

# matrix

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The News Magazine of the  
British Science Fiction Association

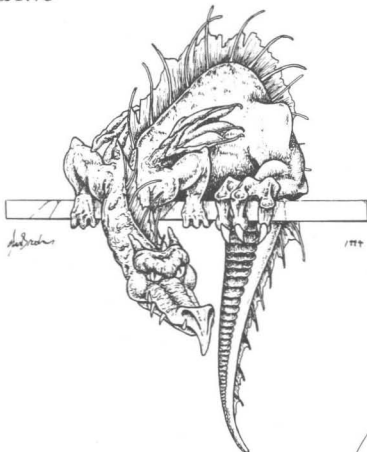
Issue 128

November / December 1997

**brian stableford**  
goes to portugal

**ian watson**  
ponders alien abductions

**janet barron**  
at clarion with  
Octavia E. Butler  
Joan D. Vinge  
Terry Bisson  
Richard Kadrey  
Karen Joy Fowler  
Tim Powers



## movie special

**CONTACT**  
**MEN IN BLACK**  
**THE FIFTH ELEMENT**  
**EVENT HORIZON**  
**SPAWN**



Andy Sawyer at Stars' End ... Clarke Award Backlash ... News ... Books ... Radio ... Letters

# matrix

the news magazine of the

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Wednesday 10 December 1997

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## news

## JUDITH MERRIL, GEORGE HAY DIE SPINRAD FOR A DOLLAR

TWO LEADING LIGHTS of the science fiction field have died: **George Hay**, founder of the SF Foundation, and **Judith Merril**, editor, writer, and creator of the Merril Collection archive in the US. Hay was 75 and died on 3 October; Merril was 74 and died of heart failure on 12 September in the cardiac unit of Toronto General Hospital.

**GEORGE HAY**—George's partner *Mollie Gillam* writes:

It is with great sadness I have to tell you that George Hay died on 3 October, following an operation. He hated funerals as he preferred to remember friends in life—so his funeral will be private, no flowers. I would like him remembered in your thoughts and words, so if you want to write to me please tell me about George as you knew him. But don't phone—I've lost my best friend.

*Mollie Gillam, 53 All Saints Street, Hastings, TN34 3BN*

George was born in 1922 and after publishing some sf novels in the early 1950s turned to editing. In particular he produced *The Disappearing Future* in 1970, a "symposium of speculation" containing both fact and fiction—it includes Samuel Delany's famous essay "About 5,175 Words". Following this he turned his efforts to establishing the SF Foundation, now flourishing at Liverpool University. **Andy Sawyer** writes about George on page 20, and next issue there'll be further tributes.

## JUDITH MERRIL

Following a private family service a memorial service for family and friends was held on 20 September at her home; it included spoken and sung tributes. Mementos from Judith's life, such as paintings, awards, favourite foods, and her "Stop the War" banner, were on display and a selection of condolence letters was read. A celebration of her life will be held on Saturday 24 January 1998, which would have been her 75th birthday; the venue will be announced shortly by the Merril Collection. Contributions in her memory can be made to the James Tiptree Memorial Fund, which provides an annual award for feminist writing in sf. □

• The following biography of Judith Merril was issued by the Friends of the Merril Collection

Judith Merril, born Josephine Judith Grossman on 21 January 1923 in New York, began her political education early—her parents were both intellectuals, her father an ardent Zionist. She later joined the Trotskyites while at City College of New York. She met her first husband, Dan Zissman, in the movement; they married in 1940. She first encountered science fiction when reading some of Dan's books while ill. She had her first daughter, Merril, in 1942, whose name became the source of her pseudonym.

After leaving Dan (she divorced him in 1947), she and Virginia Kidd created Parallax, an apartment where the Futurians, a group of sf writers and editors, often gathered. Here she met Frederik Pohl; they married in 1949 and she had a second daughter, Ann (b. 1950). She and Fred divorced in 1953. She published her first sf story, "That Only a Mother", in 1948, and continued to publish stories and novels up to the early 1960s. She edited numerous sf anthologies beginning in 1950, notably Dell's series of *Year's Best SF* from 1956-1967, and was the 'Books' columnist for the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* from 1965-1969. She became interested in and a proponent of the 'New Wave' in sf (a term she did not coin) during her

trips to London in the mid-60s, leading to the anthology *England Swings SF* (1968). She also married again, to Daniel Sugrue, in 1960.

Her lifelong disgust with American foreign policy climaxed in 1968, with her first-hand experience of the violent suppression of an anti-Vietnam War demonstration at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. She moved to Rochdale College in Toronto and established its library (based largely on her own private collection) in 1969. When Rochdale closed in 1970, she donated the collection to the Toronto Public Library, creating the Spaced Out Library, now the Merril Collection. She wrote programs for the CBC, most notably for *Ideas*, and introduced TVOntario's broadcasts of *Dr Who* from 1978-81. She continued to be very active in a variety of political movements.

In the 1980s she did much to encourage Canadian sf, founding Hydra North in 1984, and in 1985, editing *Tenacious*, an anthology of Canadian sf that became the first of a series. She also received two Canadian Science Fiction Lifetime Achievement Awards: for contributions to the field (1983) and for achievements in editing (1986). She continued her political activism for as long as she was able. Heart problems led to a triple bypass operation in 1991. She died on 12 September 1997 from complications following an angiogram. □



George Hay

"I HEREBY OFFER to sell the American volume rights to my completed novel *He Walked Among Us* for an advance of \$1 to the publisher who persuades me that they will publish it properly."

So starts an open letter, published on the Internet, by **Norman Spinrad**, author of books such as *Bag Jack Barron* and *The Iron Dream*. Spinrad believes that *He Walked Among Us* "is probably the best novel I have written", and that it is "a novel whose publication is of some cultural importance". But after receiving a number of rejections—none of which cited lack of literary quality as a reason—he has decided to go out on a limb. His previous novel *Pictures at 11* did not do well: "The sales figures were sufficiently low so that I have been told that my name is a guarantee that the major bookstore chains will not order sufficient copies of whatever my next novel might be—regardless of content or quality—for any publisher to bring it out."

Spinrad blames the current "bottom-line thinking" in the industry for this. Money isn't at issue, he says: "I will go out on an even more outrageous limb by saying that I believe that there are more important things than money. That the cultural health of literature is one of them, and that planetary survival is another, and that the two of them are not entirely separable. And that when a writer believes he has written something that in some small way can contribute to either or both, he has, yes, a moral obligation to that work which transcends fear of public ridicule or his own economic self-interest."

Judge for yourself on his website, where you can read a sample chapter.... □

• [http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/norman\\_spinrad](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/norman_spinrad)

## WORLD FANTASY AWARDS NOMINATIONS

This year's World Fantasy Awards will be presented at the World Fantasy Convention in London's Docklands on 2 November. The judges are Paul Barnett, Nancy A. Collins, Clark Holman, Joe R. Lansdale and Diana L. Paxson, and the nominations are:

## NOVEL

**Terence M. Green** *Shadow of Ashland* (Tor); **William Kotzwinkle** *The Bear Went Over the Mountain* (Doubleday); **Marc Ladlow** *The 37th Mandala* (St Martin's Press); **George R. R. Martin** *A Game of Thrones* (Bantam Spectra, Oct); **Rachel Pollock** *Goodmother Night* (St Martin's Press); **Melanie Rawn**, **Jennifer Roberson** & **Kate Elliott** *The Golden Key* (DAW Books, Pan); **Mark Summer** *The Devil's Tower* (Del Rey).

## NOVELLA

**Suzi McKee Charnas** *Beauty and the Ophelia* or *The Phantom Beast* (Asimov's, Mar '96); **Mark Helprin** *A City in Winter* (Viking); **George R. R. Martin** *Blood of the Dragons* (Asimov's, Jul '96); **Susan Palwick** *GI Justice* (Starlight 1); **Michael Marshall Smith** *Yield* (Hachette Ellerygheed) (Dark Terrors 2).

## SHORT STORY

**James P. Blaylock** *"Thirteen Phantoms"* (Omni Online Oct '96); **Dennis Etchison** *"The Dead Cop"* (Dark Terrors 2); **Graham Masterton** *"Underbed"* (Dark Terrors 2).

## ANTHOLOGY

**Ellen Datlow** & **Trent Winding** (eds.) *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror, 8th Annual Collection* (St Martin's Press); **Katherine Kerr** & **Martin H. Greenberg** (eds.) *The Shimmering Door* (HarperPrism); **Stephen Jones** & **David Sturt** (eds.) *Dark Terrors 2* (Gollancz); **Patrick Nielsen Hayden** (ed.) *Starlight 1* (Tor).

## COLLECTION

**Richard Chizmar** *Midnight Promises* (Gauntlet Publications); **Terry Lamsley** *Concurrence With the Dead* (Ash-Tre Press); **Jonathan Lethem** *The Wall of the Sky, the Wall of the Eye* (Harcourt Brace); **Thomas Ligotti** *The Nightmarer* (Faber); **Robert C. Carroll** & **Griff** *James Morrow Esq. Stories for Adults* (Harcourt Brace); **Norman Partridge** *Bad Intentions* (Subterranean Press); **S. P. Somtow** *The Pavilion of Frozen Women* (Gollancz).

## ARTIST

**Thomas Cantray**; **H. R. Giger**; **Wobius** (Jean Giraud); **J. K. Potter**.

## PROFESSIONAL AWARD

**Diana Wynne Jones** (for *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*; **Stephen Jones** (for editing and anthologies); **David Pringle** (for contributions to the genre); **Kristine Kathryn Rusch** (for editing (F&SF)); **Mike Weldon** (for *The Psychotic Video Guide to Film*).

## NON-PROFESSIONAL AWARD

**Fedogan** & **Bremer** (for book publishing); **Paula Garon** (for Dark Echo); **Barbara** & **Christopher Roper** (for *Ash-Tre Press*). □

## IMPORTANT NOTICE • BEST SF POLL

We've decided after further discussions to extend the poll for the best British sf novel published between 1948 and 1998. Rather than three titles, please give five and list them in order—if you wish to annotate your list then please still feel free to do so.

The deadline is extended to 30 June 1998.

Send your votes to:

**Andrew M. Butler**

33 Brook View Drive, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5JN

Email: [vector-bsfa@rocketmail.com](mailto:vector-bsfa@rocketmail.com)

(subject line Poll)

# snippings...news...gleanings...rumours...cuttings...

**SALMAN RUSHDIE** is in the news again. The BBC's plan to film his 1980 fantasy *Midnight's Children* has run into trouble in India, where the government, fearful of provoking Islamic opinion, has withdrawn permission for location work. Production of the serial – retitled to *Saleem's Story* – has shifted to Sri Lanka, which itself has a 7% Moslem population.

**GILLIAN ANDERSON** won an Emmy Award as Best Actress in a Drama Series, for *The X-Files*. She forgot to thank the rest of the crew and had to take out full-page ads in *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter* to make amends. Emmys also went to **John Lithgow** and **Kristen Johnston** for their parts in *Third Rock From the Sun*, **Andreï Konchalovsky** for directing NBC's *The Odyssey*, to *Dark Skies* for its titles, *The X-Files* for Art Direction, and *Star Trek: Voyager* for – titter ye not – “Outstanding Hairstyling For a Series”.

**JANET BELINGER** was elected President of the Horror Writers' Association, with **Alan Rogers** a close runner-up (58 votes to 53).

**KEN MACLEOD** will be speaking in the Putney Debates on “Libertarianism, SF and the future”, 12 December, 7.30pm – 11pm. This will be in Putney, West London. For further details, contact **Dr Tim Evans** on 0181 789 3247 (evenings).

**BRIAN STABLEFORD** will appear in a celebration of Edgar Allan Poe (“in music, theatre, film, animation, art and acrobatics”, which last boggles the mind) at Union Chapel Studio, Compton Avenue, London N1 on 8/9 November, 8pm-midnight. Contact 0171 226 1686.

**PUBLISHERS AND SINNERS** **Paul Barnett** (a.k.a. **John Grant**, co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* and co-author with **Ron Tiner** of *The Encyclopedia of SF & Fantasy Art Techniques*), is now editor at art-book publisher **Paper Tiger**. At Millennium, Senior Editor **Caroline Oakley** has handed over sf hardbacks to Editorial Director **Simon Spanton**, but retains sf paperbacks and will take on more of Orion's non-sf list. • Following substantial profit and income shortfall, **HarperCollins** recently announced a massive cut of late-delivering authors, cancelling many contracts. But strong objections led to them backing down over 106 cancellations, and they have agreed to pay in full without conditions, waiving restrictions on re-sales and repayments. Gross sales dropped from \$932million to \$737million for year ended June 1997, and profits were slashed from \$68million to \$12million.

**STEPHEN KING** has left his US publishers **Viking** and is offering his next novel to whoever can afford his asking price: \$17million. **GOTH'S AWAY** **Felidae**, though due for a renaming, is a regular tree newswatch devoted to Gothic events around the country. **Sale** to Top Floor Flat, 8 Springfield Mount, Leeds, LS2 9ND. Website at <http://www.gothic.felidae.com.uk/felidae/index.html>

**THE PLAYS THE THING** **An Experiment With an Air Pump** is a play by **Shelagh Stephenson** to be premiered by Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre Company next February; it's based on the famous Joseph Wright painting, “1799: on the eve of a new century, the house of an eccentric family buzzes with manic activity. Scientists and body-snatchers, a freak of nature and a pair of hopeless amateur thespians participate in a series of ground-breaking experiments. 1999: in a world of scientific chaos, cloning and genetic engineering, the cellar of the same house reveals a dark secret buried for 200 years.” • *An Experiment With an Air Pump*, 12 Feb 7 Mar 1998, tickets £5-16, half-price preview 11 Feb 98. Tel. 0161 833 9833. As the Theatre was a victim of last year's IRA bomb, productions are staged at Upper Campfield Market.

**VISIONS ON NO**, really. According to **Harlan Ellison** on the Tom Snyder chat show in the US, “There will be a Last Dangerous Visions; watch the skies.” **Chris Priest** was unavailable for comment.

**DEATHS** **Carl Jacobi**, pulp writer, died on 25 August aged 89. He was a prolific contributor to  *Weird Tales*, *Planet Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, writing mostly fantasy and horror, with some space-opera. He was a founder member of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society. • **Andrew Keir**, actor, died on 5 October aged 71. He memorably played *Professor Quatermass* in the 1967 Hammer production of *Quatermass and the Pit*, a rôle he recently reprised for BBC radio in *The Quatermass Memoirs* (1996). He was also in a number of horror films including *Dracula*, *Prince of Darkness* (1966) with **Christopher Lee**, and *Blood From the Mummy's Tomb* (1971). • **James A. Michener**, writer, died on 16 October of cancer; he was 90. His fiction novel of the US space program *Space* (1982) was commercially successful, though not critically; in 1985 it was made into a TV movie. • **General Sir John Hackett**, who completed the best-selling speculative book *The Third World War* in 1978, has died aged 87.

• **Burgess Meredith**, who played the Penguin in the 1960s *Batman* TV series, has died aged 89.

# Roald And The Money Factory

ANOTHER POLL was organised by Waterstone's in conjunction with the TV programme *Bookwatch*, this time asking 11,000 readers of all ages for their favourite children's books. Three charts were issued, for over-16s, under-16s, and an overall listing: over 700 books were nominated. As with the ‘Best books of the century’ poll earlier this year, fantasy is strongly represented, though the most striking feature is the total dominance of

Roald Dahl titles. *Daisy Goodwin* of *Bookwatch* said “It just shows that the more politically incorrect and cruel a book is, the more children seem to like it.”

Authors who also scored highly included **R. L. Stine** (whose ‘Goosebumps’ horror series is very popular), **Terry Pratchett**, and **Christopher Pike**; their omission from the lists is due to their votes being spread among many books. □

## OVERALL CHART

1. Roald Dahl *Matilda*
2. Kenneth Grahame *The Wind in the Willows*
3. C. S. Lewis *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
4. A. A. Milne *Winnie the Pooh*
5. J. R. R. Tolkien *The Hobbit*
6. Roald Dahl *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
7. Arthur Ransome *Swallows and Amazons*
8. Roald Dahl *The BFG*
9. Lewis Carroll *Alice in Wonderland*
10. Frances Hodgson Burnett *The Secret Garden*
11. Roald Dahl *James and the Giant Peach*
12. Roald Dahl *The Witches*
13. Louisa M. Alcott *Little Women*
14. A. A. Milne *The House at Pooh Corner*
15. Roald Dahl *George's Marvellous Medicine*
16. Roald Dahl *The Twits*
17. J. R. R. Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings*
18. Michelle Magorian *Goodnight Mr Tom*
19. Roald Dahl *Fantastic Mr Fox*
20. L. M. Montgomery *Anne of Green Gables*

## OVER 16s

1. Kenneth Grahame *The Wind in the Willows*
2. C. S. Lewis *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
3. A. A. Milne *Winnie the Pooh*
4. J. R. R. Tolkien *The Hobbit*
5. Arthur Ransome *Swallows and Amazons*
6. Frances Hodgson Burnett *The Secret Garden*
7. Lewis Carroll *Alice in Wonderland*
8. Roald Dahl *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
9. Louisa M. Alcott *Little Women*
10. Roald Dahl *Matilda*

## UNDER 16s

1. Roald Dahl *Matilda*
2. Roald Dahl *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
3. Roald Dahl *The BFG*
4. J. R. R. Tolkien *The Hobbit*
5. A. A. Milne *Winnie the Pooh*
6. Roald Dahl *James and the Giant Peach*
7. Roald Dahl *The Witches*
8. Roald Dahl *The Twits*
9. Roald Dahl *George's Marvellous Medicine*
10. Jacqueline Wilson *Double Act*
11. C. S. Lewis *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
12. Roald Dahl *Fantastic Mr Fox*
13. J. R. R. Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings*
14. Michelle Magorian *Goodnight Mr Tom*
15. Arthur Ransome *Swallows and Amazons*
16. Brian Jacques *Marcel of Redwall*
17. Kenneth Grahame *The Wind in the Willows*
18. E. B. White *Charlotte's Web*
19. Phillip Pullman *Northern Lights*
20. Brian Jacques *Redwall*

11. A. A. Milne *The House at Pooh Corner*
12. L. M. Montgomery *Anne of Green Gables*
13. Malcolm Saville *Mystery at Witchend*
14. Enid Blyton *The Faraway Tree*
15. Roald Dahl *Danny the Champion of the World*
16. Susan Cooper *The Dark is Rising*
17. E. B. White *Charlotte's Web*
18. Michelle Magorian *Goodnight Mr Tom*
19. Roald Dahl *The BFG*
20. Anna Sewall *Black Beauty*

# SHOTS

**QUEUING IN MOSCOW** Moscow's *Kodak* Kino Mr has the unique distinction of being the world's most successful cinema. After just one year in business, an average of 8,000 punters a week take a seat before its single screen, paying a cumulative equivalent of \$2million for the honour. All of which means that this one movie house is the recipient of no less than 50% of Russia's total box-office take. Needs to add, the queue for the Saturday night performance stretches all the way to the Ukraine. Meanwhile, on another Mr, plans are being drawn up for attempting (allegedly) to woo **William Dafoe** and Oscar-magnet **Emma Thompson** to sign on for an undisclosed project which will require them to go through several months training, then blast off to the Mr space station. Given its recent safety record, they'd better hurry up – it may not be there forever.

**STARGATE AJAR** Do you remember *Stargate*, the film which got director **Roland Emmerich** the clout to go for *Independence Day*? Well, there's good news for **Kurt Russell** fans (or should that be “Kurt Russell's fan?”): he won't be appearing in the spinoff TV series, *Stargate*

## media news from john ashbrook

**SG1**. This will feature **Richard Dean Anderson** instead (oh ... him). The entire series has just been picked up by Fox Networks who, of course, own Sky TV. So expect to see **Emmerich's** big brass ring on your TV soon.

**MONEY MONEY MONEY** Here are the earnings of this summer's blockbusters. ‘Weeks’ is the time the film has been released in the US, not Britain. The figures are the global take, and were accurate at the end of September. Titles not in **bold** are not remotely sf-related.

Million Weeks	
533	<b>The Lost World</b>
422	<b>Men In Black</b>
294	<b>Liar Liar</b>
229	<b>The English Patient</b>
226	<b>Batman and Robin</b>
206	<b>The Fifth Element</b>
200	<b>Con Air</b>
183	<b>Air Force One</b>
150	<b>Face/Off</b>
129	<b>Hercules</b>
102	<b>Contact</b>
61	<b>Austin Powers</b>
54	<b>Spawn</b>
31	<b>Event Horizon</b>

## Scribble, Scribble, Scribble

- **Joe Haldeman** has delivered the long delayed sequel to *The Forever War* to Ace. It's called *Forever Free* and will be out next year.
- **Brian Stableford** is currently writing the text for a science-fictional version of the *Dictionary of Imaginary Places* for an American publisher allied to the Wonderland Press. "I want to call it *Realms of Possibility: A Universal Directory of Imaginary Places* but that has yet to be decided by the man in charge (who goes by the auspicious name of W. John Campbell, although he's no relation to John W.)." Meanwhile, his *Teach Yourself Writing Fantasy and SF* is due from Hodder in December, and *Inheritors of Earth* from Tor in Sep 98.
- **Robert Silverberg** *The Alien Years*, due next February from Voyager, touches all the bases by mixing the millennium, first contact with extraterrestrial hostile aliens, UFOlogists, New Age cultists and alien abduction. Marketing should be no problem.
- Edited by **Robert Silverberg** and due next June from Voyager is *Legends*, current holder of the record for the highest advance paid for an original anthology: \$650,000. It features new fantasy stories set their authors' characteristic worlds and the star-studded list of contributors includes Ursula K. Le Guin (Earthsea), Fritz Prattichet (Disworld), Stephen King (Dark Tower), David Eddings (Belgarath), Robert Jordan (Wheel of Time), Raymond E. Feist (Riftwar), Tad Williams (Dragonsbane Chair), Terry Brooks (Shannara), Alan McCaffrey (Dragonworld), George R. R. Martin (Ice and Fire), and Silverberg himself (Majipoor). • Reportedly a similarly-themed science fiction anthology aroused no interest from publishers.
- **Ken MacLeod**, fresh from celebrating the Scottish referendum result "with a dram or three", has joined the team who put together the 'Web' children's series for Orion (see *Matrix* 127 p20). His contribution is called *Odyssia*, and should be published late in 1998. Once that's finished he'll be starting work on his next sf novel for Orbit, following *The Cassini Division* which will be out next Easter. The provisional title is *The Earth Century*, and according to Ken it "may or may not be set in the same future as *The Star Fracture*. If it is, it'll wrap up the quasi-series by bridging the gap between the solar system Wide leaves and the Solar Union he returns to. (This scenario requires a global, peaceful democratic socialist revolution in a post-holocaust environment – as Ian Banks said of his tale about a Japanese lady cello player with a fear of flying. "It's an old theme but I think I can breathe some life into it.")
- **Robert Holdstock's** 'Mythago Wood' novel *Gate of Ivory* is due next May from Voyager. It's the story of Christian Huxley, who as a boy witnessed his mother's suicide following an eruption of mythagos into the world, and his quest to bring her back to life.
- **Ray Bradbury** is working on a new novel, *From Dust Returned*. Meanwhile, he's involved in developing and writing film versions of *The Martian Chronicles* (for Stephen Spielberg), a remake of *Fahrenheit 451* (for Mel Gibson) and *The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit*.
- **George R. R. Martin's** second book in his 'Song of Ice and Fire' fantasy series, *A Clash of Kings*, has been put back by Voyager from this October to next April.
- **Pamela Sargent** provides the text and **Ron Miller** the art for *Firebrands*, due early next year from Paper Tiger. It's a pictorial history of the great heroes of sf and fantasy.
- **Stephen Baxter** had a busy day on 11 September. His next novel, *Moonseed*, was optioned for movie development by The Bridge, a production company co-owned by Sony Pictures Entertainment and the French tv station Canal Plus. "A deal for me to do the screenplay is being negotiated," he says. He also signed a deal with HTV to develop a treatment for a children's tv series called *The Link*, an ongoing series of 30-minute episodes, and signed up with Orion to write another book for the 'Web' young-adult sf series; it'll be called *WebCrash* and should be out in August 1998. The writers of the second series are Baxter, Eric Brown, Ken MacLeod, Pat Cadogan, James Lovegrove and Maggie Furey.
- The book of *Moonseed* will be out next year, and it's a disaster story: "As a threat to Earth emanates from the Moon, its first manifestation is among the ancient volcanic hills of Edinburgh..." Meanwhile, April sees *Steve's* second story collection, *Traces* (Voyager: £16.99 hb), containing alternative history tales like "Mittweil" and "No Longer touch the Earth", visions of space travel like "Zemlya", "Moon Sir" and "Pilgrim 7", bizarre future visions such as "Downstream" and "The Blood of Angels" and end-of-the-world stories like "Inherit the Earth" and "George and the Comet".
- **Douglas Adams** and ex-Python **Terry Jones** have collaborated on an sf novel called *Starship Titanic*, due next year in the UK and in December in the US. There'll also be a CD-ROM to follow.
- **Christopher Fowler's** next novel is *Schrodinger*, and he's also written the screenplay for a mooted Britpak film version of *Psychoville*.
- **Geoff Ryman's** London Underground set 253 makes it into print in Feb 98 (HarperCollins: £6.99 pb), after being premiered on the Internet earlier this year (see *Matrix* 123 p5). There are 252 seated passengers plus the driver on a Tube car, and Ryman pens 253 words about their intersecting lives during the 7½ minute trip from Embankment to Elephant and Castle.
- **Jenny Randles** is one of the more sensible members of the UFO community (Whitley Streiber threatened her with legal action), and next year Collins & Brown bring out *Truly Weird*, twenty real-life examples of allegedly paranormal occurrences, including the 'face on Mars'.

