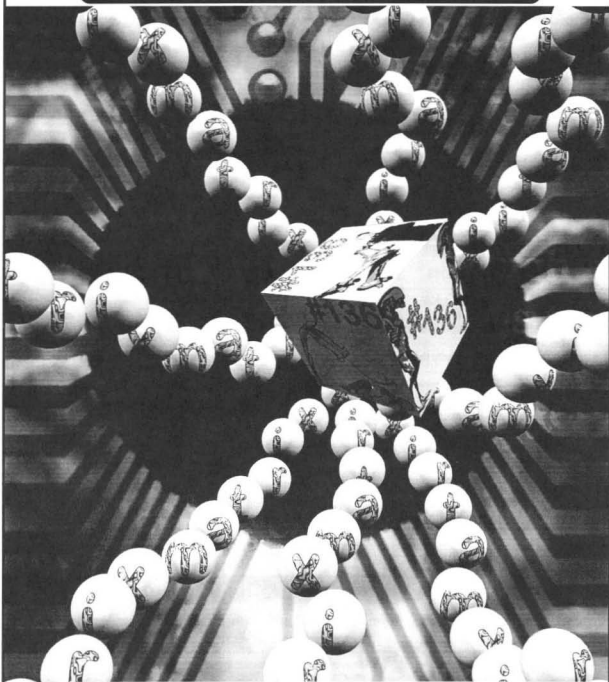


# m a t r i x

£1.75

the news magazine of the british science fiction association



**New Vice President for the BSFA**  
**Shortlists Announced - BSFA & Arthur C Clarke Awards**  
**Alien Spawned - It Was Twenty Years Ago Today....**  
**The Wonders of the Web?**  
**+ News, Views, John Wyndham and More!**

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march/april 1999

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1999



issue 136

the news magazine of the british science fiction association

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## stephen baxter is new b.s.f.a. v.p.

The Committee of the British Science Fiction Association is pleased to announce that Stephen Baxter has agreed to take on the new role of Vice-President of the BSFA.

Sir Arthur C. Clarke is an excellent president of the BSFA and we are very proud to be associated with him. The Committee now feels it is time that the BSFA had someone who might serve as a deputy to Sir Arthur in his role as an ambassador for the organisation and we are delighted that Stephen Baxter has accepted our invitation to take up this position.

Stephen Baxter is well-known as one of Britain's leading contemporary science fiction writers. His novels, including *Voyage*, *Titan* and *Moonseed*, have won considerable praise and critical acclaim, and he has received, among others, the Philip K. Dick Award, the John Campbell Memorial Award, the Kurd Lasswitz Award, the Seiun Award, and of course, several BSFA Awards, including Best Novel for *The Time Ships*. He's currently working on a collaboration with Sir Arthur himself, to be called *The Light of Other Days*.

We are hoping to create a more active role for Council members in the coming years, in areas where their experience and expertise can be most effectively employed, particularly as advisors to the BSFA Committee, helping to promote greater public understanding and appreciation of science fiction, and the encouragement of writers, and in the wider promotion of the BSFA's aims. We feel sure that Stephen's involvement with the BSFA will help us to accomplish this.

## new co-ordinator for orbiter groups

After almost seven years, Carol Ann Kerry Green has decided to hand over the baton for co-ordinating the Orbiter Writer's workshops. Although she has thoroughly enjoyed her time and is going to miss it like hell, feels that life moves on and she may even get to complete her next novel in less than two years.

Dr Kat Patrick has taken over and describes herself as a "fool/martyr/type-A-personality" for doing so. She likes to use her PhD title of Dr., not because she is being stuffy, but because when people meet her "they think I'm in the 6th form if I don't".

Originally from Texas, she moved to England in 1991 when she married mathematician Robert Leese (they met in 1987 while Kat was studying for a MA in 17th-c. studies at Durham). She then did the obligatory stint as a teacher before realising it wasn't for her and since February 1998 has been a full-time writer and (very) part-time theology student.

She has had lots of magazine articles published in places like *Birdkeeper* and *International Railway Traveller* and has now finished an sf novel (for which she is now trying to find a publisher - plug, plug).

If anyone wants more information on the Orbiter Groups contact Kat at 44 Ticknell Piece, Charlbury, Oxon, OX7 3TW, e-mail gbf78@dia1.pipex.com

## change of editor for 'matrix' - help needed

After five years producing *Matrix*, during which time he took it to new heights of excellence, Chris Terran is no longer Editor of *Matrix*.

We're now looking for a new team to write, edit and produce *Matrix*. We need someone to oversee the magazine's production, and we're looking for people interested in commissioning and editing work. We're also looking for people with a particular interest in media, publishing and fanish activities.

If you'd like to be part of the new *Matrix* team, especially if you have writing, editing or production skills, please contact Maureen Kincaid Speller (Administrator, BSFA, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ, email: bsfa@acnestis.demon.co.uk) as soon as possible, outlining your interests and/or relevant experience.

As a consequence you are now reading *Matrix: Interstitial Issue #1*, a temporary measure in order to fill the (hopefully brief) period whilst the new Editorial team is forged.

For the time being any letters, information, news, reviews, should be sent to Colin Odell & Mitch Le Blanc (address on page 2). It would greatly help if this could be sent by e-mail, on disc (plain text file) or clearly typed. The deadline for the next issue is March 18th.

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# media news

➔ Good news for fans of William Hartnell's incarnation of our favourite Time Lord - the BBC have confirmed that the first episode of season two's *The Crusades*, entitled *The Lion*, has cropped up in New Zealand, continuing the painfully slow restoration of episodes "lost" (read dumped) by Aubrey Beeb following their transfer to colour broadcasting in the late 60's.

➔ By the time you read this you are going to be sick of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* speculation, but here goes anyway: the trailer shown with the swashbucklingly good *Mask of Zorro* looks very promising if cluttered - hit a 70mm presentation if you can; Lucas has stated release dates for the sequels in 2002 & 2005; after this trilogy "that's all folks" - the previously mooted 9 or (going back to 1977 here, Crumblies) 12 episodes was a red Jawa, multi-zillionaire Lucas indicating he's too old (55 now) to write further episodes. Still, ewoks hard for the money...

➔ Inexplicably *Star Trek: Insurrection* is doing great business world wide (a No. 1 spot here in the UK with £3 million takings), despite its "odd number film" status...

➔ John Travolta will star in and produce L. Ron Hubbard's *Battlefield Earth* for Franchise Entertainment with a projected trimmed down budget of \$70 million. The title is proving somewhat prophetic, as leading Scientologists are protesting that an interview with Travolta printed in Canada's *National Post* referred to the Most Reverend Founder of their Church as "a sci-fi hack and self-made messiah", much to the chagrin of star and sect.

➔ The autopsies continue on the bloated blockbuster corpses of last year's summer hits with the major three films, *Armageddon*, *Godzilla* and *Lost in Space* featuring high on almost every critic's "Top Ten Terrible Turkeys" list although the former could well be up for an Oscar.

➔ On a more positive note, and showing that money may well talk but it doesn't necessarily say anything interesting, praise for *The Truman Show* continues unabated with Andrew Niccol's excellent screenplay attracting particular attention (making up for the fact that the exceptional *Gattaca* has, as sadly expected, disappeared into the ether). Other contenders for praise include the woefully under-distributed *Pi*, the woefully under-distributed *Gods & Monsters* and the woefully under-distributed *Dark City*. Mind you we must not read too much into all this. *Saving Private Ryan* fares rather well too...

## john wyndham exhibition

When I was a teenager, I brought home a house plant which developed the engaging but ultimately irritating habit of growing baby plants along the edges of its leaves, which then fell off into other plant pots, until seemingly the entire house was engulfed by the wretched things. My mother called it 'the triffid' without so much as a thought as to what this might actually mean. I'm happy to report that the plants never took to walking round the house but the careless familiarity with which my mother christened this plant, disapproving of science fiction as she did, goes some way to showing how John Wyndham's best-known work has penetrated the British psyche. Indeed, as Andy Sawyer, Librarian of the Science Fiction Collections at the University of Liverpool, noted in a recent talk he gave in the University's Art Gallery, for many people, Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* was their introduction to science fiction, while for many others who don't read the genre, Wyndham's is the one name they do know. It's fitting, therefore, that the University's acquisition of the Estate Collection of John Wyndham, should be celebrated by an exhibition entitled 'The Return of the Triffids' featuring material to do with his most famous work, as well as other archive material.

*The Day of the Triffids* actually first appeared in *Colliers Weekly* in 1951, under the perhaps misleading title *Revolt of the Triffids*, although this underlines that ambiguity inherent in the convenient juxtaposition of events, namely the discovery of the triffids, and later, the meteor shower which blinded so many and made them vulnerable to the triffids. The exhibition displays the opening spread of the story in *Colliers Magazine*, and also includes a 1954 Penguin edition of the novel, with a delightful little sketch of a rather friendly-looking triffid on the cover. By contrast, the illustrations produced by Bryan Poole for the short-lived Science Fiction Classics paperback show something altogether more sinister, something one would definitely not want to meet at the bottom of the garden. Translated into many different languages, there are copies of French, Finnish, Hungarian, Dutch, Portuguese and German translations on display, each with its own exotic interpretation of the eponymous plants.

The exhibition also illustrates the effect that the novel had on people. Described on the cover blurb as a 'modified form of what is unhappily called "science fiction"', it seemed, as the catalogue notes, to attract a more middle-class audience, the kind of audience which might otherwise have felt alienated by obvious genre tropes. Reviews were enthusiastic and Wyndham's press scrapbook is on display. Many people wrote to Wyndham praising the book, among them the science fiction writer A. Bertram Chandler, while some asked for sequels. Wyndham was always, commendably I feel, reluctant to write sequels, and indeed one wonders how a sequel to any of his best-known works could ever have been produced.

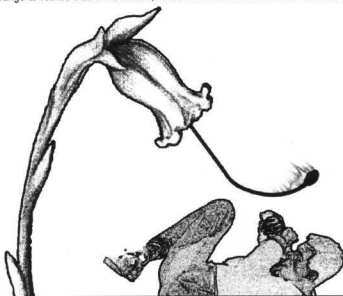
However, looking round the exhibition, one quickly comes to realise that there is a much less familiar side to John Wyndham. Many people assumed, when *The Day of the Triffids* was published that here was a brand new writer, whereas they were in fact looking at a new incarnation of John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris who, before the Second World War, had written regularly for British and American magazines under several different permutations of his many given names (and who would, as a result, as Andy Sawyer notes, become one of the very few authors to have collaborated with himself). More than that, one realises that John Wyndham the writer was a very private man who, as Andy Sawyer speculates, kept his life very much compartmentalised. His wartime letters, written to Grace Wilson, whom he would later marry, contain vivid descriptions of his experiences, primarily as a firewatcher (he also worked as a censor and in the Royal Corps of Signals) but give no hint that he was also a science fiction writer. Indeed, as the obituary in his local paper, the *Petersfield Post*, hints, very few people realised that he was an author. However, the delightful Valentines that he made for Grace show another side to this intensely private man. He was a skilled and amusing versifier, and not afraid either to turn to glue, lace and ribbons to decorate his verses.

On a more general level, the exhibition also seeks to show the breadth of its holdings, and its interest in science fiction, and so I found myself confronted by Eric Frank Russell's *Hugo*, presented to him in 1955 for the short story, *Alamogosa*, as well as by correspondence between him and John Christopher, and material from the Olaf Stapledon Archive, sf magazines and fanzines, including an issue of *Zenith*, from 1942, with a cover from Harry Turner, still active in fandom today, and a story from Arthur C. Clarke. As I said to Andy Sawyer, at the time, it is strange to realise that one's culture, that of science fiction literature and fandom, has become worthy of exhibition

(and indeed to find my own fanzine article on Wyndham listed in the catalogue's bibliography).

Sadly, by the time you read this, the exhibition, which ran from 15th January to 26th February, will be over. A modest but fascinating exhibition in the exotic surroundings of the University of Liverpool's Art Gallery in Abercromby Square (and well worth a visit in its own right), it also featured lunchtime Gallery talks from Andy Sawyer himself, from Simon Ings and David Ketterer (the latter currently researching a biography of Wyndham). One can but hope such exhibitions will become an annual event.

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## branching out

Way back in the mists of time (well in 1997, anyway) the BSFA added its voice to support a lottery application bid by the Society of Chief Librarians. This bid has now been successful and the £300,000 funding is already being applied to the Branching Out project which aims to promote reading, especially of contemporary and genre literature, through public libraries.

33 local authorities have been selected to take part in specially devised training to enable libraries to develop new approaches to involving readers in contemporary literature. Participants will play a key role in the development of new

software designed to help readers choose books by mood and content, by selecting the books to be included and rating them on, for example, how unpredictable, optimistic or emotional they are. The software will be available in 2000.

Other aspects of Branching Out, which hopes to 'change libraries forever' are a collaboration with major library bookseller, BFS, to develop a route for the buying and promotion of a wider range of material and the creation, through the University of Central England, of accredited courses in reader development for librarians and other professionals.

## banks helps emi

In a new series of compilation CD's, aimed, according to the publicity, at the "list-obsessed tape-making lads immortalised in Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*" EMI have commissioned a number of "cult writers" to compile soundtracks to their work.

