Ships as characters, trillion-year-old sons, but never losing sight of people. Highly recommended (of course).
- ★ **Jonathan Wylie** *Across the Flame* (Jun; £16.99 hb) — New fantasy from the author(s) of:
 - **Jonathan Wylie** *Other Lands* (Jun; £5.99 pb)
- ★ **David Brin** *Brightness Reef* (Jun; £6.99 pb) — Paperback of the latest 'Uplift' novel. "On the distant planet of Jijo, six exiled races live side by side. It seems they have been forgotten, along with whatever crimes they committed. But for how long?"
- ★ **Patrick Tilley** *Star Wars* (Jun; £5.99 pb) — SF comedy from the 'Amtrak Wars' author.
- ★ **Larry Niven** *The Ringworld Throne* (4 Jul; £16.99 hb, 376pp) — Tazara-resident Niven's first solo novel since 1983 (*The Integral Trees*) is the long-awaited third book about the biggest Polo mint in Known Space. 'Louis Wu is back — but he is now 200 years old and definitely not looking for any more adventures. Until, that is, he meets a Puppeteer who has the power to make him young again. As a theme which regularly appears as authors age: of Stephen King's recent *Insomnia*. — CJT. In exchange, Wu must return to the Ringworld, to save it from destruction.' One wishes blurb-writers would occasionally read the book: Wu's been on the Ringworld ever since *Engineers*. Oh well... it's always been rather besides the point to criticise Niven for his characterisation (and never mind the moral simplicities). But when — as in his last couple of solo novels — he concentrates on a cast of repressed primitives in a sort of quasi-pastoral setting (though calling a gas toroid round a neutron star 'pastoral' does stretch the term a little, I admit), it begins to grate. You can't help noticing that every character talks in the same way, regardless of culture, intelligence, or even species. And as always, Bad Things happen when characters react emotionally — in Niven's universe, you're meant to think it through, the only valid response is rationality. Niven opened the gaudy skies thirty years ago, but the worldbuilding is over; now, sorry to say, it looks as shoddy as a 60s car park. But suck it and see.
- ★ **Robert Jordan** *A Crown of Swords* (4 Jul; £17.99 hb, 640pp+18pp glossary) — Fantasy. Book 7 of 'The Wheel of Time'. The prices creep up, but you do get colour endplate maps.
- ★ **Garry Kilworth** *The Root of Voyaging* (1 Aug; £16.99 hb, 421pp) — Book 1 of 'The Navigator Kings', a fantasy based on Polynesian life and myth. To come are *The Princely Flower* and *Land-of-Mists*.
- ★ **Sean Dalton** *Puzzle* (Warner: 1 Aug; £5.99 pb, 230pp) — Tie-in novel, based on the Sky TV series *Earth 2*.
- ★ **Alan Dean Foster** *Mid-Flix* (1 Aug; £16.99 hb, 346pp) — SF.
- ★ **Haydn Middleton** *The Queen's Captive* (Little, Brown: 22 Aug; £15.99 hb, 244pp) — Second in the 'Mordred' trilogy. The first is:
 - ★ **Haydn Middleton** *The King's Evil* (Warner: 22 Aug; £5.99 pb, 328pp) — These two fantasies are based on the Arthurian mythos, but are a striking, bloody and erotic version — based on Welsh tellings of the story cycle — of these perhaps overfamiliar stories. Middleton, a historian, has concentrated on Mordred, incestuous offspring of Arthur and Morgan, and brings out the Freudian undertones in the tale (perhaps a little too obviously for some tastes). Intriguing books, with striking covers. The next and final volume, *The Knight's Vengeance*, will be out in Aug 97.

Key

pb = paperback; hb = hardback; tp = trade paperback
 pp = page count; ill. = illustrated; ed. = edited
 coll. = collection of stories (same author)
 anth. = anthology of stories (different authors)

★ = Highlight ✱ = Editor's choice

All unquoted remarks by Chris Terran, quoted comments are from publishers' material — *caveat emptor!*

Voyager



Including HarperCollins

- ★ **Katherine Kerr** *Darkspell* (6 May; £5.99 pb) — Extensively revised reissue of the second volume of the 'Deverry' series.
- ★ **Raymond E. Feist** *Rise of a Merchant Prince* (7 May; £9.99 tp, 406pp) — Fantasy, volume 2 in 'The Serpentwar Saga'.
- ★ **Lawrence M. Krauss** *The Physics of Star Trek* (HarperCollins: 13 May; £12.99 hb, 188pp) — Non-fiction (sort of) from a physics professor. Foreword by Stephen Hawking.
- ★ **Philip K. Dick** *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said* (20 May; £5.99 pb) — Welcome reissue of the John W. Campbell Award winning novel.
- ★ **Guy Gavriel Kay** *The Lions of Al-Rassan* (20 May; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy based on medieval Spain.
- ★ **Patricia Kennealy-Morrison** *The Hedge of Mist* (20 May; £4.99 pb) — Arthurian fantasy. The 'Morrison' part of her name derives from her marriage to Jim Morrison of The Doors.
- ★ **Julian May** *Magnificat* (23 May; £15.99 hb, 448pp) — Final volume in the 'Galactic Milieu' trilogy.
- ★ **John Baxter** *Steven Spielberg: The Unauthorised Biography* (Jun; £18.00 hb, 448pp ill.) — Biography of the most successful sf film-maker ever.
- ★ **Brian Aldiss** *Heliconia* (3 Jun; £9.99 pb) — Welcome reissue of Aldiss's masterpiece, containing all three books (*Heliconia Spring*, *Summer* and *Winter*) complete in one volume. A BSFA Award winner, and recommended.
- ★ **Kevin J. Anderson** *Ground Zero* (3 Jun; £5.99 pb, 292pp) — X-Files tie-in novel.
- ★ **Graham Edwards** *Dragonstorm* (3 Jun; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy about, um, dragons. First publication of Nottingham-resident Edwards's second novel, a sequel to *Dragoncharm*.
- ★ **Samuel R. Delany** *Tales of Nevèrÿon* (17 Jun; £4.99 pb) — Reissue of the first 'Nevèrÿon' novel. Umberto Eco says, 'I consider Delany not only one of the most important speculative fiction writers of the present generation, but a fascinating writer in general who has invented a new style.'
- ★ **David Zindell** *The Wild* (17 Jun; £5.99 pb) — Book 2 of 'The Requiem for Homo Sapiens' (though *Neverness* is connected and is, I suppose, Book 0). Mind-boggling (meta-) physics, poetic writing, wounded characters; Zindell isn't for everyone, but anyone who can make mathematics sing is OK by me.
- ★ **Charles L. Grant** *Goblins & Whirlwind* (8 Jul; £15.99 hb, 435pp) — Hardback omnibus of Grant's two X-Files novelisations.
- ★ **Philip K. Dick** *The Divine Invasion* (8 Jul; £5.99 pb) — Reissue of one of the three novels in which Dick tried to come to terms with the infamous pink beam.
- ★ **Robert Silverberg** *The Road to Nightfall* (8 Jul; £6.99 pb) — Vol. 4 of Silverberg's collected short stories, covering his early efforts.
- ★ **Clive Barker** *Sacrament* (HarperCollins: 8 Jul; £15.99 hb, 434pp) — Barker turns to ecological issues with this dark fantasy concerning 'the mystery at the heart of nature'.
- ★ **Robert Silverberg** *Starborne* (8 Jul; £5.99 pb) — SF novel.
- ★ **Philip K. Dick** *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (Voyager / Waterstone's: 15 Jul; £5.99 pb, 204pp) — As part of Waterstone's summer sf promotion they are co-publishing John Lennon's favourite Dick novel in a limited edition — how limited isn't known — only available in their bookshops; there is a special discount available (details on news pages). There's an introduction by Fay Weldon, who is well known as a Dick champion: I recall her appearing on Radio 4's *A Good Read* some years ago and choosing — rather surprisingly — *Counter-Clock World*, a book which impressed the other guest, Michael Foot. Here she says, 'See Dick as the William Blake of Northern California: a seer-er of angels and devils, a visionary driven mad, according to his fans, by his own vision; mad to begin with or because of the drugs, according to his detractors.' She also quite correctly notes his humour, and the large part it plays in his novels. Recommended.
- ★ **David & Leigh Eddings** *Belgarath the Sorcerer* (22 Jul; £6.99 pb) — Paperback of the prequel to *The Belgariad*.
- ★ **Katherine Kerr** & **Mark Kreighbaum** *Palace* (25 Jul; £15.99 hb, £9.99 tp) — First volume in a new science fantasy series.
- ★ **Julian May** *Sky Trillium* (25 Jul; £15.99 hb) — The fourth 'Trillium' book, and the second by May alone.

Orion



Including Millennium

Last issue I asked, 'Why an ant?', and a little mole tells me it may not be unconnected to Anthony Cheetham, Orion's Rigel (as it were).

• **Angus Wells** *Exile's Children* (7 May; £5.99 pb, 582pp) — "First in an epic two-volume fantasy, *Exile's Children* tells of a people split asunder by a love-match, of a community and a culture riven by dissent and disaster, utterly unprepared to counter the all-consuming threat that is approaching from beyond the mountains that form the boundaries of their world."

• **James Bibby** *Ronan the Barbarian* (7 May; £4.99 pb, 260pp) — Humorous fantasy from a former scriptwriter on *OTT* and *The Lenny Henry Show*. The cover has endorsements from Chris Tarrant and Lenny Henry; I fall over in surprise.

• **Kristine Kathryn Rusch** *The Fey: Changeling* (20 May; £15.99 hb, £9.99 tp, 514pp) — Fantasy. Sequel to *The Fey: Sorcerer*.

• **Bruce Sterling** *Globalhead* (3 Jun; £5.99 pb, 301pp) — Reissue of Sterling's 1992 collection, with 13 stories from *ISAFM*, *Interzone*, *Omni*, *Semiotext* (E) *SF* among other sources, and one unpublished story ('You For 86?').

★ **Michael Moorcock** *A Nomad of the Time Streams* (10 Jun; £5.99 pb, 549pp) — Vol. 6 in the reissued 'Eternal Champion' series contains the Oswald Bastable novels *The Warlord of the Air*, *The Land Leviathan* and *The Steel Tsar*. (Orion have spoiled the appearance of these otherwise handsome volumes by changing their logo part-way through the series, and inconsistent design of the spines.) It's subtitled 'A Scientific Romance' and is a substantially revised version of the book originally published as *The Nomad of Time*. Moorcock again provides an interesting introduction, in which he talks about his fondness for Edwardian fiction and the children's writing of the Fabian and socialist E. Nesbit (although Richmal Crompton's 'William books'). In explaining the political thinking behind the books he says: 'As I suggested to John Major when he told us that socialism was dead, he should not be too triumphant. After all, until his predecessor revived it, we thought feudalism pretty much over and done with, too. Paternalism and centralism, the bane of capitalist as well as socialist politics, are for me the permanent enemy of democracy. It was my wariness of paternalism, especially as it is these days applied, which inspired this sequence.' This book has a good claim to be a forerunner of steampunk, and is recommended.

• **Kristine Kathryn Rusch** *The Fey: Sacrifice* (10 Jun; £5.99 pb, 550pp) — The huge first volume in "an epic fantasy sequence".

• **James Bibby** *Ronan's Rescue* (17 Jun; £15.99 hb, £9.99 tp, 261pp) — Sequel to *Ronan the Barbarian*. "Having saved his father's spirit and waged war against demons, Ronan was looking forward to a peaceful future with his lady love... only to be kidnapped at the moment of his victory. He's held prisoner by the sorceress Shikara — and it's more than just spells she wants to practise."

★ **Bruce Sterling** *Hot Fire* (17 Jun; £15.99 hb, 296pp) — According to the title page this is actually written by some parvenu called Bruce Sterling, but don't be fooled. Sterling is that oxymoron, an American internationalist, and this novel — which is either very good indeed or deeply pretentious, or possibly both — could be said to be Euro-st (other bridgeheads into *Europa incognita* being Paul McAuley's *Fairland* and Brian Aldiss's *Barefoot in the Head*). Like his *Islands in the Net*, it's an exploration of a flawed utopia — flawed, that is, from the viewpoint of Mia Ziemann, born in 2002 and now aged 93, who is a Good Citizen and exists for no reason that she can fathom. She becomes young, she has a breakdown; she escapes the torture of kindness and tours the underground cultures of Europe. She may find some relief in the furious impotence, the holy fire, of the young, who no longer matter. Post-human existence is the totem set up here, high-tech and self-absorbed; but there is no idolatry, no easy sneering (despite more occurrences of that most unquotidian word 'quotidian' than I cared to count, and the occasional lapse into postmodern academese). A book about art, and small rebellions, and people; I liked poor flawed Mia, and cried at the end. Highly recommended, and your editor's choice this issue.

• **Mickey Zucker Reichert** *Beyond Ragnarok* (17 Jun; £9.99 tp, 676pp) — Fantasy, the latest novel in the *Last of the Renhai* series (though it's subtitled *The Renhai Chronicles: Volume One*).

• **Mary Corran** *Fate* (1 Jul; £5.99 pb, 363pp) — Fantasy.

★ **James Buxton** *The Wishing Tree* (22 Jul; £15.99 hb, £9.99 tp, 330pp) — Effectively written dark fantasy, set like Jenny Jones's superb *The Blue Manor*, in Epping Forest. As we should all know, fairies are not cute and twee; they are cold, dangerous, and deeply unfathomable. Those that inhabit this book are creatures of rot and leaf-mould and slime, and Buxton's feeling for the forest is occasionally Holdstockian in its intensity (there are thematic similarities to Holdstock, too; to say more would unglue the plot). It's also a police thriller, wherein a detective — a working man, decent and compassionate — struggles to come to terms with something Other. And a story of childhood abuse and dark bargains; and loss, and futility... a very English book, then. It's overwritten in places (superbly written in others), and the plot may wobble a little if you stare at it, but is nevertheless warmly recommended.

• **Mary Corran** *Dartlett* (22 Jul; £15.99 hb, 326pp) — Fantasy from a former stockbroker who cites as her influences Andre Norton and Marion Zimmer Bradley. This is a return to the world of Corran's first book, *Imperial Light*.

Gollancz



Including Vista, Indigo

• **Arthur C. Clarke** *The Snows of Olympus* (Jun; £9.99 tp, 120pp ill.) — Paperback of Clarke's vision of a terraformed Mars, using many computer-generated images.

★ **Ian Watson** *Hard Questions* (Jun; £16.99 hb, 224pp) — New novel from one of the UK's real SF treasures. "A new generation quantum computer may hold the answer to life after death — but it may also destroy life as we know it."

• **Steve Harris** *Black Rock* (Jun; £5.99 pb) — Horror.

• **Todd Wiggins** *Zeitgeist* (Jun; £9.99 pb, 280pp) — "A *fin de siècle* fantasy in which Tom Robbins meets Quentin Tarantino. It's 1999, and one woman is about to get the journalistic scoop of a lifetime: an interview with America's most wanted criminal on the eve of his execution, an event that will usher in the new millennium at 12:01, 2000." Weirdest and mayhem with cyber-junky Internet terrorists, Welsh bisexuals with a taste for sex and violence, an excommunicated priest who is a Jewish schizophrenic, and more. It says here.