**WAITING FOR KUBRICK** At time of writing, the legendary Stanley Kubrick's romantic thriller *Eyes Wide Shut* enters its eleventh month of principal photography. Most big movies are shot in three to five months, but then Kubrick isn't most directors.

Why do I tell you this? Well, partly because I just love the idea that husband and wife team Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman have been trapped here in England all year watching the movie people in Hollywood are already asking "Whatever happened to...?" and, for an emotional scene where Cruise has to burst into tears, Kubrick, the patron saint of perfectionists, made Cruise go through hell a reported 38 times before he was happy. But mostly because Kubrick is making this piece of unexplored box office dynamite as part of a deal with Warner Bros to persuade them to finance his long-chirped distant-future tale *AI*, based on the Aldiss story "Supertops Last All Summer Long" and which has seen contributions from **Bob Shaw** and **Ian Watson** – see his article last issue. If *AI* gets made, it will be Kubrick's first venture into sf since *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), and let us not forget a little *Flash Gordon* in the sixties.

**HIYA HAYAO** If you haven't yet encountered the brilliance of Japanese animator **Hayao Miyazaki**, you owe it to yourself to rectify that situation immediately. He is, in the considered opinion of most anime experts, the most talented anime director alive, and, in this reporter's humble opinion, the greatest single animator who ever lived.

You will understand, then, if I am keen to let you know that his latest feature film *Princess Mononoke* is, world-wide

(excluding America), the second highest grosser of the summer, after *The Lost World*. At time of writing, Spielberg's fossil has been playing in five territories outside the US for six weeks, and has earned \$21million, while *Princess Mononoke*, over the same period, has only played in Japan, and has made the equivalent of \$17.2million. Cartoons are not a minority interest, and any foreign film-maker who can hold his own against the raging behemoth that is Spielberg has got to be worth investigating, *n'est pas?*

**BEAN THERE, DONE THAT** Buoyed by the inexplicable worldwide success of *Bean* – the fastest money-maker ever made by a British company – Working Time is gearing up to release *The Borrowers* in time for Christmas.

Oh, and while we're on the subject of *Bean*, its excellent advertising campaign (far better than the movie itself) has pulled another ace out of its sleeve. If you recall, the poster for *Men In Black* showed Messers Jones and Smith, dressed in black (natch) and bore the legend "Saving the world from the scum of the universe".

Recently, billboards have begun to appear around London bearing a picture of Mr. Bean, all dressed in black, slouching, hands in pockets, slumped, accompanied by the simple, telling legend "Mr. Bean: The Scum of the Universe". If only that sort of wit could have found its way into the movie.

— John Ashbrook

## BIG EARS of on radio

### Childhood's End

Radio 4 has a number of dramatisations planned over the next few months starting with a celebration of **Arthur C. Clarke's** 80th birthday. Brian Lighthill is producing and Tony Mulholland is dramatising a two-hour adaptation of Clarke's novel *Childhood's End*, for transmission in two parts on 2 and 9 November at 2pm. [Ellen Cheshire]

### Blake's 7 Returns

Seventeen years after its final episode on BBC television, *Blake's 7* is set to return as a Radio 4 play. Called "The Seventeen Crown", the 90 minute programme features many of the original cast and will be transmitted in January 1998. It's produced by Brian Lighthill and written by Barry Letts, who also wrote two of the *Dr Who* serials broadcast on Radio 3 and Radio 4.

The cast includes original Paul Darrow as Avon, Michael Keating as Vila, Steven Pacey as Tarrant, Jacqueline Pearce as Serallan and Peter Tuddenham as the computer ORC, plus Paula Wilcox and Angela Bruce. All except Avon were killed in the last episode of the tv series – so apparently were – 30 episode comic script-writing gymnastics. The story involves Serallan attempting to control the Federation with the aid of a 'psionic crown', which confers total control over people and the ability to destroy planets by thought alone.

The play will also be released as a BBC Audio cassette, possibly in time for Christmas: rumours suggest that it will be an extended version, including interviews with cast members. [Chris Terran / Ellen Cheshire]

## ... PLUS

Also coming in January are two dramatisations of **John Wyndham** novels, both adapted by John Constable: *Chocky* and *The Kraken Wakes*. It is anticipated that both of these will find their way onto the BBC Radio Collection list at around the same time as transmission.

Not strictly an sf series, but certainly covering much the same territory is a six-part series of **Ray Bradbury** stories under the umbrella title *Tales of the Bizarre*, which starts on Thursday 20 November at 11pm. [Ellen Cheshire]

### Chris Terran adds:

**GALLAGHER ON VIDEO** No, not a new Oasis single. On 3 November BBC Video release the *E-Space Gift Set* (£34.99), a compilation of three linked *Dr Who* stories, one of which is **Stephen Gallagher's** *Warrior's* Gate. All previously unreleased and first broadcast in 1980! – commonly regarded as the series' peak, when Tom Baker was the Doctor – the others are *Full Circle* by Andrew Smith and *State of Decay* by Terrance Dicks. The Gallagher video also contains new material from *Destiny of the Doctors*, the *Dr Who* CD-ROM.

**MEDIA SNIPPETS** Disney will start shooting a new *Tarzan* movie in 1998. • **Star Trek: Voyager's** Patrick Stewart proposed the series' producer **Wendy Neuss** in September. She said yes. • Paramount will begin production on the 9th *Star Trek* film in March 1998. **Jonathan Frakes** will probably direct, and Patrick Stewart was reportedly paid \$12million to star. • **Laurence Fishburne** and **Carrie-Anne Moss** are set to star alongside **Keanu Reeves** in the new *Matrix* (no relation). • UK production company Working Time will be doing the special effects in-house for the forthcoming live-action *Theremin* film. • **A Town Has Turned Up** by **Rod Serling** was originally broadcast as a play on CBS tv in 1958, and on 29 Sep the So-Fi Channel started production on a movie version. It's a "morality story about bigotry and mob psychology," and is set on a ravaged and abandoned far-future Earth.

# KURT VONNEGUT'S BROTHER IGNOBELED!

THIS YEAR'S Ig Nobel Prizes were handed out on 9 October at Harvard University; recipients included Tamagotchi's Mum and Dad, and Kurt Vonnegut's late brother. The Ig's are a good-natured spoof of science and the Nobel Prizes, and honour people whose achievements "cannot or should not be reproduced".

## ENTOMOLOGY

**Mack Hoestler** of the University of Florida, for his scholarly book *That Gunk on Your Car* (Ten Speed Press: 1996), which identifies the insect splats that appear on car windows. Dr Hoestler drove to Harvard (very quickly) to collect his Prize in person.

## ASTRONOMY

**Richard Hoagland** of New Jersey, for identifying artificial structures on the Moon and Mars, including a human face on Mars and ten-mile high buildings on the far side of the Moon; see *The Monuments of Mars: A City on the Edge of Forever* (North Atlantic Books: 1997).

## COMMUNICATIONS

**Samford Wallace**, president of Cyber Promotions of Philadelphia – neither rain nor sleet nor dark of night have stayed this self-appointed courier from delivering electronic junk mail to all the world. Send congratulatory notes (lots of them) to: Cyber Promotions, 1255 Passmore St., Philadelphia, PA 19111, USA.

## PHYSICS

**John Bockris** of Texas A&M University, for his wide-ranging achievements in cold fusion, in the transmutation of base elements into gold, and in the electrochemical incineration of domestic rubbish.

## PEACE

**Harold Hillman** of the University of Surrey, for his lovingly rendered and ultimately peaceful report "The Possible Pain Experienced During Execution by Different Methods" (published in *Perception* 1993, Vol. 22, pp745-753).

# SF ART IN CHESTER

FROM ANDROMEDA TO THE X-FILES is an exhibition of art and fantasy-related art at the Grosvenor Museum in Chester. It will run until 30 November and includes work from **Roger Dean**, **Jim Burns**, **Keith Scaife** and **Brian Talbot**, among many others. There'll be X-Files comics artists, **Colin McNeil** and **Brian Hitch** from Marvel comics, **Stephen Player** (who works for

## BIOLOGY

**T. Yagyu** and his colleagues from the University Hospital of Zurich, Kansai Medical University in Osaka, and Neuroscience Technology Research in Prague, for measuring people's brainwave patterns while they chewed different flavours of chewing gum. (Published as "Chewing gum flavor affects measures of global complexity of multichannel EEG", *T. Yagyu et al, Neuropsychobiology*, vol. 35, 1997, pp46-50)

## LITERATURE

**Dorun Witztum, Eliahu Rips** and **Yoav Rosenberg** of Israel, and **Michael Drosnin** of the US, for their hairsplitting statistical discovery that the Bible contains a secret, hidden code. (Witztum, Rips and Rosenberg's original research was published as "Equidistant Letter Sequences in the Book of Genesis", *Statistical Science*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1994, pp429-438. Drosnin's popular book, *The Bible Code*, was published by Simon & Schuster.)

## MEDICINE

**Carl J. Charnetski** and **Francis X. Brennan**, Jr of Wilkes University, and **James F. Harrison** of Muzak, Ltd in Seattle, Washington, for their discovery that listening to lift music stimulates immunoglobulin A (IgA) production, and thus may prevent the common cold.

## ECONOMICS

**Akihiro Yokoi** of Wip Company in Chiba, Japan and **Aki Maeda** of Bandai Company in Tokyo, the father and mother of Tamagotchi, for diverting millions of person-hours of work into the husbandry of virtual pets.

## METEOROLOGY

**Bernard Vonnegut** of the State University of Albany, for his revealing report "Chicken Plucking as a Measure of Tornado Wind Speed" (published in *Weatherwise*, Oct 75, p217). Bernard Vonnegut, brother of Kurt, died earlier this year; his award was collected by his son, Peter. □

Terry Pratchett), and a Warner Bros animation display. Local artists **Peter McKenna** and **Julian Baum** will show work ranging from sculptures of sf characters to computer-art featuring Chester Town Hall going up in flames, *à la Independence Day*. There will be accompanying events, creative writing classes, signings, an artist-in-residence, bookstalls and support material. □ **Contact:** Steve Woolfall, Grosvenor Museum, 27 Grosvenor Street, Chester, CH1 2DD. Tel: 01244 402015. Fax: 01244 347587. Email: s.woolfall@chestercc.gov.uk

**NORMAN TEBBIT** is not a name you'll see often in *Matrix*, but at the Tony Party Conference he revealed both the extent to which being led (after a fashion) by the Mekon has influenced Conservative thinking, and more interestingly, how pervasive sf metaphors and language are in the culture at large. "Like a space fiction alien life form," he said, "Blair has invaded Old Labour and remade it in his image. Only the spikiest, prickliest, case-hardened Old Labourites have not been enveloped and reprogrammed. Paddy Ashdown has been ingested." (Quoted in *The Guardian* of 8 October).

**SHINING WIT** Philip French's review (why quoted? See below) of John Baxter's *Stanley Kubrick: A Biography* (Observer, 28 September) shone an interesting sidelight on *Observer*. A Space Odyssey, French notes how Kubrick is notorious for treating employees and co-workers as slaves, and his knack for making enemies. "When Arthur C. Clarke, his collaborator on 1951, was asked how much he would have to be paid to work with him again, he confided in fellow sf writer Brian Aldiss who had suffered at Kubrick's hands without being made rich, as Clarke had. 'He hasn't got that much money.'

So far so good. But the following Sunday's Observer carried a letter from Arthur: "When I remarked to Brian Aldiss that Stanley Kubrick hadn't enough money to make me work with him again, my meaning was that no one had enough money to make me leave Sri Lanka and return to the arctic north. Perhaps because I do not belong to the endangered species of actors... my relations with Stanley were always very amicable, and the only serious disagreement we ever had concerned the publication date of the novel. Contrary to many reports, I always found him very considerate and reluctant to hurt other people's feelings – except when it was necessary."

Back to the so-called 'review'. It's a shining example of the Sunday Paper School of reviewing – viz., to ramble on at length about your own opinions (relevance to the subject under discussion is useful but not essential) and, usually at the end, toss off a sentence or two actually about the book itself. Here, in a substantial half-page review, there are precisely four words commenting on the ostensible subject of the review, John Baxter's book *Stanley Kubrick: A Biography*. Here they are: "judicious and well-researched".

— Chris Tegan  
• With grateful thanks to **Paul Billinger**, **Andy Butler**, **Steve Jeffery**, and **John Ollis**. Send sf-related clippings and cuttings to Chris Tegan at the editorial address.

# BSFA AWARDS

Send awards nominations to

Chris Hill

Room's Cottage, 3 Lynch Hill,  
Witchurch, Hanls, RG28 7ND  
Email cphill@enterprise.net

OK, what is going on? As I write this (5 October) I have had one new nomination from the membership since I wrote my piece for *Matrix* 127 (3 August).

As I filled last time, I am not so concerned about the novels. It's the artwork and short stories that worry me. From the survey results I know that you read a lot of short stories (unless you just buy the magazines to fill up the shelves). So are they all so bad that no one can find anything worth nominating? What about artwork? Surely this is the easiest to nominate. You don't even have to buy the book or magazine – just spot something that you like, note the artist and source and drop me a line.

Remember also that it is the number of nominations received for each item that counts. Just because an item has been listed here does not mean that you should not also nominate it. If an item has one nomination and another has two, the latter will go on the shortlist.

The BSFA Awards are important. They are the only popular awards for sf in this country. Publishers should consider them as worthy of being mentioned on the covers of books as the Hugo or Nebula awards. We want the authors / illustrators to consider them to be worth winning. The presentation ceremony should be one of the most important media events in the British sf world, not just tagged on and dismissed for those at Eastercon earlier this year.

But it is very difficult to convince those outside the BSFA of the importance of the Awards if the membership of the sponsoring organisation does not appear to care.

So come on, take it seriously! This is your chance to have your say and to make the awards mean something.

— Chris Hill

## Best Novel

**Stephen Baxter** *Titan* (Voyager: £16.99 hb)

**Jack Deighton** *A Son of the Beast* (Orion: £5.99 pb)

**Greg Egan** *Diagonia* (Orion: £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb)

**Neil Gaiman** (ill. Michael Zuki, Jon J. Muth, Charles Vass, Dave McKean) *Sandman: The Wake* (Titan: £12.99 pb)

**M. John Harrison** *Signs of Life* (Gollancz: £16.99 hb)

**Gwyneth Jones** *Phoenix Call* (Gollancz: £16.99 hb)

**Tim Powers** *Earthquake Weather* (Legend: £17.99 hb)

**Brian Stableford** *China's Cradle* (Legend: £16.99 hb)

**Tricia Sullivan** *Someone to Watch Over Me* (Orion: £16.99 hb)

**Michael Swanwick** *Jack Faust* (Orion: £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb)

**Ian Watson** *Oracle* (Gollancz: £16.99 hb)

**Michael Womack** *Let's Put the Future Behind Us* (Flamingo: £8.99 pb)

## Best Short Story

**Eugene Byrne** "Magma" (Interzone 120)

**Paul Kincaid** "Last Day of the Carnival – 35 Exposures"

(Back Brain Recycle 23)

**Martin Simpson** "Dancing About Architecture"

(The Third Alternative 11)

**Lisa Tuttle** "Soul Song" (Interzone 119)

## Best Artwork

**Brian Froud** *Cover of The Wood Wide by Terri Windling*

(Legend: £5.99 pb)

**Michael Whelan** *Cover of The Golden Key by Melanie Ramo*,

Jennifer Robertson & Kate Elliot (Pan: £7.99 pb)

## Many thanks to

Brian Aldiss, Paul Barnett, Stephen Baxter, Elizabeth and Paul Billinger, Simon Blisson, Brum SF Group, Andrew M. Butler, Ellen Cheshire, Arthur C. Clarke, Andy Cox, Cardinal Cox, Gary Dakin, Vikki Lee France, David Garnett, Mary Gentle, Roy Gray, John Gribbin, Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Edward James, Steve Jeffery, Dave Langford, Ken MacLeod, Stan Nicholls, John Ollis, Steve Palmer, Andy Sawyer, Maureen Kincaid Speller, Brian Stableford, Waterstone's in Leeds, Ian Watson, and Steve Woolfall.

## recent &amp; forthcoming books

## Voyager

Including HarperCollins, Flamingo, Fontana



Sharon Shinn *Jovah's Angel* (20 Oct; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy about religion and faith from a rising star of American romantic fantasy, much praised for her style.

Graham Edwards *Dragonframe* (1 Oct; £2.99 pb, 441pp) — Dragon fantasy, the final volume of a trilogy; the *Dragoncham*, is now being made into an animated feature film by Dandelion Films. Edwards, a design studio manager, was born in 1965 in Somerset and now lives in Nottingham.

Lewis Gannett *Millennium #2: Gehenna* (1 Oct; £5.99 pb)

Everett Owens *The X-Files #7: Control* (1 Oct; £3.99 pb) — Novelisation.

★ Elizabeth Hand *Glimmering* (1 Nov; £5.99 pb, 413pp) — Erotic millennial sf from the much-praised author of *Waking the Moon*. It is 1999. The Last Days, say some. The First, claim others. The climate is clearly warming, and underground clubs are preparing for the frenzy of all frenzies. Jack Finnegan, the world's last literary publisher, is dying of AIDS. Trip Marlowe, VR star, is dying from too many drugs. Marz Candy is waiting to bear Trip's child, and Leonard Horst is coming to town with his life-restoring elixir. Trippy sex, new age revivals and the hottest hallucinogens the imagination can buy — it must be the time of the Glimmering. Hand lives in Maine, which she "swears is getting hotter".

Douglas E. Winter (ed) *Millennium* (17 Nov; £5.99 pb) — Linked stories set in various decades of the 20th century, with a framing novel by Clive Barker.

★ Arthur C. Clarke 2001: *The Final Odyssey* (17 Nov; £5.99 pb) — First paperback publication of the last Odyssey novel. The second and third are being reissued simultaneously.

Arthur C. Clarke 2010: *Odyssey Two* (17 Nov (R 1982); £5.99 pb) — Dec 83

Arthur C. Clarke 2061: *Odyssey Three* (17 Nov (R 1987); £5.99 pb) — Apr 88

★ Katherine Kerr *Red Wyvern* (1 Oct; £2.99 pb, £5.99 pb, c400pp) — Fantasy set in Kerr's world of *Dervish*. Book One of *The Dragon Mage*.

Chris Carter *Millennium #1: Things Fall Apart* (1 Nov; £15.99 hb, c300pp) — Contingently labelled by its-in — this differs from the Elizabeth Hand novelisation noted above.

Kevin J. Anderson *The X-Files VI: [Title tbc]* (1 Nov; £16.99 hb, c256pp) — Sixth original

novel based on the TV series.

Ben Marcus *The Age of Wire and String* (Flamingo: 1 Nov; £12.99 hb, 160pp) — Unclassifiable meditation on the power of objects and environments — "a *Finnegans Wake* for the 90s".

J. R. R. Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien: Nov; £6.99/vol pb) — Reissue of *The Book of the Century*, with Tolkien's original dust-jacket designs. Also available as a box set at £25.00, which includes *The Hobbit*.

Roy Porter *A Medical History of Humanity* (HarperCollins: 1 Nov; £25.00 hb, c500pp ill.) — ... from antiquity to the present.

Douglas Rushkoff *Children of Chaos* (Flamingo: Nov; £7.99 pb, 288pp) — In which cyberguru Rushkoff "deconstructs the culture of the generation he calls the 'screenagers' in their search for strategies for coping with, and thriving amidst, the discontinity of the post-modern experience".

Les Martin *The X-Files #8: The Host* (1 Nov; £3.99 pb) — Novelisation.

Matthew Sturgis *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography* (HarperCollins: 1 Dec; £20.00 hb, c320pp ill.) — An early and very influential fantasy artist, who died astonishingly young, aged 25.

★ Sheri S. Tepper *Family Tree* (1 Dec; £16.99 hb, £9.99 pb, c500pp) — New sf novel. "Trees are suddenly growing at a fantastic rate, and police officer Dora Henry thinks she knows where the plague of trees began. Elsewhere, in the far future when technology has all but vanished, two princes go on a quest that takes them further than they wanted. Dora will find out about the future. Meanwhile, the trees keep growing..."

★ Sheri S. Tepper *Gibbon's Decline and Fall* (1 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Paperback of the Clarke Award-nominated sf novel.

Raymond E. Feist *Feast of a Demon King* (1 Dec; £5.99 pb) — Third in the 'Serpentwar Saga'. Feist is married to fantasy novelist Kathryn S. Starbuck.

Robert J. Sawyer *Illegal Alien* (1 Dec; £2.99 pb; £5.99 pb) — An alien starship arrives in need of spares, which Earth will manufacture in exchange for alien technology, but one of the aliens ends up in court on a murder charge. Then some different aliens arrive...

Jack McDevitt *Enemy Road* (1 Dec; £2.99 pb; £5.99 pb) — Far-future archaeologists study ancient 20th century culture.

Victor Koman *Millennium #3: Weeds* (1 Mar; £5.99 pb)

## Gollancz

Including Vista, Indigo



Stephen Jones & David Sutton (eds.) *Dark Terrors 3* (Vista: 1 Oct; £16.99 hb, 381pp) — Original horror anth. with stories from Bradbury, Britz, Gaiman, Constantine, Campbell, Cadigan, Fowler, Michael Marshall Smith and others.

Stephen Jones & David Sutton (eds.) *Dark Terrors 2* (Vista: 31 Oct; £5.99 pb, 378pp) — Horror anth.

★ Joe R. Lansdale *Bad Chilli* (1 Oct; £5.99 pb, 292pp) — New Nap Collins crime novel, with fantasy trimmings.

★ Tom Arden *The Harlequin's Dance* (1 Oct; £16.99 hb, c488pp) — Fantasy, the 'First Book of the Orkono': a debut novel. It's set in an 18th century world of muskets and high society, and is described as being "in the tradition of David Eddings". Arden was born and grew up in Australia but now lives in Brighton and lectures in 18th century literature.

LeVar Burton *Aftermath* (Vista: 1 Oct; £5.99 pb) — Apocalyptic horror, 'along the lines of *The Stand*' according to Whoopi Goldberg, from the actor who plays La Forge in *Star Trek*. Set in the early years of the next century when the first black president is assassinated, there's a massive earthquake in the Midwest, and the US collapses into its second civil war. And — you guessed it — only one man can save the world, in this case a doctor who has produced a device which cures all diseases.

Alan Moore *Voice of the Fire* (Indigo: Oct; £5.99 pb)

★ Terry Pratchett & Stephen Briggs *The Unseen Universe Diary 1998* (Oct; £9.99 hb, unpaginated, ill.) — It had to come. Illustrated by Paul Kidby, this features an exclusive eight day, every week (Oct/Dec), a map of Ankh-Morpork, and a guide to places of interest (cafes, pubs, societies and clubs etc.). And, er, lots of days. Well, you try to review an empty diary.