Among those asked is Iain Banks whose compilation is entitled *Personal Effects*, after an album made by a character in his novel *Espedair Street*, and includes the track "Don't Bang the Drum" by the Waterboys. Banks is quoted as including this "as a sound track to a Scottish mountain road movie [he wanted to make],

a romantic comedy road movie in which the central character was a drug dealer, but a nice drug dealer, starting, pre-titles, with lots of dark, slow motion chrome shots of lonely highland roads, mountains and lochs. Then a break in the music, cut to a bright red Lotus Esprit Turbo [not a Porsche 911??] with lights blazing." A full track listing is not given but a video must surely follow?

Others in the series include compilations by Hunter S Thompson, Ralph Steadman and Gerry Anderson [so we can finally find out what was on the stereo of Thunderbird 2].

## arkwright returns

Fans of *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright*, possibly the best comic of the 1980's, will be delighted to hear that author Bryan Talbot is currently putting the finishing touches to the sequel *Heart of Empire*, subtitled *The Legacy of Luther Arkwright*. The first issue of nine will be published April/May by Dark Horse Comics, who reprinted the original series (with altered speech bubbles) in America. This time around we are promised a more accessible work than its experimental predecessor and furthermore the comic will be in full colour (courtesy of Angus

McKie). Conventional it won't be, Arkwright's daughter, Princess Mary Victoria Elizabeth Boudicca Cordelia Miranda Arkwright Stuart, born at the end of the first series, is a racist aristocrat with a tendency to vomit because of persistent migraines and is the main protagonist. Luther Arkwright himself is not to be seen due to a mysterious disappearance but his presence will permeate the series. Hopefully we will see more of the baroque intricacy and delicate line drawings that made the original such a masterpiece.

## oscars announced

Yes, it's that Oscar<sup>TM</sup> time again. This year the Academy have nominated relatively few genre films for the coveted golden statue, but then again mainstream quality product has been in short supply lately so this is to be expected. Among the films nominated are:

*The Truman Show* (Ed Harris - Best Supporting Actor, Peter Weir - Best Director, Andrew Niccols - Best Original Screenplay)

*Gods and Monsters* (Ian McKellen - Best Actor, Lynn Redgrave - Best Supporting Actress, Best Adapted Screenplay)  
*Amageddon* (Sound Effects Editing, Visual Effects, Sound and, horrible though this sounds, Best Original Song for "I Don't Want To Miss A Thing")  
Also in line are the saccharine *What Dreams May Come* (two nominations), the pointless remake of *Mighty Joe Young* and the return of our porky pal in *Babe: Pig In The City*.

☛ Cap'n Janeway, aka actress

Kate Mulgrew, may well depart from the Starfleet seat and embark on a voyage into stage and family. How can she clothe her kids without the paycheck? Make her sew...

☛ TV/Sci-fi: among the many new series showing, filming, waiting for airtime are: *The Tenth Kingdom* (Trolls and stuff not, unfortunately a sequel to that other great mini series *The Kingdom*), *The Martian Race* ("scientific accuracy" is quoted, mmmm), *Strange World* (disease of the week meets *The X-Files* and *The Gemini Man*, for those with similarly indiscriminate childhood memories) *GvsE* aka *Good vs. Evil* (Faust meets *Randall & Hopkirk* Deceased in what we are promised will be a "humorous look" at a "dark and serious genre". Can't wait), and *The Lost World* (Conan Doyle's oft-filmed book - not Spielberg's celluloid travesty). Expect them to crop up on satellite soon and terrestrial sometime next decade.

☛ In *lost* pre-production: meteors + dinosaurs = *Dinosaurs*, one time Paul Verhoeven project now facing the \$200+ million Disney price tag and a loopy "cute-dino-pretends-to-be-Bruce-Willis" plot that mixes the *Land Before Time* and *Armageddon*. *Fahrenheit 451*'s second big screen outing is on hold while Trauffaut-a-like director Mel Gibson completes other contractual obligations. *End of Days* is on, it's got Arnie and it's going to be spooky. William Malone directs the remake of exploitation king William Castle's *House on Haunted Hill* for the new Joel Silver/Robert Zemeckis film sub-company, Dark Castle. Hopes for the famous "Emergo" skeleton making a long overdue comeback are probably premature. Shame. Steve H20 Minner is set to direct *Ghosting* and Joe genre genius Dante is to helm the \$40 million clone and run (well, fly, the protagonist is a helicopter pilot) paranoid thriller *The Sixth Day* for Phoenix pictures.

☛ Inevitably the backlash against the new film version of *Lord of the Rings* has started before the first film (*The Fellowship of the Ring* spooky enough) has even finished casting. Stuffy killjoys the world over are clambering for literary supremacy over film magic. Bah Huhmbug. How can it fail when it has the mighty Peter Jackson behind the camera, he of *Branded*, *Heavenly Creatures* and the Muppet musical sex 'n' snuff classic *Meet The Feebles* fame? Casting for hobbits, elves and the like seems to be limited to those with "English accents" (so no high flying dwarves or "Frodo 'n' Sam in da House (of Elrond) HWA action then...). Months of grueling blue screen work is in the pipeline.

☛ Spooky Fox show *Brimstone* is no more, despite the expected too-and-froing regarding its future. Apparently some effort will be made to tie up as many loose ends as possible.

# media news

cont.

➤ What's going down on *Babylon 5* spin-off *Crusade*? Who knows for sure but the rumors fluctuate wildly on a day to day basis, generally indicating that the prospects for the series are not going to plan. As we went to press the current situation is that *BS/Crusade* creator J.M. Straczynski has confirmed that TNT (the channel that handles the series in the U.S.) are "not SF-friendly" but that the series has not been canceled as Warner Bros., who handle the financial side of the production, have the final say. Comments suggesting that the rough cuts of the first few episodes of the series were abandoned remain unsubstantiated.

➤ Fans of science fiction and *The Simpsons* (whose X-Files episode remains a genre favorite) will be delighted to hear that Matt Groening and Fox (studio, not animal...) have announced production of *Futurama*, a new animated comedy programme set one thousand years in the future. Central character Fry is thrust forward in time where he befriends a robot called Bender and a woman called Leela, his unconventional adventures will apparently indicate the similarities of future living as much as the differences. Fox clearly feel they can make the substantial investment following the news that, once again, *The Simpsons* has been nominated for a number of Emmys. Any improvement on *The Jetsons* will be welcomed by all.

➤ Disney's *Mission to Mars* launches without Mousehunt director Gore Verbinski on board due to "creative differences"; apparently the Disney-friendly Sam *The Evil Dead* Raini could be a replacement although other sources suggest Brian de Palma. The film concerns two missions to Mars, the second one to examine the mysterious disappearance of the first.

➤ The snappily monikered *Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict* has been renewed for a further two seasons because "Gene Roddenberry's name is synonymous with success"...

➤ Isaac Asimov's *Bicentennial Man* will commence shooting with Robin Williams, Embeth Davidtz and Embeth Davidtz (for she plays her grandmother too). Williams is a servant android who's two hundred year service sees him developing humanoid characteristics.

➤ **Final Note:** I always cry at weddings so fellow romantics will be delighted to crack open the Kleenex with me as we happily sniff our way through the news that *Babylon 5*'s Patricia Tallman (Lyta) and Jeffrey Wellerth (Kosh) have announced their engagement. Wedding bells be Vorlon...



## arthur c. clarke award: shortlist announced

The shortlist for the 1999 Arthur C. Clarke Award has now been announced. The six books on the shortlist are:

*Earth Made Of Glass* - John Barnes (Orion)  
*Time On My Hands* - Peter Delacorte (Gollancz)  
*The Cassini Division* - Ken MacLeod (Orbit)  
*The Extremes* - Christopher Priest (Simon & Schuster)  
*Cavalcade* - Alison Sinclair (Millennium)  
*Dreaming In Smoke* - Tricia Sullivan (Orion)

*Earth Made Of Glass* is the follow-up to *A Million Open Doors* which was shortlisted for the Clarke Award in 1994. It takes the two central characters from that earlier novel to another world being opened up by an instantaneous matter transporter, but here the world is already trembling on the brink of catastrophic civil conflict. Barnes was also shortlisted for the Clarke Award for *Mother of Storms* in 1995.

Although *Time On My Hands* is not published as science fiction by Gollancz, its story of a time traveller returning to 1930s Hollywood in order to prevent a bit-part actor called Ronald Reagan going on to become President is clearly science fictional. Delacorte is primarily a show business writer, and his familiarity with the movie business of the time clearly shows in this novel.

Ken MacLeod was the runner-up for the 1996 Clarke Award with his first novel, *The Star Fraction*. *The Cassini Division* is the third novel in the sequence in which a bravura attitude towards sf tropes is combined with a strong political attitude. MacLeod has twice won the Prometheus Award for Libertarian science fiction. *The Cassini Division* has also been shortlisted for the BSFA Award.

Christopher Priest's previous novel, *The Prestige*, was not only shortlisted for the Clarke Award but also won the World Fantasy Award and the James Tait Black Memorial Award. This latest novel takes as its starting point a shooting with echoes of the Hungerford shootings, but turns this into a haunting novel of virtual reality. *The Extremes* has also been shortlisted for the BSFA Award.

*Cavalcade* is Alison Sinclair's third novel, following *Legacies* and *Blueheart*. Previously a research fellow at the University of Leeds, Sinclair is now studying medicine at the University of Calgary in Canada. Her novel tells of a disparate group of humans taken aboard an enigmatic alien craft, but whose all-too-human disputes and prejudices threaten them all.

Tricia Sullivan is an American writer now living in London. *Dreaming In Smoke* is her third novel, having won acclaim for both *Lette* and *Someone to Watch Over Me*. Her new novel involves cyber-assisted Dreams, but is set on a very hostile world, the two elements combining to chilling effect.

The shortlist was chosen by a panel of judges consisting of Claire Briaire and Tanya Brown representing the BSFA and Farah Mendlesohn and John Clute representing the Science Fiction Foundation, under the chairmanship of Paul Kincaid. The winner will be announced in a ceremony at the Science Museum in London in May.

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tip top ten

### PRATCHETT OUT-SOLD BY A GARDENER - BUT BEATS DELIA

No Waterstone's chart this issue but a survey conducted to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the British Book Awards has produced a list of the top selling writers of the 90's.

Far out in front is Catherine Cookson, but the surprise is at number two. Hessayon is the writer of the "Expert" series of gardening books, the first of which was published in 1959 followed by 18 more, with *The House Plant Expert* having total sales to date of 12.7 million.

Terry Pratchett comes in at number 3, described as "a phenomenon of the nineties" which, given that it is reported that 1 in 25 of the books sold by W H Smith is by Pratchett and that he accounts for 20 per cent of all sf sales, appears an accurate description. The only other genre author on the list is Stephen King, although his 90's sales are down on his earlier success.

And for the next decade? Well, hopefully Pratchett will go on but neither of the two expected to come into the list, Patricia Cornwall and Bill Bryson, are genre authors.

### Top Ten Best-Sellers of the Nineties:

- 1 Catherine Cookson - 14.5 million
- 2 Dr David Hessayon - 10.5 million
- 3 Terry Pratchett - 10 million
- 4 Danielle Steel - 8 million+
- 5 Delia Smith - 8 million
- 6 Stephen King - 7.5 million+
- 7 John Grisham - 7 million
- 8 Dick Francis - 7 million
- 9 Maeve Binchy - 5.5 million
- 10 Wilbur Smith - 5 million+

## bsfa awards shortlist your votes count!

Introducing your BSFA Award Co-ordinator Chris Hill:

*Roll of drums please! Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is time to announce the shortlist for the 1998 BSFA Awards! The full list is below. Firstly, though:*

### how to vote:

With this mailing you will find a ballot paper. Each item on the shortlist is listed on the ballot paper with a space next to it to put a number. In this you should enter 1 if you think it should win in the category, 2 if you think it should be in second place, etc. If you do not feel capable of judging the entry (if you have not read the book, for example) please leave the space blank or put a line through it.

Please put your name on the bottom and, if you know it, your BSFA Membership Number (this is primarily for me to trace the source of ballot papers, whether Eastercon or BSFA members).

The ballot papers should be returned to me by second post on Thursday 1st April. Alternatively, if you are going to be at Reconvene (the 1999 Eastercon) then feel free to deliver it to me personally or to the BSFA stall in the dealers' room by 12 o'clock midday on Sunday 4th April.

Before moving on to the actual shortlist, just a couple of notes:

1. Thanks to everyone who gave me nominations (you know who you are!). Collect your OBEs at the door...
2. The closing date printed in the last Matrix. Yes, I know Friday 27th January does not exist (it should have been Friday 22nd January). This was a transcription error that occurred after I sent the copy to the editor. I also know that the date had passed by the time you received the magazine. This was due to circumstances totally out of my control, I am afraid.

### best novel

I thought that this year I would write a few words about each of the shortlisted books to give a little bit of a flavour of them.

#### *To Hold Infirmary* by John Meaney

A story of intrigue and murder among the enhanced humanity of a distant planet. A very impressive first novel filled with intriguing ideas and well-drawn characters.

#### *The Extremes* by Christopher Priest

After her husband is murdered in a killing spree in the US a woman goes to England to investigate a similar event that happened in a small town on the same day. A dark examination

of the nature of loss and perception in Priest's first novel since the highly acclaimed *The Prestige*.