• **Peter James** *TechnoTerror Stories* (Jun; £7.99 hb, £3.99 pb, 96pp) — First children's book from a respected horror/fantasy author.

• **S. P. Somtow** *The Pavilion of Frozen Women* (Jul; £15.99 hb, 288pp) — Coll. of ten stories, including Stoker Award winner 'Darker Angles', three tales of theology and zombies, and a pair of retold fairy stories.

★ **Diana Wynne Jones** *A Sudden Wild Magic* (Jul; £15.99 hb, 320pp) — Jones's first adult fantasy. A benevolent secret society of witches and

warlocks protect our world, but they are tested by climatic disaster and mages from a neighbouring universe: 'It is left to a motley group of Talented commandos to launch an attack on Arth, using an arsenal of psychological sabotage, internal dissension and kamikaze sex' (an interesting concept, that).

• **Margaret Weiss & Don Perrin** *Robot Blues* (Aug; £16.99 hb, 384pp) — Volume 2 of *The Knights of the Black Earth*.

• **Rebecca Bradley** *Lady in Gl* (Aug; £16.99 hb, 288pp) — First novel from a Canadian resident in Hong Kong. "An enchanting fantasy in the tradition of Alan Dean Foster's *SpellSinger* novels."

• **Terry Pratchett & Paul Kidby** *The Pratchett Portfolio* (Sep; £7.99 pb, 320pp ill.) — Lots of drawings of Discworld characters by Kidby, who apparently has named his three children Sharpen, Shawn and Pevsey — I wonder if he's a fan? The next Discworld novel is *Hogfather*, subtitled 'A Hogswatch Carol' and due in November; the Hogfather (the Discworld's Santa Claus) is kidnapped...

★ **Paul J. McAuley** *The Invisible Country* (Sep; £16.99 hb, 320pp) — Collection from the Clarke Award winning author of *Fairland*. Recommended.

• **Nell Ferguson** *English Weather* (Oct; £9.99 pb, 288pp) — Non-*sf* from the Dick-influenced author of *Double Helix Fall*.

• **Joe R. Lansdale** *Savage Season* (Oct; £5.99 pb, 192pp) — Fantasy-tinged crime; the first UK publication of the initial *Hap Collins* novel (the excellent *Mucho Mojo* was the sequel).

• **Joe R. Lansdale** *Cold in July* (Oct; £5.99 pb, 240pp)

• **Alan Moore** *Voice of the Fire* (Oct; £9.99 pb, 320pp) — First novel from the writer of *Watchmen*.

Legend

Including Arrow, Century, Hutchinson



I know, I know, it's not sf but I simply can't resist:

- **Kendall Crollis & Anne Montgomery** *Knitting With Dog Hair* (Hutchinson: Jun; £5.99 pb, 112pp) — Here's the sales pitch: "Better a sweater from a dog you know and love than a sheep you'll never meet. This sensational, easy to use, tip-filled guide to recycling Rover makes the perfect gift for every dog lover and every knitter. The definitive guide [*My Dog - there's another?*] to a new and exciting hobby." The wonderfully named Kendall Crollis is apparently a senior VP at J. Walter Thompson. And I didn't believe a word of it either . . .
- **Christopher Stasheff** *The Oathbound Wizard* (20 Jun; £4.99 pb) — Gently humorous fantasy.
- **Greg Bear** *Legacy* (20 Jun; £5.99 pb) — Paperback of the latest book in 'The Way' series.
- **Terry Brooks** *Witches' Brew* (20 Jun; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy.
- **Philip G. Williamson** *Clade!* (20 Jun; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy.
- **Michael Crichton** *The Lost World* (Arrow: 4 Jul; £5.99 pb)
- **Michael Crichton & Anne-Marie Martin** *Twister* (Arrow: 4 Jul; £5.99 pb) — Novelisation of the film.
- **Diana Gabaldon** *The Drums of Autumn* (Century: 4 Jul; £15.99 hb, £9.99 tp) — Historical fantasy.
- **Harry Harrison** *King and Emperor* (18 Jul; £16.99 hb, 512pp) — Book 3 of 'The Hammer and the Cross' . . .
- **Harry Harrison** *One King's Way* (18 Jul; £5.99 pb) — and Book 2.
- ★ **Richard Adams** *Tales From Watership Down* (Hutchinson: Aug; £14.99, 224pp) — Long-delayed sequel to the classic *Watership Down*.
- **Robert Jordan** *Conan the Invincible* (1 Aug; £4.99 pb)
- **St. Jude, R. U. Sirius & Bart Nagel** *Cyberpunk Handbook* (Arrow: 1 Aug; £6.99 pb) — Foreword by Bruce Sterling. It's hard to tell from the publicity if this is a parody or not: "Your chance to . . . get on the same funky wavelength as those other dudes . . . Do you know where to find the cool places to hang in Cyberspace? Do you own Terminally Hip Widgets and High-Tech Toyz [sic]? Are you aware of the books and films you must have read [sic]?" R. U. Sirius?
- **Anne Rice** *Memoirs of the Devil* (1 Aug; £5.99 pb)
- **Andrew Harman** *The Dirty Dozen* (1 Aug; £16.99 hb, £4.99 pb, 320pp) — Another groanworthy title, another Harman book . . . this one's about the bureaucratisation of Hell by a demon whose startling new concept is 'efficiency'. OK, but didn't Terry Pratchett do that one in *Discworld*?
- ★ **Ken MacLeod** *The Stone Canal* (5 Sep; £15.99 hb, 352pp) — Follow-up to the highly successful *The Star Fraction* (see below) from the West Lothian based author. A tale of sexual and human politics, AIs, and revolution: "Jonathan Wilde is dead. His memory is immortal. The young man who walks into Ship City remembers all of Wilde's life and death. That 21st century anarchist agitator took some of his secrets to the grave, and beyond. His clone is back and looking for a man who sent him to a cold and lonely death."
- ★ **Ken MacLeod** *The Star Fraction* (5 Sep; £5.99 pb) — Paperback of the Clarke Award runner-up. Recommended.
- **Robert Jordan** *Conan the Defender* (5 Sep; £4.99 pb)
- **Stephen Fry** *Making History* (Oct; £15.99 hb, 320pp) — His novel *Liar* had snafu elements, and this appears to as well. Fry can occasionally not be found in Britain.
- ★ **Tim Powers** *Earthquake Weather* (17 Oct; £16.99 hb, 496pp) — Powers' new novel 'mixes Multiple-Personality Disorder with a network of sorcerors and corporate politics.'
- **Tim Powers** *The Anubis Gates* (Oct; £5.99 pb) — Reissue of the exuberant Dick Award winning fantasy. Recommended.
- **Oliver Johnson** *The Forging of the Shadows* (3 Oct; £5.99 pb, 608pp) — Epic fantasy. Book One of 'The Lightbringer Trilogy'. This is getting a big autumn push: Johnson contributed to *White Dwarf* magazine, has written five children's books, and is currently an Editorial Director at Random House. Guess who owns Legend . . .
- **Alan Dean Foster** *A Call to Arms* (17 Oct; £5.99 pb) — St.
- **Terry Brooks** *First King of Shannara* (17 Oct; £9.99 tp)
- **Simon Archer & Stan Nicholls** *Gerry Anderson: An Authorised Biography* (17 Oct; £14.99 hb, 256pp) — The lavish colour promotional material says that Anderson is responsible for, among better known works, a series called *Stringray*; type of the month, I think. A live action version of *Thunderbirds* is being mooted, which presumably had to wait until computer special effects had advanced sufficiently to show really convincing strings.

Hodder & Stoughton

Including NEL, Coronet



- **Mark Dery** *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century* (4 Apr; £15.99 hb) — Non-fiction about the darker side of net culture, about which J. G. Ballard says: "[i]t is without doubt the best guide I have read to the new computer culture that will soon dominate our lives."
- ★ **Richard Dreyfuss & Harry Turtledove** *The Two Georges* (NEL: 18 Apr; £5.99 pb) — Alternative world story in which the UK still rules America.
- **Stephen Laws** *Daemonic* (NEL: 16 May; £5.99 pb) — Horror.
- **Brent Monahan** *Blood of the Covenant* (NEL: 16 May; £5.99 pb) — Horror.
- ★ **Buzz Aldrin & John Barnes** *Encounter With Tiber* (6 Jun; £16.99 hb) — An "epic of space exploration and alien contact by a 'dream team' — one of whom really has been there, done that! Arthur C. Clarke says: "I'm quite stunned. Buzz and John have written a classic. Its scope is astonishing, and it contains much wisdom and profound philosophy."
- **Michael Slade** *Zombie* (6 Jun; £16.99 hb) — Horror.
- **Stephen King** *Rose Madder* (NEL: 27 Jun; £5.99 pb)
- **Stephen King** *Desperation* (1 Jul; £100.00 hb) — Special leatherbound limited edition for King addicts.
- ★ **Simon Clark** *Dark* (4 Jul; £16.99 hb) — Third novel from the Doncaster-resident author of the interesting *Blood Crazy*.
- **Steve Walker** *22nd Century Blues* (Coronet: 4 Jul; £5.99 pb) — Sf humour.
- **A. A. Attanasio** *The Dark Shore* (18 Jul; £16.99 hb) — High fantasy. Two sequels are on the way.
- **A. A. Attanasio** *The Last Legends of Earth* (NEL: 18 Jul; £5.99 pb) — Sf. Upcoming in 1997 is *Centuries*, 'the epic novel of the next millennium'.
- **Michael Williams** *Arcady* (18 Jul; £16.99 hb) — Dark fantasy from the author of *Weasel's Luck*. Williams's passion for the works of Milton, Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley informs the imagery and culture of *Arcady* in a wonderful swirling poem reminiscent of Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast*.
- **Martin Greenberg** (ed.) *Dark Love* (NEL: 18 Jul; £5.99 pb) — Horror coll.
- **Eric S. Nyland** *Pawn's Dream* (NEL: 18 Jul; £5.99 pb) — Sf.
- **W. A. Harbinson** *Revelation* (NEL: 18 Jul; £5.99 pb) — New edition of Nazi UFO conspiracy 'fact based' novel . . . probably the Earth's hollow, too.
- **Piers Anthony** *Yon Ill Wind* (15 Aug; £16.99 hb) — New fantasy.
- **Piers Anthony** *Roc and a Hard Place* (NEL: 15 Aug; £5.99 pb)
- ★ **Harry Turtledove** *World War: Upsetting the Balance* (15 Aug; £5.99 pb) — Third in the alternative-world tetralogy concerning an invasion by laetent aliens during World War II. The final volume, *Striking the Balance*, will be out late this year.
- **David Wingrove** *Days of Bitter Strength* (NEL: 15 Aug; £5.99 pb) — Penultimate 'Chung Kuo' book.
- **J. D. Robb** *Naked in Death* (NEL: 15 Aug; £5.99 pb) — Sf / crime hybrid.
- ★ **Stephen King** *Desperation* (15 Aug; £16.99 hb)
- ★ **'Richard Bachman'** *The Regulators* (15 Aug; £16.99 hb) — Horror novel from the archives of the deceased 'Bachman', who is of course Stephen King.
- **John Doolan** *Zoo Event* (19 Sep; £16.99 hb) — Splatter horror.
- **Will Baker** *Star Beast* (NEL: 19 Sep; £5.99 pb) — Sf.
- **Will Baker** *Shadow Hunter* (NEL: 19 Sep; £5.99 pb) — Sf, new edition.
- **Michael Slade** *Zombie* (NEL: 19 Sep; £5.99 pb) — Horror.



QUANTUM LEAF

The Rest

- ★ **Sarah LeFanu** *Writing Fantasy Fiction* (A & C Black: Jun; £8.99 pb) — LeFanu was the commissioning editor responsible for the sf and fantasy line of The Women's Press, and this practical guide 'looks at the different kinds of fantasy fiction, including comic fantasy, children's fantasy and dark fantasy, illustrating her advice with many references to published work. She covers all that the fantasy writer needs to know and offers practical help on every stage, from inspiration through to publication.'
- ★ **Alasdair Gray** *Mavis Beilgrave* (Bloomsbury: Jun; £13.99 hb, 224pp) — A novella and five shorts from the incomparable Gray.
- ★ **Huw Price** *Time's Arrow and Archimedes' Point* (OUP: Jun; £18.99 hb, 320pp ill.) — A philosopher reflects on time and quantum physics.
- ★ **Ronald Hutton** *The Stations of the Sun* (OUP: Jun; £19.99 hb, 560pp ill.) — A comprehensive guide to the festivals and customs of the ritual year in Britain from prehistoric times to today, both pagan and Christian.
- ★ **Richard Glynn Jones** *Cybersex* (Robinson: Jun; £6.99 pb) — Anthology featuring J. G. Ballard, Pat Murphy and Harlan Ellison, among others.
- ★ **Alan Garner** *Strandloper* (Harvill: Jun; £14.99 hb, 208pp) — Garner's first adult novel — though many regard such extremely sophisticated books as *Red Shift* as being demeaned by the 'kids' book' tag — is the true story of Cheshire bricklayer William Buckley, transported to Australia in the 1790s. He escaped and lived for 32 years with the Aborigines, becoming a law-giver and holy-man.
- ★ **Paul Harrison & Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo** (eds.) *Caring for the Future* (OUP: Jun; £7.99 tp, 400pp ill.) — This examination of the world's contemporary population problems is subtitled 'Report of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life'. The report 'places women at the centre of development, and caring at the centre of public policy, arguing that there must be a new focus on sustainable quality of life in order to slow population growth and reduce our impact on the environment.' See *Matrix* 119 for a bibliography of overpopulation sf books.
- ★ **Gene Brewer** *K-PAX* (Bloomsbury: Jun; £5.99 pb, 272pp) — A patient in a mental hospital claims to be from the planet K-PAX, a place so appealing that the other inmates decide to accompany him when he returns. 'Gene Brewer?' Hmm . . .
- ★ **Stephen King** *The Bad Death of Edward Delacroix* (Penguin: 27 Jun; £1.99 pb, 90pp) — Part 4 of *The Green Mile*.
- ★ **Stephen King** *Night Journey* (Penguin: 25 Jul; £1.99 pb, 90pp) — Part 5 of *The Green Mile*.
- ★ **Stephen King** *Coffey on the Mile* (Penguin: 29 Aug; £1.99 pb) — Final part of *The Green Mile*, and you've now shelled out nearly £12 for a standard 500-odd page paperback. If this had been done in a similar format to the 'Penguin 60s', and at a similar price, no one would have been too bothered . . . if you have any thoughts on this experiment in 'serial publishing', let *Matrix* know.
- ★ **Bram Stoker** *Dracula* (World's Classics: Sep; £2.50 pb, 448pp) — Cheap new edition edited by Maud Ellman, with introduction, bibliography and detailed notes on the text.
- ★ **Manfred Eigen** *Steps Towards Life* (OUP: Sep; £9.99 tp, 192pp ill.) — How evolution can be applied to molecules, and how life might have begun.
- ★ **David J. Chalmers** *The Conscious Mind* (OUP: Sep; £22.50 hb, 416pp ill.) — A(n)other new theory of consciousness from a philosopher. Haven't they got any proper philosophy to do?
- ★ **Josef & Karel Capek** *R.U.R. and The Insect Play* (Oxford: Oct; £7.99 pb, 188pp) — Two classic play scripts, the first of which gave us the word 'robot'.
- ★ **Peter Day** (ed.) *Unveiling the Microcosmos* (OUP: Oct; £10.99 tp, 144pp ill.) — Selection of Royal Institution lectures on science and technology from such as Lewis Wolpert and Tony Benn.
- ★ **Michael Cox** (ed.) *The Oxford Book of 20th Century Ghost Stories* (Oxford: Oct; £17.99 hb, 448pp) — Stories by John Wyndham and Angela Carter, among many others.
- ★ **G. K. Chesterton** *The Man Who Was Thursday* (World's Classics: Oct; £5.99 pb, 224pp) — A wonderfully unclassifiable story. Edited by Stephen Madcall, this edition also includes 'A Picture of Tuesday', 'The Book of Job', and 'The Diabolist' as well as a map. Recommended.
- ★ **Stephen Braun** *Buzz: The Science and Lore of Alcohol and Caffeine* (OUP: Oct; £17.99 hb, 192pp ill.) — Bleurgh — a handy guide for con-goers, I would imagine (not that they need any help).