Christopher Lee *Tall, Dark and Gruesome* (1 Oct; £15.99 hb, c320pp) — Coinciding with the centenary of *Dracula*, the autobiography of the actor most associated with the Count.

★ Diana Wynne Jones *Deep Secret* (1 Oct; £16.99 hb, c352pp) — Adult fantasy. There's an imbalance in the multiverse: Earth needs pushing towards the magical, 'Ayewards' side, and Rupert Venables is involved in pushing the world back to its rightful place. But his sponsor dies, the replacement isn't interested, and magic starts to get out of hand...

## Key

pb = paperback; hb = hardback; tp = trade (large format) paperback; pp = extant

ill. = illustrated; ed. = edited; R (x) = reissue / reprint (first publication date)

➤ = review in *Vector* x/date; GN = Graphic Novel; ab = Audiobook; YA = Young Adult

coll. = story collection (same author); anth. = anthology (different authors)

★ = Highlight ☆ = Editor's choice 1 = First UK edition

Treat titles with caution. All unquoted remarks by Chris Terran.

Quoted comments are from publishers' material — caveat emptor

— Thanks to Michael J. Cross for his index: <http://www.ajckeb.decon.co.uk/topsfba.htm> —

Paul Kearney *The Heretic Kings* (Vista: Oct; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy, Book 2 of 'The Monarchies of God'.

J. G. Ballard *The Drowned World* (Indigo: Nov (R 1962); £5.99 pb) — ➤ Apr 82

J. G. Ballard *The Terminal Beach* (Indigo: Nov (R 1964); £5.99 pb)

J. G. Ballard *The Voices of Time* (Indigo: Nov (R 1962); £5.99 pb) — ➤ Feb 93. Three reissues. *Drowned World* was recently broadcast on Book At Bedtime. *Terminal Beach* is "perhaps JGB's strongest single collection" (David Pringle in the SFE), and *Voices of Time* was originally published as *The Four-Dimensional Nightmare*.

★ Ursula K. Le Guin *A Fisherman of the Inland Sea* (Vista: Nov; £5.99 pb) — Coll. of 8 stories and a delightful introduction on why Le Guin likes sf: 'vitality, largeness, and exactness of imagination; playfulness, variety, and strength of metaphor; freedom from conventional literary expectations and mannerisms; moral seriousness; wit; pizzazz; and beauty.' — 193

Michael Scott *Rohan The Lord of Middle Air* (Vista: Nov; £5.99 pb) — ➤ Dec 95

★ Ian McDonald *Sacrifice of Fools* (Vista: Nov; £5.99 pb) — McDonald's splendid Northern Irish tale of aliens and the Troubles. Recommended. — 193

S. P. Somtow *Darker Angels* (Nov; £16.99 hb, c384pp) — Dark fantasy set in 1803. A voodoo priest's search for the secrets of life and death take him from revolutionary Haiti to a meeting with Byron to West Virginia to West Africa.

Mark Chadbourn *Scissormen* (1 Nov; £16.99 hb, c352pp) — Horror. A City dealer has a breakdown and tries to recover in a magical house.

★ Terry Pratchett *Jingo* (1 Nov; £16.99 hb, 285pp) — Pratchett's latest book for Gollancz, the 21st Discworld novel. Here TP bravely tackles pulp, but unlike *Small Gods*, which successfully took on religion, this one doesn't quite come off. Ankh-Morpork and Klatch find themselves heading for war over possession of a new island, mysteriously arisen from the depths of the Circle Sea. Vines and the Watch get mixed up in events, via a Kennedy-assassination spoof, but despite some effort even Pratchett finds it difficult to be funny about the subject; perhaps the only possible comedy about organised mass-murder is black, which isn't quite his style. Of course, it being a Discworld book, there are a lot of good jokes along the way, but the overall effect is rather depressing. And perhaps that's the point. (Interestingly for a book about war, Death makes only the briefest of appearances.) Nevertheless, it's an improvement on *Hogfather*, and is recommended; it's a brave attempt.

Lisa Jardine & Alan Stewart *Hostage to Fortune: The Troubled Life of Francis Bacon* (1 Jan 98; £25 hb, 384pp) — New biography of the Renaissance writer, philosopher and statesman, founder of the scientific method and author of the proto-sf *The New Atlantis*.

★ Gwyneth Jones *Phoenix Café* (Vista: Jan 98; £5.99 pb) — ➤ 194. Third 'Aleutian' novel, following on from:

Gwyneth Jones *White Queen* (Vista: Jan 98 (R 1991); £5.99 pb)

Gwyneth Jones *North Wind* (Vista: Jan 98 (R 1994); £5.99 pb) — ➤ Aug 94. Sep 95

Vera Chapman *The Enchantress* (1 Jan 98; £16.99 hb, c256pp) — Arthurian fantasy, hitherto unpublished and found among her papers after her death in 1996.

Paul Kearney *The Iron Wars* (1 Jan 98; £16.99 hb, c320pp) — Fantasy, Book 3 of 'The Monarchies of God'.

★ Ian McDonald *Kirinya* (1 Jan 98; £16.99 pb, c448pp) — Sequel to *Chaga*, continuing the story of Dr Shepard (on board the Big Drum Object), Gabby McAslan [living within the Chaga zone in Africa in an experimental artistic community], and their daughter Serena.



Including Eros



**Todd McFarlane** *Spawn: Creation* (14 Aug; £7.99 tp, UP ill.)

**Todd McFarlane** *Spawn: Evolution* (14 Aug; £7.99 tp, UP ill.)

**Todd McFarlane** *Spawn: Revelation* (14 Aug; £7.99 tp, UP ill.) — GNs.

**John Rozum, Charles Adlard & Gordon Purcell** *The X-Files: Internal Affairs* (15 Aug; £9.99 tp, UP ill.) — GN.

**Eddie Miller & Daniel Faris** *Their Sexploitation!* (1 Sep; £12.99 tp, 160pp ill.) — Subtitled "The Forbidden World of 'Adults Only' Cinema," this is a history of US 'blue' movies from the 1920s to the 1970s, when video killed the porno stars.

★ **Michael Szewc** *The Complete Book of Scriptwriting* (1 Sep; £12.99 tp, 464pp) — A complete guide to writing screenplays, from inspiration to writing to presentation to selling, by the creator of *Babylon 5*. Who looks curious like Mikhail Gorbachev, to judge from the cover. Includes the complete shooting script for the 85 episode "The Coming of Shadows".

**Rachel Aberley** *Spawn: The Making of the Movie* (19 Sep; £7.99 tp, 96pp ill.) — Todd McFarlane's comic character is now a movie, and this book features interviews with him and director Mark Dippe, original concept sketches, ILM split details, and plenty of colour illustrations. Canada-born McFarlane is now estimated, thanks to *Spawn* and its range of spin-offs (toys, the Sony Playstation game *Spawn: The Eternal* due early 1998, an adult animation series on HBO, etc) to be worth \$75million. Buy this book and make him richer!

**Alain Carraz & Jean-Luc Putheaud** *The Avengers Companion* (26 Sep; £14.99 tp, 196pp ill.) — This was originally published in France as *Chapau meurt et botte de cuir* (1990) and features episode guides, interviews, memories, and lots of photos. There's also some attempt to culturally contextualise the series, and it being French, a pleasingly off-centre view of a quintessentially English phenomena.

**Pete Tombs** *Mondo Macabro* (1 Oct; £14.99 tp, 192pp ill.) — Follow up to *Immortal* takes about European sex-horror films. This book further affords at bizarre cinema such as 'Indian horror movies, Mexican masked wrestling films, Japanese ghost stories, Africa's cinema of the supernatural, and even the Turkish versions of *Dracula* and *Star Trek*'.

**Joseph Cochran** *The Babylon Project: Earth Colonies Sourcebook* (1 Oct; £9.99 tp, 128pp ill.) — Second sourcebook for the *B5* role-playing game.

**Maxim & Dolores Jakubowski** *The Best of The Journal of Eros* (1 Oct; £5.99 pb, 336pp) — Selections from the zine's first three years, some fantasy.

**Michael Perkins** *Dark Matter* (Eros) (1 Oct; £5.99 pb, 256pp) — Erotica set in San Francisco in 1999. "a world where all sexuality is acceptable, everything is permitted, in a frenzy to usher in the new millennium".

**David Aaron Clark** *Into the Black* (Eros) (1 Oct; £5.99 pb, 256pp) — Erotic dark fantasy. A professional dominatrix has an encounter with a mysterious force, which strips away everyday life in New York "to reveal a necropolis where gruesome beings exist a vibration away from detection".

**Luc Besson** *The Story of The Fifth Element* (1 Oct; £24.99 tp, 244pp ill.) — "A beautifully illustrated" — and it should be, at that price — "account of the making of one of the most eagerly awaited films of the decade, from its writer and director, Luc Besson. ... Packed with stills and production artwork, including designs by Moebius and Jean-Paul Gaultier".

**Dave Dorman** *Star Wars: The Art of Dave Dorman* (1 Oct; £19.99 tp, 128pp ill.) — Dorman is responsible for most of the covers of *Star Wars* books, comics, and other spin-offs, so if you like that sort of thing. ...

**Alex Ross & Mark Waid** *Kingdom Come* (10 Oct; £9.99 tp, 232pp ill.) — Though painted GN which aims to do for Superman — and many other DC superheroes — what *The Dark Knight Returns* did for Batman. Undeniably impressive.

**Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon** *Preacher: Proud Americans* (10 Oct; £9.99 tp, 232pp ill.) — Violent and foul-mouthed GN from Ennis, who comes from Belfast, and artist Dillon, from Luton. It's the third in the 'Preacher' series; the first swept the board at the 1997 UK Comic Art Awards.

**Andrew Murdoch & Rachel Aberley** *The Making of Alien Resurrection* (1 Nov; £8.99 tp, 144pp ill.) — Behind-the-scenes look at the new 'Alien' movie, featuring Sigourney Weaver and Winona Ryder and due to be released on Boxing Day. Includes an in-depth interview with director Jean-Pierre Jeunet, actor profiles, and production notes.

**Joss Whedon** *Alien Resurrection Scriptbook* (1 Nov; £10.99 tp, 160pp ill.) — Shooting script for the film.

**Anton Allen** *Resurrection Postcard Book* (1 Nov; £5.99 tp, 60pp ill.) — Stills from the film. **Walter Simmons & Lee Weeks** *Tarzan vs. Predator at the Earth's Core* (1 Nov; £7.99 tp, 104pp ill.) — GN, wherein Predators

invade Pellucidar.

★ **Neil Gaiman** *Death: The Time of Your Life* (1 Nov; £7.99 tp, 96pp ill.) — New 'Sandman' story about Morpheus's sister, Death.

**Rachel Aberley** *The Making of Spawn* (1 Nov; £7.99 tp, 96pp ill.) — Another behind-the-scenes look at a movie, with costumes, production design and split.

★ **Dave McKean & Neil Gaiman** *The Sandman Dustcovers* (1 Dec; £35.00 hb, 208pp ill.) — Complete collection of McKean's artwork for Gaiman's extraordinary GNs, plus, 'exclusive to this book', a new Sandman story.

★ **John Gatehouse & Geoff Wilmetts** *The A-Z of British Animation* (1 Jan; £8.99 tp, 288pp ill.) — "The indispensable reference book for this ever popular field." Covers UK animation from the beginning of the century, through *vor the Engine* and up to Wallace and Gromit. Includes an A-Z of full-length animated features, animated specials, tv series, short films and commercials, plus a Who's Who in Animation section.



Including Millennium, Phoenix, Weidentfeld, Dent, Everyman, Dolphin



**Yvonne Navarro** *Music of the Spears* (Nov; £4.99 pb, 288pp) — Latest Aliens book taken from the Dark Horse comics.

**Wendy Cooling** (ed.) *Quids For Kids* (Dolphin; Nov; £1.00, 80pp) — Series of YA anthos, includes *Scared Stiff* (horror), *Seriously Spooky* (ghosts), and *Out of This World* (virtual reality).

**Mercedes Lackey** *Storm Breaking* (Nov; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy.

**Mickey Zucker Reichert** *Last of the Renshai* (Nov; £5.99 pb) — Fantasy.

**Tim Sebastian** *Ultra* (1 Nov; £16.99 hb, 352pp) — Technothriller about the chemical and biological weapons used in the Gulf War.

★ **Terry Goodkind** *Temple of the Winds* (Millennium; 1 Dec; £16.99 hb, 512pp) — Fourth in the 'Sword of Truth' fantasy series. The third is:

**Terry Goodkind** *Blood of the Fold* (Dec; £6.99 pb)

**Eliette Abecassis** *The Qumran Mystery* (1 Dec; £16.99 hb, 384pp) — Fantasy thriller about the life and death of Christ and the disappearance of a Dead Sea Scroll that would uncover the truth about it. A bestseller in France. Delayed from July.

**Michael Moorcock** *Earl Aubrey* (Dec; £5.99 pb)

**Alison Sinclair** *Blueheart* (Dec; £4.99 pb)

**Various Predictions** (Phoenix; £2.00 each pb, c80pp) — 25 short books in which leading thinkers attempt to forecast the next fifty years.

★ **Alan Stewart** *The Magical Maze* (1 Dec; £17.99 hb, c320pp) — The book of the 1997 Royal Institution Christmas Lectures, published to coincide with their broadcast. Stewart is a fine populariser of mathematics, and this year's lectures are about maths as a problem and puzzle-solving activity.

**Poppy Z. Brite** *Courtesy Love: The Real Story* (1 Dec; £16.99 hb, c256pp) — Associational biography of the rock singer / actress.



Including Little, Brown

**Warnings:** Due to the Legend/Orbit merger some of the information below may be unreliable.

**Nancy McKenzie** *The High Queen* (Legend; 1 Sep; £5.99 pb, 430pp) — Arthurian fantasy

continuing the story of Guinevere begun in *The Child Queen*.

**Chris Bunch** *The Seer King* (Orbit; 1 Oct; £9.99 tp, 519pp) — Epic fantasy, first in a

trilogy. "The story of a wizard-emperor and the kingdom he rises to lead and then almost destroys".

**J. V. Jones** *Master and Fool* (Orbit; 23 Oct; £6.99 pb, 688pp) — Final volume of the 'Book of Words' fantasy trilogy.

★ **J. V. Jones** *The Barbed Coil* (Orbit; 23 Oct; £16.99 hb, 612pp) — Fantasy, a stand-alone novel. "A young American woman finds an unusual ring and is transported to a strange, colourful world where she is caught up in a heady and dangerous mix of politics, war, magic and love." J. V. Jones — the 'J' stands for Julie — was born in Liverpool and, after some involvement in the 80s music scene there, moved to San Diego to run an export business and become the marketing director of a software company.

★ **John Brosnan** *Light Camera Magic!* (Legend; 1 Oct; £4.99 pb, 216pp) — Another volume in the humorous fantasy sequence begun in *Damned and Fancy*. Travis and the demon Jack are down on their luck, and decide to make a movie on the cheap by transporting a film crew to the fantasyland of Samella, where magic works and barbarians are covered in more baby oil than *Alan Schwarzenegger*. Harry Harrison tackled a similar theme in the splendidly daff *The Technicolor Time Machine* (1968).

**Michael White** *Life Out There* (Legend; 1 Oct; £15.99 hb, 304pp) — Rational non-fiction account of SETI, interstellar flight, and the possibilities of alien life.

**Paul Barnett** *Kaantalek* (Legend; 1 Nov; £5.99 pb, 384pp) — Tasty space opera, second volume of the 'Strider Chronicles'.

**Elizabeth Moon** *Divided Allegiance* (Legend; 1 Dec; £5.99 pb, 528pp) — Heroic fantasy, book two of 'The Deed of Paksenarrion'.



# The Rest



Jonathan Cape  
Paper Tiger  
Bantam  
Vintage

★ **Douglas R. Hofstadter** *Le Ton beau de Marot* (Bloomsbury: £1 Jul; £30.00) — If you know Gödel, Escher, Bach or Metamagical Themas you'll have some idea what to expect. This is about language translation, but veers off into digressions on AI, games, Stanislaw Lem's and Poul Anderson's worldplay, J. D. Salinger, slang, and the wider shores of language.

★ **Sadie Plant** *Zeros + Ones* (Fourth Estate: £1 Sep; £14.99 hb, c320pp) — Radical view of the intersections between women, feminism, machines, and information technology. Plant is researching at Warwick University.

★ **Ray Bradbury** *Quicker Than the Eye* (AvoNova: 10 Sep; \$5.99 pb) — Bradbury's first coll. for ten years.

★ **Ray Bradbury** *Driving Blind* (AvoNova: 10 Sep; \$23.00 hb, 261pp) — Hot on the heels of *Quicker Than the Eye*, here's another coll. of 21 stories, 17 of which have never appeared before.

★ **Simon M. Shinercock** *The Dark Lagoon* (Ripping: £1 Sep; £5.99 pb, 412pp) — Horror from an estate agent in Surrey, with a pair of vaguely-drawn heroes confronting an unmotivated off-the-shelf evil in Florida. But it's in sore need of a copy-editor ("Wilbur... started humming the tune to Uretha [sic] Franklin's Killing Me Softly With Your Love [sic] and has a tendency to spontaneously italicise and, random comes. Though poorly-paced (horror needs good plot-control to work), it's a first novel and does show the occasional spark of imagination in the set-pieces. Brian Hughes Hobson & Co (Ripping: £1 Sep; £5.99 pb, 356pp) — Humorous fantasy, rather splendidly illustrated by the author.

★ **J. K. Haderack** *Mercur's Whore* (Ripping: £1 Sep; £5.99 pb, 375pp) — Heroic fantasy, with a ludicrously obviously-shaped map.

★ **Anthony Masters** *The Dark Side of the Brain* (Bloomsbury: £1 Oct; £3.99 pb, c128pp) — YA fantasy about a boy who gets a knock on the head and finds he can hear other people's thoughts.

★ **Anthony Masters** *Cloving Me, Cloving You* (Bloomsbury: £1 Oct; £3.99 pb, c128pp) — YA fantasy. A Hall of Mirrors in a carnival appears to be able to create copies of its visitors.

★ **Peter Haining** (ed.) *Timespaces* (Sovener: £1 Oct; £16.99 hb, 288pp) — Anth. of time-travel stories, all reprints and nearly all classics. Contributors include Dick, Ballard, Gibson, Clarke, Amis (Martin), Adams, Bradbury, Heinlein, Asimov, and Wells. Recommended.

★ **Peter Haining** (ed.) *The Flying Sorcerers* (Sovener: £1 Oct; £16.99 hb, 272pp) — YA (which here stands for 'Yet Another') comic fantasy anth., a follow-up to Haining's *Wizards of Odd* from Legend earlier this year. Contributors include Pratchett, Dahl, Clarke, Vonnegut, Wyndham, Peake, Carter, and P. G. Wodehouse.

★ **Francis Spufford** (ed.) *The Vintage Book of the Devil* (Vintage: Oct; £7.99 pb, c400pp)

★ **Jenny Uglow** (ed.) *The Vintage Book of Ghosts* (Vintage: Oct; £7.99 pb, c400pp)

★ **Albert J. Ailezhuwa** *Quake* (Bloomsbury: Oct; £5.99 pb, c400pp) — Harrowing disaster novel as a quake levels Tokyo. "Not for the squeamish," saith The Times.

★ **Michael White** *Isaac Newton: The Last Sorcerer* (Fourth Estate: £1 Oct; £17.99 hb, c416pp) — New biography of Newton, concentrating on his alchemical researches.

★ **Patrick Süskind** *The Double-Bass* (Bloomsbury: £1 Oct; £10.95 hb, c128pp) — Associational monologue by a bass player from the author of the very fine fantasy *Perfume*.

★ **Michael Swanwick** *Jack Faust* (AvoNova: Oct; \$23.00 hb, 337pp) — Snaal recasting of the Faust legend. "There is no God," says  $m_{ph}=i\partial_t\Phi H E_1 \Sigma S$  to Jack Faust, offering from his alternative universe. With echoes of Hitler and the Holocaust, Charles Foster Kane, Aleister Crowley, Faust forays the Industrial Revolution in his own lifetime. . . . This is the famous road paved with good intentions, truth and the certainty that all men are good. Good Angel Margaret and her alter ego BadAss Gretchen are the spurs, and Faust and Gretchen's descent into a moral abyss is chronicled mercilessly, and poetically — Swanwick's writing is excruciatingly good, and though couched in sf language the story, like all of his tales, inhabits a truthful intergenre hinterland. The Iron Dragon's Daughter offered many lovers of genre fantasy with its glorious disregard of convention, and this may do likewise to sf readers who like The Same As Before. But if you're happy with sf-spectulative fiction, read this notioned, lush, compulsively readable moral tragedy. Highly recommended.

★ **Justin Richards & Andrew Martin** *The Doctor Who Book of Lost Souls* (BBC: £6 Oct; £5.99 pb, 223pp) — "Tollie references, bicycles, swearing ('Shit', 'Crapp', 'Sod off'), nudity, plus every fact you'd expect and some you wouldn't: apparently Chris Priest wrote a Dr Who story, but it was never broadcast. And Harold Pinter. Once acted. In the series. Also includes a full episode guide.

★ **Mike Tucker & Robert Perry** *Doctor Who: Illegal Alien* (BBC: £6 Oct; £4.99 pb, 279pp)

★ **David J. Howe** *Doctor Who: Monsters* (BBC: £6 Oct; £16.99 hb, 118pp) — A distinctly tacky cover hides an interesting and well-informed encyclopedia to the various monsters encountered by the Doctor over the years, with production drawings, interviews with designers and writers, BBC memos, fx details, unused designs and lots more. An example of how to do this kind of book well.

★ **John Peel** *Doctor Who: War of the Daleks* (BBC: £6 Oct; £4.99 pb, 277pp)

★ **Robert Silverberg** *Sorcerers of Majipoor* (Pan: 10 Oct; £5.99 pb, 629pp) — Fifth book set in Majipoor, some of Silverberg's slightly cynical (but money-spinning) fantasy/sf series; this set is 1,000 years before the reign of Lord Valentine.

★ **Malcolm Ashman & Joyce Hargreaves** *The Book of Fabulous Beasts* (Paper Tiger: £1 16 Oct; £13.99 pb, 112pp ill.) — Portfolio of fantastic and mythological creatures put together by Ashman: Typhon and the Fomorians as well as the more usual mermaids and dragons.

★ **Rodney Matthews & Nigel Suckling** *Countdown to Millennium* (Paper Tiger: £1 16 Oct; £13.99 pb, 112pp ill.) — Matthews' album covers from 1969 to date, plus various book covers and illustrations.

★ **Gardner Doziers** (ed.) *Best New SF 10* (Raven: £30 Oct; £7.99 pb, 676pp) — New edition of the indispensable annual anth., covering 1996. Stories from Bedford, Swanwick, Kress, Tony Daniel (2), Blacklock, Bud Sparhawk, Kessel, Park, McDonald, Silverberg, Jim Cowan,

McHugh, Sterling (the Hugo-winning "Bicycle Repairman"), Feeley, Michael Cassut, Resnick, Gwyneth Jones, Sheffield, Reed, Stephen Utley, Barton, Wolfe, Lethem, Wilder, Broderick, Williams, and Stephen Baxter ("In the MSOB"; wrongly credited to Bruce Sterling and with a major error in the intro: *The Time Ships* did not win the Clarke Award). There's also a comprehensive 50-page review of the year and an invaluable "Honourable Mentions" list. Some facts: 4 stories out of 28 by women. 3 UK authors. 3 stories first published on the Internet. Story sources: Asimov's 9 — edited by Dozios, of course; *Interzone* 2; *SF Age* 2; *Starlight* 13; *Omni Online* 2; *Intersections* 2; and one each from *Analogue*, *F&SF*, *Century* 4, *Eidolon*, *Off Limits*, *Aboriginal* and *War of the Worlds*. Global Dispatches.

The summation of 1996 makes depressing reading. In the US nearly every sf magazine saw a substantial drop in readership, and Dozios laments the dominance of fantasy over sf — particularly in the UK, where "it is now almost impossible to sell an sf book to a British publisher, even for Big Name writers". He has high praise for *Interzone*: "The literary quality of the stories in *Interzone* remains high; *Interzone*, in fact, is one of the most reliable places to find first-rate fiction in the entire magazine market, and deserves your support", and gives substantial critiques of the major anthologies of the year, particularly praising Patrick Nielsen Hayden's *Starlight* 1.