#### *Inversions* by Iain M. Banks.

In a twin narrative, two outsiders play out their lives in a background of encroaching war on a feudal planet. A quietly elegant tale from Banks after the more pyrotechnic *Excession* (which won the 1996 BSFA Award for Best Novel).

#### *Queen City Jazz* by Kathleen Ann Goonan.

In a USA devastated by out of control nanotech a woman confronts her destiny in an unrecognisably changed Cincinnati. Another fine first novel only now getting its long deserved first UK edition.

#### *The Cassini Division* by Ken MacLeod.

Third novel set in the same background as *The Star Fraction* and *The Stone Canal*. I cannot say any more than that as I have not yet read it!

### best short fiction

All the short fiction is from Interzone this year. I find this a little disappointing after the spread last year but not too surprising, with no *Back Brain Recluse* or major anthology released in this country in 1998.

#### *The First Annual Performance Arts Festival at the Slaughter Rock Battlefield* by Thomas M. Disch (published in Interzone 131).

#### *La Cenerentola* by Gwyneth Jones (published in Interzone 136).

#### *Shift Change* by Timons Esaiias (published in Interzone 137).

#### *The Day Before They Came* by Mary Soon Lee (published in Interzone 133).

#### *Vulpheous* by Eric Brown (published in Interzone 129).

### best artwork

The artwork nominations are split between three artists this year. After featuring on the shortlist last year Dominic Harman returns with two pieces from *Interzone*. After a year off we also have the return of the ever-popular Jim Burns. And finally first appearances from one of Matrix and Vector's resident film groupies, Colin Odell.

#### *The Gardens of Saturn* (cover Interzone 137) by Dominic Harman.

#### *In Focus/On Focus* (front cover Focus 34) by Colin Odell.

#### *Bottles #3* (back cover Focus 34) by Colin Odell.

#### *Jedella Ghost* (cover Interzone 135) by Dominic Harman.

#### *Lord Prestimion* (cover Interzone 138) by Jim Burns.

So, that is the line-up for the 1998 BSFA Awards. Please use your vote! Last year was a good start, with the highest number of votes for some years, but please, let's make this year even better!

### General Note on the Awards:

A correspondent recently brought up an inconsistency with the dating of the awards. There seems to be some confusion over whether the awards should be dated for year of eligibility or year of presentation. I thought it would be worth clarifying this. So, despite what it says in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, the proper dating of the awards is Year of Eligibility. So the 1998 awards are presented for material published in 1998, even though they are presented in 1999.

Clear as mud? Good!

### the 1998 bsfa awards

Remember that you can now start sending me nominations for the 1999 Awards. More of this next issue, but in the meantime a quick reminder of the rules for eligibility:

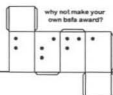
**Best Novel:** Novel first published in the UK during calendar year 1999.

**Best Short Fiction:** Fiction first appearing (in magazine or anthology) during calendar year 1999 irrespective of country of origin.

**Best Artwork:** Artwork first appearing in the UK during calendar year 1999.

### So get reading!

Note that we use what I believe is called the 'Australian Method'. If there is no clear winner after the count of first place votes then we take out the ballot papers for the entry with the least votes and redistribute them to their second place vote. This continues until a clear winner is found.



Inspired by the release of 'The Alien Box Set' from Fox Video, John Ashbrook takes a look behind what was to become the first film in the increasingly inaccurately-entitled 'Alien Trilogy'. It was the bleak mid-winter of 1979; Labour were in power and America was bristling for a fight out East, whilst teenagers were stoned out of their tiny minds in smoky, neon-lit dance-halls... oh, how the world turns.

Depending on your opinion of babies, you may take as simple common sense the suggestion that a purple, wrinkled, bawling mass of id, is very like an 'Alien' movie. In much the way that a newborn child may inherit its eye-colour and bad temper from its parents and grandparents, a film will bear the imprint of those which came before it.

Case in point: does anyone remember 1980's *Inseminoid* or *Saturn 3*? No? How about 1989's *Leviathan*? Alright then, let's bring it more up to

date - who saw *The Relic* and *Event Horizon* last year? Well, all of these movies, among dozens upon dozens of others, follow, with tedious precision, the blueprint laid down by the block-busting success of *Alien*. Yet, even in 1979, that blueprint was far from new.

*Alien* did not burst fully formed from the heads of writer Dan O'Bannon and director Ridley Scott - nor, for that matter, from the chest of John Hurt. It is not a unique thing, conceived in a vacuum and cast out into an unsuspecting universe; rather it is an end product, fed and fattened and lifted high on the celluloid shoulders of a plethora of cheap and occasionally nastier earlier films. So, let us climb *Alien*'s family tree, perching on its branches to consider a few of its more conspicuous relatives:

The film is an offshoot of the ancient and noble line of Hollywood hokum known as 'Old Dark House' movies. These will be familiar to fans of mystery fiction - they are the ones where a house-full of innocent people mingle with an unknown killer who picks them off one-by-one. It's usually the butler. The grand-dame, and possibly the most celebrated exponent of this sub-genre, was Agatha Christie with her plays *Ten Little Indians* and *The Mousetrap*.

As the motif developed into a cliché, it visited any number of alternatives. So, horribly mutilated murderers have stalked the dumb and the doomed down darkened corridors in Parisian opera houses, Lakeside summer camps or through the rain-soaked streets of unnamed cities. The idea has even been rendered safe for children with the ever-popular board game *Cluedo* (which itself became the film *Clue* back in 1985).

*Alien* simply took the idea and moved it to outer space. But it wasn't the first film to borrow the 'Old Dark House' for science fictional purposes.

A generation earlier, in 1951, Howard Hawks oversaw the production of *The Thing From Another World* (and, some say, he actually directed it, although Christian Nyby gets the screen credit). Taking John W. Campbell's 1938 short story 'Who Goes There' as its starting point, this film re-locates the Old Dark House to the ferociously inhospitable wastes of the North Pole.

A team of American scientists and soldiers find a huge circular object buried in the ice (it turns out to be a crashed space ship) alongside a hulking great veggie-man, equipped with ten-men's strength and a wicked line in horny knuckles.

Through a determined mix of raw courage and good-old-fashioned ingenuity, the humans win the day. But, as the movie closes, we are reminded

to be vigilant - more invaders could arrive at any time - "Watch the skies!"

Of course, *The Thing* touched a nerve in the American consciousness, it talked of invasion, of the Great American Way of Life being destroyed. It was a cunning metaphor for those darn Russkies! Consequently, the film was a huge success and opened the floodgates for a decade of tackily delightful black and white 'sci-fi' quickies. You know the sort of thing, they turn up on late-night TV from time to time.

Cashing-in on this cultural phenomenon, Heinlein wrote *The Puppetmasters* (1951), a book about parasitic aliens taking away humanity's ... humanity. Jack Finney followed this with his book *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1955), in which alien spores float out of the sky, settle on earth and begin to spread their tendrils to eventually form cocoons from which perfect copies of people emerge. The only difference is, these people look human, but they don't act human. Within a year, this tale had made it to the big screen - ending with another pessimistic catch-phrase: "You're next!"

The fear of aliens invading a nation, had become more personal, it was now about the body and mind being invaded. Seen through their films, the Americans of the mid-twentieth century will appear to history to be a deeply insecure, paranoid people. Eventually their irrational fear of 'The Red Menace' led them from notional invader to actual invader, and the Vietnam War.

Their films of the seventies are, in many ways, a reaction to this battle on the other side of the planet. The voracious national pride of the fifties had leached away, leaving a population cynical, fatalistic, listless and stoned. The young were at the dull edge of this 'counter-revolution', and one such group made, purely as a student experiment, a short sf film which eventually became the 1974 feature *Dark Star*.

An antidote to the glossy, sophisticated majesty of 2001 - *A Space Odyssey* (1968), the students' film was grim and grimy. It suggested that the wonders of space flight would one-day become so matter-of-fact that they would be positively boring. Astronauts become blue-collar workers. The titular space ship aimlessly wanders the far-reaches of space, blowing up asteroids. It is essentially vacuuming dirt from the ignored corners of the galaxy.

The writer and co-star of *Dark Star* (he played the hassled Sergeant Pinback) was one Dan O'Bannon. A fan of those old fifties sci-fi movies, but very much a product of his decade, O'Bannon had a head-full of sf ideas - and one was to take the Old Dark House out into space.





Initially calling it 'Space Beast', D'O'B worked on the script in-between spending nights on the sofa in his business partner's back room. Hey, it's a glamorous life in Hollywood! Fortunately, said partner (Ronald Shussett) had a substantial input into the script, making key suggestions - possibly the most significant of which being that they show the script to a big Hollywood studio. O'Bannon had seen the piece as another Dark Star, a small-scale character piece. Most of all, he wanted to keep it simple. Shussett had bigger plans.

And so it was that *Alien* became a big-budget movie, conceived on a vast scale, and going on to be one of only a dozen-or-so films which had, up to that point, earned more than \$100 million.

When you look closely at *Alien*, peering around its exquisitely designed corners and through its artfully photographed gloom - you find a post-modern montage of quotes, references and influences. Although *Alien* owes its shape and substance to that Old Dark House, its debts are more numerous and varied than anyone - at least consciously - could have realised when the cameras were rolling.

The film begins quietly, slowly - in a whitewashed room full of sleeping astronauts. All around them Mother, the on-board computer, is bringing the ship back to life, like a behemoth awakening. Neons popping into life, crew padding bleary-eyed through the motions, unable to speak until they've downed their first cup of stewed coffee. The routines they run through for another day in space are convincingly depicted. The last time we saw anything quite like his was on 'The Discovery', in Kubrick's 2001.

Indeed, in *Alien*, Mother's central core is like Hal's - a room lined with twinkling lights. When Ripley hacks into Mother's program, she finds that the computer intends to bring the monster back and that the crew are not just expendable, but, given the beast's reproductive method, their death is necessary!

Taking this news with an understandable lack of grace, Ripley sets the ship to self-destruct (setting-off a pedantic vocal count-down reminiscent of the smart bombs in *Dark Star*) but, before hitting the boom button, she pauses to read the backlit instructions - a direct visual homage to Kubrick's one stab at humour in 2001: the zero-g toilet.

Philip Strick, in his *Sight and Sound* review of the film, reads *Alien* as a paean to quarantine, that terribly British need to hold potential disease carriers at bay. He sees it as following on from films like *The Quatermass Experiment* (1955) and *Village of the Damned* (1960) in that they demonstrate a paranoid fear of this scept'dr isle being invaded by something far less scrutable than jack-booted Germans.

Certainly, *Alien* actually raises the issue of quarantine, when astronaut Kane - in the grips of what would come to be called 'The Face-Hugger' - along with his comrades, is refused re-entry to the ship by Ripley because of the danger of contamination. How right she was. If she'd been allowed to stick to her guns, this would have been a much shorter film about a bunch of space-truckers. Alien, what alien?

The classic scenario of explorers stumbling across the remains of an ancient civilisation, and accidentally unleashing the jinn, is practically as old as fiction itself. Between the wars, 'pulp' and comics adapted and employed it many times. Indeed, the motif of a team of interstellar adventurers stumbling across a derelict spaceship had become so ubiquitous it had dropped into redundancy by the sixties, yet had only rarely made it onto the big screen.

Hawks's *The Thing From Another World* employed it, of course, but the only other examples this side of the BBC's TV show *Dr Who*, were Italian director Mario Bava's film *Planet of the Vampires* - aka *Terrere Nello Spazio* - (1965) and Tarkovsky's Russian rendering *Solaris* (1971). Although as different in approach as films can be, they are similar in that their derelict spaceships don't contain a tangible monster, but rather a madness which makes the characters destroy themselves.

So, once more, we return to *The Thing*. Rescued from a crashed spaceship, its monster stalks the dark and claustrophobic corridors of an Arctic Station, which is buried in a blizzard so no one can escape. One of the crew - a doctor named Carrington - tries, in the name of science, to reason with his fellows, to study the monster instead of kill it. Eventually, he sides with the beast over the humans and meets the kind of sticky end traditionally reserved for traitors.

In *Alien* one of the crew - a doctor named Ashe - tries, in the name of science, to reason with his fellows, to study the monster instead of kill it. Eventually, he sides with the beast over the humans, and meets a very sticky, gooey end indeed.

In *The Thing*, a tray of peculiar plants gives a hint to the monster's life-cycle, beginning as a pod and growing into a strapping seven-foot ex-football player. In Campbell's original story - and John Carpenter's 1982 movie remake - the thing hides inside people, much as the infant alien does. Similarly, in the 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* - the plants conspire to inherit the earth by invading and consuming people.

Generally speaking, drawing such 'inspiration' is accepted as a natural part of the creative process; hey, even Shakespeare 'borrowed' ideas from other playwrights. Of course, if the

'homage' becomes too in-depth, issues of plagiarism and copyright infringement can arise. One 'homage' which was not greeted with indulgence and humour, was to A.E. Van Vogt's 1939 short story 'Discord in Scarlet' (which can now be found as part of the fix-up *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*). This features an alien beastie stalking the corridors of a space ship, picking off the crew one-by-one. Fingers were pointed, accusations were made and eventually an out of court settlement was reached, to the tune of \$50,000.

Curiously, a similar claim was not made against the substantially less-successful sci-fi pot-boiler *It - The Terror From Beyond Space* (1958), where 'our heroes' chase the bog-standard rubber-suited bogey-man through corridors and air-shafts of a creaky old space-ship, until they herd it into an airtight and blast it out into space.