Corgi



Including Bantam

- ★ **Michael A. Stackpole** *Star Wars X-Wing: Wedge's Gamble* (6 Jun; £4.99 pb, 357pp+20pp advertising) — This is Arizona-resident Stackpole's 17th novel; he's also a game designer, and plays indoor soccer (no bottle, these Americans).
- ★ **Anne McCaffrey** *Black Horses for the King* (6 Jun; £9.99 hb) — McCaffrey's first young adult book is a historical novel set in Arthurian times, with lots about horses; very astute.
- ★ **Alan Dean Foster** *The Dig* (6 Jun; £4.99 pb) — An asteroid-about-to-hit-Earth yarn.
- ★ **Anne McCaffrey & Elizabeth Ann Scarborough** *Power Play* (6 Jun; £4.99 pb, 332pp) — Third novel set on 'the living, breathing, sentient world of Petaaybee. Scarborough — who lives in Seattle — won a Nebula for *The Healer's War*, and is currently working on her next solo novel, *The Godmother*.
- ★ **Robert T. Bakker** *Raptor Red* (11 Jul; £4.99 pb, 284pp) — Bakker is Curator of Dinosaurs at the Tate Museum in Wyoming, and was an 'unofficial consultant' (which usually means you don't get paid) on *Jurassic Park*. He believes, controversially, that dinosaurs were warm-blooded and social animals, and this novel is a dramatisation of what life might be like for the creatures of prehistoric Utah, 120 million years ago.
- ★ **Timothy Zahn** *Conqueror's Legacy* (11 Jul; £4.99 pb)
- ★ **George Lucas & Chris Claremont** *Shadow Dawn* (8 Aug; £14.99 hb) — Sequel to:
- ★ **George Lucas & Chris Claremont** *Shadow Moon* (8 Aug; £4.99 pb)
- ★ **Alan Dean Foster** *Dinotopia Lost* (8 Aug; £4.99 pb)
- ★ **Anne McCaffrey** *Red Star Rising* (8 Aug; £4.99 pb)



Psst!

wanna write some sf?

The BSFA runs writers' postal workshops, known as *Orbiters*. Each group (or orbit) consists of five members, with one member chosen to be the coordinator of the group.

I've been looking after the *Orbit* groups for three years now, and in that time they've grown to encompass members from as far afield as India, France and the United Arab Emirates, as well as from more local places such as London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Bristol and the beautifully-named Kirkcudbrightshire. We now have nine groups circulating short stories and novel extracts from science fiction to fantasy to horror and back again. There are also two groups specifically for circulating novels.

If you are interested in writing and would like to get constructive feedback on your creations, then an *Orbiter* is the place for you. Each member of the group places a manuscript in the parcel, writes constructive critical comments on the other manuscripts, and sends it on its way. In return they receive four criticisms on their own manuscript. The parcels go round the groups in varying times, but the average is ten to twelve weeks. It is important that each member does not hold on to the parcel for more than two weeks (though exceptions can be made if all agree).

Be warned, though: *Orbit* groups are not ego-boosters, they can be and should be *hard work*. If you think you've got what it takes to not only receive constructive criticism, but to give it, then the *Orbit* groups should work for you.

A quarterly newsletter is also produced, *Trajectory*, which usually includes market information, competition details, and letters from *Orbiter* members.

If you are interested in joining an *Orbiter*, please contact:

Carol Ann Green
Flat 3
141 Princes Avenue
Hull
HU5 3DL

—Carol Ann Green

John Ashbrook



Meet Matrix's new
media supremo

It's a thankless task, writing about sf in any medium other than the venerable tome. Nevertheless, the Powers That Be of the BSFA decided that *Matrix* (and *Vector*) needed to embrace post-literacy and all the evils it entails. Truly a dirty job, but someone had to do it. But who?

Were any of the respected and reputable burghers of the BSFA going to open themselves up to public humiliation and vilification... or were they going to get someone new in? Rapid nodding of heads. They'd need to find someone with a particular and peculiar skill-base. Illiteracy – otherwise they'd read rather than watch. Gullibility – so they'd do it for now. Pachydermy – to put up with the vitriol they would inevitably attract. Punctuality – so they would only narrowly miss deadlines. But who could possibly combine such obscure and ignoble attributes?

Hello. I'm John Ashbrook.

What Is 'Media SF'?

How do you spot a science fiction film? Is *Star Wars* sf or a cowboy film with hardware? Is *Independence Day* sf or a disaster movie? Is *Star Trek* sf or soap opera? To me, these are overwhelmingly sf. But what about TV shows like *The X-Files* or movies like *Mission: Impossible* or *Twister*? That's trickier. For the record, I'd say they are too, because they all take us beyond the known, the actual. If sf is the fiction of exploration, of experiencing something awe-full, of solving problems through technological tenacity, of developing, nurturing and exercising intellect, of analysing the chilly outer edge of the credible, then these latter examples comply. But what about superhero comics or computer games or Japanese anime or radio plays or... any of the infinite ways we find to present ideas? I take them on a case-by-case basis myself, and therefore so shall my contributions.

I will concede that sf is predominantly a paper-based genre, that TV and cinema can often look like sf, but scratch the surface and beneath you will find something quite different, something we patronisingly and invectively refer to as 'sci-fi' or 'skiffy'. However, this is not *always* the case. Look at *Space: Above and Beyond* (a TV series which has been airing on Sky, over the summer); it is really just *Tour of Duty* (a TV drama set in the Vietnam war, which you may be able to

stumble across, about midnight, on your local ITV station) with star-fighters instead of 'copters. At heart this series is not sf: it doesn't explore, it doesn't lead us beyond ourselves to places we've never been. Its script-writers have clearly grown up in the shadow of movies like *Aliens* instead of books like *Study War No More*. In contrast, *Babylon 5* has rapidly and methodically emerged from the shadow of *Star Trek* to demonstrate that its writers (particularly the extraordinarily talented J. M. Straczynski) are literate in the medium they attempt to represent. They don't borrow second-hand ideas from movie adaptations, they go straight to the source. Their TV show not only looks like sf, it is, and damn fine sf at that!

Why didn't Stephen Baxter get gunked on Noel's House Party?

So why have so many hackles risen? Why have so many people just stopped reading and turned the page looking for something less controversial? Because sf is inherently and jealously a peripheral genre, few fans welcome the encroachment of the mainstream into their world, yet TV and films are unashamedly mainstream media. They have to be in order to turn a profit. Even the most grotesquely hyped Martin Amis novel will cost a pittance to manufacture compared to any movie that may spring from it.

This is why you will see *Independence Day* merchandising, the tie-ins with soft-drink and fast-food companies, the chat-show appearances of the cast. Why doesn't this happen with novels? Why, in 1995, were we not snowed under with H. G. Wells poseable action figures? Where was *The Time Ships* CD-ROM game? Why didn't Stephen Baxter get gunked on Noel's House Party? Because the book could turn a tidy profit simply on units

sold, and units sold to a niche market at that! An all-media publicity blitz wasn't necessary.

Consequently sf remains peripheral and we can continue to be precious about it. However, just because *Babylon 5* is designed for mass consumption does not necessarily obviate its appeal to sf readers. To ignore all non-written sf is quite simply to throw the baby out with the proverbial.

The movie trade paper *Screen International* recently (issue 1060, 31 May-5 Jun 1996) printed an article on sf movies which began, 'Sci-fi (sic) is possibly the most enduring and popular of all film genres, and is responsible for the lion's share of the highest-grossing films of all time'. Most of the biggest earners ever are sf; most years the big summer action movies will draw heavily on sf and fantasy. Visual sf could not be further from the periphery. It is not a genre which needs nurturing like a sacred flame or a vanishing wilderness. Sf is mainstream! If you refuse to believe this, then that's your prerogative.

This much I know: written sf and visual sf are not the same genre. Generally speaking, sf TV and movies haven't advanced much beyond the territory that written sf abandoned soon after WWII; but I, for one, don't see this as proof of their irrelevance. Far from it: I could not have visualised anything as vast as Orbisville if I hadn't already seen the *Death Star* with my own eyes. I couldn't begin to understand cyberspace if I hadn't been there with *Trom*. I couldn't conceive of interplanetary distances if I hadn't seen film of the Earth, the size of a dinner plate, rising over the Moon's surface. For me, and for an increasing number of people today, I receive the greater part of my life experience through my eyes. Films therefore add an essential visual gloss to my understanding of the hardware, the distances, the landscapes of sf.

Sf movies and TV shows can do the future-tech, dog-fights and supernovae convincingly, but they can't do 'em inexpensively; so, until hardware designers can give us CGI machines on the cheap, sf movies will continue, on the whole, to be mass-appeal spectacles with little room for contemplation. Accept that the primary goal of all fiction is to entertain and movies do so in different ways to books. Accept that they are to literature what sculpture is to painting. Or don't, it's your loss.

—John Ashbrook

—film & video—

John Ashbrook's
movie trailers

• **Dragonheart** (Cert. tbc) — Dennis Quaid is the medieval dragonslayer, Sean Connery and \$10 million worth of CGI animation are the dragon. It's a comedy-action-drama-love-story type thing which will, I suspect, infuriate and delight McCaffrey fans in equal measure. At the very least it will prepare younger viewers for their first dragon book. It may even herald a long-overdue reissue of *Dragonslayer*.

• **Independence Day** (Cert. tbc) — As excitement builds in the film world over the rumours surrounding the new *Star Wars* film (like: is it in production, or isn't it? What's it about and who'll be in it this time? etc., etc.), interest in space opera has been rekindled. First out of the gate is this huge-scale BEMs-with-attitude story. At the time of writing the film hasn't even opened in the States so no one has seen it yet, but don't expect subtlety or inter-species equanimity. Expect whacking great spaceships being blown up in spectacular fashion. Sounds like Banksie should enjoy it!

• **Screamers** (Cert. 18) — Starring Robocop's Peter Weller, this film claims Dan O'Bannon (writer of *Alien* and *Blue Thunder*) and Philip K. Dick (who should need no introduction) for its lineage. It tells of a bitter off-world struggle between political and corporate power-bases. The politicos have developed subterranean weapons called Autonomous Mobile Swords — but since that didn't make for a snappy title they are also dubbed 'screamers'. As is the wont of self-replicating machine life-forms, the screamers evolve and decide that their above-ground colleagues are now superfluous to requirements. Based as much on *Mad Max* and *The Terminator* as it is on Dick's story 'Second Variety', this is an efficient, personable and surprisingly witty movie which has been given a cinema release simply to enhance its eventual video appearance. The gorgeous landscapes will be lost on the small screen, however, so catch it at the movies if you can.

• **Mission: Impossible** (Cert. PG) — Appreciation of this slice of enjoyable tosh (did you know tosh came in slices?) is greatly increased when your disbelief isn't so much suspended as imbued with powers of flight. Tom Cruise takes a venerable old ensemble concept and turns it into a run-of-the-mill, one-man-against-the-system tale with three distinct, notable highlights. Lalo Schiffrin's opening theme has been wisely retained, and starts everything on the right foot. About halfway through director Brian de Palma treats us to a masterclass in how to build tension, as the Cruiser has to rob a secure room without touching the floor or making a sound. The showdown atop the TGV as it hurtles through the Channel is hilariously unlikely, but no less enjoyable for that. You may be laughing at it rather than with it, but at least you're laughing. The tech employed gives the impression that this film is set in the very near future, but this is never made explicit.

• **Twister** (Cert. PG) — A team of storm-chasers led by ex-lovers Helen Hunt and Bill Paxton chase madly around middle America trying to place their new hand-made tracking device (called Dorothy... think about it) inside a tornado. That's it. About as simple a plot line as you're ever likely to encounter. What lifts the proceedings out of contrivance and into excitement is the sense of wonder the extraordinary special effects engender. The seven tornadoes which tear through this movie at approximately ten-minute intervals are truly awesome, magnificent, inconceivable engines of destruction. A small band of mere mortals is attempting to literally ride the whirlwind, in order to gain understanding and power over something against which there has traditionally been no defence. Admirable in its simplicity, electrifying in its execution.

—John Ashbrook

Doctor Who

UK broadcast BBC1, May 1996

Dir. Geoffrey Sax

Even as a merely casual *Dr Who* fan (raised with Hartnell, Troughton, Pertwee and Tom Baker, but losing touch in its later years) I was looking forward to this made-for-TV movie, the first outing for Paul McGann as the eighth Doctor, the first to be produced with the American market in mind, and the re-invention of a British icon. Would it pass muster? Would it sacrifice too much of its eccentric Englishness to the perceived demands of the US audience?

The answer to the latter question is "no"; unfortunately, annoyingly, *Doctor Who* is a very disappointing film. Annoyingly, because its faults are both obvious and avoidable.

The story, such as it is, involves the Doctor (Sylvester McCoy) transporting the remains of the Master (Eric Roberts) to Gallifrey. The Master — as a transparent snake-like creature — escapes his locked urn and causes the TARDIS to make an emergency landing in California on New Year's Eve, 1999. The Doctor is accidentally shot when he leaves the TARDIS, and is taken to hospital. There — despite his protests — he is operated on by the glamorous Dr Grace Holloway (played by Daphne Ashbrook). He dies and is taken to the morgue, where he regenerates into his eighth incarnation (McGann). He persuades Dr Holloway to help him search for the Master, who has taken over a human body but needs the Doctor's for a permanent host. The Doctor has to stop the Master and close the Eye of Harmony which the Master has opened on the TARDIS. Battle ensues, the Master is defeated, all is well.