This book is essential — if you're interested in sf, you'll want it. Highly recommended.

★ **Margaret Atwood & Charles Pachter** *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (Bloomsbury: £1 Nov; £20.00 hb, 722pp ill.) — Associational facsimile reprint of Atwood's 1970 poetry cycle, illustrated by Pachter.

★ **Swampy** *An Eco-Warrior's Handbook* (Fourth Estate: £1 Nov; £9.99 pb, c160pp) — "huff said. Let's hope he's more articulate in print than verbally.

★ **Caroline Alexander** *Mrs Chippy's Last Expedition* (Bloomsbury: £1 Nov; £14.99 hb, c192pp) — The ship's cat on board Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition to the South Pole in 1914 tells her own story.

★ **A. C. Evans** *Space Opera* (Stride: Nov; £4.99 pb, ill.; ISBN 1 900152 00 2) — Reprint of a sequence of sf poems about a starship exploring the mysterious planet NeoGaia; it was first published in *The Serendipity Caper* (1986), is illustrated by Evans, and includes an interview with the author by Steve Sneyd. The "techno-reportage" style, ambiguity and ironies of *Space Opera* make the sequence a unique example of 1980s speculative poetry. Available (post free) from Stride Publications, 11 Sylvan Rd., Exeter, Devon, EX4 6EW.

★ **Patrick Süskind** *Three Stories and a Reflection* (Bloomsbury: Nov; £5.99 pb, c128pp) — Three fantasy slipstream stories and an essay recounting the author's "great forgetting," as he browses his library and discovers how few of the books he can actually remember.

★ **Philip Martin** *Vengeance on Varos* (BBC: £3 Nov; £5.99 pb, 1x90m abridged) — This is read by Colin Baker, but you'll have to search for the writer; it's Martin's own novelisation (published by Virgin) of his original teleplay.

★ **Anne Rice** *The Feast of All Saints* (Chatto & Windus: £1 Nov; £12.99 pb, c128pp) — Associational. Historical epic set in pre-Civil War New Orleans.

★ **Jeremy Dyson & Mark Gatiss** *The Essex Joke* (Fourth Estate: £1 Nov; £6.99 pb, c128pp) — Dreadful-sounding allegedly humorous short story from *The Essex Joke Book* and the current craze for paranormal happenings.

★ **Stephen Jay Gould** *Questioning the Millennium* (Cape: Nov; £12.99 pb, 208pp) — Gould muses on the millennium.

★ **Joseph Harker** (ed.) *The Weirdest Ever Notes & Queries* (Fourth Estate: £1 Nov; £8.99 pb, c288pp) — Selections from the *Guardian* column, a first-rate loose book if ever there was one.

★ **Adrian Mowbray** *Whatever Happened To...?* (Sovener: £1 Nov; c£7.99 pb, c56pp ill.) — Humorous after-tales of various heroes: Pinocchio, Frankenstein's monster (analysed by Freud), Man Friday, the Arful Dodger (porn publisher), Jane Eyre, and others.

★ **Donald S. Johnson** *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic* (Sovener: Nov; £14.99 hb, c240pp ill.) — Historical examination by a mariner of the truth — if any — behind seven legendary islands: H-Brazil, the Isle of Demons and so forth.

★ **Oscar Wilde** *The Fisherman and His Soul* and *Other Fairy Tales* (Bloomsbury: Dec; £10.95 hb, c144pp) — Ten selections from the colls. *The Happy Prince* and *The House of Pomegranates*.

★ **The Brothers Grimm** *The Twelve Dancing Princesses and Other Fairy Tales* (Bloomsbury: Dec; £10.95 hb, c144pp) — Edited by Giles Gordon. Includes "The Frog Prince", "Rapunzel", "Rumpelstiltskin" and others.

★ **Mike McCormack** *Crowe's Requiem* (Cape: £1 Jan 98; £9.99 pb, c224pp) — Story of Crowe, born into a village with no history or contact with the world. "Love story and gothic fairy tale, teeming with ghosts, sorcerors and vagrants, an eerie and treacherous meditation on the nature of storytelling by one of Ireland's finest new writers."

★ **Jon Stephen King** *If He Lived* (Vintage: Jan 98; £5.99 pb, c320pp) — A modern ghost story.

★ **Gregory Benford** *Cosm* (AvoNova: Feb 98; \$23.00 hb, 344pp) — Hard sf, more akin to *Timespace* (1980) and *Artifact* (1985) than his *Waldemey* books, in that it concentrates on scientists at work. A black female physics professor in California conducts an accelerator experiment, but a mysterious bowling-ball sized object appears and wrecks her equipment. She smuggles it back to her lab and with another physicist and her students tries to work out what it is: a created universe, in which time is passing exponentially faster than here. Full of absorbing scientific detail and sensuous goosepums, it's slightly let down by Benford's sneering straw-man approach to environmentalists and politicians and reporters and religious people and administrators and . . . well, anyone who isn't a scientist, basically. In his the following in the footsteps of Fred Hoyle's *The Black Cloud* and other books since, but the reason *Timespace* remains GB's best novel is its more sophisticated approach to those who don't share his worldview. Readable, exciting, but flawed.

★ **Dennis Daxner** *Circuit of Heaven* (AvoNova: Feb 98; \$14.00 hb, 373pp) — A century hence, most of humanity exists in the 'Ben', a virtual reality environment.

MORE ON PAGE 23

# mailbox



## Write To Matrix and win a T-shirt!



Send letters to  
**Matrix**  
9 Beechwood Court, Back Beechwood Grove  
Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS4 2HS, UK  
or email [bsfa@enterprise.net](mailto:bsfa@enterprise.net)  
or fax 01327 361661  
(marking emails and faxes clearly 'For Matrix')

Letters may be edited. If you don't want your full address printed please indicate this clearly. Anonymous letters will be printed at the editor's discretion.

## T-Shirt Winner

• Let's start off with Matrix's youngest ever correspondent, who gets a rather oversized T-shirt:

From **Tristram Smith**

19 Millford, Goldsworth Park, Woking, Surrey, GU21 3LH

My sister has *Gulliverzone* and I really like it and I'd like the first 4 a lot so I can read them and let the rest of the family read them.

Your sincerely, Tristram Smith aged 8 thank you ☺

• I hope you enjoy the others; thanks for writing!

Here's *Zhenyi*, who wishes to remain anonymous ("don't ask me why, put it down to conspiracy theories!"):

From **Zhenyi**

somewhere@planet.earth

It had to take your offer of the Web books to get me to write ....

If I get them I plan to give them to a friend, whose two young daughters are now keen readers of *sf/fantasy* because I recommended he buy them some Diana Wynne Jones books (well, being bright and curious they'd probably have discovered *sf* sooner or later, but I want to try and claim some measure of credit; just a little). Would I read them first myself? Now would I?

I thought this latest issue of *Matrix* was particularly interesting – the 'Politics and SF' focus was a great idea. It would have been even more interesting in such an issue to have had maybe a general article with an overview of political *sf* novels (not shorts, just to keep the scope manageable) of the various categories, with views – in the same article – on, e.g. the key novels about or based on libertarian, then socialist, conservative, utopian, dystopian, anarchist, feminist, etc. views. But maybe you'd say the articles you had in that issue do more or less cover that ground, albeit from the idiosyncratic angles of your individual contributors, and that approach is more interesting than the boring old general long article. And you'd have had to get someone to write it too. Might have been fun to see an overview of the full range of political -isms which have been covered in *sf*, though. ☺

From **Craig Marnock**

55 Ferry Road 2/R, Yorkhill, Glasgow, G3 8QD

This is my entry in the competition to win a set of 'Web' books, as seen on p21 of *Matrix* 127.

So, did I win? [Yup – Chris]

Is this a cunning ploy to get letters of comment? A ploy so cunning you could put a tail on it and call it a brute. [Shucks, rumpled again. Got me bang to rights there, yup. – Chris] I think you're doing an excellent job with *Matrix*, and shouldn't take a lack of letters personally. In the box on p12 you say there were four pages of letters ten years ago, but did you actually count the words? I think you have got an awful lot more words per page than Maureen Porter did at the time. Anyway, without Ken Lake to stir up some controversy these days, whadya expect?

There's a lot of good features in this issue too, as well as all the news and stuff; in fact, when I saw the cover I thought I was looking at *Vector* till I checked the masthead. Andrew Butler and Gary Dalkin must be jealous of your connections. [E... it doesn't quite work like that! – Chris] Seeing that you run a *Focus* spot as well, not to mention sketches of nearly every book coming out, I wonder if I still need to read the other two magazines. In fact, if you started printing news and moved to a daily publishing frequency, I would never have to read any other publication. This would simplify my buying habits a great deal. Think about it.

PS: My favourite bits in this issue were the 'Rizla' parody at the head of 'Big Butt'; and the idea that some people collect books 'cause they've got books on the cover. C'mon... Brian and Caroline are kidding – aren't they? ☺

• That was an editorial interpolation, I'm afraid... I did indeed once meet someone who collected paperbacks in order to count nipples.

Here's *Vector*'s Andy Butler, complaining as usual:

From **Andy Butler**

33 Brook View Drive, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5JN

I suspect Aleph has been smoking too many funny cigarettes, in pursuing Robert Holdstock's so-called Freudian tendencies. [Matrix 127 p27] (Hasn't he suffered enough?) Any fule kno that the name is Gregory Pickersill – I presume both Holdstock and Pickersill were hanging out in tandem in the 1970s – and indeed that *Necroscope* was a novel by Brian Lumley rather than Mr Holdstock, who wrote the underrated *Necromancer*. Aleph should either choose wiser sources or check his facts. [Or change his editor. I hang my head in shame – I really should have picked up those errors. – Chris] Still, at least he isn't having a go at *Vector* this time, for which thanks. ☺

• You really shouldn't have said that – you've upset him now.

I was very disappointed in the feeble response to last issue's politics articles. But Gary Dalkin, saves the day:

From **Gary Dalkin**

5 Lydford Road, Bournemouth, BH11 8SN

Your 'Politics and SF' sequence of articles made for some very interesting reading. Stephen Palmer struck a chord. I remember arguing in the 5th form at school that we lived in an elected dictatorship: you play a very minor part in choosing one of two sets of people once every five years, and then they do as they please. I couldn't convince anyone, but then this was a right-wing grammar school in right-wing Bournemouth, and before that Thatcher Junta came to power. I always remember a piece of graffiti sprayed on a wall along the side of the railway line into Waterloo. It was there for a couple of years around 1981-3 and it said, "Don't Vote. It only encourages the Bastards". I've always found this to be a reasonable argument, in that not voting can, as Stephen Palmer says, represent not apathy but complete dissatisfaction with either the political process as imposed, or with the particular candidates standing. The problem is that the situation is never represented this way. Not voting is always portrayed as a result of disinterest. My solution would be to have the option "None of the Above" on every voting slip. If "None of the Above" took the most votes – obviously under a Proportional Representation system, because the very idea of democracy under our First Past the Post ritual is a contradiction in terms – then no one would be elected. The result would be an empty parliament and radical electoral reform.

As it is I do vote, not with any faith in the new lot,

but merely in the hope of finally ousting the previous corrupt incumbents. Blair and his Yesminstermen (and women) are no better, but at least they haven't yet had 18 years to wallow in far too much power. Of course, if we were unfortunate enough to have a law such as the one in Australia which makes voting compulsory – yes folks, roll up and see the wonders of enforced suffrage – then the only sane response would be not to vote. For which they can send you to prison. I could make a very non-PC joke here about how this shows the old convict mentality lingering on, but that would be too obvious, so I won't.

David Curl on "SF after Socialism" was perceptive and engrossing. Unfortunately, and it must just be me because I didn't much care for *The Star Fraction* either, I found Ken MacLeod's essay to be as dry and impenetrably tedious as I've always found the endless hairsplitting intrigues of the Hard Left and its numerous humourless subdivisions. Let's face it, socialism is nothing but a secularised version of Christianity, and it will never work (as has been proved many times this century) without the spiritual dimension. Why, because we aren't perfect. Idealism goes up against selfish instinct and gets a thrashing every time. It's also politically naive to forever argue about the distribution of resources without ever wondering where they come from, and what might happen if they run out or we poison the source. Which is why the various Green Parties around the planet are the only politicians with even half a clue. And look how popular they are. Meanwhile, back in Blairland it too, as The Who once sang, to "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss / Won't get fooled again". ☺

Ian Watson has a sad postscript to his article last issue on his novel *Oracle*:

From **Ian Watson**

Dunworthy, Northants

I just received *Matrix* with great pleasure – many thanks for running the piece about *Oracle*, and listing the web page address. Though a really sad thing happened. I sent a signed copy of the novel to my Roman re-enactor informant, to whom it is co-dedicated, as a surprise, which would have chuffed him, and his wife phoned to say that he died of a massive heart attack a few weeks earlier. Not while re-enacting, just out of the blue. He was so fit, glowing with vigour and zest. There was a one minute silence for Bucco at a re-enactment at Caerlon. ☺

• **INFORMATION WANTED** runs the heading to this plea from the Science Fiction Foundation:

From **Andy Sawyer**

asawyer@liverpool.ac.uk

Yes, even the Science Fiction Foundation can say:

"E... dunno."

Does anyone have any information on:

NEIL AUSTIN (US 1940s *sf* artist) who illustrated a series entitled 'Masters of Fantasy' in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*.

GORDON HUTCHINGS (UK (?) *sf* artist) who provided a number of covers for the British Science Fiction *Adventures* in the late 1950s.

If anyone has any information could they please contact Roger Newson, 32 Rosemary Avenue, Felixstowe, Suffolk, IP11 9HX – please also let me know so I'll be better prepared for next time. ☺

• If you don't have email, see Andy's 'Stars' End article on p20 for details of how to contact him.

Richard Dunning is tersely worried about something:

From **Richard Dunning**

richard.dunning@virgin.net

What's wrong with Space Sagas anyway? ☺

• OK, I give up...

• John Jarrold's provocative piece on the Arthur C. Clarke Award drew a heated response. David Barrett, former *Vector* editor and ACCA judge and Administrator, kicks off. From David V. Barrett

23 Oakfield Road, Croydon Surrey, CR0 2UD  
I find it sad that John Jarrold is still so much against the Arthur C. Clarke Award, apparently on the grounds that several times in its history it's been awarded to unusual books, or controversial books, or books (shockhorror!) without the magic sign 'SF' on the cover. I don't want to get personal (God knows, it got personal enough – and at times downright nasty – when I was chairing the Award) but I seriously began to wonder where John has been for the last twenty or thirty years.

Judith Merril, who died in September, fought strongly for 'SF' to be redefined as 'Speculative Fiction' rather than that very odd and rather inaccurate term 'Science Fiction'. Even though she was unsuccessful in her genre labelling terms, most of us do now think of sf, at least to some extent, in this way. It's undeniable that, for whatever arcane reasons of their own, publishers do sometimes put out some of the most interesting speculative fiction on non-sf genre lists. To suggest that the ACCA must ignore these is simply silly. (How silly? Well, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* clearly can't be, can they?)

The ACCA has had a mind of its own since its inception, and why not? It's had a very wide range of judges over those years, with different backgrounds, different 'credentials', different stances on what makes or doesn't make 'good sf'. The mixture of fanish and professional, of readers and authors and critics and scientists, ensures that no one faction should ever dominate. Sometimes a clear genre-sf title wins; sometimes the judges pick a title which didn't happen to be hand edited by one of the half-dozen or so genre-sf editors in the country.

John mentions three recent major sf titles and asks "How did none of them end up on the shortlist? Please, please don't tell me 'We found six better novels' ...". I obviously don't know about this year, but in my two years as a judge and three as (non-voting) chairman, it happened several times that a book similar to these three, an undeniably good, worthwhile, genre-sf title, would be mentioned at the shortlist meeting, but that no one rooted for it to go on the shortlist. Why? Who knows. Strange things can happen when judges get together, in my award. When you have fifty books submitted (and sometimes in the past it was over a hundred), many of them can be expected to be good. It's not always a question of 'good' and 'better'. It's more a case (or so it seemed to me, in the years I was involved) that there was sometimes an almost indefinable something about a book which got it on to the shortlist – or didn't.

(And also, don't forget that when selecting a shortlist of six, there's always a seventh and an eighth which could so easily have changed places with the sixth. There is an element of luck in it – or bad luck, for the seventh book that didn't quite make it.)

The ACCA has been, from the start, an award for excellence and innovation in speculative fiction – not just for a good old sf novel commissioned and edited by John Jarrold or Nick Austin or Jane Johnson or Carolyn Oakley or others and published under their specific imprints. There are plenty of other awards for different aspects of sf; surely there is a legitimate place for the ACCA to recognise sf as literature – and to recognise speculative fiction as sf, whatever the marketing label a publisher has seen fit to stick on the back. Does this really make the ACCA "a totally discredited award", as John asserts? I worry when one of our leading sf editors seems determined to keep sf trapped in its little genre ghetto. ☹

• Andy Butler was one of last year's judges:

From Dr Andrew M. Butler  
33 Brook View Drive, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5JN

I'm very pleased to see that John Jarrold has attacked the ACCA winner *The Calculus Chromosome*. After the controversy surrounding the prize going to *Body of Glass* rather than *Red Mars* a couple of years ago, I'd expected the choice to be controversial. It certainly wasn't a decision we took lightly. When I heard no reports of any sign of protest (save for Jarrold's condemnation of the ACCA judges as 'dickheads' at Eastercon) my only regret was that I had worried over nothing.

I'm not prepared to explain why certain books were or were not on the shortlist. But I do wish to defend the shortlist itself. Jarrold does not dispute *Voyage or Blue Mars*, but suggests that looking for *The Mahdi*, *Gibson's Decline and Fall* and *The Engines of God*, though far enough novels, are ones which have no place on a best-of-the-year list. Well, BSFA reviewers and committee members obviously disagree – all five books were voted for by this body in substantial numbers in *Vector's* annual poll (along with another novel by McDevitt, without which *Engines* may have placed higher). The ACCA jury are in good company. Yes, *Excession* is top of the list and won the BSFA Award – fine, it's certainly a crowd pleaser. Comparisons are odorous, but we did have eighteen years of Tory rule, and the Spice Girls at number one.

A hardback from a writer outside the field, from a publisher not known for its sf (but which publishes Scott Bradford, Hesse, Eco and dozens of broadly magic realist titles) was unlikely to have reached a mass audience within the field when the poll was conducted. But it was a book that Brian Stableford gave a rave review to, and which the jury strongly felt ought to be read: it's refreshing in its racial angle, it has a new slant on the information society, it has echoes of *Camp Concentration* and *The Signalman* [*The Dickens story, I think he means... Ed.*], a conspiracy theory that would make Neal Stephenson look twice and an authentically Phil Dickian twist in the tale.

I can't speak for the other judges, but I certainly felt that the winner of the Clarke Award should be the novel that made me think about sf in a new way, which enlarged the field for having existed – something which is true of Clarke's best novels. And it's certainly true of *The Calculus Chromosome*.

But no, Jarrold slaps down a gauntlet and demands that only sf books should win – or other books labelled as sf. Let's keep the genre pure. Ooops – get rid of *Vari* and *Fools* from the shelves. They're not labelled sf. Oh, and a book by an author who has written sf, though this book isn't actually labelled sf anywhere. However, even a dickhead knows that as *Excession* has a spaceship on the cover, it must be sf. There's progress for you. ☺

• Andy Sawyer is a former judge:

From Andy Sawyer  
Liverpool University Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool, L69 3DA

John seems to be saying that only books published as "a science fiction novel" should be eligible for the Clarke Award. Does this mean – as it seems to – "anything published by someone's sf line" or "with the words 'science fiction' on the cover"? If so, that seems to cut an awful lot out. Perhaps, given John's opinion on Clarke Award shortlists, this would mean that George Turner's *The Sea and Summer* (which was published by Faber without a single hint that this book was science fiction) should not have won in 1988, nor should Stanislaw Lem's *Fiasco*, published by Deutsch with only a reviewer's puff to give a hint that this was

sf, have appeared on the shortlist.

Can we argue that George Turner and Stanislaw Lem are not science fiction? Blame me – I was on the jury at that time.

John's argument would certainly invalidate William Gibson's *Idoru*, which was published as a mainstream Viking novel rather than under a specialised sf imprint – in fact I remember someone from the publishers telling me that they had made a specific decision to not publish it as an sf novel.

I can understand editors from specialist imprints becoming annoyed that "their" books have not won. But to confine an award for the best sf novel of the year to books which marketing people have decided to identify as sf does no good for the field as a whole and is a bit unfair for people who are packaged by publishers who don't identify genre in quite this way.

Quite a number of classics of science fiction have not been "published as science fiction". Let's throw out Olaf Stapledon! Let's dismiss George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides*! Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* – throw it on the "mainstream" pile. Awards are always likely to be idiosyncratic and it's certainly possible for a jury to make the "wrong" decision for the right reasons. But if the award is for the best sf novel of the year, let's keep it to that, not "best sf novel with the words 'science fiction' inserted somewhere on the back cover so that W. H. Smiths know where to shelve it" ... and argue again about whether a particular winner is good enough or not. ☹

• The Clarke Award is co-sponsored by the BSFA. We provide two of the judges, and so it's partly given to your behalf. However, only one 'ordinary' member seems to have an opinion or care about it. Hats off to regular correspondent Philip Muldowney.

From Philip Muldowney

7 Colson Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton, SO18 1HG

John Jarrold seems to be slightly cock-eyed, although his definition of sf as "any novel which is published as an sf novel" is very revealing. As one of the prime editors of sf, this means presumably that sf is whatever he wants it to be ... WOW! Such power. Gone are whole generations of readers, and libraries of books, to be replaced by THE WORD OF THE EDITOR, all glory to the powerful one! If your first statement is plain stupid, then your further arguments are somewhat less believable.

Any award that has had different judges each year is bound to be one that has variable results. Only the long run can really test the validity of the yearly judgements. Then again, are the populist awards any better? The Hugo and Nebula awards have often resembled beauty contests over the years. Perhaps the real pity of the Clarke Award is that it does not seem to have raised any public awareness of itself and sf over the years. Was the Clarke Award given any mention at all in the national media this year? Whatever you might say about the Booker or the Turner, they have certainly raised the profiles of their respective areas of endeavour. ☺

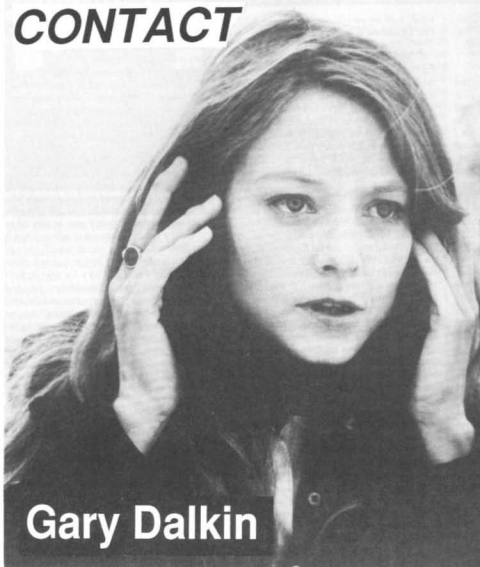
From Paul & Elizabeth Billinger

1 Long Row Close, Exendon, Daventry, Northants., NN11 3BE

Having read John Jarrold's thoughts on the Arthur C. Clarke Award in *Matrix*, we were interested to find *The Calculus Chromosome* filed under 'science fiction' in all the branches of Waterstone's we've visited recently. Not only that, but the hardback edition is being displayed with a band around it proclaiming 'Winner of the Arthur C. Clarke Award'. ☺

WE ALSO HEARD FROM David Curl, Gary Dalkin, Chris Hill, Steve Jeffery, Ken MacLeod, John Ollis, Stephen Palmer. Thanks to one and all! — Chris

# CONTACT



## Gary Dalkin

SOME THINGS which work on the page cannot be translated to the screen. A film is not a book, and when adapting a lengthy novel to fit the constraints of a commercial motion picture material must be sacrificed. Change, to translate one medium into another, is not of itself necessarily detrimental, and deletions can with care shine new light on the heart of a work. It is all a matter of what the film-makers choose to change and cut. One can even make an argument that the source does not matter, that the film is a new work in its own right, and must stand or fall purely as a film. Perhaps it depends upon the quality of the source: who now cares that *Blade Runner* is a travesty of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* A great film was crafted from the filleted bones of a flat and rather silly potboiler. Yet when the source is as good as Carl Sagan's *Contact* – not a key book of the genre, but a very good one, filled with ideas, well-plotted and richly characterised – one has every right to hope that the film-makers will have the integrity to keep faith with the spirit of the original work.