In both this film and *The Thing*, the ill-equipped humans, their numbers dwindling, desperately patch together weapons from their scant resources, whilst relying on old-fashioned human ingenuity to get them through each successive narrow-scraper.

In *Alien*, the unnamed crew make do with cattle-prods and (when they realise that baby alien has rapidly grown into scary alien) flame-throwers, to aid them in their pursuit down corridors and through airshafts. Their plan has a simple but familiar ring to it: Herd it into an airlock and blast it out into space.

All of which leaves the small matter of the epilepsy-inducing finale - the blueprint for action movie finales to this very day. Nowadays, if it doesn't have klaxons, flashing lights, steam and (optionally) an ominous countdown - all wrapped-up in a satisfyingly huge explosion - well it's hardly a finale at all. Several commentators have noted that the strobing of the hazard-lights during Ripley's escape, are borrowed from the rapid-cut rape/murder scenes in *Looking for Mr Goodbar* (1977). Which makes the xenomorph's determined pursuit of Ripley seem rather too much like a date that goes dramatically wrong.

When the huge oil-tanker (or Old Dark House, whichever you prefer) finally bows out - in a spectacular (for the time) big bang - we are put in mind of the detonations that rounded off *Forbidden Planet* in 1956, or took out *This Island Earth's* besieged planet Metaluna one year earlier. For that matter, the death throes of Superman's Krypton and Darth Vader's Death Star also come to mind. Yet the Technicolor 'swoosh' of energy that escapes space-zero is clearly and unambiguously a nod to *The Star Gate* at the end of 2001.

The one genuine revelation in *Alien* is Scott's camera-work, this was totally pre-emptive. When was the last time that you saw a horror movie which didn't employ steel grills and steam and strong back-lighting? Yet, up until 1979, no film in this genre had ever before employed the moody, shadow-laden motifs of the crime movie. The naturalistic acting and documentary air to the film's first half depict deep-space flight as a more natural, more believable extension of that pioneered in 2001, *Silent Running* and *Star Wars*, yet this has been largely forgotten. All most people remember about *Alien* now, are the claustrophobic airshafts, the cricket-pad and fish-bowl space-suits and, of course, John Hurt giving birth on the dining table.

A slightly different version of this article appeared in 'Model Mart' magazine, as the first of a series of pieces looking at all four 'Alien' films.

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#### LETTERS TO:

Matrix Letters

c/o: the editorial address

or: E-Mail us at:

colin.mitch@virgin.net

Firstly, a response to Roy Gray's letters of *Matrix* 133 and 135, which seems to be developing into a heated debate.

"Controversy or Just SF?" continues...

From: Andrew M. Butler, Nottingham

Roy Gray talks about the age of consent, and we have to note that his comments are carefully written so as to include both males and females. His objection to equal ages of consent is that it might legitimise sexual behaviour between 16 year olds and 40 year olds. Of course, the hopeless law that we have in place would allow a 16 year old girl to have sex with a 100 year old, providing she is consenting. A 16 year old girl is as likely to be penniless as the equivalently aged boy, who could sleep with a 100 year old woman if she so chooses. Surely this is as much a matter of an economic transaction as consent: is a 16 year old prostitute (of whichever sex) being more exploited than a 40 year old?

The argument for fixing a homosexual age of consent at 18 seems to be that males take longer to find a mature sexual identity. We could posit a male teenager who is legally married at the age of sixteen, despite this supposed fluid sexual identity, which 730 days later settles down into healthy homosexuality (maybe he has that gay gene, or the difference in part of his brain or an absent father or whatever the theory is this week). Oops! Much embarrassment all round. I can see a case for a separate male age of consent (gay and straight) to female (gay and straight). But only just: let's say males at 18, females at 16. Except that then it would be legal for men to die for their country but not to lie back and think of England.

But to get back to the age difference issue: the five year age difference rule seems sound, but dealing as I do with 18-21 year olds (and older), that is within that a wide range of relative maturities. Let's muddy the waters a bit: one of the safeguards built into the legislation is that teachers and other people in positions of authority (scoutmasters? GPs? MPs?) should be excluded from sexual relationships with their charges. Should this also apply to student teachers who may well be aged 20 (in a BA (QTS)) teaching sixth formers? Should it apply to university lecturers and 18 years olds? And mature students? Any age of consent can only hope for being the least worst scenario.

Roy notes the drip-drip effect of gay porn in converting recruits to the pink cause (latest development: gay section in Nottingham Waterstones is next to the True Crime section - they're after hardened criminals now, or people interested in crime...). Would it be OK to have piles of straight porn to counteract this, or is it porn in general (note that Smiths now stock Black Lace and equivalents)?

He also suggests that supermarket place (say) beer next to (say) sf if they think the same will sell. Equally likely (and from experience of trying to buy breadcrumbs for fish) they'll design it so that you pass as much of the shop as possible.

But I honestly think the thought of placing gay literature next to sf as some kind of subliminal recruiting device is absolute paranoia: it assumes that the large chains of bookshops either have gay managers or gay employees somehow wangle their way onto layout duty and that seeing a pile of books will somehow convert someone to homosexuality as opposed to cooking (teenagers are interested in eating) or travel (and foreign lands). It just doesn't add up.

## Letters

Incidentally, it's a shame Chris Terran (who I'll miss working alongside) didn't suggest the BSFA's website as a good place to start browsing the web. It's blowing our own trumpet, maybe, but let's blow it [and blow we do - see pages 14 & 15 - Eds]

(We'll have responses to your comments for future Matrices)

Quite a few responses to Andrew M. Butler's reviews in *Matrix* 135 of *Mathematical Movies* *Pi* and *Cube*...

From Henry Edwards, via email

Andrew M. Butler's review of *Cube* seemed a little disjointed, and its comment about two mathematical movies made little sense until you read the same reviewer blathering on about *Pi* on the next page. Perhaps he'd like to try a little harder and integrate reviews of two films a bit more if he's going to make cryptic comments like that.

And from Andrew M. Butler again (although, maybe we should issue a Spoiler alert here):

Interesting to see another view of *Cube*, even if I obviously disagree with Mr Simpson.

What worries me slightly, and perhaps this is something the membership might help us with, is how much of a movie should we give away? Look away now if you want to see *Cube* and haven't yet read our reviews.

The gimmick of *Cube* is that it's this huge cube containing lots of smaller cubes, withatches between them, and some of them are booby trapped, with mathematical puzzles to cue explorers into this. But just as they've got that worked out, they find themselves back in the same place. I allude to this in my review by saying that there's someone or something moving out there. Ian simply tells us that the cubes are moving, well, that just about gives away the ending (not quite - there are a couple more twists).

(It's OK, you can come back now - Eds)

The question is, should we reviewers assume that everyone who's likely to have seen the film, and discuss it with this in mind, or should we be more circumspect and hold back on detailed discussion of anything more than, say, three quarters of an hour into the film? Or should the editor of the magazine warn you about what we'd call spoilers if it were email?

An interesting point. Does anyone else have any views on the matter? Letters to the address at the top of the page. And now another issue for discussion, but from a correspondent whose tongue is firmly in his cheek!

From: Morris Stroud, Norfolk.

Dear Sir,

No doubt you will think I am one of those terrible media types who would reduce the genre that has produced such literary grates as Lino Faunthorpe and John - throw on another slave girl - Norman to the level of Quatermass or Blade Runner. My idea is neither radical nor original, merely a modest proposal that, having perused the fine selection of wordy consumables listed as comprising the long shortlist for the BSFA Award [Best Novel] as elucidated by that fine gentleman Mr Christopher Hill in *Matrix* 135, that the BSFA does, finally, at long and overdue last, introduce two further awards. To wit: Best Film Dramatic Presentation, and Best Television Dramatic Presentation.

If this is to be done at all, and considering the copious quantities of both film and television SF in recent years, it most certainly should be, there would need to be two separate media awards, for whatever those who do not go to the cinema may imagine, films and television productions are very different beasts indeed.

You may now discuss for the next 20 years then forget about it.

Yours in white wine sauce, lightly basted in fishnet stockings,

Morris Stroud [Ms.]

Any views? Do have a look at page 7 to see the final nominations for the BSFA Awards for 1999 and vote!

Naomi Mitchison, a prolific writer whose works included several novels of fantasy and science fiction, died on 11th January 1999, aged 101. She was born in Edinburgh on 1st November 1897, the daughter of biologist J.S. Haldane and sister of biologist and occasional writer J.B.S. Haldane. However, despite this impeccable scientific background, her first and most lasting love was politics. While still a teenager she married Dick Mitchison, who became a Labour MP, and she remained a radical and a free-thinker throughout her life. Many of her more than 100 books had a strong and often overt political theme, usually reflecting feminist principles (one of her earliest and most controversial publications was an article called 'Comments on Birth Control', which reflected her belief that marriage was 'domestic prostitution'). Her finest and most successful science fiction novel, *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962) reflects these concerns as the narrator's journeys through space result in her finding a very different Earth each time she returns, which in turn allows Mitchison to present a variety of speculations of a biological and often sexual cast. Her later science fiction novel, *Solution Three* (1975), is another, if less successful, plea for sexual tolerance as she portrays a world of clones in which heterosexuality has been all but eliminated. There is a more straightforward political message in *We Have Been Warned* (1935), a near-future allegory about the suppression of the Left, and *Not by Bread Alone* (1983) which concerns the problems created by the distribution of free food. The third

Brian Moore, the Irish-born author of one of the most powerful and works with fantastical elements, died at his home in California on 10th January 1999, aged 77. Born in Northern Ireland in 1921, he moved to Canada in 1948, where he became a reporter on the Montreal Gazette and took out Canadian citizenship. He remained a Canadian citizen when he moved to the US in 1959. Though he had early rebelled against his father's anti-British sentiment, and once settled in North America never returned to Ireland to live, much of his fiction, beginning with his first book, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Heame* (1955), revolved around the conflicts in Ireland. The sense of doomed conflict came out in his work in many different ways, most notably in the thriller *Lies of Silence* (1990). He wrote in several different genres, including detective fiction (under

## obituaries

world focus of this latter shows another of her concerns, with the native peoples of the world's poorer areas - in the 1960s she became the tribal mother of a village in Botswana and maintained a close connection with it up until her death. Mitchison, however, was far more prolific as a writer of fantasy than of science fiction. Her early work, notably *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931), tended to be anthropological tales of the distant past with a strong fantastic element. The fantasy, however, came more to the fore in works like *Beyond This Limit* (1935) which was a collaboration with Wyndham Lewis as illustrator and *Travel Light* (1952) about a child reared by dragons. Many of her finest fantasies were aimed at children, one of the best examples perhaps being *The Big House* (1950) a time travel adventure set in Scotland's Celtic past (an excuse also to express something of her belief in Scottish independence). She also used fantasy freely in a variety of satires and allegories, including *To The Chapel Perilous* (1955), a retelling of the story of King Arthur and the quest for the Holy Grail which is seen through the eyes of very modern journalists. When Mitchison celebrated her 100th birthday at home in Argyll in 1997 her guests included her five children, nearly all her 19 grandchildren and many of her 27 great grandchildren. Her indomitable spirit is best reflected in a remark made shortly before her death: 'Dying is quite the most interesting thing that is going to happen to me now. I often wake up in the night and wonder if it's starting. I would really like to take notes.'

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the pen-names Michael Bryan and Bernard Mara) and historical fiction (notably *Black Robe* (1985) which, like much of his work, was later filmed). His one overtly science fictional novel, *Catholics* (1972) (filmed as a TV movie), was typical of this strand in his work, describing a conflict between different branches of the Catholic Church at the end of the century. There are elements of fantasy in several other novels, particularly *The Great Victorian Collection* (1975) (which won the prestigious Governor General's Award) which deals with a man who dreams a collection of Victorian antiques into existence, and *The Mangan Inheritance* (1979) which involves a doppelgänger. There were also visitations from the dead providing a fantastic strand in *Fergus* (1970) and *Cold Heaven* (1983).

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## RESULTS - COMP 135

A very close-run thing between Roger Robinson and Andy Mills, the only entrants to attempt all 26 questions. Both found an identical alternative answer to Q13 - all wrote mystery novels. However, Roger wins the prize as he alone got Q22 correct. Thanks to all who entered, even Theo Ross, who provided a scandalous criticism of the Editor and myself in 26 lines of blank verse.

### ACROSTIC 3

Most entries were correct, and the prize goes to Beds and to Bridget Bradshaw. Nigel Parsons asks if I want the whole solution - no, title and author plus quote will do.

### COMPETITION 135 - I'M SORRY I HAVEN'T A CLUTE

The correct answers are as follows:-

1. All wrote scripts for Star Trek.
2. All had or have husbands who also wrote sf.
3. All played Dracula.
4. All played Frankenstein's monster.
5. All featured matriarchal rule.
6. Each pair tied for a Hugo.
7. All feature matter transgression.
8. All are pseudonyms.
9. All played Dr Who.
10. All published first story in 1974.
11. Between them wrote the fiction content of the first issue of Interzone.
12. All feature invasions of Earth.
13. All collaborated with Gordon Dickson.
14. All feature invisibility.
15. All have seriously tried to define sf.
16. In 1965, Herbert and Zelazny tied for a Hugo, and Aldiss and Zelazny tied for a Nebula.
17. All have appeared in films.
18. When not writing, all work or worked as professors.
19. All are first novels.
20. All were serialized in *Asounding or Analog*.
21. All wrote under male pseudonyms.
22. All published first story in 1939.
23. All British writers who were born overseas.
24. All contributed lists to THE BOOK.
25. Jointly edited THE BOOK.
26. The Complete Book Of Science Fiction And Fantasy Lists.