And some aspects of this film do indeed work well — excellently, in fact. McGann is a handsome, romantic, mischievous Doctor, combining elements of Pertwee, Baker and Troughton; certainly he shows the potential to become the best of the lot. The spacious, Victorian interior of the TARDIS has surely never been bettered (production design by Richard Hudolin). With the Englishman McGann in the lead, and the continuity of elements from the TV series, the Americanisation of the character never happens. It is a great pity, though, that the theme music is re-orchestrated, thus depriving the Americans (and ourselves) of what in Ron Grainer's original form is undoubtedly the best of music... ever!

Which leads me on to the film's failing — the screenplay. The plot, as has been mentioned, is simplistic in the extreme. It is not helped along by a reliance on coincidence, nonsensical devices, pseudo-scientific drivel, flat characterisation, limp dialogue and well-worn special effects. Thus the disgruntled viewer asks him or herself a multitude of questions for which the film provides no answers, such as: why is the Master possessed of all these weird abilities when he is simply a Time Lord like the Doctor? How can the Doctor (supposedly in a weakened state following his regeneration) smash down a steel door — is he now Superman? (A fatal error — the Doctor's vulnerability, his ability to think his way through situations rather than use force, was always a strong feature of the series). Why do possessed bodies always have green, glowing eyes? Why are the supporting characters not developed? What is the rationale behind the resurrection scene? Why is the final scene between the doctor and Grace Holloway so limp?

Doctor Who ultimately becomes nothing more than a series of competent special effects linked together by a cursory plot. It is redeemed in part by a few knowing touches centring around the programme's icons (the Doctor's jellybabies, his rejection of the scarf found in the locker) but overall it fails to deliver. Nevertheless, let's hope that this isn't McGann's last outing in the eponymous rôle, and that future productions are better vehicles for his talents.

—Andy Mills

THE END of a career is not the best place to start with someone's work — but *Cold Lazarus* was, as far as I know, Dennis Potter's only project, with the arguable exception of *Brimstone and Treacle*. Given a few months to live, Potter embarked upon writing two four-part serials which would be co-produced and co-broadcast by BBC1 and Channel 4. No other British writer has been so committed to TV writing, and no other writer could have pulled off such a deal.

So *Cold Lazarus* has to be viewed in two ways: as *sf* and as Potter's last testament. The first of the two serials, *Karaöke*, chronicled the decline of a heavy-drinking screen writer, Daniel Feeld, dying of cancer, who begins to hear parts of his dialogue recited by real people. Despite the presence of a high octane cast — Albert Finney, Richard E. Grant and Alison Steadman among others — it never quite gelled. Much the same ground (the hallucinations of an ill writer in a hospital) had been dealt with to greater effect in *The Singing Detective*. Potter's by now trademark lipsynched musical numbers began to annoy, although they came full circle with Feeld singing "Pennies From Heaven" in a karaöke bar.

Cold Lazarus takes up the story a couple of centuries after *Karaöke*, with the audience uncertain whether Feeld has survived long enough to complete his final screenplay (also called *Cold Lazarus*) about a frozen head. A group of scientists in a future dystopian world are stimulating the frozen head of Daniel Feeld, trying to tap into memories of happier times. Their work brings them to the attention of their boss, Mazdan (Diane Ladd, playing the same Wicked Bitch of the West turn that she gave in *Wild Heart*), and media tycoon David Siltz (Henry Goodman, doing an impression of de Niro). The scientists have to cope with conflicting offers of financing, surviving terrorist attacks and avoiding being informed on, whilst worrying that Feeld is aware of his predicament.

We know it is science fiction: there's a multiracial crew of scientists, silly hairstyles and costumes, and the wheel appears to have been abandoned in favour of floating chairs and voice-controlled cars. Everyone lives in mushroom-shaped buildings with searchlights pointlessly playing on the undersides. Potter throws in doubletalk

about chemicals and virtual reality, but doubletalk is all it is. And whilst smoking cigarettes is clearly thought to be the ultimate act of decadence (more so than drinking coffee even), none of the scientists bat an eyelid at the sight of Feeld smoking.

In seeing Feeld's memories, we see a reprise of Potter's major early works. Young Feeld in a tree echoes a scene in *The Singing Detective*, young Feeld being played by Albert Finney repeats the conceit of adult actors playing children from *Blue Remembered Hills*. A brief sequence of Feeld visiting his home town after being a student refers back to the awkwardness of the Oxford-educated working class hero of the Nigel Barton trilogy. Feeld's experiences echo Potter's — a sexual assault as a child, a childhood in the Forest of Nead / Dean, maybe even having a twin brother.

Potter's desire to assassinate Rupert Murdoch, expressed in his final interview, provides the climax for both *Karaöke* (where Feeld murders the evil night-club owner) and *Cold Lazarus*. Lines from the scientists about accounting for every paperclip are surely an attack on John Birt's BBC. Potter's house is being put in order, the axes are being buried.

He has obvious fun with the names of characters: the chief scientists Emma Porlock is obviously named for the legendary interrupter of Coleridge's remembered visions. One of her assistants, Dr Watson, stumbles and bumbles through a description of Occam's Razor in phraseology more familiar to Sherlock Holmes.

But it is never enough. Potter's thesis seems to be that we are created and influenced by our memories, and that we recreate and rewrite them to match the way we are. The future is hell, the present lousy, and the past is full of painful memories. More intrigue is hinted at than explained — Siltz's connections to the security forces, whether there is actually a terrorist movement called "Reality or Nothing", precisely why Feeld's twin brother was how he was, indeed, what his twin brother was. Poor *sf*, better but inadequate Potter, leaving memories of the glory days of one-off plays like *Son of Man* and *Brimstone and Treacle*, where in battling with directors and producers he could get as close to art as TV can ever allow. Potter's death leaves a gaping hole in the schedules — his life will never and can never be seen again.

— Andrew M. Butler

Feeld Of Dreams

Writer: Dennis Potter
Director: Renny Rye
A Whistling Gypsy Production
UK broadcast BBC / Channel 4
May 26 - June 17 1996
4 episodes, 60 minutes each.

Two views of Cold Lazarus

THE SAME weekend that saw the screening of the final part of *Cold Lazarus*, Channel 4 (either deliberately or simply due to a marvellous coincidence) showed a 1941 film — *The Devil Commands* — which sympathetically portrayed Boris Karloff as a grief-stricken scientist attempting communication with his dead wife. The film's conclusion — there are Things Mankind Should Leave Well Alone — was even then hardly original; some of the imagery, dramatically-lit encased bodies wired together, at the same time striking and disturbing, most certainly stands in the mind. Fifty-five years on, and the theme is revisited.

Along with *Karaöke*, Dennis Potter's previous offering, *Cold Lazarus* is of course the playwright's last will and testament. As such, it is virtually impossible to isolate it for critical evaluation, to take it on its own merits; the shadow of Potter looms too large for that. Whatever, there is no doubt that this is a significant piece of television science fiction.

The story itself is a simple one. Writer Daniel Feeld (Albert Finney), the central character from *Karaöke*, had his body frozen when he died from cancer. He hoped to be resurrected, cured, in the future, when medical science had progressed sufficiently. Four hundred years later his head is wired up and the brain's memories accessed, like a holographic film being played. The research team carrying out the experiment, threatened with funding cuts by the company boss, is tempted to continue its work under the aegis of an entertainment baron. To the team's horror, they find that the brain is truly alive, that it is aware of what is going on and that it wants to be released, to continue Feeld's journey after death which was interrupted by the freezing process. At the end, the head is given its wish.

That, essentially, is the plot: there is a sub-plot concerning Reality Or Nothing terrorists. There are a great number of flashbacks to the events in *Karaöke* and Feeld's childhood. These do establish that Feeld's brain is aware and operating, that his memories cannot simply be run back like a movie, that he relives and reinterprets pleasure — but more especially, trauma; he is in a living hell. This leads to the moral choice taken by the scientists (played with verve by such as Frances de la Tour and Ciaran Hinds) to end the experiment and finally allow Feeld his

peace. The last moments we see of Feeld's consciousness are apparently of Feeld being welcomed into Heaven; a surprisingly mawkish ending, perhaps, but in the circumstances the author can hardly be blamed for opting for it...

Potter's vision of the future — the minority huddling in safe buildings, protected from the have-nots by private police forces, travelling through desolate landscapes in a world dominated by powerful corporations — is one which also seems much closer than the four centuries hence which Potter postulates. Yet for all that this is a dystopia brought about by the application of science — and this includes the resurrection of Feeld's memories — one does not get the impression, as in the 1941 film, that Potter is against certain lines of scientific enquiry: what he clearly does say in *Cold Lazarus* is that moral decisions have to be made by those who undertake such enquiries, and these decisions cannot be shirked, whatever the cost.

Potter insisted on the paired dramas being co-produced by the BBC and Channel 4, and the pooled resources are shown to good advantage by the special effects, which are very impressive — floating vehicles, self-propelled chairs, and most especially the disembodied head and its replayed memories. It is a measure of the quality of the writing that these effects do not dominate the work. That said, whether or not you are impressed by the drama will largely depend on your reaction to Potter's characters. The corporate bosses Masdon (Diane Ladd) and Siltz (Henry Goodman) are over-the-top caricatures, so much so that they are funny rather than monstrous. Finney — as Feeld in the flashbacks — dominates rather too much of the screen for my taste. Where Potter scores is with the scientific team led by Professor Emma Porlock (an assured performance by de la Tour). No mad scientists these; instead we have a disparate group — including a terrorist and a police informer! — far removed from Karloff's portrayal. A pity, then, that Potter did not spend more time exploring the team itself: in *The Devil Commands* Karloff may be off his head, but at least we empathise with him. The only person we care about in *Cold Lazarus* is Feeld. But perhaps that's the way Potter wanted it.

— Andy Mills

WELL, IT ALL DEPENDS on what you mean by 'why', doesn't it?

I first read science fiction knowing it was sf because my father encouraged me to. He had read a lot of sf in the 50s and remembered a number of books that he thought I'd enjoy. I trusted and respected my father (I still do), so I accepted that his book recommendations would be good. So that's why I read the Asimovs, the Clarkes, the Bradburys; the first book I can remember reading from this period is *Fahrenheit 451*. And I did like them, although what I found there often seemed, at eight or nine years old, quite bleak and lonely visions of the future. I'm not sure which prospect, the emptiness of much of space or the tininess of many people's minds, seemed more discouraging. But it certainly didn't discourage me from reading more.

My father also encouraged me to read Tolkien, about which I was less certain, having come across characters' not-entirely-positive reactions to Tolkien in various children's books I'd read. My headmaster at primary school, searching for something to stretch me and prevent me from losing interest in the pace of regular lessons, started me on C. S. Lewis's 'Narnia' series; despite the reasonably explicit religious metaphor which underlies the whole series, I enjoyed them – and still prefer them to Tolkien. That was my introduction to fantasy: I suspect being compelled to read both trilogies of 'Thomas Covenant' (which passed in something of a blur, since Stephen Donaldson's campaign to use every word in the dictionary at least once rather than throw me off the scent of whatever story there was) and *The Belgariad* (which I'm afraid I loved at the age of fourteen) by a schoolfriend with wide but almost indiscriminating tastes, may initially have dulled my enthusiasm for fantasy even more than the scathing opinions of some Real SF Fans.

(What continued to put me off Tolkien was the assertion of a different and sometimes insufferably prissy schoolfriend that "every literate person should have read and enjoyed *The Lord of the Rings*". It may be that which made me stick three times on the wretched banquet scene on page 123 of her edition, or it may not. The only way I eventually managed it was to re-read *The Hobbit*, which I had enjoyed, and carry straight on. Remind me, if you have opinions on Tolkien, to discuss my theory about why *The Lord of the Rings* should be either twice as long or only two-thirds of the length to be a truly Great Novel. If you actually believe in Great Novels, we could have another argument later.)

But, incredibly, I digress. Why do I like science fiction? It's not just having been caught at an early age: I read other things at about the same time which I wasn't much impressed by, although I can't recall abandoning any book unfinished. I read a great variety of things now, but they still include sf. I think the key is in the great variety: the linking factor in a lot of the other things I read, fiction or non-fiction, is history. And that's why, I think, I like science fiction.

This isn't just an attempt to be wacky and promote debate. I get similar things from history and sf, and it may well explain why one of my favorite sub-genres is sf extrapolated from alternative histories. I currently feel that, of sf books, Stephen Baxter's *The Time Ships* and Paul J. McAuley's *Pasquale's Angel* would come with me to a desert island (and we both agree anyone who claimed that one book was the limit). A combination of Paul Kincaid's 1995 fanzine *A Balanced Diet* and Harry Turtledove's *The Guns of the South* recently sent me into non-fiction on the American Civil War. And, whatever factual and local errors it may have, Connie Willis's *Doomsday Book* uses skiffy devices to play with real history and I found it riveting as a result.

I'll try to explain, rather than just leaving this hanging in mid-air and whiffing about books I enjoy. What I find fascinating about history is that we know something fairly certain, we have historical facts and evidence, and we can build up more information about what happened, what people did, how they lived, perhaps even what they thought and why. All of this is subject to various uncertainties; some of it becomes 'knowledge', some of it remains theory. And virtually all of it is fair game for a new theory or opinion, and people feel strongly enough about all of it to make it really interesting: I've spent more evenings shouting, "You're barking!" at TV documentaries on ancient Egypt, for example, than I currently care to count. So what we really have is some basis for extrapolation and theorising about past societies and politics and culture and religions and people and their lives. That applies whether we're talking about 5,000 years ago or trying to analyse the value of a politician's memoirs as a historical record.

And, for me, what sf does is similar. We have our basis for extrapolation and theorising in what we know now, what we expect to be possible in the near future, and perhaps our hopes and fears about our society; using our imaginations, we can build ideas about future societies and politics and cultures and religions and people and their lives.

WHY I LIKE SCIENCE FICTION

We all have our reasons, and here
Claire Brialey
gives hers

The difference is that historical imagination makes a good story (or, sometimes, a boring or inconclusive story) which needs to fit the known facts or, if you're being really radical and thought-provoking, needs to interpret the known information in a way which fits the story. Sf imagination makes a good story (or, sometimes, a boring or completely lousy story) which may be possible – even if it doesn't fit the known facts or information about what we think is possible now. History need not be comfortable, but it needs to be credible. Our credibility for the future can be limitless.

There's another article in this alone, of course, about whether when older sf is overtaken by technology, and thus becomes truly incredible, it is still good stuff – and, even if it still reads well and is basically a ripping yarn, whether it is still science fiction – but someone else can write that.

So that's why I like science fiction. The reason I don't read exclusively in the sf field is because there's so much other good stuff out there, including non-fiction where I can develop my own stores of knowledge and information. This is partly so that I don't feel ignorant about where I stand, in the present; and partly so that I can use my imagination better about the past and the future. And partly because I love reading books.