It is for this reason, together with the fact that it is so rare that there is even an attempt to film a serious sf novel, that I am going to take the unusual step of reviewing *Contact*, the movie, in the context of *Contact*, the book. In order to do this I will be revealing more details of the storyline than normal, so you may wish to read this after having seen the film or, preferably, read the novel.



There were reasons to be hopeful. The director, Robert Zemeckis, is one of the few Hollywood star directors to have shown a clear ability to present complex sf storylines with lucidity and coherence, specifically in his 'Back to the Future' trilogy. He had also demonstrated, with *Forrest Gump*, a flair for marshalling an elaborate production encompassing a span of decades and continents, large-scale crowds and action and state-of-the-art special effects. All of which would, on the surface, appear to have made him an ideal choice as the man to bring *Contact* to the screen. Further, Zemeckis had assembled an excellent cast, led by Jodie Foster, an intelligent and independent actress, for whom Sagan might have written the rôle of Ellie Arroway.

+++ On 26 September British researchers engaged in the Search for Extra Intelligence (SECI) were briefly by a signal originating from the binary Zemeckis-Foster, a pair of white stars in the dense cluster designated Hollywood. +++

+++ The signal also included data newly-discovered class M. McCann two old main-sequence stars, the Woods, against a faint but detectable background radiation from the newly extinguished supernova Sagan. +++

+++ However, over a period of 1 from around 13.00 BST tentative as it became increasingly obvious signal was the latest in a long false alarms, no more than a momentary striking anomaly amidst the mean noise which comprises 99% of the received from this region . . .

The film begins well, with a splendid, and already celebrated, zoom outward from Earth, through the solar system and beyond to interstellar space, accompanied by a soundtrack montage of famous soundbites back through the decades of the century to the dawn of the wireless age. This sequence encapsulates a real sense-of-wonder of the scale and beauty of the astronomy of one small part of our galaxy, while whetting the appetite for the film to come. Unfortunately this is by far the best scene in the film; there are still 145 minutes to go, and it will be downhill all the way.

What follows is a competent condensation of the novel. The performances and production values are more than acceptable and the whole is shot with a good eye for composition. Combined with the subject this makes for a film which is never less than interesting, but which is presented with a certain lethargy, which Hollywood sometimes mistakes for seriousness, and the result is that it rarely grips.

Ellie Arroway (Foster) is a radio astronomer who has devoted her career to the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence (SETI). Eventually a signal from the stars is received, which when decoded proves to include the plans for a machine. All this is portrayed by Zemeckis with a refreshing realism and attention to detail, with the exception of the moment when the signal is first detected. Sagan gave us a simple spike on a computer display coupled to an alarm light. Zemeckis shows us Foster sitting under a visually striking radio telescope array, listening to the stars through headphones and just happening to stumble across the right frequency – which sounds like a washing machine. This is ludicrous, and Zemeckis now compounds the melodrama by having Foster leap into her car and speed back to the control room accompanied by frenzied music, all the time shouting instructions into her mobile phone for the realignment of the array. The very array which would appear to be pointing in exactly the right direction.

In between Arroway having a one-night stand with Palmer Joss (Matthew McConaughey) then developing a more tentative relationship with this writer cum Presidential spiritual advisor, the Machine is built, sabotaged by a 'born

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again' zealot wearing the latest line in close-fitting dynamite, and the existence of a second Machine, built in secret, is revealed. The Machine as specified contains room for one passenger, all indications are that it is a transport to take a representative of the builders to meet the designers. It is Arroway who ultimately makes the journey, and it is from this point on that the film does everything it possibly can wrong.

Sagan gave us five places in the Machine, sufficient for representatives of different cultures and faiths to debate their experience mediated by their background. Thus an event which changes the entire world is shared by people of different races, different scientific disciplines, religions (or no religion at all), and by members of both sexes. Zemeckis gives us just Foster, who goes because she is an attractive white middle-class American, and the biggest star in the picture. A scrupulously pan-cultural vision, albeit an American one, becomes another adventure in which America leads the way.

The Machine takes Arroway through a series of wormholes. This and the following scenes may have been what attracted Hollywood to the project originally. Sagan's five experience a galaxy full of wonders, but Zemeckis, incredibly, hardly lets us see them at all. There is a wonderful shot of a butterfly galaxy hanging in space. Zemeckis cuts quickly to a close-up of Foster, speechless, close to tears. Repeatedly she says how beautiful it is, that they should have sent a poet. It's a fine moment, but then we want to see what Arroway is seeing again – the golden rule of film is 'show, not tell' – and Zemeckis fails spectacularly.

Sagan's central encounter, in which the travellers reach the galactic core and meet aliens physically embodied from memories taken from their sleeping minds, is reduced to a brief pseudo-mystical moment so ill-explained that much of middle America will probably assume the heroine has taken a day trip to heaven. Then, quite unforgettably, Arroway is back home. Zemeckis has deprived us of our sight of Grand Central Station, Sagan's vast galactic travel interchange, where his travellers see thousands of portals and ships of every design coming and going, of the billions of stars at the galactic core, of the twin black holes, and, most of all, of the enormous engineering project at the centre of the galaxy. It is as if Zemeckis has confused the notion of having a childlike sense of wonder with the childishness

of special effects dominated blockbusterdom, and so decided to keep his 'serious' sci-fi film free of such grandeur.

Arroway is debriefed, and, with no one to confirm her story, disbelieved. This gives the film an opportunity to end with Arroway telling a group of children visiting the array that everyone has to find their own truth within. This fashionably New Age conclusion is a betrayal of everything Sagan stood for, of his argument that there is objective truth 'out there' waiting to be found. Why else have a scientist heroine? We leave Foster sat mournfully in the desert beneath the stars, Alan Silvestri's sentimental score droning on in an attempt to move us. Sagan's ingenious ending, in which Arroway finds conclusive proof of the existence of a creator behind the universe, has, of course, been deleted. It would have required the audience to think.

Systematically the thoughtful debate between science and religious faith which provided the spine of the novel has been reduced to arbitrary New Age wistfulness. The Palmer Joss of the novel provided a positive counterforce to mindless Christian bigotry who oppose the Machine, and who are portrayed with appropriate dry irony in the film. His very tentative romance with Arroway mirrors the metaphysical argument, both characters changing to acknowledge the best in each other's point of view. The Palmer Joss of the film is a vague, all-purpose spiritual guru. Matthew McConaughey is a gifted actor with the looks and charisma of a young Newman or Redford, but here he is reduced to little more than a token sex/love interest for the heroine.

For all its surface sophistication, its claims to be a serious, adult film, a would-be 2001 for the '90s, carefully distancing itself from any movieland sci-fi nonsense, *Contact* is less a sign of intelligence from the stars than of the vacuum between them, containing no more than trace elements and background radiation left over from the creator who first gave it life. Meanwhile the Search for Extra-Cinematic Intelligence continues. It's almost enough to make one lose one's faith ... in the movies.

— Gary Dakin 1997

## "That About Wraps It Up For God"

an alternative view from

JOHN ASHBROOK

SPACE IS BIG. You may think it's a long way down the road to your local multiplex, but that's just peanuts compared to Space.

*Contact* opens with a protracted pull back from our dirty, noisy planet, out through the galaxy, off into dark silence, through clouds of starstuff, which begin to resonate with the hiss of eternity, until, finally, we pass through the infinite and back into the microcosm.

This is a beautiful, majestic, epic opening, which catches the spirit of the scope of sf in one fluid motion. As several characters comment, if we are truly alone in the universe, it seems like an awful waste of Space.

This is a long, deliberate movie, introducing us to its dramatis personae gradually. Director Robert Zemeckis builds a multi-layered narrative, involving, as with all of his movies, well-integrated visual effects (he made *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* in his more flippant days, then went on to heal America's wounds with *Forrest Gump*). But, flying in the face of Hollywood's usual practice, the fx are sewn in all but invisibly. It is as if Zemeckis is determined to enable the gaudy CGI shot by employing it in affectionate emulation of Orson Welles's audacious *Citizen Kane*.

Seriously though, folks, *Contact* isn't about big dreamy visuals, or even about bug-eyed monsters: it's about simple, confused, ambitious, frightened human beings.

Joie Foster plays Ellie Arroway, a precocious radio astronomer. One evening, about forty minutes into the movie, sitting quietly and listening to the universe's static, she suddenly hears a heartbeat. A gentle but emphatic pulse which becomes more and more defined. A rhythmic sign of life, broadcasting across twenty-five light years. For the first time since her parents' death, she isn't alone.

Of course, once the word gets out, the human race (as represented by Americans) predictably displays the infinite variety of human idiosyncrasy. The Jesus freaks, skinheads, hippies, and Elvis impersonators all claim the discovery for their very own. As the sheep look up, Ellie learns that the most important revelation of all time isn't really a question of science, or truth, it's about political posturing and profit margins. Humans will, after all, be humans.

Throughout, Ellie's concerns are off-set by those of the improbably monickered Reverend Palmer Jost (played by Matthew McConaughey) who, despite his affection for her, constantly challenges her lack of faith in God. They embody the classic science v religion debate. Plato v the Apostles.

It would be easy to try to paper over this issue, and it is the film's credit that it doesn't allow either side of the argument to win. Instead, it favourably compares her belief in aliens, despite an absence of evidence, to his belief in God, despite an absence of evidence. Scientific investigation and spiritual conviction are not mutual exclusives, it says; only people too deeply buried in one or the other may lose that perspective.

After a journey which Stanley Kubrick would have been proud of, to a revelation which is, frankly, confusing, we are encouraged to dwell upon how tiny, insignificant, rare and precious life on Earth is. Even though the film strays into polemic as it draws to a close, this takes nothing away from the impact of its mantra. Three words we could do well to mull over as society barrels madly towards the arbitrary measure of a millennium, wracked with new diseases, choked with smog and frightened of every shadow: Awe. Humility. Hope.

As *Contact* draws to a gratifying conclusion, it reminds us to keep searching for our own answers to the big questions ... and not to be too disappointed if we don't find them.

— John Ashbrook 1997

**Contact** — Warner Bros / Southside Amusement Company.  
Director Robert Zemeckis. Produced by Zemeckis & Steve Starkey. Co-produced by Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan.  
Screenplay James Hart & Michael Goldenberg. Based on the novel *Contact* (1985) by Sagan. Based on the story by Sagan and Ann Druyan.  
Special visual effects supervisor Ken Haiston. Editor Arthur Schmidt. Production designer Ed Verreux. Music Alan Silvestri.  
Cast: Joie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, Tom Skerritt, John Hurt, James Woods, Angela Bassett, David Morse, Larry King.  
149 mins. Cert. PG. Anamorphic Panavision. Released Sep 1997.

**T**WO MILLION Americans claim to have had close encounters with aliens. Under hypnosis, many of these remember being abducted from their bedrooms or their cars, and being taken on board flying saucers for intimate medical examination.

Some awful past event was niggling at the backs of the victims' minds, perturbing their lives. The incident had been so traumatic that amnesia drew a veil over it – and maybe the aliens waved a wand of forgetfulness too. The episode became a buried memory. Now, thanks to hypnotherapy, they discover the truth – alien abduction.

*Dark Skies*, the latest UFO conspiracy series showing on Channel 4, knows precisely why aliens abduct people. It is in order to insert a parasitical crayfish into peoples' brains to control their behaviour. The pilot episode of *Dark Skies* showed a classic abduction experience: the hero's terrified girlfriend beset in her bedroom by blurred visitors with big eyes and uncanny powers.

Let us dismiss the parasitical crayfish theory as slightly implausible – *warning, i am being compelled to deny this* – ahem, might there actually be a sensible explanation for the UFO abductions which so many Americans remember?

The recovery of buried memories by hypnotherapy is losing a bit of credibility these days. The human mind has a wonderful knack for embroidering, and for fitting data into a plausible framework. Police forces are no longer quite so confident about using hypnotism to enhance witnesses' memories of a crime. Witnesses *do* remember fuller details, and are utterly convinced that such-and-such is what happened, but these details can be purely imaginary, based on cues that the witnesses have inadvertently picked up.

And consider the epidemic of accusations of child sexual abuse, particularly in America. Visits to a hypnotherapist result in a patient remembering being abused, when a girl or boy, by a parent. Yet now it is beginning to appear that many of these recovered memories may in fact be false memories.

Human memory seems to work by the mind rewriting its memories as time goes by – editing them with a view to what is most important to a person nowadays. Thus the dominant cultural framework has an influence on how we interpret our memories. In the field of family relationships, child sexual abuse became a trendy topic; and hey presto.

Another highly influential cultural framework is the whole business of flying saucers and alien intruders and conspiracies to conceal The Truth, which powers such popular shows as *The X-Files*.

Let's suppose that people who claim to have had close encounters did indeed at some time in their lives undergo a highly traumatic, confusing, and awesome experience. This experience left a very deep mark upon them – so deep, indeed, that it is usually hidden by amnesia, until a few helpful sessions of hypnotism tease out the truth.

To be pulled from your warm soft bed or your car, to be snatched away and to find yourself helpless, blinded by bright lights in a cold gleaming environment, subject to probing by invasive instruments, half-seeing blurred alien strangers who are almost featureless.... To breathe strange, acrid odours. To be bound, and to have your sex organs molested, and samples taken from you. To be separated from comfort, and examined by cold intelligences for an indeterminate period of time before finally being restored to comfort and security....

Actually, hundreds of millions of people, particularly in the developed countries, have experienced this terrible shock, and have forgotten all about it until the memory is restored to them.

This experience is known as *being born*, especially in a hospital.

What an overwhelming impression this 'first contact' with another world has upon the impressionable infant intelligence. Thankfully, as with many big shocks, such as a car crash, the memory is suppressed.

The principal hormone which a mother secretes during labour and birth, in her pituitary gland, and which she releases to induce uterine contractions and lactation, is oxytocin. For the mother, oxytocin serves as a muscle regulator. However, oxytocin has a major side effect. Oxytocin causes amnesia.

Under the influence of oxytocin, trained laboratory animals forget how to carry out tasks. During labour, oxytocin floods the little baby's system. And thus we forget this traumatic episode....

...till, years later, after we have been exposed consciously and unconsciously to hundreds of media accounts of alien abductions, hypnotherapists get to work on us.

Really, most of us are abductees. Maybe the miracle is that *only* two million people in America insist that aliens abducted them, rather than the folks in the delivery room.

— © Ian Watson 1997

• Ian's 1978 novel *Miracle Visitors* offers another explanation for UFOs and alien abductions. In his forthcoming book about UFOs for Virgin, Colin Wilson says: "[Ian Watson's] *The Embedding* is quite possibly the best sf novel ever written, and *Miracle Visitors* runs it close. It is undoubtedly the best novel ever written about UFOs, and, I suspect, comes close to a solution about their true nature."

Ian's latest novel is *Oracle*, published by Gollancz at £16.99.



# IAN WATSON

WONDERS WHETHER  
THERE IS A SENSIBLE  
EXPLANATION FOR UFO  
ABDUCTIONS

with EYES  
as big as  
SAUCERS



Are you a Man in Black or are you just pleased to see me? Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones show off their Saturday night specials

# film

## The Spoof Is Out There

### MEN IN BLACK

reviewed by  
*john ashbrook*

"A: None, because the light bulb doesn't exist. Right?"

**I**F YOU'VE SEEN the trailer for *Men in Black*, you've seen the whole movie. Every gag, stunt, special effect and alien is presented for all to see. Now, clearly, the job of a trailer is to attract attention to a film by showing you the good bits, tempting you with a flash of thigh here, a hint of breast there; but the *MiB* trailer shows you the whole damn chicken.

As one of only two non-sequels released this summer (the other being *The Fifth Element*) this film needed some subtle pre-selling if it was to compete with caped crusaders and dinosaurs. But the eye of the media storm, the film itself, far from being the spectacular, scenery-chewing monstrosity we were led to expect, is a reasonably small-scale slice of whimsy.

Its rather engaging conceit is that they are among us. Selling papers, running pawn shops, driving cabs – they are all aliens. No, not Hispanic or Armenian aliens, but the green-skinned, bug-eyed, glop-slobbering kind. The people who police their activities are those nameless, faceless chaps in dark suits, who are funded through their petal holders on such alien inventions as Velcro and liposuction.

Nice idea.

A typical day in the office can include helping an octopus give birth, interrogating a dog, wiping the memory of any number of innocent bystanders, and saving the Earth... again.

The film hinges on the genuinely engaging old warhorse / young buck

relationship which develops between Tommy Lee Jones (Mr K) and Will Smith (Mr J). The problem is, as characters who have a profile so low they are positively horizontal, who have no names, who are only recalled as *djā vu*, and for whom "silence is our native tongue", they can only have so much personality.

Jones's abrupt "just the facts, ma'am" approach gels well with Smith's badass attitude, but they aren't substantial enough to carry the whole film. So it relies very heavily on its story, which is, unfortunately, merely a hairline thread which strings together a dozen or so carefully conceived and precisely constructed set pieces.

*MiB* feels like what it is – a blueprint for the cartoon series, computer game, toy-line, comic, pillowcase and string of sequels which it will inevitably grow into.

For what is, at heart, a light-hearted "what if" piece, *MiB* is weighed down with the significance brought about by \$400million profit. As Jones confesses at one point, speaking maybe for the whole movie-making machine: "We at the FBI do not have a sense of humour... we're aware of."

*MiB*'s trailer makers may want to take note: jokes do tend to fall flat when you tell people the punch-line first.

"Q: How many men in black does it take to change a light bulb?"

— *John Ashbrook 1997*

**Men in Black** — Columbia TriStar. Director Barry Sonnenfeld. Executive producer Stephen Spielberg. Producers Walter F. Parkes, Laurie MacDonald. Screenplay Ed Solomon, based on the comic by Lowell Cunningham. Music Danny Elfman. Cast: Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Rip Torn.

## points arising

### • Are You Going To Saturn?

In July 1996, page 4 of *Matrix* 120 carried a news item on the NASA/ESA Cassini mission to Saturn, successfully launched on 15 October this year. The news report concerned a CD-ROM full of scanned signatures, now en route to Saturn, to which NASA and ESA invited members of the public to contribute. Did any of you respond? Is your signature on its way to Saturn? Are there any ring-bound representatives of the BSFA? If so, I'd love to hear from you. Let us know!

### • CompuCockUp

A slightly faulty press release led to some incorrect information appearing in the report on CompuServe's 'SF Community' web site (*Matrix* 127, p4), moderated by Stan Nicholls (whom I thank for pointing out the errors). The correct web address is: [http://www.compuserve.co.uk/communities/toc/go\\_top.htm](http://www.compuserve.co.uk/communities/toc/go_top.htm)

(All one word – column widths weren't designed to handle web addresses) CompuServe members with 3.0.3 software can also get in via the Forums and Communities icon on CSI's opening page. There are no 'live' debates at the moment, but they are planned. Currently you can find Publisher's Tips from

Gollancz's sf editor Jo Fletcher, a humorous 'Blast Off!' column from Freda Warrington, and an interview with Louise Cooper.

### • Ken MacLeod

A couple of points arising from Ken MacLeod's article last issue. First, a transcription error led to Brian Micklethwait of the Libertarian Alliance gaining an extraneous appended 'w', my apologies.

The Libertarian Alliance issue various publications, some of which are of sf interest (for instance, 'Boom and Slump in Space' by James P. Hogan). You can contact them at: Libertarian Alliance, 25 Chapter Chambers, Esterbrook Street, London, SW1P 4NN. Tel. 0171 821 5502

### • Back In The USSA

Too late for inclusion in 'Recent and Forthcoming Books' was news of Eugene Byrne & Kim Newman's new novel *Back in the USSA*, published by Mark V. Ziesing Books (a US small-press house) and launched at Murder One in London on 15 October. I note it here as, coincidentally, the story series was mentioned a couple of times last issue in the notes to the

footer quotations. No details of price, but it should be available in specialist and import shops.

### • Best SF Poll

As you'll see on page 3, the BSFA is muscling in on Waterstone's act and running a 'Best SF Book' poll, open to any British or fantasy novel published in the last 50 years. Desert Island Books, if you like – choose the FIVE books you'd take to a desert island and rank them in order; additional comments on the titles are welcome.

I've been pondering my choices over the last few weeks. There's the obvious 'classics' – *Childhood's End*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Stand On Zanzibar*, *Pavane* and so forth – and the less well-known personal favourites – *Divine Endurance*, *The Twilight of Biareus*, *The Affirmation*, *Lavondyss*, *Hello Summer*, *Goodbye* – and then there are novels from the last few years, which have produced some of the best sf I've ever read – *Fairland*, *The Stone Canal*, *The Time Ships*, *Anno Dracula*, *The Werewolves of London*...

One thing's sure: there's no shortage of candidates.

— Chris Terran

**C**LARION is the Writers' Workshop to end all writers' workshops, and the Clarion experience is encapsulated in one word. Intense. That's the point.

Take nineteen assorted individuals, high in talent and ego and ambition, and with little else in common. Tight-pack them into halls of residence. Give them common woes – the heat, the cafeteria food, the trains belching across campus through the night. Give them common cause – to write better, faster, tighter, fresher and to be seen doing it. Let them daily expose themselves in prose under the eyes of a series of successful writers.

Stand well back.

I was warned that Michigan can be hot and humid, and it is. "Last week was cold," Lister Matheson, the course Director, tells me as he picks me up at Lansing Airport. "We've gone straight from winter to summer with no spring." I find it difficult to believe. The heat has a dense and permanent quality to it, and I am glad I have a few extra days to acclimatise and explore the verdant expanse that is Michigan State University campus. It seems about the size of Monaco – but Monaco doesn't have chipmunks – and is laid out for those with cars, bikes, or at the very least, in-line skates, not for stubborn pedestrians such as myself.

The days before the workshop start are needed for more than recovering from jetlag. A rented computer has been installed in my room but it is days before it works – A-drive, screen and keyboard all pack up in quick succession and have to be replaced. Finally, I have a working system and a writing itch that is driving me mad. I raise my hands above the keys and begin to type – and sirens sound throughout the campus. Yes, the county is on tornado alert. Irritated but excited (ooh, I don't think I'm in Barnes any more), I trot down to the basement to wait dutifully for the all-clear. The tornado has been spotted about twenty miles from MSU and it dissipates without much impact and without getting much closer. What an anti-climax. This gives me the impression that moribund computers and imminent twisters are to be a hallmark of my stay in the US, and luckily neither of these prove to be true.

**Try telling a bunch, all convinced that they are mightily talented, that talent weighs less than persistence when it comes to getting published**

The other effect of my early arrival is to raise my curiosity and trepidation about my fellow Clarionettes to an intense pitch, since the value of the experience is probably going to rely at least as much upon them as on the tutors. I knew we had an unusually high ratio of women to men (14 to 5). I knew there was a wide variation in age (early twenties to early fifties) and at fortyish going on fourteenish I fit into the middle somewhere. But what would they be like?

Rumours exist about aggressive competition in some Clarions, and I knew it was not unheard of for someone to leave before the end of the course. Fears that my fellows would be downright nasty begin to dissipate when I meet Scott from Kansas, the next to arrive, and evaporate entirely by the time our group is complete on Sunday. As we circulate, eyeing each other with varying degrees of wariness and enthusiasm, the pattern for the next six weeks is set out. After the first day, mornings from 9.00 to 1.00 would be devoted to going over critiques, then the next bunch of MSS would be passed out to be critiqued for the next day. We also sign up for individual conferences with the tutor during the afternoons. Right from the start there is a sense of urgency to complete new work, staying up until the early hours of the morning if necessary. My writing itch is put to good use. I take to typing with the door to my room open and request being dragged away from the keyboard occasionally.