### ACROSTIC 3

The solution was: Neuronancer by William Gibson and the quote 'The walls blurred. Dizzying sensation of headlong movement. Colours whipping around corners and through narrow corridors. They seemed at one point to pass through several metres of solid wall. A flash of pitch darkness.'

### CORRECTION

A small correction to page 5 of Matrix 135: Vernor Vinge's *A Deepness in the Sky* is not about 'Pham Nuwen's final adventures in the Slow Zone,' but about the events just prior to those. Any reader of *A Fire Upon the Deep* who expects *A Deepness in the Sky* to wind up with Pham broken up into various separated body parts aboard a vessel becalmed in the Unthinking Depths is bound to be disappointed.

## gollancz

**Kate Jacoby:** *Voice of the Demon* (March, hb, £16.99, 480pp) This is the *Second Book of Elita*, the first, *Exile's Return* will be published in

paperback in March for £6.99. *Exile's Return* was reviewed in *Vector* 200: 'This is intelligently handled fantasy, and I was particularly impressed by the characters, who have much more depth and ambiguity than sometimes seen in this genre.'

**Jonathan Carroll:** *The Marriage of Sticks* (May, hb, £14.99, 256pp). 'Returning to her class reunion after fifteen years, Miranda Romanac has her heart set on meeting James Stillman once again. Her life's never quite measured up to the ideal that he, her first boyfriend, represented for her. She is devastated to learn, therefore, that he died three years earlier in a car crash. Her life settles back into its routine in New York, but things begin to change when she meets the fabulous Frances Hatch, mistress of many of the artistic great in Paris in the twenties. At the same time, Miranda starts an affair with Hugh, a married man. Then she sees James Stillman again, waving to her across the street. Is it possible?'

**Simon R. Green:** *Deathstalker Destiny* (June, pb, £6.99, 576pp) 'The final gripping instalment in the bestselling *Deathstalker* series'.

**Storm Constantine:** *Sea Dragon Heir* (April, hb, £16.99, 352pp) First book in a new epic high fantasy trilogy. 'Where the wild mountains of Caradore, in the northernmost part of Magravandias, reach the ocean, there the sea dragons make their mournful lament....'

**Terry Pratchett:** *Interesting Times: Collector's Edition* (Gollancz, May, hb)

## orbit

(including *Little Brown*, *Abacus*, *Virago*, *Warner*)

**Brian Aldiss:** *When the Feast is Finished* (May, Little Brown, hb, £15.99, 192pp) 'When the Feast is

Finished is writer Brian Aldiss' moving account of his wife Margaret's fatal illness and her death from pancreatic cancer in November 1997. He details the kindness of friends, and the support he receives from colleagues,

doctors and the Macmillan nurses who care for Margaret. He portrays his wife as stoical, uncomplaining and brave, and he shows how the tragedy affects his four children'.

**Edwina Currie:** *The Ambassador* (April, Little Brown, hb, £15.99, 416pp) 'an extraordinarily persuasive account of how the world could be. Scientific discovery is both Pandora's box and Ali Baba's cave. People seldom wish to return to a less comfortable age. When faced with the astonishing array of choices offered to us by the new genetic knowledge, how do we choose? The results could be chilling, even terrifying'.

**Maggie Furey:** *The Heart of Myrial* (May, Orbit, hb, £15.99, 432pp) 'the first volume in a major new two volume series from the bestselling author of *The Artefacts of Power*'.

**David Brin:** *The Secret Foundation* (June, Orbit, hb, £16.99, 352pp) Following on from Gregory Benford's *Foundation's Fear* and Greg Bear's *Foundation and Chaos* in the *Second Foundation* Trilogy.

**K. J. Parker:** *The Belly of the Bow* (April, Orbit, tp, £9.99, 512pp) Second book in *The Fencer Trilogy*. *Colours in the Steel*, the first book in the trilogy is issued in paperback in March at £5.99.

**L. E. Modesitt Jr:** *The White Order* (May, Orbit, pb, £6.99, 480pp) Another novel in the hugely popular *Recluse Series*.

**Kate Elliott:** *The Burning Stone*, (May, Orbit, hb, £16.99, 528pp) Volume 3 of the *Crown of Stars*. One wonders, as the blurb says nothing about it being a final book, whether this is a series rather than a trilogy?

Orbit also lists the following frequently asked for dates:

**The Warrior King** by Chris Bunch - March 1999 paperback

**Inversions** by Iain M. Banks - May 1999 paperback (shortlisted for this year's BSFA award)

**The Cassini Division** by Ken MacLeod - June 1999 paperback (shortlisted for both the BSFA and Arthur C Clarke awards this year)

**River of Blue Fire** (Otherland Volume 2) by Tad Williams - July 1999 paperback

**Mountain of Black Glass** (Otherland Volume 3) by Tad Williams - September 1999 hardback

**A Knight of the Word** by Terry Brooks - August 1999 paperback (followed by the final book in the series in hardback in October)

**The Path of Daggers** by Robert Jordan - September 1999 paperback

## voyager

(including *HarperCollins*, *Flamingo*, *Fontana*, *Thorson*)

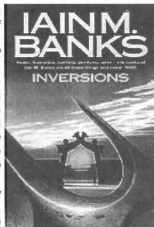
**Elizabeth Hand:** *Black Light* (March, Flamingo, pb, £6.99) Elizabeth Hand's novel *The Glimmering* was on the shortlist for last year's Arthur C Clarke Award.

✓ **Kim Stanley Robinson:** *The Martians* [coll] (March, Voyager, hb, £17.99) Also in May from KSR, comes the reprint of *Escape From Katmandu* (May, Voyager, pb, £5.99) The original publication was reviewed in *Vector* 157 back in 1990: 'certainly not sf, cameo appearances from sundry yetis and the fabled city of Shangri-La notwithstanding... It will not appeal automatically to his regular sf audience, but if you like good writing and have

even a passing interest in Nepal, Tibet and the Himalayas, this is a book well worth reading.'

**Robin Hobb:** *The Mad Ship* (March, Voyager, hb, £17.99) Second book in *The Liveship Traders* series, following on from *Ship of Magic*.

**Sara Douglass:** *Starman* (April, Voyager, pb, £6.99) Third book of the *Axis Trilogy*. *Battleaxe*, the first, was reviewed in *Vector* 203: 'The plot was complex, the characters well delineated, and I found myself engrossed. Underpinning the story is



the subtext: the bigotry of organised religion, racism, and environmental vandalism... I look forward to reading the next book.'

© **Kathleen Ann Goonan**: *The Bones of Time* (May, Voyager, pb, £6.99) Cloning "By 2034 a long dead king of Hawaii, Kamehameha, has been cloned and brought once more to life. Kamehameha becomes the figurehead of a native Hawaiian bid to steal the first interstellar ship ever built". Long-awaited UK publication by an author whose earlier novel, *Queen City Jazz* is shortlisted for this year's BSFA Award.

**Greg Bear**: *Darwin's Radio* (May, HarperCollins, hb, £16.99) ".....Mitch and Kaye meet by chance at a party and eventually pool information. Viruses and bacteria swap genetic material around the world. They form a hitherto unknown communal mind whose neurones are composed of humans themselves. This 'mind' determines that the human species must be replaced. Speciation will be complete in less than a decade".

**Pick of the rest, R. A. Salvatore's The Crimson Shadow Trilogy** concludes with *The Dragon King* in March (Voyager, pb, £5.99), *Streets of the City*, due in April (Voyager, pb, £5.99) is the third book of *A Walk in the Dark* by **Alison Spedding** who featured in *Matrix* 133, and **Graham Edwards**, he of the talking dragons, starts *The Stone Trilogy* with *Stone and Sky* (Voyager, pb, £5.99) in April.

## orion

(including *Millenium*, *Weidenfeld*, *Dent*, *Everyman*, *Dolphin*)

✓ **Eric Brown**: *Penumbra* (March, pb, £5.99, 320pp) "The discovery of human inscriptions on impossibly ancient ruins on a distant planet has little impact on the millions of people struggling to make a living in India. But for the young Indian police officer hunting for a serial killer the find will overturn her investigation. Eric Brown brings together Eastern philosophy, the wonders of space travel and all too fallible human characters in a unique vision of the future".

**James Lovegrove**: *Days* (March, pb, £5.99, 352pp) Shortlisted for last year's Arthur C Clarke Award, this was reviewed in *Vector* 199: 'although it masquerades as a futuristic novel about a giant American shopping store, it is in fact an allegory of modern American shopping life with all the science fictional thrust of a

Barbara Cartland novel. It's not a bad novel just a rather confused one.

**John Marco**: *The Jackal of Nar* (April, hb/tp £17.99/£9.99, 544pp) Yet another first novel from a new fantasy author. ".....But all is not what it seems: Richius is a flawed hero pursuing a woman he has met just once, the Emperor is greedy and lazy, while Tharn is a dying man touched by the gods and struggling to use his power for good".

**John Barnes**: *Apocalypses and Apostrophes* [coll] (April, hb/tp, £16.99/£9.99) A collection of original stories, and stories that have previously appeared in *Asimov's* and *Amazing* magazines". First appearance in book form. (All references to the US publication suggest that the title over there is *Apostrophes and Apocalypses*...)

**Robert Charles Wilson**: *Darwinia* (May, pb, £5.99, 320pp) In 1912 the world changes overnight. Europe and all its inhabitants disappear to be replaced by a primeval continent which becomes known as *Darwinia*: a strange land where evolution has followed a different path".

In the best of the rest there is sf in **Will McCarthy's** *Bloom* (May, hb/tp, £16.99/£9.99), and fantasy in June from yet another new author, and yet another epic fantasy series 'ripe with magic, action and intrigue'. **Valery Leith**: *Company of Glass* (The First Book of *Everien*) (June, hb/tp, £16.99/£9.99, 352pp)

Orion's SF Masterworks reissues continue with:

**Gene Wolfe**: *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* [R 1972] (April, tp, £6.99)

**Roger Zelazny**: *Lord of Light* [R 1967] (April, tp, £6.99)

**Frederik Pohl**: *Gateway* [R 1977] (May, tp, £6.99)

✓ **Cordwainer Smith**: *The Rediscovery of Man* [R 1988] (May, tp, £6.99)

## earthlight

(including *Simon & Schuster*)

**Freda Warrington**: *The Amber Citadel* (March, Earthlight, pb, £5.99, 520pp) Book one of the *Jewelfire Trilogy*.

**Harry Turtledove**: *Into the Darkness* (April, Earthlight, tp, £9.99, 600pp) "Harry Turtledove has written a story of epic dimensions, the story of global war in a world where magic works.

The death of a Duke leads to bloody war, as the King of Algarve moves to reclaim a former duchy. But country after country is pulled into the conflict, as alliances reassert themselves and hatred escalates into rabid nationalism".

**Jon Courtenay Grimwood**: *reMix* (April, Earthlight, pb B format, £6.99, 400pp) "Fiction so trendy you can wear it" *Locus*. This is the third of a loosely-connected trilogy of cyberpunk sf novels and according to the cover it's 'William Gibson meets Quentin Tarantino'. Grimwood looked at punk fiction and hard-boiled sf in *Matrix* 130.

**Christopher Priest**: *The Dream Archipelago* [coll] (May, Simon & Schuster, pb, £5.99, 272pp) In this collection of interlinked short stories, Chris Priest explores war, relationships and forms of reality.

In May and June 1999, Earthlight will publish two Omnibus collections of earlier Chris Priest works. *Omnibus 1* in May will contain *The Space Machine* and *A Dream of Wessex*: *Omnibus 2* in June will contain *Fugue for a Darkening Island* and *Inverted World*. (no prices available at present). Also coming from Earthlight, a fantasy debut for new author **Marcus Hermiman** with *The Siege of Arrandin* (May, pb, £5.99, 608pp): The second volume in *The Book of Ond: The Bard of Castaguard* comes from **Jane Welch** (April, pb, £5.99, 624pp):

## best of the rest

© **Mary Doria Russell**: Black Swan have now published *Children of God* (£6.99), the sequel to *The Sparrow*, winner of both the BSFA Award (which is mentioned in

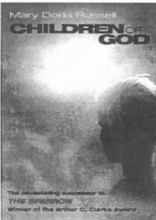
introduction to the sequel) and the Arthur C Clarke Award, as a UK paperback, in a fetching orange edition to match the first book.

**Steven Erikson**: *Gardens of the Moon* (Bantam, April) A new epic from a new author: to be reviewed by Vikki Lee in a forthcoming *Vector*.

**Anne McCaffrey**: *The Tower and the Hive* (Bantam, May)

**Terry Pratchett/Stephen Briggs/Paul Kirby**: *Death's Domain* (Corgi, art, tp)

**Mickey Zucker Reichert & Jennifer Wingert**: *Spirit Fox* (Millennium, May, hb/tp)



## surfing on mars

Fighting off the post-Christmas flab can be a thankless, unrewarding and usually futile task that can depress even the most hardy of dietary acolytes. So, instead of spending your hard earned cash on some comfort candy why not put it to better use and treat yourself to some internet activity. Lose pounds by proxy, it makes it all seem so much better. So join us, fellow flab fighting fans as we see what you can find on the web for the price of a Mars bar. Without delving deeply into the dark mysteries of telephone tariffs and current confectionery prices, this amounts to just over half an hour of surfing. What better place to start than the BSFA website...