Of course, this doesn't really touch on media other than books, which wasn't deliberate: I just focused on books automatically as soon as I started thinking about this subject. I've seen some wonderful sf on film, although I think I like it because I also like written sf, rather than for exactly the same reasons that I like written sf; there's just a different response to different media. I have problems with most sf on TV which I won't go into here; I've watched a fair amount of TV sf but most of it seems, above all, to have been a waste of a really good idea, let down by low budgets or dated costumes or the overriding need for episodes to be self-contained and short. The only sf I've seen on TV which has really appealed is *Babylon 5*, and again I won't dwell on this because I suspect there's another article for someone else available in this subject. However, I've heard one of its strongest detractors complaining that it's dreadful TV sf. Maybe it's the double negative that makes it appeal to me: since I find most 'proper' or 'good' or 'normal' sf on TV somehow lacking in what interests me about sf, perhaps *Babylon 5*'s strength, and its success for me both as science fiction and as television, is that it is bad TV sf.

So there we have it. That's why I think I like sf. I'm just off now to deliver this basket of eggs to my grandmother . . .

— Claire Brialey

[This article first appeared in the science fiction fanzine *Waxen Wings* and *Banana Skins*, written and co-edited by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer.]

conventions

There Are Stranger Things in Heaven and Earth...

Jo Chipperfield

is deflowered by UnConvention96

YES, I TOO was a con virgin... before UnConvention. I have the (now crumpled) schedule leaflet with its optimistically highlighted bits, and it seems I went to precious few of them. (I can hear the seasoned cons laughing derisively at my assumption that the weekend would somehow go to plan...)

The convention was held on 20/21 April at the grandly titled Institute of Education in London, which like many grandly titled buildings in London turned out to be a 60s study in concrete, with more stairs than you could shake a stick at. Tickets cost £20 for both days (early booking discount - on the door they were £25 for two days or £15 for either one). Attendance was high - I understand that the popularity of the convention had demanded a venue 50% larger than last year. There was a noticeable preponderance of males, but the age-range was limited only by walking ability, and as far as dress sense went... well, there wasn't a costume in sight.

satanic rituals and blood-drained animal corpses

There were two lecture halls running parallel programmes (which we came to term 'comfy-seats' and 'plakka-chairs' - 'plakka' being Tyneside-speak for 'plastic', courtesy of my partner Alan). Logan Hall was an impressive, steeply raked large-capacity theatre with comfy seats, a great sound system, visual aid facilities and an ample stage, suited both to single speakers and panel debates. Jeffrey Hall was considerably less than half Logan Hall's capacity, flat and plastic-chaired. I've no idea what the sound system was like, as unfortunately we never got in - the items myself or Alan wanted to see were either cancelled or standing-room only by the time we got out of the previous events in the other hall, the programmes having inevitably got slightly out of sync.

The first gremlin-casualty of the weekend was Jenny Randles, whose item on the relationship of the human mind with time (precognition, synchronicity, dreams etc) was cancelled through illness. An inconvenient switching of two events threw my itinerary into disarray by creating clashes between 'The Highgate Vampire' and 'Repressed Inventions Affecting Our Energy Future'. Alan and I decided to separate and report back, but he dejectedly returned from 'Repressed Inventions' declaring that Jeffrey Hall was so packed he could barely get in the door. It seemed odd that these items were scheduled in the halls they were: the exodus of bodies from big hall to small was huge. 'The Highgate Vampire' was billed as a discussion between

paranormal investigator David Farrant and *Fortean Times* (FT henceforth) fixture Ian Simmons, but sadly became an interview with Simmons desperately trying to elicit information from Farrant. This process was akin to getting blood from a stone, with a nervous, inarticulate and often unintentionally funny Farrant interrupting his most interesting bits with, "Are you interested in this? I'm not boring you, am I?" The tale he was telling, of a sinister Man In Black haunting Highgate Cemetery in the 1970s, possibly connected to satanic rituals and blood-drained animal corpses, was fascinating enough, when he could be made to tell it. Underlying it was a tale of police harassment, brutality, prejudice, ignorance and distortion / fabrication of evidence which, it seems, continues even today. Dynamite stuff, you might say, but Farrant (bless 'im) really was so intractable it was embarrassing, and we left half-way through. Ian Simmons would have done better to have given the talk himself, and probably wishes he had.

"I want to believe!"

We were somewhat put off by these events, and we spent the rest of the afternoon browsing the cryptozoology exhibition (mainly a pretty poor cut-and-paste job of blown-up newspaper articles), the three stalls granted foyer space (FT, SCHWA and Forbidden Planet), and in heated discussion (we never argue!) on all things Fortean. The FT stall was back issues, books, T-shirts and what have you, the SCHWA stall just T-shirts (I have no idea what SCHWA means or stands for,* but their merchandise is 'the world's premier range of alien defence equipment' apparently - very tongue-in-cheek), and Forbidden Planet suffered a sad preponderance of X-Files stuff as they are now "Bureau Headquarters" or something, plus - of all things - Buzz Lightyear figures.

The trade hall was a church-hall bazaar affair of trinkets and organisations, with a multi-media platform graced by an alien in which nobody had much interest. Apart from the obligatory bookstall it seemed to represent the fringe of the fringe, and while FT carries much of this kind of thing in its advertising, the visitors to the con appeared singularly unimpressed. I often wonder whether anyone falls for some of the ads in FT (like you wonder about those hideous porcelain ornaments 'lavishly touched with 9ct gold' in the *TV Times*), as in my experience Fortean tends to note the existence of a group out of interest in the weird and the wonderful, and leave it at that.

Sunday began with Alan and I arriving late after a 'flu-ridden night of insomnia and so I missed my first must-see of the day, a talk by David Heppel, Curator of Mermaids at the National Museum of Scotland, on mermaids and their social context. Next up was a talk from Roger Scotford, Director of the British False Memory Society, which raised more than a few hackles and a great number of questions. Unfortunately, he seemed to have scant knowledge of psychology, and appeared to be saying that all late recoveries of abuse memories are false (which he denied when challenged). I wasn't convinced, but unfortunately for genuine victims, who do often suppress memories, he was a convincing speaker. We then embarked on a positive orgy of Roswell gubbins, opened by the very droll and diligent American investigator Dennis Stacey. He had investigated

One measures a circle beginning anywhere.
- Charles Roy Fort (1874-1932)

television

Astronauts

UK broadcast Channel 4, June 1996

Reviewed by Maureen Kincaid Speller

It's curious; most of us will never be astronauts yet we know a remarkable amount about what it's like to be in space, thanks not only to science fiction but also the incredible range of factual programmes which appeared in the wake of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first landing on the Moon, not forgetting *Apollo 13*.

So, do we even need another programme about astronauts? Channel 4 certainly thought so, but I remained unconvinced well into the first episode of the three-part series, *Astronauts*. Even if the programme makers had been granted access to the shuttle crew, we didn't see to be seeing anything startling or unusual. Indeed, a trainee shuttle astronaut's life is surprisingly mundane, with its emphasis on repetitive, minute-by-minute rehearsals of the entire nine-day flight, simulating every possible problem under every possible condition, all this relieved only by geography lessons, food-tasting sessions and of course, getting to know the famous hygiene facility.

Only gradually did the programme's agenda become clear, as the commentary revealed that Endeavour was the successor to Challenger, that it was to take off from the old Challenger launch-pad, and that it was ten years since the Challenger disaster had finally shattered a nation's faith in the comparative safety of space travel. Suddenly, the programme's emphasis on safety and emergency procedures acquired a new and ghostly significance. Astronauts are trained to believe they can escape from any disaster, a sobering thought when you're on the launch pad with the nearest rescue team a full three miles away. But what the astronauts actually thought about this and the impending anniversary, we never found out. We saw them inspecting safety gear and being told about emergency procedures but we never once saw them carry out a safety drill.

Indeed, we never got close to learning anything about their hopes and fears for the journey. Brian Duffy, the leader and a veteran of seventy-two missions, imparted words of wisdom to his crew – don't select tuna from the menu if you want to stay friends with your colleagues in the shuttle – and thoughtfully sent flowers to the wives of his crew, timed to arrive after take-off, but what he felt about his journey, he never said. The black American crew member was shown *en famille*; it was difficult to decide who was more behind the times in feeling this to be necessary, NASA or Channel 4. Sadly, it seemed typical of an all-pervasive sense of stage management, showing the astronauts as regular guys with homes and families, but always at a distance, in a kind of emotional quarantine. They spoke candidly while the camera was around but only of the lightest matters, and never to the viewer. Commentary abounded but analysis was reserved for readings on the dials.

Only once, in an extraordinary sequence just prior to the final countdown, did we get any sense of the pressure these men were under. The first US astronaut made an orbital flight in 1962, and in the thirty-four years since, a remarkable set of rituals and traditions has grown up around the launch: it is traditional, for example, for the quarantine catering staff to bid the crew farewell from the kitchen door; it is traditional for the astronauts to play a game called Possum Fargo before going to their craft, only leaving when the leader has been dealt a losing hand; it is traditional, indeed obligatory, for the families and friends to eat a baked bean dish prepared by the crew before they leave (and one felt for the poor child forced to eat a single token bean for luck). Where did these rituals come from? No one queried them, no one explained them; so much for the age of science and rationality, I thought.

After a two-and-a-half episode build-up, the flight itself was almost perfunctory. A crew member had been specially trained to use the TV camera but the shots brought back didn't seem to shed new or revealing light on the business of going into space. There was a play for extra drama when the previously captured Japanese satellite began to overheat but we already knew that the crew had returned safely so this seemed faintly superficial.

Ultimately, we came no nearer to discovering why these men felt the need to 'slip the surly bonds of Earth' but NASA at least was secure in the knowledge that another promotional mission had been safely carried out.
— Maureen Kincaid Speller

a supposed UFO crash on the Tex-Mex border, mentioned in the MJ-12 document, which (it was hoped) would go some way to validating the document and, by extension, the Roswell incident. Yes, there was a military cover-up – but of a touchy 'friendly-fire' accident involving a secret flight and a training plane. While I'm

"all late recoveries of abuse memories are false"

sure many dedicated Roswell-conspiracy folk were heartily disappointed, it was an extremely valuable insight into the nature of UFO incidents, their folkloric qualities and the unreliability of witnesses, military documents and the human mind. We were also treated to the infamous Santilli film (or the released bits of it) and a formal debate between Philip Mantle, Director of Investigations of BUFORA ("I

want to believe!") and a special effects artist and hoaxer sitting in for Jenny Randles. After a thorough discussion of the known facts, the film was almost unanimously suspected to be fake: the final vote was just two (including Mantle) for genuine 1947 footage of an alien autopsy, against the rest of the audience for a very worthy but recent hoax. *Respect* to the one guy in the audience who raised a nay to the hoax theory, but the ayes had it (with suitably Fortean reservations, of course).

The next item in my itinerary, entitled "What Are Ghosts?", was cancelled – due to the speaker Tony Cornell being "shafted by British Rail" (Ian Simmons). Painful. So, one late lunch later, the last item of the weekend rolled round in the shape of a talk on reincarnation from Roy Stemma, Director of Reincarnation International. Personally I have no curiosity on whether I or anyone else may or may not have been reincarnated, but his case histories and the lively and distinctly philosophical debate his talk generated left me intrigued, and it was a grand note on which to end the convention.

maybe cons are partly about what can go wrong

This was my first experience of *Fortean en masse*, but the level and variety of inquiry and comments from the audiences at the end of each item, while unearthing a few 'out there' ideas, certainly denoted wit, scholarly intellect, and healthy Fortean scepticism. Perhaps as a Fortean I shouldn't have been surprised that the event suffered more than its fair share of gremlins, and having read the write-ups on the Worldcon, maybe cons are partly about what can go wrong... there's a theory in there somewhere. Despite the problems the con was well run, well attended and offered a fine variety – one of the joys of Fortean is that so many different subjects can happily rub shoulders and find interesting cross-pollinations. All in all, it was indeed a 'Weekend of the Wondrous' (the convention's subtitle) with UFOs featuring so prominently only by virtue of the current debate surrounding the Santilli film. The Fortean subjects covered by the convention – mythical/folkloric creatures, ghosts, reincarnation, conspiracies, UFOs – certainly benefit from being viewed together, and indeed belong in the same camp. If nothing else, UnConvention, like FT itself, demonstrated that weird shit happens, and as we can't do owt about it, we may as well sit back and enjoy the spectacle.

— Jo Chipperfield

* 'Schwarz' derives from Hebrew through German ('empty'), and is a phonetic term for a particular vowel sound. In fact the comment one in spoken English. Despite this it has no standard alphabetic representation. It's notated as a and occurs in words such as, let's see, *alleged* (alleged) and *photograph* (photograph). Read into that what you will. — CT

mailbox

T-Shirt Winner

From **J. P. Mowatt**
3 Bridge Terrace, Bridge Street
Morley, Leeds
LS27 0EW

I hear at the BSFA AGM there was some discussion regarding the BSFA Award and the suggestion was raised that it should be called 'The Bob Shaw Award'. If this is so I would like to state my objection to any such name change. The BSFA has poor enough publicity already without obscuring the BSFA name from the award. It is presented by the BSFA; it is paid for by the BSFA and voted for by the BSFA. Therefore the name should represent that and although we are all saddened by the death of Bob Shaw I feel it would be inappropriate to attach his name to the award. Bob Shaw has a fine memorial in his many works and in the memories he leaves behind. I will remember him for his warm manner and gentle humour. His 'Serious Scientific Talks' were delightful and if we wanted to celebrate the memory of Bob Shaw perhaps it would be more appropriate to name a humour section in *Matrix* after him. Possibly the Bob Shaw Serious Contemplation Section? ☺

From **Joseph Nicholas**
15 Jansons Road
North Tottenham, London
N15 4JU

[...] I see from *Matrix 118* that some people are still droning on about bloody *Star Trek: Generations* — doesn't Roger Gilbert have a real life to get on with, instead of trying to sublimate himself in a piece of Hollywood artificiality? His criticism of me as some sort of right-winger of course provokes vast amusement here at

FTT Towers, and in fact demonstrates that he hasn't really read the review he purports to be criticising — because if he had he would have noted that I am speculating on the possible motives of those who designed the *Trek* universe, not advancing an argument of my own.

Elsewhere, Ros Calverley suggests that my review of the *Judge Dredd* movie proves that I have no familiarity with either the *Judge Dredd* comic or comics in general. Quite true — but also quite irrelevant. The film had to be reviewed as a film, not as a something else — otherwise she might just as well level the same accusation at the film's whole audience, the majority of whom won't be familiar with comics either. If the film failed (as it did), then it was because it was no bloody good as a film, not because it didn't faithfully replicate every last jot and tittle of the original comic. ☹

From **Andy Butler**
Flat 3, 28 Louis Street
Hull
HU3 1LY

It was great to see the BSFA parcel with *Matrix 119* at long last. It maintains the high standards which we've come to expect from you — *Matrix* is in safe hands.