Our first tutor is Octavia E. Butler, and since I was Guest Liaison who organised her stay at Intervention last Easter, she, at least, is not an unknown quantity. Her basic reserve might prevent her from being a natural-born teacher, but she would never let that stop her from being a good one. I have no worries about her gratuitously stomping on anyone's ego.

Octavia's style is well suited to the first week. In workshops her critiques are to the point and never heavy-handed. Anyone who attended her talk at Intervention will know that her own writing comes largely out of life events which have affected her deeply, and her reiterated advice was to write about things you care about. Her general comments were more likely to be unpalatable than her comments on a particular story. Try telling a bunch all convinced in their deepest selves that they are mightily talented, that talent weighs less than persistence when it comes to getting published.

## Janet Barron

enjoys tornadoes, 'flu and dodgy computers in her quest for the perfect story.

Clarion '97 was held at Michigan State University earlier this year, six weeks of intensive tuition in the art and craft of writing from Octavia E. Butler, Joan D. Vinge, Terry Bisson, Richard Kadrey, Karen Joy Fowler and Tim Powers.

See Janet write . . . see Janet survive criticism . . . see Janet return,

**better  
faster  
tighter  
fresher**

Part of the fascination of the six weeks is finding out about the very different ways our tutors organise their working days. Octavia has to have evolved one of the most extreme, since she fits two days into one. She rises around dawn and gets the bulk of her writing done before tackling the outside world in any form. Then after a couple of hours sleep, she is at the keyboard again. This is a legacy from the time when she was fitting in writing around one or more lowly-paid jobs – and the habit is so deeply engrained it may never leave her. She urged us, with her customary quiet firmness, to establish our own writing routine.

Octavia keeps a fairly low profile away from the workshop sessions themselves, and so does not interfere with the ongoing process as folks begin to form friendships and subgroups ('having kids' links one subgroup, 'having ferrets' another). We begin to sort out whose reading interests are just outside the range of our own writing and who is prepared to be outspoken in their critiques; to find writing that presses all your enthusiasm buttons even though you then go over it and pick it to pieces; and just to find that here was a group of friends who understood what it was like to be a writer. This commonality begins to override other considerations such as age and gender and culture.

**The public reading Richard Kadrey gives towards the end of the week gives me nightmares, a fact I suspect he finds mildly gratifying**

Towards the end of Octavia's week it becomes apparent that the piece I was typing so furiously would not be finished by 9.00am Thursday, and so I submit the story I was finishing on the Day of the Twister. Rather reluctantly – it is high fantasy, not my usual style; it is not as ambitious as the unfinished epic; and it was nine-tenths complete before Clarion. As such it almost qualifies as a trunk story. In general, submitting Things-I-Did-Earlier is not recommended, since half the fun of Clarion is watching people's writing evolve, and seeing events and influences at work on story content. Then fate takes a hand, and I am stricken with a ghastly gastric bug, postponing getting my first feedback. This may have been food poisoning, since it lasted barely two days. It may have been 'flu – a couple of hours into my flight from England I found, to my dismay, that the woman in the next seat was suffering from gastric 'flu, and though I did manage to change seats, the damage had probably been done.

I was immeasurably glad I didn't fall sick when I first arrived on campus. Not that anyone could do much for me apart from keeping me supplied with ice and water. But at least I am among friends. This brings home to me the curious acceleration and intensity of Clarion, as your feelings become engaged with amazing rapidity.

We have been having monsoon weather, and Joan D. Vinge, our tutor for the second week, has horrendous problems with cancelled flights due to thunderstorms all across the west. But when she does arrive, she is bouncy with anticipation, and week two starts in a fresh burst of energy.



To my relief, my first submitted story is received with active enthusiasm (this doesn't mean that no one could pick holes in it. Far from it; we were all becoming adept at this). I have more worries about being shot down in flames with my second, having cheekily given it an American setting and some unpleasant content. In fact, the story-shopping of this second story probably produced the most useful feedback of any critiquing I have encountered anywhere, and if the finished product doesn't come across as both US and entirely credible, then I have only myself to blame. I have also given one of my characters my Gran's disapproving chuckle (*leh leh leh*). This becomes one of our catchphrases and ends up on the back of the Clarion '97 T-shirt. Other quotes include "I think this may be as close to literature as anything we have seen, and this may be a problem", and "I want to know what you take before you write and I want some". The first is a reference to a story of Bill Henry's, whose polish and ability to wield a mean semicolon drew gasps of pure pleasure. The second refers to a particularly vibrant submission from Jae Brim, whose background in the theatre may have something to do with her individual style.

Where Octavia's approach is measured and thoughtful, Joan's is fizzy and enthusiastic. Joan lets us see segments of work in progress in the form of a handwritten draft plus notes added to notes until the effect is of a collage, both confusing and burgeoning with possibilities. With Octavia we had carried out focusing exercises (describe your story in a single sentence), with Joan we undertake inspirational exercises (pick out a card from Joan's collection, and let the imagery suggest a story).

Joan also makes a point of homing in on the emotional heart of a story, and soon we're all doing this. She is also keen to socialise. We go to see *Men in Black*, we eat out, Joan hangs out with us in those free moments.

At the end of the week Joan's husband, Jim Frenkel, arrives for the weekend and schedules an hour with each of us in his capacity as Editor-in-Residence. A packed couple of days indeed. I then realise that there had been a slight slackening of tension during the previous weekend. This doesn't happen while Jim is around, even at the barbecue on Sunday afternoon. If anything, things wind more tightly.

At this point I feel the first signs of fraying round the edges (and four weeks still to go!). Juggling the writing state and the critical state is hard enough. I'm gratified to find I can more or less manage it every day. The lack of sleep is beginning to push at my resilience – but for now my energies are still high and stories are flowing well enough.

And there is good news – Joan is staying on for an extra week, not as tutor but to do some writing. During Terry Bisson's week, Joan lives in her apartment to begin work on the novelisation of *Lost in Space* (both Joan and Terry do novelisations as bread-and-butter work to supplement their own stuff). This is universally held to be a wonderful idea. If there is one thing wrong with the Clarion method of having a different tutor each week, it is that the end of the week comes too soon.

## Tim Powers drinks Diet Coke at the rate of a case a day. Writers shouldn't drink after they are forty, he says

We have all read Terry Bisson's short stories, stylistically enviable and subtle and recognisably individual. So his arrival is keenly anticipated and we are not disappointed. Terry's style as a writer is different again, and his additions to the basic workshop are eclectic. From the literary (reading and discussing extracts from Conrad, Salinger, Snyder and W. H. Auden) to the prosaic (completing a novelisation of a small portion of *The Wizard of Oz*). The focus on the stories shifts slightly to deal with their overall shapes, with more emphasis on form and plot.

Clarion must be an odd experience for the tutors who are responsible for weeks three and four. Underlining the responses to the story under fire are expectations of change and variety, a subtlety which comes from perceptions of previous stories and previous critiques. At the end of the week Terry comments that he would do certain things differently had he to do it again; no novelisation for instance, but perhaps prodding us to produce the alien. So he leaves us, having floated the idea that as an exercise we should write a First Contact story. Nobody actually produces an exercise on First Contact – but the idea filters into several of the stories that are submitted during Richard Kadrey's week.

Richard has the task of holding us together through week four, commonly held to be the time when sleep deprivation and close contact causes frayed tempers to snap. The number of manuscripts submitted each day causes some bad temper – there are seldom fewer than four, and some of these were long – everyone wishes someone else would slacken off. Don't even think of going to Clarion if you don't

see critiquing other MSS as at least as important as the feedback on your own work.

Richard's exhortations are to experiment stylistically and not to censor anything at first draft stage, if at all. He practices what he preaches – the public reading he gives towards the end of the week gives me nightmares, a fact I suspect he finds mildly gratifying. Check out this man if your tastes run to graphic violence depicted in icy clean prose. Richard's impressive array of tattoos make him look ferocious (something he used to bring us into line in workshop, when anyone unwise enough to ramble subsided instantly after a terse "Wrap it up" from the man himself), but under the ink is a charming and cultured man.

## Some come away from Clarion and never write again, their critical instincts honed so sharp they slice themselves to pieces

Karen Joy Fowler and Tim Powers are joint tutors for the final two weeks. As they slip into easy repartee, it's obvious they have done this before. They claim that they rarely agree on anything (except the quality of stories) but they play off each other like a double-act. We rapidly learn to tell them apart, however. Tim is the one who drinks Diet Coke at the rate of a case a day. Writers shouldn't drink after they are forty, he says, and he holds to it. I write down this sage advice in my book of Important Things I Learned At Clarion and then work out on my fingers how many weeks of alcohol consumption I am now allowed. Not many.

The class of '97 are not the only ones who have been working hard. Not only have Tim and Karen read all our submitted stories, but they have received all the stories we have written to date. By the end of the six weeks, the final tally was 106 stories workshoped and Tim and Karen would have read another score or so submission stories as well.

Karen and Tim each have a conference with individuals to discuss all their stories. Then in the final week, as a pair they give a pep talk on *Life After Clarion*.

Not to worry if you don't write for a while, they say. I look behind me to see who they are talking to. Then I wonder if they can see something I can't see. This, however, turns out to be a general form of encouragement, included since some folks do come away from Clarion and never write again, their critical instincts honed so sharp they slice themselves to pieces.

In the middle of all this, one of our number is married, in a Filipino-American ceremony not far from campus.

M. L. Roegner becomes M. L. Konett on Saturday 19 July, and was back in class on Monday 21 July. We (Catherine, mostly) make her veil and Bill is responsible for producing the Order Of Service. We all attend the wedding. There may never have been a turnout of Clarionettes looking so respectable. The bags under our eyes are still there but the T-shirts and shorts are transiently replaced by suits and dresses.

The final week sees me crabby and irritable. I am sick to death of being with these people night and day, and my heart is going to break if I can't be with them forever. Worse, MSS to critique are still pouring in, and I am not actually writing. I vow that after Clarion I am never going to do another critique in my life. No more workshops for me, nosir. Why did I write such long stories, and how am I going to get them home? I have reluctantly decided not to ship my pile of papers by sea, having been told many tales of things going astray. Then I find out how much this will cost per kilo to post. So now, instead of writing, I am collating the comments from a pile of MSS that reaches to my knees (and takes me three trips to carry to the recycling station on the ground floor) into something small enough to carry home with me. All the pain of revision and none of the final result. But I do get a minor glow of achievement when I have reduced it to a manageable four-kilo pile.

We have a farewell party on Friday 25 July.

Then we have another one on Saturday 26 July. Strictly speaking, this is the Clarion 30th Year Reunion, but no matter how much we try we can't raise much interest in anyone who isn't one of us. The tearful farewells begin on the Sunday morning. I am one of the last to leave on Monday morning. And I'm not going straight home. My husband will meet me at Chicago airport, and we go west for a fortnight of stupendous sightseeing. Or that is the general idea.

It isn't that easy.

Eight hours and three flights later, I am at Rapid City Airport alone, not knowing why or how David has missed our flights, but prepared to stick it out here a bit longer. It's not as though I have nothing to do, after all. But I wish I have a laptop.

I take a notebook and start a new story.

It seems Clarion is only the beginning.

— © Janet Barrow 1997

THANKS to the generosity of the British Council, which kindly appointed me its 'keynote speaker', I was recently able to attend the second series of 'Encounters' hosted by the Portuguese Association of Science Fiction and Fantastic Literature and held in Cascais, a small coastal town near Lisbon, from 25-28 September. The event is not so much a convention as a kind of 'outreach project'; there is (as yet) no organised fandom in Portugal and the Encounters represent an attempt by local sf writers to promote their common cause by building better bridges to domestic readers as well as to the sf communities of other nations.

I am always delighted to be able to attend events of this kind, not just because they are hugely enjoyable but because I am fascinated by the way in which the evolution of speculative fiction has been and is still being affected by the different historical circumstances of various nations. The organisers of the Encounters facilitated this by producing *Side Effects*, an anthology in which a set of Portuguese stories is set back-to-back with English translations. (They produced a similar volume in 1996 in connection with the first Encounters.) I have reviewed this book for *Interzone* so I shall not offer a detailed account of its contents here, but I found it very interesting. I was particularly intrigued to find a strong vein of sarcasm in the stories - stronger, perhaps, than one would find in work from any other nation in Europe, including the satirically-inclined Czech tradition - and this increased my own sense of fellow-feeling with the writers involved.

It is, of course, useful to be reminded periodically that no matter what problems sf writers may face in the UK and Australasia their difficulties pale into insignificance by comparison with those faced by writers whose first language is not English. The US publishing machine has been so powerful since the end of World War II that even within their own languages European sf writers have found their voices drowned out by a flood of inward translations. Translation in the other direction is mostly restricted to the realm of literary fiction, where speculative fiction is generally held to be utterly insignificant. No Portuguese writer of speculative fiction has the option of writing full-time, and those who are sufficiently passionate about it to pursue it as a vocation while earning their living in some other way have to contend with the problem that the 'science fiction' label carries the inevitable local implication of 'American mass-market trash'.

In spite of these difficulties the organisers of the Encounters contrived to win considerable support from Cascais Town Council and other local institutions - to the extent that they were able to hold their prize-giving ceremony and conference dinner in the Casino Estoril. The diners were thus able to see the show which is presented nightly to the casino's patrons. This was admittedly the only highlight of the event, but it was something quite unique in my (admittedly limited) experience.

Like science fiction stories, casino shows are forced by expectation into a mould made in America (in this case Las Vegas) and are thus obliged to follow a pattern involving flashing lights, gaudy costumes, and a sequence of fast-paced dance routines in which the can-can and the Charleston are sandwiched between bits of *Carmen*, *Madame Butterfly*, Bill Haley and the Beatles. Interestingly, however, the Casino Estoril show runs through that set of obligatory moves in a matter of minutes before settling down to concentrate on its own agenda. Not for a single moment does it stop being a Casino Show, always retaining the full measure of its frenetic pace and effervescent glitz, but after paying its due homage to cosmopolitan culture it then offers a musical version of the life of the Lisbon-born poet Fernando Pessoa.

I am assured by João Barreiros that the Casino Estoril's show is not a very accurate account of Pessoa's life, but as Dr Johnston once observed of a woman's preaching,

## zines

### The Edge 5

Ed. Graham Evans. £22.55 A4, 48pp. 4 issue subscription £75.00 (payable to 'The Edge')  
Contact: 111 Guinness Buildings, Fulham Palace Road, London, W6 8BQ.  
Tel: 0181 741 7757.

(Note the above is an address change.)

Email: houghtong@globalnet.co.uk

Web: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~houghtong/edge1.htm>

• The Edge is a semi-professional general sf magazine (they pay £10 / 1,000 words), with a mix much as *Interzone*: stories, interviews, reviews, editorial. Fiction this issue comes from Eric Brown, David Kendall, Iain Sinclair and Don Webb; cartoons from the venomous pens of David Britton and Kris Guido (three splendid 'Le Squab' strips); musings on sf, horror and media from novelist Chris Fowler (a regular contributor); intelligent and knowledgeable reviews of books, films and comics; and as a centrepiece, a very long (12 pages) but very interesting interview with comics writer Alan (Watchmen) Moore, conducted by David Kendall. All presented idly and with attention to detail. Recommended.

### Albedo 1 14

Ed. Brendan Ryder (who's very shy - his name appears nowhere). £25.00 A4, 44pp. 4 issue subscription £10 (payable to 'Albedo One')  
Contact: 2 Post Road, Lusk, Co. Dublin, Ireland  
Email: bhr@iol.ie

Web: <http://www.iol.ie/~bobs>

• Albedo 1 is Irish, loud-mouthed, and unevenly interesting. Here we get stories from Brian Stableford, D. F. Lewis, Sean Mac Robin, David Guillen, Nigel Quinlan and - a coup - Ian

# The Casino Show And Other Encounters

## Brian Stableford

visits Cascais in Portugal in search of science fiction, dancing showgirls and literary presidents

the truly astonishing thing is that it is done at all. It serves as a poignant reminder that in 1910 - long before Czechoslovakia elected Vaclav Havel as its head of state - Teófilo Braga had become the first president of republican Portugal. Bragas's main claims to fame were that he had written a history of Portuguese Romanticism and a *Visão dos Tempos* (*Vision of the Ages*) inspired by Victor Hugo's *Legende des Siècles*, so his election was rather as if France had elected Théophile Gautier or Braga's hero Jules Michelet president of their republic. The Casino Estoril show thus provides eloquent evidence of the high regard in which literary art is still held in Portugal - and also of the fact that the formulaised products of popular culture can be turned to earnest and blithely idiosyncratic purpose. Having sat in on many of the other discussions around which the Encounters orbited it seems to me that Portuguese sf writers are perfectly well able to fuse the sf traditions they have inherited by co-colonisation with something closer to the spirit of Teófilo Braga, thus producing something unique and valuable which has every right to serious critical attention both within and without Portugal.

This is, I think, something whose importance extends far beyond the commercial fortunes of Portuguese sf writers. No serious contemporary writer in any nation can possibly write about future possibilities without taking a global view of the world's problems and opportunities, so if readers in the nations of Europe - and, for that matter, readers in America - have no view of future hopes and future fears save for those manufactured in the USA we will all be condemned to confront the world to come in blinkers so narrow as almost to qualify as blindfolds.

Events such as the Encounters, therefore, are not simply meetings of like-minded people - although they are certainly enjoyable on that level - but important links in a chain of endeavour which needs to be forged for everyone's benefit. If plans to hold a third series of Encounters in 1998 come to fruition it will be an event well worth attending.

— © Brian Stableford 1997

McDonald; more tiresome moaning about rejections from aspiring writer 'Severian'; book, zine and small-press reviews; and an interview with Jeff Noon (a reprint from *Holland SF*). This issue came with an 'Albedo 1 Showcase', a 14-page A5 chapbook containing the story 'Something Occurred: Bennie on the Loose' by Sean Mac Robin with artwork by John Robbins.

### The Third Alternative 12

Ed. Andy Cox. £22.75 A4, 60pp. 4 issue subscription £10 (payable to 'TTA Press')  
Contact: 5 Martins Lane, Wiltham, Ely, Cambs., CB6 2LB  
Tel: 01353 777931

• Glossy and well-designed, TTA 12 has stories from Lawrence Dyer, Joel Lane, Tim Nickels, Tim Lees, Jason Gould and Rhys Hughes; essays on 'The Horror in Ian McEwan' (by Roger Keen) and Poppy Z. Brite (Wayne Edwards); snail musings from Rick Cadger; letters and editorial; all interspersed with J. K. Potter artwork, taken from *Neurotica*. Which works well - Potter is at his best in monochrome anyway, and spacing the illustrations through the magazine is better than a clump of pictures.

### Defying Gravity 3

Ed. Craig Turner. £2.50 A4, 60pp. 5 issue subscription £10 (payable to 'Defying Gravity')  
Contact: 60 Howard Close, Cambridge, CB5 8QU  
Tel: 01223 293843

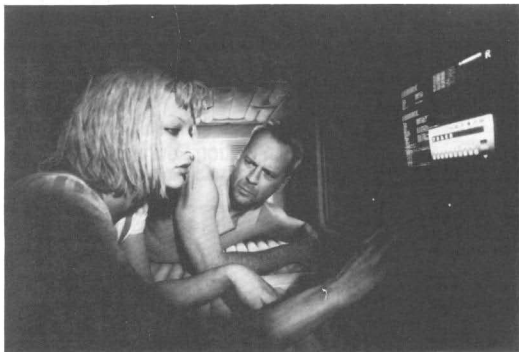
• This exists 'to promote challenging, imaginative new writing', and includes uneven fiction in various genres, articles on music and US sitcoms, some New Age nonsense about machine consciousness and spirituality, and other diverse bits and pieces. Which is the problem - there's no focus, and it's all mixed up in varying (and illegible in some cases) styles. Stand-out piece is

film

# Heroine Chic

## THE FIFTH ELEMENT

reviewed by  
**john ashbrook**



Space invaders: Milla Jovovich as Leeloo and Bruce Willis as Korben Dallas

**T**HE FIFTH ELEMENT is the most impressive science fiction film released anywhere in the world, since *Blade Runner*. Everything about this film drips with quality, from the sumptuous costume and set designs, to the wickedly elaborate special effects. The characters are sketched rather than fully rendered, every line, however economical, being precisely and entirely what is required.

As with all great fiction, the audience is dropped into a living universe, at a reasonably convenient stop-over in an ongoing story. A reassuringly simple story. A huge story of intergalactic war, waged around a millennial pivot by a mere handful of frail mortals over a particularly hectic weekend.

Unlike films effected by Industrial Light and Magic (the McDonalds of optical trickery), writer/director Luc Besson doesn't give his digital effects centre stage. The 23rd century New York cityscapes whip past almost too rapidly for you to focus on them. The effects are woven matter-of-factly into the fabric of the film and allowed to pass without comment; after all, today's wonders rapidly become tomorrow's old news.

As with *Siar Wars*, this film uses cutting-edge, state of the cliché technology to produce a hardware-heavy tale, about simple human values. As such, by

Jane Stamp's "Sunday Stripper", an extract from her chapbook *Hickey* about her experiences in northern strip-clubs, it would fit well into a fanzine such as *Attitude* (which is a compliment) – in fact, *Defying Gravity* is a fanzine. As such it's not a bad one, reflecting its editor's obsessions and interests... but as a semi-pro magazine it doesn't quite work.

### Fanzines Received

#### Squiggledy Hoy

Ed. Bridget Hardcastle. 12pp A5. Free (for the usual).

c/o 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX

Friendly personal writing from Bridget, and a (rather late) critique of the 1996 Eastercon by Pat McMurray. Croydon fandom continues its bid for galactic domination with the customary mention of fishfitters.

#### Balloons Over Bristol 11

Eds. Pete & Sue Binfield. 42pp A4. Free (for the usual).

160 Wells Road, Bristol, BS4 2AG

Christina Lake reports on her American travels. Simon Lake on legendary 60s producer Joe Meeki ("Telstar"), a spoof French film script by D. Hunter Bell, the Miss Lee letters continue, and letters from all the usual suspects.

#### Götterdämmerung 10

Eds. Tommy Ferguson, Mark McKann & James McKee. 28pp A5. Free (for the usual).

40 Deramore Avenue, Belfast, BT7 3ER

Tommy returns from Canada. James on films and CDs. Hugo McHenry on Cubans, Alison Freebairn on football, Tommy on coffee, Mark goes clubbing (great illo), Lesley Reece goes jobhunting, and letters. Variegated and spunky, a great read.

— Chris Terran

exploring the limits of the credible, and wrapping it up in a damn good yarn, with just a trace of pretension at its heart, *The Fifth Element* comes close to exposing the core of all good sf.

Frenchman Besson continues to focus on female leads refusing to conform to the standard Hollywood fashion of reducing women to mere decoration. Here, the fate of the world lies in the hands of the elfin, ostensibly vulnerable alien called Leeloomina, played with a sophisticated mix of wide-eyed innocence and dark-eyed menace by 'super' model Milla Jovovich.

Her rôle has been cleverly written to resemble that of the trophy she would be in an all-American movie, but, upon closer inspection, she is very far from being a mere maguffin to be chased and protected by hard-man Bruce Willis; Leeloo is often the only character who knows quite what is going on.

In order to satiate the modern American audience's voracious appetite for incident, *The Fifth Element* chews up plots and sub-plots like fast food, reminding this reviewer of the wit, pace and scale of Iain M. Banks's 'Culture' novels. If *Consider Phlebas* ever makes it to the big screen, it'll look and feel like this. Hopefully.

Although it is clearly an American movie, the international cast, crew and production process (it was made entirely in England and France) give *The Fifth Element* a unique aspect. It doesn't quite fit into the standard Hollywood 'blockbuster' niche; the characters, although recognisable, aren't quite the archetypes we've grown sadly accustomed to; and the story isn't quite as conveniently wrapped-up as most modern movies manage. By avoiding the Stateside production line, this film hasn't been sucked into the Hollywood clone wars, and therefore stands conspicuously proud of the crowd.

If you check the reviews and the box office returns, few people bothered with *Blade Runner* on its initial release; yet, fifteen years on, it is one of the most oft-quoted inspirations for young film-makers. Although, given the white noise of nineties media, I doubt if any single film can be that impactive today; in time, *The Fifth Element*, as with last year's *Twelve Monkeys*, will come to be seen as a benchmark against which others will compare their work. It is, for want of a better word, perfect.