<http://members.aol.com/tamaranth/>

The BSFA website provides a perfect jumpgate to all things SF. In addition it is rich in content and well worth that bookmark space. Overall the design is crisp and uncluttered as it leads you through its many pages (there are indexes of past issues to save you wading through piles of *Vectors* for that article, membership information, teasers for the latest issue of *Vector* and so on). We decided to go for the events page and were pleasantly surprised to find that there was even a colour map to help find your way to the London meetings. Whilst there we spotted a links link to...



### Handy hints:

1. Remember, you have a cache. Read those text heavy pages after you have gone off-line.
2. Start on a Saturday morning, because the phone rates are cheaper and America hasn't woken up yet.

<http://harlanellison.com/>

Ellison Webderland. This is a seriously deranged site as is befitting. Underneath the bizarre exterior lurks a thorough and absorbing range of articles on both the man and his books. Throughout, the picture design is nothing short of stunning and, as an added bonus, the pages download quickly considering the depth of content. There is news, a picture gallery, biographies both real and surreal (nice touch), lots to read and do but, strangely, a rather incomplete bibliography. Content is as esoteric as its subject and all the better for it. It even goes so far as to deny all but one link to *Babylon 5*, just because it can! Feeling suitably boisterous this was the link that we, naturally, pursued...

<http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Ansible/ansilink.html>

*Ansible* is one serious fan site, there are listings of conventions, SF resources, bookshops, book search engines and more links than you could comfortably cope with. While the site, run by the ubiquitous Dave Langford, is not the most aesthetically pleasing it does however supply the goods. This is one major resource, it's usefulness is down to it's simplicity and categorisation. With so much to choose from this is the ideal springboard with which to launch yourself into the internet. Which is what we did by selecting author Harlan Ellison (completely at random, you understand) from the numerous links available...

### • THE ESSENTIAL •



to next page



<http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/releases/98/crusade2.html>

Babylonian Productions enlisted the help of NASA scientists and technicians for the new series *Crusade* to help ensure the accuracy of the spaceship 'Excalibur'. This page is the official NASA press release on the subject. There is a nice picture of the spaceship but nothing else to pursue here, so click on the 'Back' button, to go back to Lurkers, which then, for our sins, diverted us to...



<http://www.midwinter.com/lurk/lurker.html>

The Lurkers Guide to Babylon 5 - Looks a bit ropey because it is mainly text based, is completely embroiled in the minutia of the programme, but this is THE definitive B5 site - there is no point in going anywhere else unless you want shockwave animations or visit the amusing 'Ask Kosh' pages (all, it must be said linked from the extensive links page). Everything you could possibly need to know and much that you don't, this has episode guides, news, product information, speculation, discussion, you name it. Overall this can be daunting to the uninitiated but is essential for fans, its six year on-line pedigree displayed throughout. We were curious to find out about *Crusade* so took a link to NASA!



<http://www.dreamwatch.co.uk/>

*Dreamwatch* is a UK based SF magazine that is freely available in newsagents, its homepage on the web is a frame nightmare of catastrophic proportions. Claustrophobic design rubs shoulders with multiple scrollbars to create one of the worst surfing experiences endured for a very long time. Couple that with virtually content-free articles/interviews (mainly TV) that appear in less than a quarter of the page space and you have an electronic anti-advert. Fortunately the slim links sections (*Alien to The Outer Limits* and *Poltergeist to Xena*) allows you to depart quickly onto...

from previous page

<http://www.starwars.com/>

*Star Wars* - the official *Star Wars* Site is a sight (so to speak) for sore eyes. It is again a frame based affair but here they are used to create a prevailing design structure that is at once aesthetically pleasing and intuitive. The roll-over buttons are slick but not gratuitous and the whole thing seems optimised for lower bandwidth (that or they have a very good server). But enough about style, what about content? There is enough teaser information on the forthcoming *Episode One: The Phantom Menace* to keep the impatient happy, the trailer to download, production sketches and diaries, all sorts of techie info on the making of all four films, features and so on. There is so much that you could spend hours just exploring this one site (assuming you like *Star Wars* that is), the level of detail increasing the further you go from the main page. There are, however, no external links so it's back to *Ansible*, THE place where links are not a problem and off to...



<http://www.abel.net.uk/~savoy>

Savoy Books, one of the more innovative and eclectic of British publishers have a very tight presence on the web. The opening image map is thoughtfully complemented by a text based series of options for those with limited browsers. There is a fascinating History of Savoy Books (although all the chapters load on the same page, they could have been broken up for easier viewing), interviews, articles and a searchable back catalogue of books and authors. A quick check on the Michael Moorcock front has left us with some serious cheque writing to do...However, we cannot dally too long as time is now of the essence. There are a scant four links on offer here, although as they are to sites for William Burroughs, The Edge magazine, David Lynch and Michael Moorcock we will forgive them.

<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/%7Ehoughtong/edge.htm>

The Edge Magazine: confusing as there is (or was?) another Edge magazine and with a none too snappy url to boot, it comes as a surprise that this is a rather good little place. A large but swift to download cover of the latest issue leads you into a plethora of in-depth material on a number of its contributors and subjects. We are certainly on the more experimental fringes of the science fiction underground here but the usual pretentious trappings and unfathomable interfaces are absent so that navigation is child's play. High on the list is a complete, new, Jerry Cornelius story just waiting there to be downloaded and read, complete with Jamie Reed style punk graphic. What better place to finish our brief journey?



The Spencer's Substance  
A Jerry Cornelius Story  
by Michael Moorcock

So little time, so many sites, it is truly amazing how much information (actual or apocryphal) is available. Do you have a favourite web site? Would you like to surf for Matrix? Do let us know by writing (or better E-Mailing) to the editorial address.

©Colin & Mitch 1999

# events

1999

## 26-28 Feb: Chronicles 99

Highlander con at the Grand Moot House, Birmingham.  
Reg. £45. David Simons, 69 Merlin Crescent, Edgeware, Middx, HA8 6JB  
simonsd@msn.com  
<http://members.aol.com/dsimons206/chronicles99.htm>

## 26-28 Feb: Fal Tor Pan

Classic Star Trek con at the Britannia Hotel, Birmingham, UK. Non-commercial - any profit goes to charity.  
Fal Tor Pan, 26a Napier Avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS1 1LZ  
tfpan@aol.com

## 26-28 Feb: Redemption

Babylon 5 and Blake's Seven con with a fannish slant at the International Hotel in Ashford, Kent. Guests Gareth Thomas, Jane Killick, Sheelagh Wells, Joe Nazzaro. Reg. now £40.  
Redemption, 28 Diprose Road, Corfe Mullen, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 3QY  
Judith@Blakes-7.demon.co.uk  
<http://www.smt.com/redemption/>

## 4-7 Mar: World Horror Convention

In Atlanta, Georgia. Guests include John Shirley, Neil Gaiman, Lisa Snellings.  
Reg. \$100 on the door.  
World Horror Convention 99, PO Box 148, Clarkson, Georgia 30021-0148, USA  
HorrorCon@aol.com

## 6-7 Mar: Microcon 19

Small at con at the University of Exeter. No further details!

## 13-14 Mar: Mecon2

"The Northern Ireland's Science Fiction Convention" in the Senior Common Room, Queen's University of Belfast, with guests including Michael Marshall Smith, Diane Duane, Graham Joyce, Ian McDonald, James White and David Wingrove.  
Reg. £10 (EIR12), supp. £5 (EIR6), cheques to "Queen's University Science Fiction Society".  
Stephen Rushe, Flat 2, 12 Ashley Avenue, Belfast, BT9 7BT  
Steve@blackstar.co.uk  
<http://lquib.ac.uk/fantasy>

## 19-21 Mar: Starfury 99

Highly commercial con - from Tomcat Productions - celebrating "Women in Sci-Fi".  
Guests Tracy Scoggins, Claudia Christian. Tickets cost £45.  
Starfury 99, 148a Queensway, Bayswater, London W2 6LY

[http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Chamber2784/sean\\_harry@PSICorps.com](http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Chamber2784/sean_harry@PSICorps.com)

## 2-5 Apr: Reconvene

The 50th UK National SF Convention and the last of the twentieth century. Venue is the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool and the guests are Jeff Noon, Peter S. Beagle, John Clute, Rod Tiner and Tom Holt. Newsletter from *Thog the Mighty*. It's themed around "Time Was, Time is, Time Shall Be".  
Attending Reg now is £50, Supporting membership, over 60's and 5-14's rate is £25. Last date for postal membership is 28th Feb 1999. On the door prices will be £80 adult,

£40 concs for the weekend, and £30 adult, £15 concs per day. It is definitely worth checking that on the door memberships will be available.  
3. West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ  
mychelle@firedrake.demon.co.uk

## 30 Apr-3 May: Supernova 99

Star Trek con at the Jarvis Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. Reg. £45.  
Supernova Conventions, 4 Burford Corner, Westhumble Street, Dorking, Surrey, RH45 6BS.  
supernova.conventions@virgin.net  
<http://tfreespace.virgin.net/supernova.conventions/>

## 9 May: Fantasy Fair 9

Cheap one-day market-type event at the Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough, from 10.30-4.00pm. Sponsored by Peterborough SF Club. Guests include Dave Hodges, immortalised as "Hodgesaargh" in Terry Pratchett's "Discworld" books.  
Bruce King, 1 The Halliards, Eaton Socon, St Neots, PE19 3QW  
01480 216372

## 21-24 May: Trinity (Eurocon)

Dortmund, Germany. Multilingual (including English). Guests include Sam J. Lundwall, Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison, Terry Pratchett.  
Reg. £34. Beluga Post (Chair), Frankfurt Weg 18, D-59439 Holzwickede, Germany +49 2301-5785 Fax +49 2301 5743  
TRINITY@cbg.de  
<http://www.cbg.de/sf-tage-nrw>.  
UK Agent: Mike Cheater, 42 Elm Grove, Southsea, Hants, PO5 1JG  
01705 361350  
mike@frasers.demon.co.uk

## 28-30 May: Seccion.

General sf con with a light but varied schedule and plenty of opportunity to socialise at the Hertfordpark Hotel, Stevenage. Guest Stephen Baxter.  
Reg: £17.50  
Seccion c/o 92, Liffeld Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3TR  
seccion@bradshaw.cix.co.uk  
<http://www.cix.co.uk/~sbradshaw/seccon.html>

## 4-6 June: Avalon

Star Trek Con at the Meadows Centre, Burton Upon Trent. Reg £50, £20 per day.  
Avalon, 8, Yew Tree Road, Hatton, Derby, DE65 5EX

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE:

- Always enclose a SAE when requesting information
- Please mention Matrix when responding
- Matrix accepts no responsibility for any errors in this listing
- If you spot any errors, please tell us
- Running an event? Then write in and tell us about it.

## 12 Jun Inense and Insensibility

Psychedelic 60's sf conference in Liverpool. Contact Andy Sawyer, Librarian/Administrator, Science Fiction Foundation Collection University of Liverpool Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA, UK  
E-mail asawyer@liv.ac.uk  
<http://www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/sfhome.html>

## 16-18 July: Baroqueun

The annual role playing con, at New Hall College, Cambridge.  
Guest Mary Gentle. Reg £18, Supp £4.50. 8, Saddler's Close, Baldock, Herts, SG7 6EF  
baroqueun@philim.demon.co.uk  
<http://philim.demon.co.uk/Baroqueun/main.html>

## 16-18 July: Nexus 99

SF/Media con somewhere in Bristol  
Nexus 99, 1, Lullingstone Road, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2LN  
nexus@cosham.demon.co.uk  
<http://www.cosham.demon.co.uk>

## 24-25 July: Telefantastique 2

Multi media con at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. Guests Mira Furlon, Diane Duane, Peter Morwood. Reg £45.  
38, Rochford Avenue, Loughton, Essex IG10 2BS.  
fn62@dia1.pipex.com

## 11 Aug: Total Eclipse of the Sun

Totality passes through Cornwall, Northern France, Romania and bits of Italy. Cornwall and France have been booked solid for some time now, but Jonathan Cowie is hoping to organise an eclipse trip to Romania, where the best seeing will be, taking advantage of local fan links. Enquiries (no commitment necessary

yet) to: 44 Brook Street, Erith, Kent, DA8 1JQ

## 13-15 Aug: Wincon V

The 1999 Unicorn at King Alfred's College, Winchester. Guests include Diana Wynne Jones, John Barnes, Warren Ellis. Reg. £25 att, £15 supp.  
Wincon V, 53 Havant Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants., PO2 7HH  
wincon@pompey.demon.co.uk  
<http://www.pompey.demon.co.uk/wincon.htm>

## 14-15 Aug: Finncon

Turku, Finland. Guest Connie Willis.  
<http://www.utu.fi/tfs/finncon>

## 26-29 Aug: Conucopia

Venue Anaheim Marriott Hotel, Anaheim California. Guests Jerry Pournelle, Nicki & Richard Lynch, Ellen Datlow.  
info@99.nasfic.org  
www.99.nasfic.org  
UK Agent:  
John Harold, 8 Warren Close, Langley, Slough, Berkshire, SL3 7UA