The production quality was brought home to me when, over last weekend, I found a seemingly endless supply of back issues in various plastic bags which were shoved in cupboards when I moved to my current abode. It might simply be stone age technology, but issues even as recent as two years ago seemed to be crammed with information, almost at random. You've achieved a pleasant, uncramped layout, where information is able to speak for itself without being swamped (to use a

Write To Matrix

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happy or sad, crushing or sympathetic, warm or distant, formal or sloppy, rude or clean, or any combination thereof.
Hope to hear from you!

dubiously figurative phrase). It must be difficult to present lists and make them interesting, but your lightly annotated forthcoming books column (however after the fact it has become) is a must-read.

(Although I wonder if using the "It says here" gag twice on Todd Wiggins and Tom Holt is wise. And why is Kevin J. Anderson's second *X-Files* novel *Ruins* on p5 untitled by the time we get to p6? I suspect a government cover-up at the highest level. Either that or I've too much time on my hands.)

I'll sign off now before I start fainting with damn praise, and with the hope that the Jane Chord of the α and ω competition "Last words!" shouldn't be considered an epitaph. ☹

points arising

• After spotting my comment "interesting choice of name" in *Matrix 119*, Steve Palmer writes to explain his choice of 'Kray' for the city in his recent novel *Memory Seed* (Orbit, £5.99 pb):

"In the earliest draft (which dates back to 1988) the city was founded upon the remains of an old Croy supercomputer, hence the name. That machine got removed in later drafts, but the name stuck! When I sold the novel to Little, Brown it was actually called *Kray*; however the publications department decided that, in lists of books, there could be confusion with the dreaded East End gangsters [Ronnie and Reggie Kray], and so I was asked to suggest an alternative title. Also my editor didn't want people asking the inevitable 'Has it got anything to do with the Kray twins?' type questions. So there you are!"

• Dave Langford notes that the German sf award is named after Kurd Lasswitz (not Lassitz, as alleged in *Matrix 119*). Lasswitz (1848-1910) was a philosopher and historian of science, and also the first major German sf writer; their Wells-figure, and of a similarly didactic nature.

• Form-following John Ollis nags (sorry) me about the item concerning a horse apparently named for a Discworld character (*Matrix 119*): it's actually called "Captain Carat" (not "Carrot"), and the owner is Lynda Ramsden. It's still winning, though.

• And the recently doctored Andy Butler gently chides me for miscrediting Prospero's Books to Derek Jarman (*Matrix 117/8*): it was of course a Peter Greenaway film, though Jarman did film *The Tempest*.

Upcoming in September is an addition to the canon of Shakespeare-influenced sf: Garry Kilworth's *A Midsummer's Nightmare* puts Oberon, Titania et al on a bus with a collection of New Age travellers. And then there's Poul Anderson's *A Midsummer Tempest*... it'll be interesting to see if Shakespeare gets an entry in the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*.

• Unaccountably omitted from the overpopulation bibliography last issue was Anthony Burgess's 1962 sf novel *The Wanting Seed*. Also of interest is *Caring for the Future* (Oxford 1996); see the books columns for more details.

• Dave Langford points out that I'm not the first to notice a lack of originality in the titles of fantasy books (*Matrix 119*):

"The mighty Terran comments on stereotype fantasy titles reminded me that once upon a time, famous doomed software house Ansible Information bashed out a programmable text generator. Its first assignment was to produce fantasy novel titles."

Here is a sample of the program's output, culled from the 5,000 or so he sent: *Starkdoom of Felltree*, *Stone of Horns*, *The Dread of the Gravebringer*, *The Deep Fairy*, *The Amber Laper* (lepers crop up awfully often — what can it mean?), *A Dragon of Charms*, *Sterrmom* and the *Heartmirror*, *The Citadel of the Warriorwids*, *Tizer*: *The Burning Well* (I always wondered about Tizer), *Graveyard of the Greenraven*, *The Mad Ruler*, enough, enough, will no one stem *The Stark Tide* and save me from this *Grim Doom*...?

WHO THE HELL DOES ANDREW M BUTLER THINK HE IS?

The Matrix editor clearly can't do it, and has to nick titles . . . but Andy has no trouble

Finding the Words

ONE OF THE TWO recently appointed features editors of *Vector*, Andrew M. Butler, agreed to talk to me over a pint or two at the Linnet and Larkin pub in Hull. Although he has lived in Hull for eight years, he grew up in a village in southern Nottinghamshire, with Kenneth Clarke as his MP. He escaped to read a degree in English Language and Literature and stayed on to do a PhD on Philip K. Dick. "It was a very bookish, very shy childhood; I read poetry for goodness' sake. Was crap at sport. My only public outlet was a bit of Amateur Dramatics, which I still have nightmares about. There was some bullying, a lot of name calling, accusing me of sexual deviancy, you know the sort of thing. Your standard, fascist, right-wing village childhood."

And he's moved onto a very bookish, very shy adulthood. He laughs: "I guess I lost the shyness. I read this thing by Spalding Gray [*Swimming to Cambodia*] where he needs will-power; he's an actor and figures, 'Why don't I pretend to have a will.' I'm not very fond of strangers, but I'm often confronted with occasions when I have to deal with them – a new crop of first years, potential tombola victims that kind of thing. It's true about the bookishness."

Hull, indeed, is a bookish place. The Hull SF Group meetings tend to consist of someone presenting a talk on a specific author. It all sounds very serious, but Andrew disagrees. "There's a lot of laughter, a lot of heckling. There's a certain amount of structuredness – we have to have planning meetings. But we more or less all live within the same couple of post-codes, and local calls are practically free. If we want to chat or gossip, we can pick up the phone; the two Tuesday nights a month can thus be talking about sf."

SpooF

How then does a literature fan studying for a degree get to be a features editor of *Vector*? "By not hiding. I think everyone but me and Gary [Dalkin] took a step back when they asked for volunteers. No, actually, it was a slow process. I first met a very fraught looking woman from the BSFA at – was it Novacon in 1989? The second con I'd gone to. (I'd gone to Iconoclasm in June, under a pseudonym, and actually gave a spooF talk. Crazy. That was Jenny Glover's fault and I think I still owe her a tape of it.) Where was I? Novacon, I met a distraught-looking Maureen. I don't think I even knew what a BSFA was. As a neo I went to all the programme items, wondering how come everyone else knew each other. Fandom didn't seem particularly welcoming. A few years later Carol [Ann Green] and Julie [Venner] took over *Focus* and Carol joined the *Pieces of Eight* APA. I joined *Pieces of Eight*, and Maureen invited me to join *Aesthetis* [another APA]. Six months later I was at her wedding to Paul and suddenly immersed in fandom. But it wasn't until about Worldcon that I took over *Vector* – I don't think I'd even been published in *Vector* at that point. A review or two, maybe."

Upstart

I asked Andrew how he combined being a fan and an academic. "I'm a juggler. I'm always moving in two or three circles at once. Often under a different name – Andrew, Andrew M., Andy, Mr – I spent part of last year doing two jobs, editing *Vector*, and organising a conference. After the conference I took on a third job, and I'm contemplating a fourth. Although my contract is about to expire."

But isn't academia suspicious of fandom? "Oh yes, I've been warned against enthusiasts. As if enjoying books was letting the side down – which it is, if you look at the attitude of mosey of my students. It's as if when it becomes a profession you can't enjoy yourself. You spend six or seven years' apprenticeship to become an EngLit tutor, and then some upstart like Paul Kincaid comes along and can do it all without the training. It's very threatening. But I literally couldn't've done my PhD. Without people like Paul – they had books the British Library couldn't trace. Does that sound sycophantic?"

Radical alterity

Andrew's doctorate was on "Ontology and Ethics in the Writings of Philip K. Dick." When I asked him to explain, he left me none the wiser, and he came close to spilling his pint as he got more and more complex. "You want the twenty-five word version?" he asked after about ten minutes. "If nothing is real, how should we treat other people? That's a dozen words. Dick keeps on getting presented as this postmodernist, but they misread him when they do so. And they can't take his religious stuff. I came across a philosopher who talks about the self as constituted through a relation with radical alterity –

sorry: the existence of a person is justified through his or her ethical relation to another person. This philosopher's ideas – the 'there is', the substitution, the absurd nature of death and suicide, encounters with God – it's all there in Dick."



Andy encounters God at Matrix HQ

Anne and Nick

I suggested that Dick was an all too obvious candidate for research. "I know. I didn't realise that when I started. Gibson's as bad. I got into trouble over this at an Eastercon panel: someone was blathering on about how postmodernism has demolished the canon and how all sf is fair game. But we only talk about *Neuromancer*. Look at the cultural studies people at Warwick – did you see Istvan's piece [*in Matrix 116*] on their conference? Six hundred people all talking about this hot new thing called cyberpunk and how the Internet will change the world. I'm an Internet junky – I do a little e but I can give it up at anytime – but Sturgeon's Law applies. My response was to spend the weekend drunk. I saw more people dressed up there than at any convention. They're way more embarrassing than fans." At this point he turned the tape recorder off and talked about "The Anne and Nick of cultural theory". He may be applying for jobs with some of these people and was obviously watching his words carefully. I also detected a note of jealousy that such people were getting paid megabucks to use long words.

Little brain

"I go back to juggling, or schizophrenia," Andrew noted. "I mean, on the one hand I present myself as a bear of little brain, on the other hand I'm using words like *deconstruction* and *iterity*. You can't take yourself too seriously. I admit to being incomprehensible at some times. Maybe even most of the time. I express my own confusions and anxieties. But we ignore the academy at our peril: the insights of modern critical theory do explain sf remarkably well without being reductive. But we also need to take on some of that rigour, because the academy left to itself might make a lousy job of it. Delany talks about how critics should tell interesting stories about texts. I always feel I'm still writing the first draft. It's a matter of finding the right words."

— Andrew M. Butler

BSFA

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the

British Science Fiction Association Ltd.

Held at the

Radisson Edwardian Hotel, London

Sat. 6 April 1995, 12 noon

• The meeting was opened by Maureen Kincaid Speller.

• Apologies were received from Lorna Bootland who was unable to attend due to other commitments at the convention.

• The minutes of the previous meeting, as published in *Matrix* 115, were approved by the meeting *nem con*.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Maureen Kincaid Speller presented the Administrator's report for the year:

The last year has been an interesting one for the BSFA. At the 1995 AGM the Worldcon loomed large, with two tables booked in the Dealers' Room. Paul Kincaid kindly produced a short history of British science fiction, *A Very British Genre*, which was then sold at the Worldcon but which is free to members of the BSFA. So far only about 200 members have requested the booklet.

T-shirts in three designs were also produced for Worldcon where they sold well.

Large numbers of flyers were printed and distributed at Worldcon to great effect. 51 new members joined at the con and many more subsequently. As a result of these activities the BSFA has made a modest profit [applause].

It is hoped that *A Very British Genre* will be the start of a series of booklets. The mailings have been erratic recently, but it must be remembered that the BSFA is run on their spare time by volunteers and that several members of the committee have had to cope during the year with family illness and deaths. Maureen is not currently in touch with *Matrix* editor Chris Terran but new avenues are opening up to re-establish contact. Some of Chris's problems in producing *Matrix* have been due to the withdrawal of a loaned printer. Paul Kincaid and Maureen Kincaid Speller have therefore made him a personal loan to purchase a new printer.

Maureen expressed the opinion that she had not been as good an Administrator as she might have been. There were general expressions of disagreement from the meeting. Nevertheless the BSFA continues to survive. Tony Cullen, Andrew Butler and Gary Dalkin are doing sterling work with *Vector* and Carol Ann Green and Julie Vennar are doing equally well with *Focus*. Orbiter groups are also all doing well.

Dave Langford has done good work helping us to compile a new database and therefore for this and all the help he has given is to be awarded life membership [applause from the meeting]. Mark Plummer has also done tremendous work for the BSFA and is also given life membership in recognition of this. Without Mark, the last year — especially all the activities at Worldcon — would have been extremely difficult.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Elizabeth Billinger presented the Treasurer's report:

The BSFA made a profit of about £750 during the year to 30 September 1995, a modest sum but an improvement on the losses of recent years.

The sale of T-shirts at Worldcon was profitable but subsequent mail-order response has been disappointing.

It should be noted that during the course of the

financial year the BSFA Tombola raised about £1,500, indicating that there is still work to be done on chasing renewals and finding new members.

Elizabeth had two draft copies of the accounts available for members to inspect. The accounts will be published in *Matrix* and accepted at the next meeting.

THE COMMITTEE

All the members of the Committee retiring by rotation had expressed their willingness to stand for re-election. It was proposed by Kev McVeigh and seconded by Moira Shearman that Iain Banks, Elizabeth Billinger, Jenny Glover, Carol Ann Green and Kev McVeigh be re-elected. The motion was passed *nem con*.

• During the year the *Vector* team Tony Cullen, Andrew Butler and Gary Dalkin had been co-opted. Their election to the Committee was proposed by Kev McVeigh, seconded by Mark Plummer and passed *nem con*.

MEMBERSHIP

Alison Cook reported as Membership Secretary that although 74 new members joined during the month of September 1995, due to the activities at Worldcon, overall the number of members joining was slightly lower than the previous year.

• Maureen confirmed that more flyers are being distributed to encourage new members and that enquiries are being received from bookshops wanting to display promotional material.

• Under 'Any other business' Jilly Reed proposed a vote of thanks to the Administrator, the Committee and the *Vector* and *Matrix* teams for all their hard work and especially for turning round the look and feel of the magazines. The motion was passed by acclamation.

BSFA AWARDS

Maureen reported on the status of the BSFA Awards:

Attempts had been made to forge a relationship between the BSFA Awards and Eastercon, and to develop the idea of con members being eligible to vote for the awards. Unfortunately the relevant BSFA mailing went out late, although a few nominations have been received. The Eastercon mailing was so monumentally late that no con members responded. In addition it seems that the Awards Administrator has resigned although no formal notification has been received. This therefore seems to be the moment to revamp the Awards, and during the informal meeting following the AGM proposals and suggestions will be discussed.

• It was proposed by Maureen Kincaid Speller and seconded by Terry Hunt that the meeting be closed. The motion was passed unopposed at 12.30.

Thanks to: Paul Kincaid (minutes); Elizabeth Billinger (typing).

money

Your Treasurer looks back at the last financial year

As those of you who were at the AGM will have realised, it is a great relief to me that the BSFA made a small profit in the year ended 30 September 1995. This is the first time that I have been able to present to the members a set of accounts showing a profit, and looking back I find that we have been making a loss each year since the year ended 30 September 1991. Obviously this run of losses has seriously depleted the reserves of the BSFA and it could not be sustained much longer.

The cost of the year's six mailings was similar to the previous year's, which means that if membership remains static the BSFA at best remains static, or at worst slowly dies on its feet. For the year to 30/9/95 the turnover did increase, which is why we were left with a small surplus at the end of the year. It is important that we continue to make profits, because without funds to invest in new projects the BSFA is going nowhere. The organisation was founded nearly 40 years ago (and became a limited company in 1967) for the purpose of promoting science fiction. To fulfil this purpose we need funds. Some activities such as the sale of publications like Paul Kincaid's *A Very British Genre* will generate funds at the same time as promoting it, but other things we might do such as providing up to date information for libraries will have to be funded from other areas — so next time you're at a convention and you spot the BSFA tombola, buy some tickets, make a lot of delighted noises about your prize and persuade a few innocent bystanders to join in!