— © John Ashbrook 1997

**The Fifth Element** — Guild / Gaumont. Director Luc Besson. Producer Patrice Ledoux.

Screenplay Besson, Robert Mark Kamen, based on the story by Besson. Music Eric Serra.

Production design Dan Weil. Designers include Jean Giraud (Möbius). Costume design

Jean-Paul Gaultier. Cast: Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, Milla Jovovich.

126 mins. Cert. PG.

# STARS END

ANDY  
SAWYER  
reports from the

## Science Fiction Foundation Collection

### George Hay 1922-1997

I WAS ABOUT to send this "Stars" End piece to Chris when I heard the news of the death of George Hay, the founder of the Science Fiction Foundation, and I am still somewhat in shock. George was amongst the people – the late Ellis Hillman was another – who persuaded the then Polytechnic of East London to house a body known as the Science Fiction Foundation, and it is because of George, therefore, that I am sitting here writing this. I didn't know George well and only met him a few times, but we communicated a lot by phone and letter. I welcomed his encouragement – even in those times when I would walk in intent on another task to hear a colleague say, "Oh, wait a minute – he's just walked in now!" Somehow, it turned out that all such calls were from George!

We served together on the jury for the Arthur C. Clarke Award a few years ago, and I remember our discussions afterwards – this of course was long before I ever thought that the Science Fiction Foundation library would move to Liverpool and that I would dare to apply for the job. Of course, it did, and I did, and so I have both professional and personal reasons for respecting George. He was a man very easy to like and enormously stimulating to argue with. He was a man of a million ideas, many off-the-wall, but many of startling and original vision (and who is to say which was which?), and one of very few with whom you could talk about the undercurrents of literature, science and politics. There is no one quite like him around: I suspect that if someone today had the idea of a 'science fiction foundation' it would never get off the ground. Many people who never knew him will feel the effects of his life, and he will be greatly missed, but remembered.

— © Andy Sawyer 1997

like other collections which are technically on deposit with us or on 'permanent loan'. We will be able to make it available to scholars and researchers and safeguard it for future scholars of sf.

If our bids for funding are approved, we can only go ahead if we raise as much matching funding as we can, hence the appeal. If anyone would like to pledge or donate money, please contact me, making cheques (if necessary) payable to "The University of Liverpool". We envisage that in the admittedly unlikely event of our raising more money than we need any surplus would go towards cataloguing and conserving the archive.

I feel a bit like Bob Geldof here... but we can only operate with money. It's worth repeating that the University of Liverpool does not purchase material for the Collection, but pays my salary and administrative (and some basic equipment) costs. If we want to develop the collection, we need to do it ourselves. The science fiction world has been extraordinarily generous over the past few years, and a number of individuals have donated significant amounts of time and materials to keep this show on the road.

We still need material... but we probably need to draw a halt to the number of second-hand paperbacks which come our way. If anyone needs to buy books and magazines, and contribute to our funds that way, we have of course a large surplus and I have been generating lists of spare material. If anyone would like to donate material, we are still short of recent (particularly American) material of the past five or six years, and would welcome critical or biographical works, particularly books and journals on sf and fantasy film (you might get a run of *Cinefantastique*!). If anyone would like to see our wants list (Christmas is coming, after all) please let me know. And above all, our sale of back issues of *Foundation* at cut prices is still on. Check the *Foundation* web site for details or write to me.

— © Andy Sawyer 1997

IT SEEMS a long time since I wrote a missive from Stars' End, the second foundation. It's been an interesting year. The Eaton/Science Fiction Research Association conference attended at Long Beach, California, during which I was able to see famed master of academic KTF criticism, Gary Westfahl (who can be seen in action in recent issues of *Foundation* and *Science-Fiction Studies*) in domestic habitat, to visit the Eaton Collection of sf at Riverside University, California and not to bungy-jump. The conference, as *Interzone* editor David Pringle was later to comment, was incredibly Ballardian, held upon the opulent Queen Mary, moored by a tacky tourist village. There was even a deserted swimming pool; apparently the QM's pool is too deep at the shallow end to meet safety regulations. Yes, I was confused as well.

Two of our students from last year's MA course in science fiction have received British Academy funding to continue their researches towards PhDs. This is not something which happens every day – such funding is getting harder and harder to obtain and we're pleased that we have received such recognition. I'll be looking forward to working with Jayne Bryson and Eliot Atkins over the next few years.

The two-year HEFCE-funded project to catalogue the resources of the Science Fiction Foundation Collection has come to an end. We have catalogued over 18,000 records of English-language fiction (including most of the anthologies), the majority of the critical journals, fiction magazines, and fanzines, several hundred items in Czech, Romanian and Polish and about half the small audio collection. The bad news is that the non-fiction is still to do and the manuscript collections and other archive material still needs attention. The good news is that (as the situation is so far understood) the funding body will allow us to use a projected underspend to work on some of these areas for about five months.

For various reasons, technical and financial, it has not been possible to develop the on-line catalogue using the Cheshire II search engine, and current plans are to access the Science Fiction Foundation Collection through Liverpool University Library's new 'Innopac' catalogue. Unfortunately I have no firm dates for when we will be able to do this; there are still various tests to go through. At present, the journal articles database is still available through our web pages. I'd like to say thank-you to Paul and Peter for their hard work and commitment in developing this catalogue. This has been a major step forward in sf scholarship in Britain. At time of writing, Peter Johnston has a fortnight before he departs to Glasgow to play with SGML, while Paul Watry's future – which may involve Liverpool University in some form – should become clear in a month or two. There are other possibilities (he said, cryptically) which might result in some interesting developments. On the other hand, they might turn out to be nothing at all... which is why at this stage it's probably unwise to say too much about them. By the end of the year I should know more. (This all sounds either evasive or a carefully orchestrated build-up for a dramatic announcement really, it's neither. Just certain very positive directions which it might be possible to move in if we get support.)

#### JOHN BRUNNER COLLECTION ACQUIRED

The second major event was the acquisition of John Brunner's reading collection of sf, a copy of most of his published works, and typescripts of most of his major novels. This was acquired under the terms of John's will, and more material will follow. I recently spent several days in South Petherton listing the contents of John's manuscript files and will be developing these lists with the help of published bibliographies and actual texts over the next few months. I'd like to thank Li Yi Tan Brunner for her help and support in this. We hope to use money donated as a memorial to John Brunner following his death in 1995 to provide a way of displaying some of this material as well as making the reference resources of the Science Fiction Foundation Collection more accessible to library users. If anyone would like to contribute to this, please send money to the Friends of *Foundation*.

#### JOHN WINDHAM ARCHIVE APPEAL

Our third project, the John Windham appeal, was mentioned in the last *Matrix*. One minor point probably needs clarifying, to keep everyone happy: this is not a Science Fiction Foundation initiative but is a bid by the University of Liverpool. This is simply a question of ownership – and responsibility. If acquired, the archive – one of the largest and most biographically interesting of sf archives in private hands – will be one of the autonomous parts of the Science Fiction Foundation Collection.

#### Science Fiction Foundation Collection

University of Liverpool Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool, L69 3DA

Tel: 0151 794 2696/2733 Fax: 0151 794 2681

Email: asawyer@liverpool.ac.uk

Web site: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/sffchome.html>

#### The Friends of Foundation

... is a registered charity established to support and aid the SF Foundation.

c/o Roger Robinson, 75 Rosslyn Ave., Harold Wood, Essex, WCH 0RG

Subscriptions: £6 / year, £5 / year (payable to "Foundation Journal")

*Foundation – The International Review of Science Fiction*

c/o New Worlds, 71-72 Charing Cross Road, London, WC2H 0AA

Subscriptions: £14 / year, £10 students (payable to "Foundation Journal")

## film

## radio

# Spawn Event Horizon Delineated by John Ashbrook

"Destroy The Cosmos Now, Ask Questions Later"

**S**PAWN is another of those films based on a comic you've never heard of. *The Mask, The Crow, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, even Men In Black*... all started life as badly drawn, slightly written comics read only by a minority hardcore. *Spawn* is slightly different insofar as it is the highest selling superhero comic of the last five years, and is remarkably well drawn.

Martin Sheen has a rare old time, chomping up the furniture as despotic CIA chief Jason Wynn and sending assassin Al Simmons (newcomer Michael Jai White) to an early grave as part of a pact with Malbogha (that's "The Devil" to you and me). Simmons goes to hell, agrees to lead the horned one's army on Earth, and so is spat back out into the world, a charred and haunted shell of his former self.

Once back on *terra firma*, he is torn between two potential mentors - John Leguizamo as the squat, flatulent Clown, and Nicol Williamson as Coghosto, the 500-year-old knight. Use the force, Al.

The plot, about the release of a bio toxin tied to a trigger buried in Wynn's chest which only activates when his heart stops, can be found lurking around the fringes of the constellation Enjoyable Hokum. Shakespeare it ain't.

Nevertheless, events rattle along at a fair old lick. Leguizamo gives a delightful performance, wrapped

in 400 pounds of prosthetics and bent over double, whilst Williamson rehabs his Merin turn from *Excalibur* (1981).

Inevitably, the real stars of the show are the keyboard jockeys who create the wildly extravagant special effects. These are never more impressive than when used to bring life to Spawn's sentient cape (yes, really!) which flows and billows in a manner which is so precisely the image creator Todd McFarlane had in mind when he drew the original comics.

*Spawn* stays far closer to its source material than the recent "Batman" movies felt obliged to do, yet rationalises a dozen or more issues of the comic into a lean, lean 90 minutes of rock and roll movie making.

If you think about it, clean-cut heroes like Superman and Spiderman are a far cry from this creature, a soulless assassin, spat out of Hades and wrapped in armour which is really a polymorphous virus. Hmm. You can see old Spawny being enrolled to sell war bonds, can't you?

— John Ashbrook 1997

**Spawn** — Director Mark A. Z. Dippé. Producer Clint Goldman. Screenplay Alan McElroy, Dippé, from the comics written and drawn by Todd McFarlane. Production design Philip Harrison. Cast: Martin Sheen, John Leguizamo, Nicol Williamson, Theresa Randle, Melinda Clarke, Mike Hughes. 96 mins. Cert. 12. Released Sep 1997.

## "Funky Shit"

**T**HE MUSIC which pounds away over the closing credits of *Event Horizon* is called "Funky Shit", by those bad boys of dance - the Prodigy. Although this inclusion is clearly just jumping on a dance band wagon, I did pause to consider whether or not it might also be a refreshing breath of disarming honesty on the part of the film's makers.

You see, Non-Event *Horizon* has been precision-tooled by a team of British film-makers to fulfill all the major criteria of a Hollywood blockbuster, and as such it constitutes an admirable achievement as Form towers over Content. Spectacle takes precedence over Logic and Cliché fills the vacant shoes of Plot.

It's 2047 and Sam Neill (*Jurassic Park, The Piano*) who plays Doctor Weir (!) has built a starship called *Event Horizon* around his invention of the Graviton Drive, an artificial black hole which folds space and allows a ship to pass through another dimension in order to travel light years in the blink of an eye. Or something.

Well, it's not exactly an original concept, but I'll let it slide as there's more.

Seven years previously, the *Event Horizon* vanished without trace, but has now mysteriously reappeared in orbit around Neptune and has dispatched a signal which is mistranslated as a distress call. The rescue ship *Lewis* and Clark is sent to salvage her, but once they take possession they find a ghost ship.

Sound familiar? There's more.

The rescue ship's crew of grimy, foul-mouthed sweatshops take possession of a ship designed with the highest ergonomic standards in mind - it is all

dark corners, slamming doors and needle-sharp edges. Of course, it transpires that the ship is haunted and the ghosts know what scares you.

Ring any bells? There's more.

Up-and-coming British Sean Pertwee gets to immortalise some delicious dialogue in his rôle as ship's pilot, bringing all his expertise to bear, he helpfully diagnoses that "You can't change the laws of physics!" Then, just to prove his point, one of the ship's survivors actually manages to get himself sucked out of an airlock into hard vacuum in his jimmies... without suffering much more than a nose-bleed.

Wow, that sure stirred up some memories for me.

I suspect that cassettes of *Alien*, 2010, *The Haunting*, *The Shining*, *The Black Hole* and even *Helraiser: Bloodlines* (a.k.a. *Helraiser 4*) were rarely out of director Paul Anderson and co.'s video players as they were making this film and searching for inspiration. How else can one explain the fact that *Event Horizon* is little more than a collection of found footage filtered through modern computer technology, and dumped into our delightfully original post-modern world for those with short memories to explore and enjoy?

How? I'll tell you how. Because in space, no one can hear you sue.

— John Ashbrook 1997

**Event Horizon** — Paramount Pictures. Director Paul Anderson. Producers Lawrence Gordon, Lloyd Levin, Jeremy Bolt. Screenplay Philip Eisner. Production design Joseph Bennett. Music Michael Kamen. Orbital Dialogue editors include Nick Lowe. Cast: Sam Neill, Sean Pertwee, Lawrence Fishburne, Kathleen Quinlan, Joely Richardson, Richard T. Jones. 95 mins. Cert. 18. Released Aug 1997.

# CONTROL GROUP SIX

**Control Group Six** — Written by and featuring Richard Bean, Andrew Clifford, Clive Coleman and Colin Swash, with Geraldine Fitzgerald. Producer Jon Ralph. BBC Radio 4, four episodes from 28 Aug 1997.

"You are now entering *Control Group Six*. On leaving please deposit all memory traces in the baskets provided."

**CONTROL Group Six** was promoted as a four-part comedy, half sketch show and half thriller. It makes no mention of science fiction in *Radio Times*, but it seems more sf than anything else: with alternative futuristic worlds, powerful dictators popping up on telecreens on the back of your eyelids, photographs coming to life and robotic wives, bishops, butlers, cleaners and in-laws. One of the funniest sketches was the helpline for computer-controlled in-laws - a frantic husband was "talked through" the Father Icon on his personal computer by a sympathetic helpline operator. He was able to choose from the character options (sleeping, watching snooker and working out a route home with maps); after choosing the sleeping function he was then able to adjust the level of the snores. Operator and husband then went into a serious discussion of how important it is for your wife to be happy. When asked how this can be made possible, the operator's reply was "Have you tried shift-alt-F9?"

The plot, and you have to hunt for it amongst the irrelevant (but on the whole funny) sketches, starts with Dr Heaven in a prison cell writing his memoirs. Heaven (his first name is 'Dr', after the person who delivered him) is a trained psychologist working in a fish-and-chip shop until he is invited to become the new president of *Control Group Six*. As a 'puppet dictator' his life is put at risk when he has to run his group, and ward off rebellions and threats from *Control Groups 1 through 42*, and be his own assassin. If that doesn't make sense, it's probably because this off-the-wall comedy series doesn't make much sense either.

What seems like a pretty straightforward comedy thriller in a futuristic setting (we are told at the beginning of episode three, "You are now entering experimental town *Control Group Six*. Your money's no good here. You don't speak our language. You might think you're better than us, but you're not - so don't go lording it.") suddenly shifts direction when the characters become involved in sketches that form no part of Dr Heaven's story - they're just there. Sometimes the sketches do not involve the characters at all.

These completely unrelated sketches include a visit to a hairdressers where the 'patient' is treated to the type of examination one would expect from a dentist, including inadequate brushing. Some take the form of adverts for World's World, the life-size theme park of the world, found at four locations. And some of them are pretty lame - trying to explain the concept of the "knock-knock" joke or the completing of a computer dating form - but overall *Control Group Six*, despite the disjointed narrative/sketch format which some may find annoying, is good fun. This is the second series, and hopefully there'll be a third.

— Ellen Cheshire 1997

# events

## read me first

- Please enclose an SAE when contacting conventions.
- Efforts are made to ensure the accuracy of all the information here, but always check first.
- If you run, or know of, any unlisted conventions or events please let me know at the editorial address.
- Please mention Matrix when enquiring.
- Guests at media conventions appear 'subject to work commitments'.
- Special thanks to: Dave Langford, Chris O'Shea, Bridget Wilkinson, errors are mine.

## regulars

### BSFA London Meetings

The BSFA's London meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month (except December), in the upstairs room of the Jubilee Tavern on York Road, London SE1, between Waterloo and Westminster Bridges. Nearest stations Waterloo (mainline or Underground) or Westminster (Underground). Things start at about 7.00pm; if you get there early and the upstairs room is closed we'll be in the main bar and, if in doubt, ask the landlord. Meetings are open to all.

✉ Paul Hood on 0181 333 6670 for further information.  
26 Nov 97: NO Dec meeting; 28 Jan 98: 25 Feb 98

### London Circle Meetings

Also at the Jubilee Tavern (see above). '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.

✉ Just turn up!  
6 Nov 97, 4 Dec 97, 1 Jan 98 (theoretically); 5 Feb 98.

**Birmingham** The Brum SF Group meets on the second Friday of the month at a pub in Birmingham; contact them for details. Membership is £15 per year, which includes a monthly newsletter.

✉ Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Wiltshire, West Midlands, WV13 1HX.  
✉ baf@btinternet.com, co.uk

**Cambridge** SF Group meets on the second Monday of the month in The Wrestlers, New Market Road, Cambridge.

- Cambridge Fantasy Group meets on the second Sunday of the month in the Zebra pub on Newmarket St., Cambridge.
- ✉ John Oram, 3 Oatlands Ave., Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8EQ

**Cardiff** SF Group meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in Wellington's Café Bar, 42 The Hayes, Cardiff.

**Colchester** SF / Honor / Fantasy Group meets on the third Saturday of each month at 12.30pm in The Playhouse pub in St. John's Street.

✉ Des Lewis on 01255 812119

**Hull** SF Group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, 8pm to 10.30pm at Ye Olde Blue Bell, Market Place, Hull.

✉ Ian & Julie on 01482 447953 or Dave & Estelle on 01482 444291.

**Leicester** SF Group meets on the first Friday of the month; venue varies.

✉ Tim Groom on 0116 279 2280  
✉ rbe@globalnet.co.uk

**Manchester** F&N meets in Wetherpoons's pub (on the corner of Piccadilly Gardens, near the BR station) on the second and fourth Thursdays in the month, 8pm onwards.

✉ Mike Don on 0161 226 2980

**Peterborough** SF Club meets on the first Wednesday of the month at the Bluebell Inn, Dogsthorpe, and on the third Wednesday of the month in the bar of the Great Northern Hotel, opposite the BR station.

✉ SAE to 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5RB

**Poole** The South Hants SF Group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at The Magpie, Fratton Road, Poole.

**Reading** SF Group meets weekly on Mondays at 9.00pm in The Sun, Castle Street, Reading.

**Surrey** Surrey SF Group meets in the Coronation Hall, Surbiton, a Wetherpoons pub 100 yds from the station, on the second and fourth Thursdays in the month, from 8pm.

### 7 Nov 1997: Colin Greenland

... will be appearing at the Taylor Room, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool on 12pm, to mark the presentation of his papers to the SF Foundation Collection.

✉ Andy Sawyer on asawyer@liverpool.ac.uk  
✉ http://www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/sffhome.html

### 10-15 Nov 1997: Wyrd Sisters

Stage version of the Pratchett novel, adapted by Stephen Briggs, at the Crescent Theatre, Brindleyplace, Broad Street, Birmingham. Tickets £5 advance/concessions, £7 on the door.

✉ 0121 643 5858 (Mon-Fri 11am-4pm)

### 14-16 Nov 1997: Novacon 27

The 1997 Novacon moves out of Birmingham to the de Vere Abbey Hotel in Great Malvern. Guest is Peter F. Hamilton and registration is £35. The hotel (which has been sold, but this won't affect anything) is now full, and overflows are being used.

✉ 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS

### 14-16 Nov 1997: Cozy Con 2

Relaxicon at the Atlanta Hotel, The Hague. Reg. £18 att., £9 student. £20 pppn shared.

✉ Annermarie van Eyck, Obrechtstraat 4, 2517 VT Den Haag, Netherlands.  
✉ vantent@few.eur.nl

### 21-23 Nov 1997: ArmadaCon IX

Astor Hotel in Plymouth. Guests Colin Greenland, David Hardy, Registration £25, £20 unwaged.

✉ 4 Gleanage Avenue, Mannamead, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 5HL  
✉ 01752 267873 or 01752 673295

### 30 Nov 1997: Starcon97

Star Wars con at the Town Centre Theatre, Basildon, Essex. £10 reg. (cheques to "R. Miley"), £13 on the door.

✉ Starcon97, Nelson House, 341 Lea Bridge Road, London, E10 7LA

### 13-14 Dec 1997: Babylon 5 Academic Conference

Presented in association with the SF Foundation at University College of Ripon & York St John in York. Cost inclusive of accommodation is £75, or non-residential with meals £48. Both include the conference dinner.

✉ Farah Mendelsohn, Faculty of Humanities, University College of Ripon & York St John, Lord Mayor's Walk, York, YO3 7EX  
✉ fay@york.ac.uk

### 6-8 Feb 1998: Decadence

The tenth British Ff (sf music) convention at the Forte Posthouse Hotel, Gatwick. Reg. £24 att., £10 sup.

✉ Top Flat, 11 Evesham Road, Cheltenham, GL52 2AA  
✉ decadence@z99z.demon.co.uk  
✉ http://www.z99z.demon.co.uk/

### 28 Feb - 1 Mar 1998: Microcon 18

Venue is Devonshire House, Stocker Road, Exeter. Reg. £5, £20 students.

✉ Microcon 18, 25 Victoria Street, Exeter, EX4 6JA

### 13-16 Mar 1998: Corflu

Ian Sorensen brings Corflu - the fanzine fans' convention - to the UK for the first time. Location is the Griffin Hotel in Leeds. Reg. £25 att., £5 sup., rooms £25 pppn double/twin, £40 pppn single.

✉ Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY  
✉ ian@sorensen.demon.co.uk

### 27-29 Mar 1998: Deliverance

Blake's Seven con at the Royal Mot House, Nottingham. Reg. £45 att., rising 1 June.

✉ Deliverance, 18 Bury Ave., Newport Pagnell, Bucks., MK16 0ED

### 10-14 April 1998: Intuition

The 1998 Eastercon at the Piccadilly Jarvis Hotel in Manchester. Guests Connie Willis, Ian McDonald and Martin Tudor. Reg. £30 att., £15 sup.

✉ Intuition, 1 Waverley Way, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3LO  
✉ INTUITION@smcf.demon.co.uk  
✉ http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/~acsb/intuition/intuition\_index.html

### 22-25 May 1998: Lazlar Lyricon II

Hitch Hiker's Guide con run by the Z29 fan club celebrating the 20th anniversary of the series; venue Scotch Corner Hotel, Darlington. Reg. £30, guests Kevin Davis, Dirk Maggs.

✉ 67 South Park Gardens, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 1HZ

### 3-5 Jul 1998: Interconat '98

University of Oslo, Norway. Guests Gwyneth Jones, Pat Cadigan, Johannes Berg. Reg. £15 att., £3 sup.

✉ Interconat '98, PO Box 121 Blindern, 0313 Oslo, Norway  
✉ elf@orip.no

### 10-12 Jul 1998: Infinity

Angel Hotel, Cardiff. Guests include Colin Baker, Ed Bishop, Dave Prowse, Jack Cohen, Lionel Fanthorpe, Andy Sawyer.

Reg. £40.  
✉ Infinity, Swn y Nant, 12 Stuart Street, Treherbert, CF42 5PR  
✉ infinity@cfcc.com@hotmail.com  
✉ http://www.cf.ac.uk/ccin/main/ents/sffc/infinity.html

### 17-19 Jul 1998: Nexus 98

Media convention at Bristol's Hilton Hotel.

✉ Nexus 98, 1 Lullington Rd., Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2LH

### 5-9 Aug 1998: Bucconeer

The 56th Worldcon at Baltimore, Maryland. Guests C. J. Cherry, Milton A. Rothman, Stanley Schmidt, Michael Whelan. Reg. £80 att. (plus various complications if you voted or pre-supported).

### UK Agent:

✉ John Dallman, c/o EDS Unigraphics, Parker's House, 46 Regent Street, Cambridge, CB2 1DB  
✉ 01223 570179  
✉ jdg@cx.compulink.co.uk

### General info:

✉ baltimore98@access.digex.net  
✉ http://www.access.digex.net/~balt98

### 21-24 Aug 1998: The Wrap Party

Celebrate the conclusion of Babylon 5 at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Confirmed guests are John Michael Straczynski, Harlan Ellison, Jack Cohen, John Ridgway, Bryan Talbot, Adam Mojo Lebowitz, John Rithwain. Reg. £65 (instalment scheme available), under 17s half price, under 12s free. Room rates: £40ppn triple, £42ppn double or twin, £47ppn single.