## 26-29 Aug: Polcon

The Polish national convention in Warsaw.  
klub@rassun.art.pl  
<http://rassun.art.pl>

## 27-30 Aug: Galileo IV

The 48th British Star Trek convention at the Heathrow Park Hotel, London. Guest Walter Koenig. Reg. £40, supp. £10.  
38, Planetree Avenue, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9TH  
<http://www.homeusers.prestel.co.uk/mlrichardson/galcon.htm>

## 28-30 Aug: Shinnenkai 99

Annual anime (Japanese animation) con at the Radisson Hotel, Heathrow (apparently the name will change shortly).  
Reg. £25 to Feb 99, £30 to 1 Aug, £35 on door.  
PO Box 110, Didcot, Oxon., OX11 7YH  
shinnenkai@new-moon.demon.co.uk  
<http://www.direct.co.uk/~newmoon/shinnenkai/>

## 2-6 Sep: Aussiecon 3

The Worldcon goes down under to Melbourne. Guests Greg Benford, Bruce Gillespie; the deceased George Turner will still be honoured. Reg. £90 (with complicated variations - ask 'em).  
info@aussiecon3.worldcon.org  
<http://www.aussiecon3.worldcon.org>  
UK Agent:  
Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Road, Reading, RG1 7TT  
martinhoare@cix.co.uk



**17-20 Sep: Breakaway 1999**

Cult tv/media con; the title celebrates the weekend that the moon blew out of earth's orbit in Space:1999. Venue is Pontin's Sand Bay Holiday Village in Weston-Super-Mare. Registration plus 3 nights board for £128, with variations.  
 Breakaway 1999, P0 Box 1701.  
 Peterborough PE7 1ER  
 01733 205009  
[cultvuk@geocities.com](http://cultvuk@geocities.com)  
<http://www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/2042>

**17-19 Sept: Fantasycon 23**

The Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. Organised by the British Fantasy Society. Guests **Robert Rankin** and **Louise Cooper**. Reg. £28. Entering £50. Daily £30 Supp £25, discounts for BFS members, check with organisers.  
 David J Howe, 46 Oxford Road, Acoccks Green, Birmingham, B27 6DT

**25-26 Sep: Hypotheticon: 1999**

"Scotland's other national convention" at the Central Hotel, Glasgow. Reg. £15, under 15s £10, under 5s free; supp. £5.  
 Hypotheticon: 1999, Flat 0/2, 11 Cleghorn Street, Glasgow, G2 5RN

**2 Oct: Rebellion 99**

Star Wars con at the Moat House Hotel, Northampton. Many guests. Rebellion 99, Kentstone Close, Kingsthorpe, Northampton NN2 8UH

**8-10 Oct: Octocon 10**

Irish convention at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, near Dublin. Guests include **Robert Rankin**. Reg. £14 to Easter, £18 to mid-September, £22 on the door.  
 Octocon 10, 64 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX

**8-11 Oct: Gaylaxicon: 1999**

The tenth Gaylaxicon, "a science fiction, fantasy and horror convention for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people and friends!", in Washington D.C. Guests **Diane Duane**, artist **Nancy Janda**. Gaylaxicon 1999, P0 Box 656,

Washington D.C. 20044

[Goon1999@aol.com](http://Goon1999@aol.com)  
[www.gaylaxians.org/GNetwork/index.html](http://www.gaylaxians.org/GNetwork/index.html)

**23-24 Oct: Convergence**

Media con at the Stakis Bristol Hotel, Bristol. Guests include **Michael Sheard**, **Warwick Davis**, **Jacqueline Pearce**. Attendance limited to 200. Reg. £35.  
 Convergence, 46 Brins Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8XU  
 Mal on 0117 940 9017, mobile 0961 994969 [mal@nexuscon.demon.co.uk](mailto:mal@nexuscon.demon.co.uk)

**5-7 Nov: Novacon29**

Birmingham's annual sf convention at the Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. Guest is mathematician and writer **Ian Stewart**. Reg. £28 to Easter 99. Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. 01454 825386

**27 Dec-2 Jan 2000: Millennium**

See in the new millennium (a year early if you're a pedant) at this con, to be held somewhere in northern Europe, probably the UK or a BeNeLux country. £4.00 per year, to be deducted from the eventual membership cost.

Millennium, c/o Malcolm Reid, 2/R, 9 Aisle Street, Hyndland, Glasgow, G12 9RJ.  
[vdputte@simplex.nl](mailto:vdputte@simplex.nl)

**21-24 Apr: 2Kon (Eastercon)**

The 2000 Eastercon at the Central Hotel, Glasgow. It's themed on "Celtic SF and Fantasy" and the guests are **Guy Gavriel Kay**, **Deborah Turner Harris** and **Katherine Kurtz**. Reg. £25, £20 unwaged; supp. £15. Progress Report 1 now out.  
 2Kon, 30 Woodburn Terrace, St Andrews, KY16 8BA  
[2kon@dcs.st-and.ac.uk](mailto:2kon@dcs.st-and.ac.uk)  
<http://www.theory.cs.st-and.ac.uk/2Kon>

**26-29 May: CostumeCon 18**

Costume con at Hartford, Connecticut. Reg. \$50 to 9 Aug 98. CostumeCon18, 11 Winter Street,

Amesbury, MA 01913-1515, USA

[info@cc2000.org](mailto:info@cc2000.org)  
[www.cc2000.org](http://www.cc2000.org)

**2-6 Aug: Eurocon 2000**

Gdynia, Poland. Reg. £10.  
 Gdansk Klub Fantastyki, P0 Box 76, 80-325 Gdansk, Poland  
 +48-58-531073

**31 Aug-4 Sep: Chicon 2000**

The 58th and millennial worldcon, guests **Ben Bova**, **Bob Eggleton**, **Jim Baen**, **Bob & Anne Passovoy**, and **Harry Turtledove** (toastmaster). UK Agent: Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Road, Reading, RG1 7TT  
[Martinhoare@cix.co.uk](mailto:Martinhoare@cix.co.uk)  
 P0 Box 642057, Chicago, Illinois 60665, USA  
[chi2000@chicon.org](mailto:chi2000@chicon.org)  
<http://www.chicon.org/>

**29 Dec-1 Jan: Hogmanaycon**

Celebrate the real millennium at the Central Hotel, Glasgow. Guests **Spider & Jeanne Robinson**, **Sydney Jordan**, **Vince Docherty**, **Prof. Oscar Schweighofer**. Reg. £25 att., £5 supp.  
 26 Avonbank Road, Rutherglen, Glasgow, G73 2PA  
[john@gelsaba.demon.co.uk](mailto:john@gelsaba.demon.co.uk)  
 0141 569 1934

**2001****24-27 May: SFRA 2001**

The Science Fiction Research Association Academic Conference at the Schenectady Ramada Inn & Convention Center, Schenectady, NY, USA. Features "Provocative Papers, Winning Workshops, Amazing Art, Riveting Readings, Pleasurable Parties, Lavish Luncheon, Copious Confabulation, Non-Banquet Banquet, Fabulous Frozen Feast, Broodingnagian Banquet, and more". Jan Finder at the wombat@juno.com  
<http://www.klink.net/~fcs/sfra2001.html>

**30 Aug-3 Sep: The Millennium Philcon**

The 2001 Worldcon, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center and the Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. Guests **Greg Sear**, **Stephen Youll**,

**Gardner Dozois**, **George Scithers** and Toastmaster **Esther Friesner**. Suite 2001, 402 Huntington Pike, Rockledge, PA 19046, USA  
[phil2001@netaxs.com](mailto:phil2001@netaxs.com)  
<http://www.netaxs.com/~phil2001>

**bids****2001: Eastercon**

Blackpool  
 Paragon is the name, the Northbeck Castle Hotel in Blackpool the venue. Presupp. £2.  
 Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ  
[members.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk](mailto:members.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk)

**2002: Worldcon Seattle**

The Seattle 2002 bid has collapsed after local difficulties; the Starwood Hotel's regional manager (one Yogi Hudson) issued instructions that if conventions were not welcome, despite pleas from the city authorities, the convention centre and local businesses. The now unopposed San Francisco bid will convert Seattle presupporting memberships for the \$10.01 price difference until 5 April 1999.  
 P0 Box 1066, Seattle, WA 98111-1066, USA  
[seattle2002@isomedia.com](mailto:seattle2002@isomedia.com)  
<http://www.webwitch.com/seattle02/>  
 UK agent Chris O'Shea, 18 Letchworth Avenue, Bedford, Middx. TW14 9RY  
[Connatation@smof.com](mailto:Connatation@smof.com)

**San Francisco**  
[Info@s2002.sfsfc.com](mailto:Info@s2002.sfsfc.com)  
<http://www.sfsfc.org/worldcon/>  
 UK agents Steve Davies & Gullia de Cesare, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2RP  
[Steve@vraidex.demon.co.uk](mailto:Steve@vraidex.demon.co.uk)

**2003: Worldcon**

Toronto Presupporting £9.  
 UK agent Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU  
[Ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:Ansible@cix.co.uk)  
[Hancock@infornamp.net](mailto:Hancock@infornamp.net)  
<http://www.worldhouse.com/worldcon-2003>

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 Copy of Dan Barry Book of Space (Hulton Press, 1955).  
 Good price paid for copy in suitable condition.  
 Write to Mike Drane, 5 Portland Road, London, NW10 0TB

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 Tel: 01473 351037  
 and John Atkinson for details

**BSFA London Meetings**

New venue! The BSFA's London meetings are held at 7.00pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month (except December), at the Florence Nightingale pub - nearest stations Waterloo (mainline or Underground) or Westminster (Underground). If you get there early we'll be in the main bar; if in doubt ask the landlord. Meetings are open to all. Paul Hood on 0181 333 6670 or paul@auden.demon.co.uk for further information.

Upcoming meetings: 24 Mar 99 & 28 Apr 99

**BSFA Meeting on 24th March**

Liz Holliday is to be the Guest for the March B.S.F.A. London Meeting to be held on Wednesday the 24th March 1999 at the Florence Nightingale pub. Liz is of course, the editor of *Odyssey Magazine* and has been, in her younger, more foolish days a member of the B.S.F.A. committee.

**London Circle Meetings**

Also at the Florence Nightingale (see above) London Circle meetings are on the first Thursday of the month and usually start about 5pm. No special events but very popular and crowded. Just turn up!

Upcoming meetings: 4 Mar 99; 1 Apr 99 (honest); 6 May 99

**The Brum SF Group**

Birmingham: The Brum SF Group meets on the second Friday of the month on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel on New Street, venue of this year's Novacon. Membership is £15 per year, which includes a monthly newsletter. Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV11 1HX.

btsf@bortas.demon.co.uk

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

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

**Colchester SF/ Horror/Fantasy Group:** Meets on the third Saturday of each month at 12.30pm in The Playhouse pub in St. John's Street. Des Lewis on 01255 812119

**Glasgow: (NEW) SF/Fantasy writers circle** run from the new Borders bookshop in Glasgow. It's an extension of the old Glasgow SF Writer's Circle, which includes several Interzone contributors of the past, and which also put together the Shipbuilding anthology for the Scottish Worldcon a couple of years ago. The workshop runs on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 8pm and there's a good pub around the corner. If interested, contact Gary Gibson, who works at Borders, or E-mail him at: garygibson@skiffy.freemove.co.uk

**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. The Hull Group marked its tenth anniversary in October. 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 rbean@globalnet.co.uk

**Manchester: FONT** meets in Wetherspoon'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. Guest on 7 April is Alex Stewart. SAE to 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5RB. Pete on 01733 370542.

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

**Reading:** SF Group meets weekly on Mondays at 9.00pm; for a trial period they have moved to the Hope Tap, Friar Street, Reading.

**Surbiton: Surrey SF Group** meets in the Coronation Hall, Surbiton, a Wetherspoons

**library news****Elements**

*Elements* is a brand new festival of science fiction and science literature which launches Central's sixth series of events at Lincoln Central Library in March.

The festival will spotlight the richness of man's scientific heritage and his technological future, and show how the works of sf writers have been a blueprint for our scientific revolution. Rocket flight, robots, cloning... all were science fiction long before they were scientific fact, and now the line between what mankind can and cannot achieve has been all but wiped away.

*Elements*, featuring talks with guest writers, debates and workshops, is a celebration of our scientific past, our technological future, and the abilities of writers who have turned a minority genre into a showcase for some of our finest literary talents.

The festival runs from 11 - 19 March 1999 and the full programme is:

**Thursday 11 March, 7.30pm** - Launch evening: join the Rev Lionel Fanthorpe and *Fortean Times* contributing editor, Ian Simmons, on a voyage through the world of the weird.

**Friday 12 March, 7.30pm** - Science writers: Simon Conway Morris, Professor of Evolutionary Paleobiology at Cambridge and Georgina Ferry contributor to *New Scientist* and BBC radio.