Looking at the accounts in more detail I note that the turnover was boosted last year as a result of all the hard work put in at Intersection. There was a significant increase in new members in August and September, and the activities at the BSFA desk in the dealers' room, selling T-shirts and copies of *A Very British Genre* together with the infamous tombola made a substantial contribution.

Operating expenses only increased slightly compared with the previous year, despite the additional costs in transporting our goods to Glasgow and in printing membership cards and flyers. This was largely because Barclays introduced a special current account for clubs and societies during the year and I was able to take advantage of this charge-free account, saving around £350 per year.

— Elizabeth Billinger

COMPANY INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1995

DIRECTORS:	A. C. Clarke	M. J. Edwards	D. R. Langford
	M. S. Speller	K. McVeigh	A. Sawyer
	J. Glover	S. Glover	C. M. Cary
	E. A. Billinger	I. M. Banks	C. A. Green
	A. M. Cook	M. Plummer	C. Terran

SECRETARY: E. A. Billinger

REGISTERED OFFICE: 60 Bournemouth Road
Folkestone, Kent
CT19 5AZ

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1995

The directors submit their report and accounts for the year ended 30 September 1995.

Directors' responsibilities

Company law requires us as directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements we are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

We are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable us to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 1985. We are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention of fraud and other irregularities.

Results

The results for the year are set out below.

The directors are satisfied with the results for the year and with the state of affairs at the balance sheet date.

Activities

The principal activities of the company during the year were the promotion of science fiction and the publication and distribution of science fiction magazines.

Directors

The directors who held office during the year are as follows:

A. C. Clarke	K. McVeigh	M. J. Edwards
J. Glover	D. R. Langford	S. Glover
A. Sawyer	C. M. Cary	M. S. Speller
E. A. Billinger	I. M. Banks	C. A. Green
A. M. Cook	M. D. Plummer	C. J. Terran

I. M. Banks, E. A. Billinger, J. Glover, C. A. Green and K. McVeigh retire by rotation and being eligible offer themselves for re-elections.

On behalf of the board: E. A. Billinger, Director, 6 April 1996

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPT. 1995

	Notes	1995 £	1994 £
Turnover	2	13,648	12,245
Cost of sales		<u>11,955</u>	<u>11,091</u>
Gross profit		2,613	1,244
Net operating expenses		<u>1,872</u>	<u>1,737</u>
Operating profit (loss)		741	(493)
Interest receivable	5	<u>12</u>	<u>5</u>
Profit (Loss) on ordinary activities before and after taxation		753	(488)
Retained profit brought forward		248	826
Retained profit carried forward		<u>£1,101</u>	<u>248</u>

The only recognised gain/loss for the period is the profit for the year of £753.

There were no acquisitions and no discontinued operations in the year.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 1995

	Notes	1995 £	1994 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible Assets	6	52	55
Current Assets			
Stocks	8	1,309	
Debtors	7	330	250
Cash at bank		<u>574</u>	<u>232</u>
		2,213	482
Creditors			
Amounts falling due within one year	8	<u>1,127</u>	<u>162</u>
Net Current Assets		1,076	320
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		<u>£1,128</u>	<u>£375</u>
Capital and Reserves			
Profit and loss account		1,101	348
Other reserves		<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>
		<u>£1,128</u>	<u>£375</u>

The Directors are satisfied that the company was entitled to exemption under subsection (1) of section 248A of the Companies Act 1985 and that no member or members have requested an audit pursuant to subsection (2) of section 249B in relation to the accounts for the financial year.

The Directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with section 221; and
- preparing accounts which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial year and of its profit or loss for the financial period in accordance with the requirements of section 226, and which otherwise comply with the requirements of this Act relating to accounts, so far as applicable to the company.

The Directors have taken advantage of the special exemptions conferred by Part 1 of Schedule 8 of the Companies Act 1985 and have done so on the grounds that in their opinion the company is entitled to those exemptions as a small company.

On behalf of the board: E. A. Billinger, Director, 15 April 1996

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPT. 1995

1 Accounting policies

Accounting Convention: The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Depreciation: Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of tangible fixed assets over their expected useful lives as follows:

Library - 10% per annum on a reducing basis

2 Turnover

Turnover represents income from subscriptions, publications, advertising and associated sales together with fund-raising activities.

3 Operating loss

This is stated after charging the following:

	1995 £	1994 £
Depreciation	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>

4 Employees

The company had no employees during the year. The services of the directors have been provided on a voluntary basis and free of charge, as in previous years.

5 Interest receivable

	1995 £	1994 £
Bank interest	<u>12</u>	<u>5</u>

6 Tangible fixed assets

	Library £	Awards £	Total £
Cost			
At 30 September 1994			
& 30 September 1995	<u>213</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>240</u>
Depreciation			
At 30 September 1994	885	-	885
Charge for the year	<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3</u>
At 30 September 1995	<u>888</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>888</u>
Net book value			
At 30 September 1995	<u>25</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>52</u>
At 30 September 1994	<u>28</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>55</u>

7 Debtors

	1995 £	1994 £
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>330</u>	<u>250</u>

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	1995 £	1994 £
Loan from Mexican Hat	300	-
Trade creditors	668	143
Current corporation tax	19	19
Accruals	<u>150</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>1,137</u>	<u>162</u>

9 Share capital

The company has no share capital being limited by guarantee.

! IMPORTANT !

* Please enclose an SAE when contacting conventions, or you may not receive a reply.

* If you run, or know of, any unlisted conventions or events please let me know at the editorial address.

* Special mention Matrix when enquiring.

* Special thanks to: Dave Langford, Bridget Wilkinson

August: Hammer at the Barbican

Lots of cory gore 'n' Madeleine Smith throughout August in the Barbican Cinema, London, celebrating 40 years of Hammer horror.

Contact: The Barbican Cinema, London, EC2
Tel: 0171 638 8891

1 Aug: London SF meeting

Wellington pub opposite the Old Vic exit from Waterloo Station. 'London Circle' meetings are held on the first Thursday in each month, and usually start about 5pm. No special events but very popular and crowded.

Contact: Just turn up!

16-18 Aug: Portmeirion '96

The 19th annual 'Six of one' (The Prisoner) convention, as always in Portmeirion, North West Wales.

Contact (UK): SAE to Six of One, PO Box 66, Ipswich, UK.

Contact (US/Can): 2xIRCs to Six of One, 871 Clover Drive, North Wales, PA 19454, USA

23-24 Aug: Contraptions

Gaming and role-playing con at the Moat House Hotel, Northampton. GoH is Steve Jackson.

Contact: Contraptions, 12 Cartersmead Close, Horley, Surrey, RH6 9LG

26-31 Aug: Arvon Writing Course

Tutors Colin Greenland and Gwyneth Jones. £275 inc. accom. / food. See news pages for further details.

Contact: Arvon Foundation, Telford Barlow, Sheepshead, Devon, EX21 5NS
Tel: 01409 231338

28 Aug: BSFA London Meeting

Julius Tavern, York Road (near Waterloo Station). These meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday in each month, and start at 7pm in the upstairs room of the pub. Admission is free and both members and non-members are welcome.

Contact: Mark Plummer on 0181 656 1037 for further information.

29 Aug - 2 Sep: LACon III

54th World SF Convention in Anaheim, California. Guests include James White and Roger Corman.

Contact: LACon III, c/o SCIFI, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA

Email: info@lacon3.worldcon.org

Web: http://lacon3.worldcon.org

5 Sep: London SF meeting

13-15 Sep: Lightspeed '96

Star Trek convention at the Hilton National Hotel, Leeds. Guests include Barbara March and Jack Cohen. Full membership is £35, child £17, or £23 per day; cheques payable to 'Lightspeed Conventions' (please include 3 large SAEs). Room rates £47 pppn single, £31 pppn double / twin / triple.

Contact: Lightspeed Conventions, 16 Bramwell St., Eastwood, Rotherham, S. Yorkshire, S65 1RZ

20-22 Sep: International Festival of Fantasy Films

The seventh IFFF will be held at its usual venue of Sacha's Hotel, Manchester; guests include directors John Landis (Blues Brothers), An American Werewolf in London and Hammer veteran Freddie Jones, both of whom will be giving masterclasses. Also many classic sci-fi film screenings. Membership £45.

Contact: Gil Lane-Young, 33 Barrington Road, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA14 1HZ
Tel: 0161 929 1423 Fax: 0161 929 1067

25 Sep: BSFA London Meeting

29 Sep: Scotforce

The flyer is mysteriously unclear, but it seems that Babylon 5's Jeff Conaway is appearing at a convention in the Glasgow Central Hotel from 10am to 10pm. Cost £20.

Contact: SAE to Scotforce 1, PO Box 3870, Glasgow, G44 3PZ

Email: sfcerel@users.demon.co.uk

Web: http://users.colloquium.co.uk/~fraser_sl/Scotforce/Scotforce.htm (possibly http://at the end.)

11-13 Oct: Octocon '96

Ireland's national convention, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. Guests include Brian Stablesford. £18 or £20 on the door.

Contact: Octocon '96, 30 South Circular Road, Dublin 8, Ireland

3 Oct: London SF meeting

4-6 Oct: Fantasycon XX

Guests include Tom Holt and Chris Fowler; venue is the International Hotel, Marsh Wall, in Docklands; Membership £40.

Contact: 137 Priory Rd., Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0TB

4-6 Oct: Hispancon

The Spanish national convention in Burjassot, Spain.

Contact: Hispancon, C/O PO Box 2061, Principado de Andorra

18-20 Oct: Masque 4

Costuming convention in West Bromwich. Membership is £30, payable to 'Masque Four'.

Contact: Alan Cash, 130 Hampstead Hall Rd., Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, B20 1JB

23 Oct: BSFA London Meeting

25-28 Oct: Cult TV Appreciation Week-end

A weekend of cult TV programmes and guests at the Haven AB-Action Centre, Caister, Great Yarmouth. £30 to 31 Aug. £44 thereafter; children half-price, under 5s free.

Contact: Cult TV 1996, PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE1 1EX

26-27 Oct: Who's 7

Combination Dr Who / Blake's 7 event at the Ashford International Hotel, Ashford, Kent.

Contact: Who's 7, 10 Falebrook Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 1AG

7 Nov: London SF meeting

8-10 Nov: Novacon 26

The Birmingham SF Group's annual convention. Venue is the Hotel Isis, Ladywell Walk (off Hurst St.), Birmingham. Guests include David Gemmell. Attending membership is £27 attending until 30 Sep, £30 thereafter and on the door; supporting £10.50.

Contact: Novacon 26, Tony Morton, 14 Park St., Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS

17-19 Nov: Armadacon

General con at the Astor Hotel, The Hoe in Plymouth. Guests include Jack Cohen, Dave Langford. Membership £22.

Contact: Armadacon, 4 Glenaege Avenue, Mannamend, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 5HL

27 Nov: BSFA London Meeting

5 Dec: London SF meeting

25 Dec: BSFA London Meeting ... Not

Happy Christmas!

3-5 Jan 1997: European Anime Convention

Called 'Shinnenkai' ('gathering for the new year'), this is the National Anime Convention of old, taking place at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. Six screening rooms, a 24-hour cybercafe, and for the first time Japanese creators will be at a British con. As 5 Jan is the birthday of Hayao Miyazaki - the godfather of quality anime - there will be cinema screenings of his movies.

Contact: Shinnenkai, PO Box 3038, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 3JT

Email: shinnenkai@pound.demon.co.uk

31 Jan - 2 Feb 1997: Pegasus 97

Star Trek / general convention at the Hilton National Hotel, Coventry. Guests include Dennis Ashton. Full membership is £30, child £15, or £15 per day; cheques payable to 'Pegasus Conventions' (please include 2 large SAEs). Room rates £46.50 pppn single, £31.50 pppn double / twin / triple.

Contact: Pegasus 97, 16 Bramwell St., Eastwood, Rotherham, S. Yorkshire, S65 1RZ

14-17 Feb 1997: Attitude: The Convention

Convention organised by the Attitude team of Michael Abbott, John Dallman and Pam Wells. Venue is the Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern, Worcs., rates are £33 pppn single, £29 pppn double, twin, triple or quad. Membership is currently £23 attending.

Contact: David T. Cooper, 51 Meersbrook Avenue, Sheffield, S8 9EB

Tel: 0114 281 0697

Email: attitude@btch.demon.co.uk

28-31 Mar 1997: Intervention

The 1997 Eastercon, themed around 'Communication'. Venue is the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. Guests are Brian Aldiss, Octavia Butler, David Langford and Jon Berg. Membership is £25 attending, £15 supporting.

Contact: Intervention, 12 Crossways Close, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS

Email: intervent@compuserve.demon.co.uk

24-26 May 1997: Fantasticon UK

General convention at the Harrogate International Conference Centre. Guests include Harry Harrison, David Gemmell, Lisa Tuttle, Ramsey Campbell, Jack Cohen and Rog Poyner, proprietor of the Andromeda Bookshop in Birmingham. Events include items on cult radio and a comprehensive video programme. Rates until 1 Sep 1996 are £40.50 attending, £15.50 supporting, with reductions for individual days. Children aged 5 and below are free, children under 14 half price.

Contact: SAE to Fantasticon UK, 38 Planetree Ave., Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 9TH

Email: wlr95@aber.ac.uk

24-27 Oct 1997: Euro-Octocon '97

The 1997 Eurocon and Ireland's national con combined.

Contact: Euro-Octocon '97, 211 Blackhorse Avenue, Dublin 11, Ireland.

Email: euroocto@td.ie

Web: http://aragant.ltc.ie/ie/97octocon.html

31 Oct - 2 Nov 1997: World Fantasy Convention

1997 sees the centenary of Bram Stoker's Dracula, and the WFC will be celebrating this (which doubtless explains the contact address). Venue is the Britannia International Hotel in London's Docklands, now restored after being blown up by the IRA. Membership is now £75.

Contact: PO Box 31, Whitby, North Yorks., YO22 4YL

21-24 Aug 1998: The Wrap Party

Convention to celebrate the conclusion of Babylon 5, to be held at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Confirmed guests are J. Michael Straczynski (creator of the series), Harlan Ellison (series consultant), Jack Cohen (xenobiologist), John Ridgway (comic artist), Bryan Talbot (artist), Adam Robit (comic artist), John Matlowitz (computer animator on the series), John Matthews (expert on Arthurian mythology).

Membership until the 1997 Eastercon is £60 (instalment scheme available), under 17s half price, under 12s free. Room rates: £40 pppn triple, £42 pppn double or twin, £47 pppn single.

Contact: The Wrap Party, PO Box 505, Reading, RG1 7QZ

Email: thewrapparty@bllipin.co.uk

Web: http://www.bllipin.co.uk/TheWrapParty

27 Dec 1999 - 2 Jan 2000: Millennium

See in the new millennium (a year early if you're a pedant) at this con, to be held somewhere in northern Europe, probably the UK or a BeNeLux country. £3.00 per year, to be deducted from the eventual membership cost.