✉ The Wrap Party, PO Box 505, Reading, RG1 7QZ  
✉ thewrapparty@bipin.co.uk  
✉ http://www.bipin.co.uk/theWrapParty

### 11-13 Sep 1998: Fantasycon 22

British Fantasy Society con. Venue Albany Hotel, Birmingham, guest Freda Warrington plus more TBA.

✉ BFS, 2 Harwood Street, Stockport, SK4 1JJ

### 18-21 Sep 1998: Discworld Convention II

The second convention devoted to all things Pratchett takes place at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool, with guests including one-guess, Stephen Briggs and Dave Langford.

✉ PO Box 3086, Colchester, Essex, CO2 8TY

### 25-28 Sep 1998: Albacore '98

Central Hotel, Glasgow. Reg. £25 att., £15 sup. Guests tba.

✉ Albacore '98, F1/2, 10 Alford Road, Glasgow, G21 4TE

### 2-5 Apr 1999: Reconave

The last Eastercon of the twentieth century at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Guests Jeff Noon, Peter S. Beagle, John Clute. Reg. £25 att., £12.50 sup., discounts for unwaged.

✉ 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SE

### 11 Aug 1999: Total Eclipse of the Sun

Totally passes through Cornwall, Northern France and bits of Italy.

### 2-6 Sep 1999: Aussiecon 3

The Worldcon goes down under to Melbourne. Guests Greg Benford, Bruce Gillespie, the deceased George Turner will be honoured. Reg. £90 (with complicated variations - ask em).

✉ UK Agent: Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Road, Reading, RG1 7TT  
✉ martinhoare@cx.co.uk

## Books Extra

More space, more space... here's some extra books information, which either wouldn't fit or arrived too late.

**Jim Mortimore 'with' Allen Adams & Roger Clark** *Babylon 5 Security Manual* (Bostree: 19 Sep, £15.99 tp) — Spaceship plans, background material, computer graphics, stills, and thirty-nine none of the dreadful paintings that marred the BS RPG book recently.

**John Evans** *God's Gift* (Arrow: 2 Oct, £5.99 pb, 425pp) — Fantasy thriller about an ancient book which involves two contemporary characters in its story, linked to Cliche Barker. There's rather too much tedious detail about company takeovers and high finance (in which field Evans works), but it soon picks up speed and thrills, despite a Barker-like lack of humour.

**Richard Grant** in *The Land of Winter* (Avalon: 8 Oct, £24.00 hb, 340pp) — Warm-hearted contemporary fantasy from the Dick Award-winning author. Pippa Rede, struggling single mother and half-hearted witch, has her daughter Winterbelle taken away by social services just before Yule, after accusations of ritual abuse. In a well-drawn wintry small-town setting, you get to know Pippa and her bumbling, brave attempts to cope and recover the child. A magical, optimistic book, perfect to curl up with on a winter's night; if you don't get a lump in your throat, you're made of stone. Highly recommended.

**Kristine Kathryn Rusch** *Star Wars: The New Rebellion* (Bantam: 9 Oct, £4.99 pb, 523pp-trailers)

**Stan Nicholls** *Dark Skies: The Awakening* (Bantam: 9 Oct, £4.99 pb, 300pp) — After last issue's comment on Elizabeth Hand's 'unobtrusive' credit on the cover of her *Millennium* tie-in, this is even worse. Nicholls's name doesn't get on the spine or the front cover at all, you have to squint at the tiny print on the back to discover who left it. Shame on you, Bantam.

**David Wingrove** *Marriage of the Living Dead* (New English Library: 16 Oct, £5.99 pb, 641pp) — Final book in the eight-volume 'Chung Kuo' series, a Chinese-dominated future history. The dedication is to Brian Griffin, and has a PS: 'Look what we began, all those years ago in the little columns of Vector'.

**Graham Edwards** *Dragonframe* (Voyager: 20 Oct, £5.99 pb, 436pp) — Concluding volume of the *Dragon* trilogy.

**Craig Charles** *The Log* (Penguin: 27 Oct, £7.99 hb, 180mins) — Subtitled 'A Dwarf's Guide to Everything', this is read by Charles and is a book on which to hang various comic musings.

**Jay Russell** *Burning Bright* (Robinson: 30 Oct, £5.99 pb) — Dark fantasy from a rising star. Voodoo, Nazis, Jack the Ripper, Druids, magical battles in the East End of London... a feast.

**Mike Ashley** (ed.) *Chronicles of the Round Table* (Robinson: 30 Oct, £5.99 pb) — Anth. of new Arthurian stories, and some rare reprints. Contributors include Stalder, de Lint, Bradley, Tanih Lee, T. H. White, William Morris, Yolen, Salmonson, Schweitzer, and others. **Matt Ridley** *The Origins of Virtue* (Penguin: Oct, £8.99 pb, 304pp hb) — Non-fiction. Examination of the reasons for altruism and why it evolved.

**Robert Jordan & Teresa Patterson** *The World of Robert Jordan's The Wheel of Time* (Orbit: 1 Oct, £25.00 hb, 296pp ill.) — 70 colour plates and text with background to the bestselling fantasy series.

**Bernard Cornwell** *Excalibur* (Michael Joseph: 1 Oct, £16.99 hb, 448pp) — Arthurian fantasy, final volume of the 'Warlord Chronicles' trilogy.

**David Blatner** *The Joy of  $\pi$*  (Allen Lane: 1 Oct, £12.99 hb, 160pp ill.) — A mathematical history of  $\pi$ , from Archimedes to the present, with limericks, mnemonics and humour as well as all the serious stuff.

**David Feintuch** *Voices of Hope* (Orbit: 6 Nov, £5.99 pb, 527pp) — Space opera. C. S. Forester in a starship. The Seafort Saga continues with the story of Philip, Nicholas Seafort's son.

**Mary Dorla Russell** *The Sparrow* (Black Swan: 13 Nov, £5.99 pb, 503pp) — St, a (timely) first-contact tale and winner of this year's Tiptree Award; the book comes burbled with an enormous number of good reviews. Geek picks up radio transmissions at Arebio; Jesuit priest takes a starship and visits the aliens; disaster ensues. Good (if sugary) characterisation and fine writing is spiced by some implausible plotting, and a distinct sense of uncomfortableness about the science — it's in the build-a-science-in-your-backyard school. But the core of the book is a morality tale and an examination of Jesuitical conscience, as in James Bishop's *A Case of Conscience*.

**Dave Duncan** *Pentecost The Tower* (Corgi: 13 Nov, £5.99 pb, 477pp) — Fantasy, Round Two of the Great Game.

**Stephen King** *Wizard and Glass* (Hodder & Stoughton: 1 Nov, £14.99 hb, 640pp) — Much delayed but volume in the 'Gunslinger' fantasy sequence, based on *On the Road*.

**Rumer Godden** *Cromartie vs the God Shiva* (Macmillan: 1 Nov, £12.99 hb, 170pp) — Literary semi-fantasy, based on a real-life court case in which the god Shiva was the plaintiff.

**David Grossman** *The Zigzag Kid* (Bloomsbury: 1 Nov, £12.99 hb, 320pp) — 'A hijacked locomotive whisks a young boy into a richly-textured fantasy world where detectives fall in love with criminals, beautiful women skydive into vats of melted chocolate' — wheeeee! — and children teach their parents to find happiness.

**Peter Schweighofer** (ed.) *Star Wars: Tales From the Empire* (Corgi: 11 Dec, £12.99 pb, 324pp-trailers) — Stories from the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*, with tales from Timothy Zahn and Michael A. Stackpole.

**Timothy Zahn** *Star Wars: The Specter of the Past* (Bantam: 11 Dec, £12.99 hb)

**George Lucas & Chris Claremont** *Shadow Dawn* (Bantam: 11 Dec, £5.99 pb) — Fantasy, sequel to *Shadow Moon*.

**Robert Rankin** *Spout Mask Replica* (Corgi: 11 Dec, £5.99 pb)

**Robert Rankin** *The Brentford Chansons Massacre* (Doubleday: 11 Dec, £16.99 hb) — St comedy, in which Jesus is cloned from blood on the Turn Shroud. Six times, so each major religion can have one. How tasteful, and just in time for His birthday. Meanwhile in Brentford, they're holding the millennial celebrations two years early to avoid the rush.

## Members' Noticeboard

Advertisements and announcements are FREE to BSFA members. Send your ad to the editorial address, or phone (0113) 217 1403.

## WANTED

**RADIO PLAYS** Wanted Radio africanista (and recent BSFA joins) **Ellen Chesire** is desperate to get her ears on two of radio plays, both broadcast on Radio 4 a couple of years ago. They are: *An Alternative to Suicide* (95 mins.) and *The Silver Sky* (60 mins.) by Tanih Lee. If anyone has either of these and can copy them, Ellen will happily negotiate terms in kind from her own extensive radio collection. If you can help solve this case in this desperate search, contact either **Ellen** or **Ging** on 0181 550 6026.

**WANTED** Copy in any condition of Norton Juster's children's fantasy *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Cheapskate appreciated! **Chris Tennant**, 9 Beechwood Court, Back Beechwood Grove, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS4 2HS.

**WANTED** AI SF & F Videos. B) Popular Science Books. C) Books concerned with 'Computer Applications in Natural Sciences and Engineering' including some older ones as far back as the 70s. Send SAE for wants lists, please say which. Send your own list to: D-67059 on item C. Contact **Manfred Diehl**, 62 Kaiser-Wilhelm Str. D-67059 Ludwigshafen, Germany.

**BOOKS WANTED** Copies in good condition of: Robert Leininger *Black Sun*, Christopher Priest *Book on the Edge of Forever*, Elizabeth Troop *ed Seven Deadly Sins*, Robert van Gulik *The Fox-Magic Murders* (4 Poets and Murder), Kate Willets *And the Angels Sing*, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro *Annals*. Please contact **Andy Mills** on 0113 259 7153 (home) or at [andy.mills@edsdps.gov.uk](mailto:andy.mills@edsdps.gov.uk) (work).

**BOOKS NEEDED FOR A LOVING HOME**: John Crowley *Eggs*, Gardner Dozois *ed*. The Year's Best SF, Eighth Annual Collection in the US edition, also known as *Best New SF Five* in Britain, either edition will do. These are for reading, so cheapness is appreciated (condition is not a condition). Contact: **Syd Foster** on 01792 206729. Thanks gung!

**WANTED**: a copy in any condition of *The Robber Rouses* by Eric Frank Russell. Contact: **John Olla**, 51 Belmont Road, Luton LU1 1LL.

**'MINISTER CLASSICS' WANTED** — not for me, for a friend, honest gung. Market rate is around a quid, will pay up to £2 dependent on condition or

will swap for duplicates. Titles wanted include: *Aesop's Fables*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Jack*, *So Stories*, *Macbeth*, *Moll Flanders*, *Prince and the Pauper*, *Wind in the Willows*, *Wuthering Heights*. **Andy Butler**, 33 Brook View Drive, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5JN. Tel: 0115 957 5545. Email: [victor-butler@rocketmail.com](mailto:victor-butler@rocketmail.com).

**BOOKS REQUIRED** — Ace Doubles, Banks, Cowey, Delany, Niven, Sabinberg, Stabford, Sterling, New Writings series, and many more. Send SAE for labels to Ian Forshaw, 12 Winston Way, Farnet, Cambs, PE7 3BU. Tel: 01733 241806.

## FOR SALE

**THREE HERALDS OF THE STORM** is a booklet collected of three short stories by Storm Constantine, including one previously unpublished story. Produced 1987 by Media Merlin Publishing, Inc. in the US, and available in the UK from Inception, c/o Steve Jeffery & Viki Lee France, 44 White Way, Lexington, Ohio, O45 2XA (email [perceval@aol.com](mailto:perceval@aol.com)). £4.50 inc. postage in the UK/EU. Enquire for details of other Inception limited editions, magazines and books by Storm Constantine.

**STOCK CLEARANCE**. I have hundreds of paperback and hardback books, some 2,000 magazines ranging from pulp adventures to digest New Worlds and Science Fantasy. Thousands of comics (some even pre-war) and over 100 cinema posters. Free list on request. I'm also in the hunt for pre-1965 comics, especially Golden and Silver Age American titles and 1950s British reprints of US titles such as *Captain Marvel Adventures*, as well as books by Fredric Brown and John D. MacDonald and many pulps such as *Wired Tales*, *Oriental Stories* and *Shondell* titles like *Black Mask*, *Wu Fang*, *Doc Savage*, *G-I* and *The Road*. I'll pay cash or will allow a generous exchange from my list. Contact: **Ron Bennett**, 38 Herford Park Crescent, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG2 5AW.

## MISC

**NET NEWSIE** I was convinced at first that I should get on-line, that it was the only way to keep in touch. The only thing is, I don't know anyone else on-line. Can I have a computer-pal please? My address is [yvonne@allfarnet.com](mailto:yvonne@allfarnet.com).

## Ten Years Ago...

*Matrix* 72, Oct / Nov 87... 'So that was the Worldcon — interesting', said a bright-sounding **Maureen Porter** (now Kincaid Speller), post-Blighzon and post-newsletter. • **Hugos** were to **Orson Scott Card** (Speaker For the Dead), **Silverberg**, **Zelazny**, **Bear**, **Aldiss** & **Wingrove** (*Trillion Year Spree*), **Aliens**, **Jim Burns**, **Terry Carr**, **Lucas**, **Dave Langford**, **Brad Foster**, and **Anisette**. • **Arthur C. Clarke** received a Nebula Grand Master Award. • The John W. Campbell Award went to **Karen Joy Fowler** — one of the judges was **Kingsley Amis**. • **Clive Barker's** Hellraiser was premiered to 'mixed reviews'. • Historic horror/fantasy zine *Wired Tales* was revived from the dead. • **Chris Priest**'s campaign against W. H. Smith's stocking of gun and survival magazines gained a hostile proclamation after the Hungerford massacre. • My opinion is that these magazines are pornographic in the pure sense of the word. They are written to arouse response and to encourage participation, I wrote to the company. Their response was to move the magazines in the Marlborough branch — home of killer **Michael Ryan's** *Gull* club — to the top shelf. • **Doris Lessing** and **Philip Glass** collaborated on an opera based on her sf books. • **David Wingrove** made his first fiction sale — to **Woman's Own**. • **Dave Langford** and **John Grant** announced the imminent publication of their horror spoof *Guts!* to widespread shudders. (As of 1997, it's still imminent.) • **Margaret Thatcher** wrote an introduction to a book celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of **Dandy and Beano**. • **Douglas Adams**, various ex-Pythons and other media types held a public reading from the banned (and tedious) book *Spycatcher* in London. No one was arrested, to general disappointment. • **Star Trek: TNG** premiered in the US. • According to a *Locust* poll, *Dune* was the best sf novel of all time. Only two novels published since 1980 appeared in the top 45. • A bulging (ish) letter column was dominated by discussion of whether the BSFA should accept members in the Republic of South Africa.



# Skull C

Roger Robinson's Crackers

## COMPETITION 128: "BLURBS R US"

How accurate are publishers when they write their cover blurbs? Do they actually read the books? Match your wits against the blurb-writers and identify the following novels from these examples of their craft. One point for the author(s), one for the title; all are from paperback editions of recent (post-1980), well-known sf and fantasy novels. Do as many as you can, and don't worry if you can't get all of them.

1. Florence, 1518 Da Vinci's astonishing machines work, and the Industrial Revolution has happened centuries early.
2. In the far reaches of the solar system: a huge statue of an alien creature, with an inscription that defied all efforts of translation.
3. MIGHTY BATTLES! REVOLUTION! DEATH! WAR! (AND HIS SONS TERROR AND PANIC, AND DAUGHTER CLANCY)
4. In her dreams, Princess Catherine could still see London burning, and the luminous golden warships of her enemies, the Aztecs.
5. One morning in 1995, Jonah Ransom, clothier, was going about his normal business when he met a beautiful demon in his storecupboard. At around the same time, the King of England and his entire court vanished before astonished witnesses at a public ceremony.
6. Kay Munadi had a glittering career feeding smart lines to bubbleheads who presented the tv news to the masses. Too plain to be a star, but too human not to care, she thought she had her compromises just where she wanted them - until Halton came along.
7. Wise up, it's the 21st century and global warming is here to stay. Forget the way your country used to look. Get used to the free market, the companies have all the best hardware - they're calling the shots now ....
8. With friends like these, who needs enemies? Supernatural horror and social satire mix equally in this dazzling relocation of the Faust legend to contemporary London.
9. After a trip round the universe, Inquisitor Dagon of the Starship *Sardaniapulus* has returned to Earth.
10. It began six years ago, on Bomb Day ... when the aliens, the Torku, put up the Line to block out the rest of the world. On all the radio bands there is nothing now but static. Beyond the glowing paisley barrier there may be only a radioactive waste. Yet in the small Texas town of Coomey life goes on quietly enough.
11. Conrad Metcalf has problems. He's got a monkey on his back, a rabbit in his waiting room, and a trigger-happy kangaroo on his tail. (Maybe evolution therapy isn't such a good idea.)
12. When Peter Hobson, brilliant young biomed engineer, created a supersensitive monitor that established irrefutably that a complex electrical field - the soulwave - left the human brain at the instant of physical death, he knew the impact on society would be devastating.
13. Imagine a universe where the force of gravity is one billion times stronger than on Earth. Where humans have detectable gravity fields. Where stars are only a mile across and burn out within a year of their formation.
14. While on holiday in Sardinia Ian McGann goes to sleep one night - and meets Death in a dream.
15. For generations, the young lovers of Cretesfield pledged their vows at the High Place in Herman's Wood, part of the ancient forest above the sleepy hamlet of Little Moor.
16. Forget word processing. This is the world of consciousness processing and downloading human psyches. A world that Professor Frank Gobi has to enter if he is to save the life of his ten-year-old son.
17. A people torn in two by a tragic accident, split by worlds and time, are finally reunited sending their joint history feeling once more. Amidst wondrous alien habitats, records are preserved in electronic archives and in muddy inks on old paper; thus the legacies of love and murder left in trust await discovery. One young man has the insight and the ability to wonder that others lack. And his actions will echo for generations to come.
18. This already dated novel is set inside the head of an ageing, divorced, alcoholic, insomniac supervisor of security installations who is tripping in the bedroom of a small Scottish hotel. Though full of depressing memories and propaganda for the Conservative party it is mainly a sadoomasochistic fetishistic fantasy.
19. Civilisation on Earth was rich, comfortable - and overcrowded. Millions applied for the voyage but only the best were chosen to settle on Tau Ceti Four. The colony was a success. The silver rivers and golden fields of Camelot overflowed with food and sport nurtured by the colonists' eco-sensitive hands. It was an idyll, the stuff of dreams.
20. It is a little-known fact that after a hundred years ago an English scientist-mathematician named Charles Babbage invented a mechanical computer that was nearly as powerful as the "electronic brains" of the 1950s. The history books would have it that it was unworkable, an interesting dead-end.

The history books lie.

## RESULTS OF COMPETITION 126

Despite the external impression of clock efficiency and total infallibility, *Matrix* is as liable to cock-ups as the rest of the world. Oh yes it is! Due to various problems it isn't possible to include the results of last issue's competitions, or the crossword. My apologies to you all, and especially to Roger Robinson and John English: normal service will be resumed next issue.

Can I sink away and hide now?

—Chris Terran

Please send all competition and crossword entries, together with any related correspondence, to:

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

Or email:  
becon@dia1.pipex.com

by  
Friday 5 December 1997

# Big Butt

ALPHAs takes on the news

• **FIRST CONTRACT** Our lovely editor (fletchingly played by Jodie Foster) was awestruck to receive a message from the stars: "I have exciting news for you and all Terrans!" it began. He read on, trembling:

"Finally, after years of effort and considerable expense, we are ready to publish 'THE BURKE'S PEEAGE WORLD BOOK OF TERRANS' and you, Mr Christopher J. Terran, are listed in it." A snip at £24.95. "Wow! My name in print! Where do I sign?"

Mr Burke lives in an oddly shrunken world, though - forget it if you have any relations in Africa, South America, India, China, Russia, all of Asia, half of Europe, the Middle East, Japan, etc. "We have searched through over 170 million households," claims the leaflet. "Oh? I must have been out when they did mine," said Terran.

The magnificently bearded **Ken MacLeod** was also the recipient of a similar unrepeatable offer. "I couldn't get over the sheer capitalist elegance of a product that is its own mailing list," he said. "What will they think of next?"

• **RATA** In an earlier column I inadvertently referred to 'Greg Picksgill' rather than **Greg Picksgill**, and was rightly sio-ed by the editor. In fact the lovely Gregory Picksgill does have a cameo in *Necromanc* and that name Looking back at the drafts for the column, it is clear that I've hit the cut-and-replace button at some point, deleting a number of "S. This was my fault rather than Chris Terran's, and I apologise unreservedly for the error. It won't happen again. You're sio-ed - Ed!"

• **HARROO AMERICA** Alph has, of course, an extremely high opinion of the intelligence and sagacity of our transatlantic cousins, but even his faith was dented by the news that the PBS network has bought *Telubettes*. And just in case Americans can't quite follow the intricacies of plot and dialogue, it's been re-recorded with US voice-overs.

• **PLUS ÇA CHANGE** After last column's plug for the Belgian Speed and Funboard Association, we've been reminded of another completely unconnected BSFA. From the mists of history - well, April 1975 - comes this advert from **Leroy Kettle's** classic fanzine *True Rat*:  
BROMLEY SILENT FARTING ASSOCIATION  
Interested in Silent Farting?

Join NOW, and we promise you will hear nothing from us.  
• **GUTS FOR GARTERS** Ten years ago Dave Langford and John Grant announced the imminent publication of *Guts!*, a horror-novel spoof following up on their disaster-novel spoof *Earthdoom!*. Who could resist chapter titles such as 'Chymes at Midnight' and 'The Lights Are Going Out'? Not to mention blurbs from **Ramsey Campbell** ('The first horror novel I don't even dare to read') and **Graham Masterton** ('I have seen the bowels of horror fiction, and their names are David Langford and John Grant!'). Now it's true that publishers are not noted for speed, decision-making ability and general on-the-ballness, but ten years is stretching it a bit. Yes, Alph was Langford's *Guts!* And, undercutting **Norman Spinrad**, he's prepared to offer a delicately-scented garter to any publisher brave enough to inflict this masterpiece on an eager public. Don't all rush at once.

• **GRAFT** On Wayne Stamford has a suspicious mind. 'Matrix 127, containing a letter from me highly praising *Focus* and its newborn cub, had barely cooled from its litigious delivery when I received notification of my success in *Focus*'s short story competition.' He adds: 'I would like to take this opportunity to say how highly I regard everyone who participates in the BSFA Awards nomination process.' • **EYE AMONG THE BLAND** Fans of *Ridley Walker* suffering side-effects of short-sightedness will be relieved to note that help is at, er, hand. Victor: *The Critique Journal* of the BSFA is now available in a large print edition. Details of the experiment only emerged when the larger typeface was used in some copies of *Victor 194* in ror. A spokesperson was unable to see for comment. O - N<?<N<

**BIG BUTTERS:** (Names withheld on legal and medical advice.)

• Alph welcomes scandal, rumour, slippings, cuttings, droppings, small pieces of cheese, and bribes (c/o editorial address).

the exceedingly good **matrix** is half-baked on an acorn **a5000**, toasted and buttered by various bits of software (notably **zap**, the marmite of text editors), given a good roasting by an **hp laserjet 5l**, microwaved to a t by **pdc** copyprint, grilled and racked by **bramley** mailing services, left to cool by the **royal mail**, and sliced unfairly by you

-matrix 128- celtically soundtracked by sharon shannon - (each title thing-), de danaan, the incredible string band - (cheese sessions 1967-) music, the botry band, and talitha mackenzie

—'Troubled voyage in calm weather'

over and out

—matrix 128- celtically soundtracked by sharon shannon - (each title thing-), de danaan, the incredible string band - (cheese sessions 1967-) music, the botry band, and talitha mackenzie

—'Troubled voyage in calm weather'