**Thursday 18 March, 1.30pm** - Science Fiction Sentences: writing workshop with award-winning author Colin Greenland

**Friday 19 March, 7.30pm** - The Sci-Fi Files: live version of the Channel 4 programme hosted by producer Peter Swain and featuring Kevin Warwick, Stephen Baxter, Lise Leroux and Professor Jack Cohen

For further information and tickets contact:

Central Library  
Free School Lane  
Lincoln  
LN2 1EZ  
01522 510 800

**GEOFF RYMAN EVERYWHERE (PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTH EAST)**

Award winning science fiction writer Geoff Ryman will be in Gateshead to launch his new short story, 'Everywhere', inspired by the Angel of the North and set in Blaydon of the future. The launch, which is reported as including a 'performance', will celebrate its publication in *InterZone* (sic), a winner of the Hugo Award for Best Science Fiction magazine. Geoff Ryman was commissioned by the Artists' Agency as part of the region-wide 'Visions of Utopia Festival'. The launch takes place on 18th March at 7.30pm, Gateshead Borough

**ANY MARTIAN EXPERTS?**

Granada Television are putting together a proposal for a programme on Mars, to be broadcast by ITV later this year. The idea of the show is to 'feature Earthlings [!] who are fascinated with the planet. That

Central Library & Arts Centre. Entry by ticket (free) which can be obtained from Ednie Wilson, Arts Department Coordinator on 0191 477 3478 or Artists' Agency 0191 510 9318.

Also, there is an odd postmodernist sf collaborative story project running in monthly posters in Tyneside Metro stations from arts students at one of the colleges and Newcastle Playhouse have a production of *A Clockwork Orange* on 13-24 April, 11-15 May, 25-29 May (0191-230-5151 for details).

includes the scientists who are trying to get us there, the authors, film directors, and dreamers who love the place".

If anyone has a particular interest in the subject and wants to contribute they should contact the producer Caroline Grist on cgrist@iname.com

**SUBMISSIONS FOR AUSSIECON THREE WRITERS' WORKSHOP**

Any writers heading for this years Worldcon, Aussiecon 3 in September, should be aware that the convention is running a series of Writers' workshops including a stream of panels on professional writing information, for example on marketing a first novel. Participants will be divided into small groups of four to six writers, each with a professional writer as guest and moderator. There will be special themes for each group: science fiction, hard (ie scientifically based) sf, fantasy, horror, teenage or adolescent literature, dark fantasy and magical realism, and

the groups will critique the manuscripts submitted, over a period of 1-2 hours.

Participation in the workshops is restricted to Aussiecon members and anyone seeking further information should contact:

Rosaleen Love and Lucy Sussex,  
13 Frederick Street,  
Brunswick, Vic 3056, Australia.  
FEM-SF-REQUEST@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM.

# babylon 5: a call to arms



## review

And so it ends. After five years, the final episode of the epic story that was *Babylon 5* was broadcast (in full uncut format without irritating logo) by Channel 4 on 31st January 1999. Except that it hasn't ended at all; inevitably spin-offs have already developed, both one-off feature length stories detailing specific aspects of the some of the original plot strands, and entire (potential?) TV series, and these are starting to whirl in a frenzy in order to keep the fans satisfied.

*Babylon 5: A Call To Arms* is very much a bridge, a feature length TV movie which makes the transition between the original B5 story arc and the new series *Crusade*, which is set in the same universe but covers a different set of events. The Drakh are back. Those lovable friends of the Shadows, seem to have discovered some of their former allies technology

carelessly left lying around, and have decided to take revenge upon at least a part of the Alliance, namely Earth, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the end of the Shadow War. Cue familiar friends Sheridan and Garibaldi who are all too aware of the Shadow technology, and meet Technomage Galon and Dureena, thief and sole known survivor of her planet who have all appeared to Sheridan in a dream and are going to becoming very involved with a whole new battle...

Two major groups make an unexpected return, the Drakh (from early Season Five) and the ever popular yet remarkably humourless Technomages (from Season Two). The Technomages in particular have not used the intervening nine years to lighten up their self-centered, superior and pompous image. Looking like Dungeons & Dragons rejects of the highest order, they have convinced themselves that their staying out of contact with other lifeforms is for the benefit of others, rather than because no-one would talk to them anyway. The Drakh, likewise, have remained on the peripheries of the B5 universe for some time, although their purpose is far more sinister and not embroiled in supercilious mumbo jumbo and cod paganism. Here, however, they seem to have lost their spooky 'shaky' apparel that made their earlier appearances so spine-tinglingly memorable, but make up for this with their intention to cause as much havoc as possible. It was a pity that more members of the regular cast (even Delenn was elsewhere in the galaxy, doing good works for the Alliance naturally) weren't involved, as this would possibly have beefed up the plot a bit.

Visually the film is outstanding, with the much vaunted virtual sets playing a major role. Although the planet surfaces look a little ropery at times, they are compensated for by becoming at times almost hallucinatory. Naturally the

space sequences are exemplary, and the hyperspace/jump gate routines have undergone such a major overhaul, they look almost organic. Likewise the spaceship movements have become altogether more fluid, those extra days spent rendering sure paid dividends. If there is a problem, and it looks like a trend that could affect the new *Star Wars* film too, it is that the screen is so cluttered. At times there is that much going on you can't derive any narrative drive from the images, the message is obscured by the desire to play 'look at me' at the expense of clarity. The editing is rather lacklustre, lacking in pace and momentum, it is pedestrian in a manner reflective of many TV movies and does not offer the film the opportunity to develop stylistically.

If the film is nothing short of remarkable visually, it is in the aural department that the major letdown occurs. If there was ever a doubt as to the importance of Christopher Franke in providing *Babylon 5* with a dignified and austere ambience, it is gone now. The majestic multi-layered strings of Franke's tireless compositions are replaced here by the most irritating and trite of blippy-bloppy electronic noodleing. Moments of pathos, another popular B5 trend, such as the destruction of the Challenger, have their slow motion poignancy bludgeoned into submission by the wholly inappropriate soundtrack 'avante-garding' its way blissfully in the foreground. Hideous.

And what of the much vented Dureena, the *Babylon 5* magazine cover girl and hope for the future of *Crusade*? Well, in all honesty she comes across exactly how she looks, as an updated version of Leela, one time companion of Dr Who. To be fair there is more to her than primeval grunting and a penchant for blades (always popular in B5) by her membership of the Thieves Guild, another D&D throwback that crops up in this story. This is presumably to give her character the element of doubt to the

viewer as well as the other cast members, but clear foreshadowing only informs the latter and not the former, her importance in the narrative and indeed in the next series indicated by the Technomage dream to which we are privy; the only other character in this position is Sheridan.

The main problem with *A Call To Arms* is that it is very much an isolated entity and as such, lacks one of the fundamental strengths of *Babylon 5*, which is the long term nature of the story. B5 was often accurately described as a 'novel for television'; the characters developed over a considerable period of time, the plot unfolded gradually, there was plenty of time for story development, sub-plots and even experimental episodes. This is a rush job however, an interim measure designed to join the gap between the old and the new and as such, feels simply as if it's an opportunity to relay an awful lot of plot (which it does), and maintain a level of spectator interest in the *Babylon 5* universe. There was nothing wrong with the new characters, indeed the new actors displayed far more enthusiasm than the old hacks, the plot was interesting, if condensed, although it wouldn't mean much to new viewers. *A Call To Arms* simply lacked *Babylon 5*'s complexity. A better approach might have been to film a feature length pilot to *Crusade* (in a similar format to the original series), containing this and other plot strands. However, *Crusade* is currently expected to be episodic, rather than form an overall arc, so could this be a taste of things to come? Also, of some concern is the apparent premise of the next series, stated at the close of *A Call To Arms* - one big ship, on a five year mission, to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new... aaaaaarrghhh, *Babylon 5* has segued into *Star Trek*!!!

© Colin & Mitch 1999

## introducing...leonard fell

*Matrix recently received a document, in diary form, from an aspiring author and thought it worthwhile to share his thoughts with the rest of the membership of the BSFA.*

**1 January 1999:** So this is the year I take the world by storm, and become a best-selling author. I know I've got the talent to make it, I certainly have the looks for that all-important jacket photograph: suave, sophisticated, lady killer, and yet just there to be mothered. Cheeky chappy with just the right amount of mysterious stranger.

The only problem is what to write. But that's only a matter of cranking something out. Still, a blank sheet of paper as so off-putting, so white. Must buy some blue or purple or, better still, green paper to take off the sheen. After half an hour at my desk, rearranging my bios, I decide to take a break. I need a trip to the cinema. *Star Trek: Insurrection* sounds good. I always did like the series.

**2 January 1999:** How things change. Kirk's lost his hair, and Spock didn't seem to be in it. Still, the cinema seemed to be full of people so that's the sort of thing to write. A spaceship sets off to the North Star with a representative crew: let's say a robot science officer, a hologram security guard, an alien cook and a cute furry dustbin as captain. Their mission, should they choose to accept it, is to make the universe safe for democracy and free enterprise. Here we go.

**3 January 1999:** Just can't seem to get the opening paragraph right. I'll go to the library and check out some opening paragraphs tomorrow.

**4 January 1999:** "It was the day that the spaceships left with a Marxist called Michael Martian Smith." There, I've got some tension in it: capitalism versus communism. The red planet turns out to be commie. Must do more research on canals, communism and faster than light drives (Memo: if you use those low watt bulbs does that mean less energy to get up to light speed or that the light travels more slowly?).

**5 January 1999:** I think that I need a better idea of my market. I checked the Writer's and Artist's Yearbook and discover that there's a Science Fiction Association of Britain. This will make things so much better: I'm sure they will snap up my novel. I'll write to their secretary. (Memo: even better, if they've got a secretary, they will even type this for me!).

**6 January 1999:** Looking at the ranks of yellow spines, I've begun to wonder about my name. Whilst Leonard Fell would grace a detective novel, it somehow doesn't seem to fit science fiction. I definitely need a middle initial. 'Leonard L. Fell'. No, it's still not right. 'L. Leonard Fell'. 'L. Leonard Fell Jr.'. I still need a better idea of my market. I need a thirteen-year-old-boy.

**8 January 1999:** It took me two days, but I tracked one down. A thirteen-year-old-boy.

Indeed, rather than one, three came along at once. Sarah's Trevor's Jimmy and his friends. For a small outlay in Mars Bars, Big Macs and football stickers, they've agreed to act as consultants.

**9 January 1999:** Jimmy is a very useful source of information. There's something odd about names beginning with 'L.' There's L. Ron Hubbard who was very prolific and produced something called a dreckology. Jimmy showed me a picture of him electrocuting a tomato. He made a lot of money from setting up his own religion. Sounds like something to fall back on if nothing better turns up.

And then there's L. Neil Smith who writes something called libertarian sf, using lots of weapons and armies and stuff. It sounds all very exciting stuff, and maybe something I could have a go at.

"So basically anyone whose first name is 'L.' is a religious maniac or somewhere to the right of Attila the Hun," said Jimmy. I think that's a bit harsh myself. What about L. Frank Baum? 'Oh that both: a dystopian society with strict segregation into four separate homelands, and run by a despotic Wizard who turns out to be little more than a puff of smoke disguising a little old man. The satire is obvious.'

I suggested that Leonardo Fell might be a great name: Leonardo diCaprio seems to do very well on it. 'Leonard O'Fell?' he repeats, 'It's a bit Irish isn't it?' Apparently I'd have to write about dragons and fairies.

**10 January 1999:** so we have a name, a plot and characters, so all I have to do is write the novel and the BSFA will publish it for me.

**11 January 1999:** A bit of a setback here: apparently they don't publish fiction. I'm sure once he sees it, Mr Dillinger will change his mind; unfortunately I can't send him the finished novel yet to change his mind. He tells me about Focus (which does publish fiction, so Dillinger is clearly lying or confused or both) and something called an Orbiter. I'm not sure I like the sound of it: how do you know that they won't steal your ideas?

Still, they publish three magazines, I'm sure if they put all the issues together, they could have enough space for a whole novel. I can't understand why this Dillinger chap didn't think of it. Maybe he's got his own novel that he's planning to write.

Oh, and another problem: I need a title for the novel. I mean, the obvious name for the volumes would be Matrix, Vector and Focus, so as to keep the typefaces, but what to call it over all? I think I need to do a bit more thinking.

*If anyone has any advice for Leonard, please write c/o the editorial address. We will be happy to pass any messages you have on to him.*

m a t r i x

the new magazine of the British Science Fiction Association

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Interstitial Issue # 1

roll the credits...

Without whom...

Elizabeth Billinger,  
Paul Billinger,  
Vikki Lee,  
Andy Butler,  
Steve Jeffery,  
Gary Dalkin,  
Maureen Kincaid Speller,  
Paul Kincaid,  
Tony Cullen,  
Chris Hill,  
Penny Hill,  
John Ashbrook,  
Tanya Brown,  
Paul Hood,  
Claire Brialley,  
Leonard Fell,  
Kat Patrick,  
Carol Ann Kerry Green,  
Alice the cat.

Thanks for content, advice, help and support - you were marvellous, darlings!

### Techie Bit:

This issue of Matrix was rustled up on several horribly slow PCs (marginally speedier than Babbage's Difference Engine) using lots of infuriating standard software (no plugs, they've got enough money already), printed on a wonderful HP Laserjet 4L, reproduced by the marvellous PDC Copyprint and united with other BSFA publications by Bramley Mailing Services before distribution. It should be noted that a bottle of wine (Tempranillo in particular) is a splendid editorial tool and should be thanked officially. And now to sleep, perchance to dream....

### Competition

Apologies that there is no competition this issue. We hope to have one for you next time.

Apologies for any errors, they are all ours - Colin and Mitch