Contact: Malcolm Reid, 186 Casewick Rd., West Norwood, London, SE27 0SZ

Members' Noticeboard

Advertisements and announcements are free to BSFA members. Send your ad to the editorial address.

INFORMATION SOUGHT. After nearly forty years of involvement in it, I was intrigued to have my first trace of the 30's writer Robert J. Hogan, described as a hero of the pulps, in the latest *Encyclopedia of SF*. I would be very grateful for whatever information any members might be able to let me have on this pre-war namesake of mine. Contact: Robert J. Hogan, 30A Grange Avenue, Street, Somerset, BA16 9PF

HARM'S WAY by Colin Greenland - "What if Charles Dickens had written a space opera?" (Locust) - large paperback, the one with the pretty cover, £3.50. Also the two linked fantasy paperbacks, *The Hour of the Thin Ox* and *Other Voices* (great covers by Roger Dean and Ian Miller), £1.50 each. Prices include postage. Colin Greenland, 98 Sturton Street, Cambridge, CB1 2QA

BOOKS REQUIRED - Ace Doubles, Banks, Coney, Delany, Niven, Saberhagen, Stabelford, Sterling, New Writings series, and many more. Send SAE for wants list to Ian Forshaw, 12 Winston Way, Farset, Cambs., PE7 3BU. Tel: 01733 241836

THE WAY TO WRITE SCIENCE FICTION by Brian Stabelford. Signed pb copies available at £5. Also available: *The Empire of Fear*, £10 hardcover, ES C-format pb; *Sexual Chemistry: Sordonic Tales of the Genetic Revolution* £8 hc; *The Asgard Trilogy*, £10 boxed set (limited to 500 copies) of 3 pbs. All prices post-free. Order from Brian Stabelford, 113 St Peter's Road, Reading RG6 1PG

M. P. SHIEL, author of *The Purple Cloud*, *The Lord of the Sea* etc. The Redondan Cultural Foundation promotes discussion of his work and his remarkable island kingdom. Free newsletter from: Mark Valentine, 40 Ash Grove, Iddley, West Yorkshire, LS29 8EP

BOOKS WANTED: Original Ace paperback editions of the following books by Megan Lindöhr: *Harpy's Flight*; *The Windsealers*; *The Lindbreth Gate*; and *Wizards of the Pigeons*

Any copies in any condition of *The Unicorn Treasury* edited by Bruce Coville, published by Doubleday in 1988, and *Strategies of Fantasy* by Brian Attebery.

published by Indiana University Press in 1992.

Please contact Michael Braithwaite, 27 Marsh Drive, West Hendon, London, NW9 7QE or phone 0181 202 9018.

COLLECTION FOR SALE New review copies of SF and Fantasy fiction and related nonfiction (criticism, books about film / TV, author studies etc.), plus my personal collection of fiction, related nonfiction, American magazines about fantastic literature. Hardcover and paperbacks, most in excellent condition. Some collectables. All very reasonably priced from £1 up. US \$1 brings complete lists. Please contact Neil Barron, 1149 Lime Place, Vista, CA 92083-7428, USA.

SILENT GNASHING of teeth over my inability to find various books. If you have a copy of any of the following which you don't mind parting with, I'll happily send (reasonable amounts of) money into your hot and sticky hand: *Sorcery* and *Cecilia Patricia Wrede* / *Caroline Stevermer*; *Maisie the Magician Patricia Wrede*; *The Porcelain Dove Delia Sherman*; *The White Piles Nancy Kress*; *Bordertown ed. Terry Windling*; *War for the Oaks Emma Bull*. Please contact: Jilly Reed at: Hill House, Moats Tye, Suffolk, IP14 2EX. Tel: (01449) 612272.

COLCHESTER SF / HORROR / FANTASY GROUP. We meet on the third Saturday of each month at 12:30pm in The Playhouse pub in St. John's Street. We are mainly a discussion over a few beers kind of group. If you fancy coming along either give Des Lewis a ring on 01255 812119 or you can just turn up.

BOOKS WANTED, must be hardback first editions in fine condition with dust wrappers.

David Edgings: *Magician's Gambit* and *Castle of Wizardry*
Raymond R. Feist: *Magician*; *Silverthorn*; *Darkness At Sethanon*; and *Prince of the Blood*.

John Brunner: *Telepathist: The Stone That Never Came Down*; and *The Jagged Orbit*.

Contact: John Oram, 3 Oatlands Avenue, Bar Hill, Cambs., CB3 8EQ

— local groups & clubs —

Below are listed a few of the local groups and clubs around the country. Updates and additions are always welcome - let us know!

◆ Birmingham

The Birmingham SF Group meets at 7.45pm on the third Friday of every month in the upstairs function room of the Prince Hotel, Station Street in Birmingham city centre. Future guests include: 16 Aug M. J. "Simo" Simpson (staff writer on SF); 20 Sep Chris Priest; 18 Oct Ken McLeod. Subscription rates (which include the monthly newsletter) are £10 per person, or £13 for two people at the same address (cheques payable to Birmingham SF Group).
Contact: Sarah Freakey, c/o 121 Cape Hill, Smeethwick, Warley, B66 4SH
Email: bsf@bortas.demon.co.uk

◆ Brighton

David Pringle and the interzone team can be found on Friday evenings from 9-11pm at the Mtr, Baker Street, Brighton, and visitors are welcome.

◆ Cambridge

The Cambridge Fantasy Society is organising an appearance by Peter F. Hamilton on 29 Sep at CB1, a cybercafe in the city.
Contact: John Oram, 3 Oatlands Avenue, Bar Hill, Cambs., CB3 8EQ
Tel: 01954 781797 after 6pm

◆ Cardiff

John Campbell Rees writes: "SF Fantasy Cardiff was formed in 1986 as the Cardiff Doctor Who Appreciation Society Local Group. Since then our focus has widened to include all forms of SF. Our meetings are held every second Saturday at the Chapter Centre, Centre, Cardiff between 10am and 4pm. Meetings alternate between themed video showings and general discussions. Also, in conjunction with the South Wales ZZZ Local Group and Quonox I, the Cardiff Star Trek fan club, we organise a monthly social gathering at the Gullhall Tavern, a city centre pub, on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm."
Contact: Timothy Farr, 20 Pentyrch Avenue, Cathays, Cardiff, CF2 4JX

◆ Colchester

The Colchester SF / Horror / Fantasy Group meets on the third Saturday of each month at 12:30pm in The Playhouse pub in St. John's Street.
Contact: Des Lewis on 01255 812119

◆ Hull

The Hull SF Group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at the Blue Bell Inn, Market Place in Hull. Attendance costs 50p, extracted without visible mechanical aids by Focus's Julie Verner when your editor paid a visit. Also in

attendance you'll find Julie's co-editor Carol Ann Green and Andy Butler, the man in charge of Vactor's features on joints, (beef or... otherwise?). Future meetings include: 13 Aug - the paranormal; 27 Aug - discussion on Mars; 10 Sep - short story readings; 24 Sep - Orange County writers (Robinson, Dick etc.); 8 Oct - talk on Suzy McKee Charnas. All subject to revision, so check first. If that isn't enough, the city of Hull - where the streets are paved with fish - boasts a street called 'The Land of Green Ginger', the smallest window in the world, and a cinema called 'Ceci'.

Contact: Julie Verner, Carol Ann Green or Andy Butler (see page 2 for details)

◆ Norwich

The Norwich SF Group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at the (unfortunately named, these days) Rib of Beef pub on Fry Bridge in Norwich, at 8pm.
Contact: Paul on 01603 487202 or Andrew on 01603 629935

◆ Peterborough

On 4 Sep the Peterborough SF Club hopes to have Fred Clarke talking about the life and work of his brother, Arthur C. Clarke. Venue is the Peterborough Arts Centre, Orton Goldhay and it will start at 8pm.

• Other events in the area: 28 Sep - a possible sf writers' workshop at Peterborough Central Library; 18 Oct - a panel of fantasy writers, also in the library.
Contacts: Peterborough SF Club, 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 0RB

Tel: Pete on 01733 370542

PAnIC (Peterborough Anime Club), 103 Alexandra Road, Millfield, Peterborough, PE1 3DG

Nth Dimension (Peterborough Telefantasy Group), 43 Canbury Road, Werrington, Peterborough

Peterborough SF Writers' Circle, 28 Bathurst, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough

◆ Portsmouth

The South Herts SF Group is a local fan group based around Portsmouth, and meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays each month at the Electric Arms, Fratton Road, Portsmouth. Mike Cheater says, "The fourth Tuesday meeting generally has some sort of programme item whilst the second Tuesday meeting is pure drinking and socializing. We normally get around 30 people in the bar at most meetings and interests range from literary sf through TV, Comics and Role Playing." The SHSFG also publishes an occasional - and rather fine - magazine called *Cyberpace*, which started out as a clubzine but is now a genuine featuring mainly articles by SHSFG members.

Contact: Mike Cheater, 42 Elm Grove, Southsea, Hants., PO5 1JG.

Tel: 01705 361350

E-mail: Mike@frasers.demon.co.uk
or: 180182.1781@compuserve.com

Skull C Roger Robinson's crackers

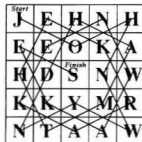
COMPETITION 120: "IT'S VERSE, JIM, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT"
In line with this issue's increased media coverage, compose a poem of up to eight lines extolling the virtues – or lack of them – of *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Doctor Who* or any other well-known TV or film series.

RESULTS OF COMPETITION 118: "WIND ME UP"
Despite the last mailing arriving some time after the stated closing date, there were lots of entries – thanks to everyone who entered, and apologies for the incorrect date. The answers are:

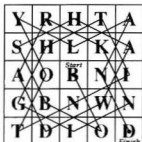
Square 1: John Wyndham *The Kraken Wakes*
Starting at the top left-hand corner and working to the centre.

Square 2: Bob Shaw *Dark Night In Toyland*
Working from the centre to the bottom right corner.

The winner, first out of the hat, was R. Smith of Barnsley. Congratulations!



SQUARE 1



SQUARE 2

COMPETITION 119: α and ω

An Interim Report

Due to popular demand (and the incorrect date!) this competition has been extended. As a reminder, here are the rules:

A **Jane Chord** (the provenance of the term is obscure) is defined as:

"The outcome obtained by juxtaposing the first and last words of a given book or other written work to create a two-word phrase or sentence."

The hope is to get some humorous or appropriate comment on the work or the author. Or perhaps a perfect plot summary, thus obviating the need to actually read all those pesky words in between.

There's been a good and enthusiastic entry so far, and here are some samples. These aren't prizewinners – yet! – but are definitely in the running:

Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars* promises Mars again.

Paul J. McAuley's *Fairyland* bears The children.

Philip José Farmer's *The Fabulous Riverboat* foretells Resurrection day.

Yevgeny Zamyatin's classic *We* defiantly states I prevail.

See if you can do better – dig out those yellowing paperbacks, flip open the first and last pages, and see what you find!

— Roger Robinson

Please send all entries, together with any competition correspondence,

to the usual address:

Roger Robinson
75 Rosslyn Avenue
Harold Wood, Essex
RM3 0RG

by Friday 30 August 1996.

Big Butt Aleph sits on the news

• **ANDROMEDA GALAXY** Even Aleph was impressed by the array of sf's Great & Good present at the unveiling of the **Andromeda Bookshop's** new premises in Birmingham over the weekend of 6-7 July. The official re-opening was performed by **Iain Banks**, **David Gemmell** and **Terry Pratchett** on the Saturday, and Sunday saw visits and signing sessions from Brian Aldiss, Jim Burns, Ramsey Campbell, Storm Constantine, Chris Evans, Colin Greenland, Peter Hamilton, Harry Harrison, Dave Langford, Chris Priest, Brian Stableford, Freda Warrington and many others. Owner **Rog Peyton** was ecstatic: "All my friends in one room!" he was heard repeatedly saying at one of the parties. Aleph dreads to think of the consequences had a rogue satellite crashed on the area, as it did in Harrison's *Skyfall*. You can now find Andromeda at 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT, tel. 0121 643 1999.

• **TONY WINS FOR LABOUR** is a headline Aleph likes to see, even when it applies to leading Birmingham fan **Tony Morton**, elected as (New?) Labour Councillor for Lye and Wollescote ward, Dudley in May's local elections.

• **CLARKE GETS A BUTLER** Congratulations and a two-year supply of Optrix to **Andy Butler**, who will be the new BSFA judge for the Arthur C. Clarke Award. He replaces **Dave Langford**, whose sentence came to an end with his release into the community in May. The two BSFA judges, who each serve for two years, are selected by the Administrator of the BSFA (Maureen Etc. Speller), the continuing judge (Steve Jeffery) and the outgoing one (Dave Langford). Will Dr Butler (for he has been recently doctored) ever speak to them again?

• **GOING GONG TON?** Reportedly there is some dissatisfaction with the Wellington pub as a venue for London meetings ... go and see why, first Thursday of the month.

• **FASHION VICTIMS Q:** Which ravishing deputy editor of a leading sf zine was recently ejected from a shopping centre by burly security guards for being "inappropriately dressed"? A: Hmm ... Also subject to a sartorial inquisition was *Matrix's* **Chris Terran**, accused by another leading skiffy zine's staff writer of bad taste in T-shirts. The design? "Vacuous Tart". Aleph predicts a niche market for "Vacuous Hack" T-shirts.

• **THE USUAL SUSPECTS** and more turned up in Radio 4's repeated four-part series on sf, hosted by John Gribbin. Victims included **John Clute** ("now we are in the period of exogamy"), **Gwyneth Jones**, **Brian Stableford** ("although [Grainger] jogs someone's elbow in volume 5, he never actually hits anybody in all six volumes"), **Paul McAuley**, **Brian Aldiss**, **Doris Lessing**, **Iain Banks** on Cultural death ("the idea that you just go on forever [sic] a bit sort of, well, vulgar really, darling"), **Poul Anderson**, **Suzi McKee Charnas**, **Arthur C. Clarke**, **Sarah LeFanu**, and the impenetrably pseudonymous "**Brian**" Pringle. Aleph is enjoying it, and digging all that retro 'space music' ... groovy. O — R.C. < R.

matrix is brewed on a creaking acorn a5000, mashed by various bits of software, notably zap (god's own editor, when he gets tired of emacs), triph-distilled by an hp laserjet 5l, bottled by pdf copyprint, labelled by the mailing house, matured for an indeterminate period by the royal mail, and consumed by you

—matrix 120—soundtracked by mouth music, garbage, the hilland ensemble's «officum» (shanks maurer), mark rapchic, r cooder & v. m. bratt, vaughan williams (dark ascending, tails fantasia), radios 3, 4 & 5, the world service, «imp», lush, claude greenit, laitha macenzie, saint etienne, and stereoweb —who— said doing this was corry?