

The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association

Issue 138

July-August • 1998

Matrix

Awards Special:
Clarke winner,
Hugo nominations

SF Masterworks:
Creating the range

Lifting the lid on SF:
John Jarrold writes

The Sky Road:
Ken MacLeod

Virtual Reality:
Why fiction works
better than film

The Matrix: Review
of Keanu's Kung Fu

Critics maul Menace:
Darth strikes back?

Voyage reaches
Radio Four



Inside

Matrix

138 • July-August • 1999

The bi-monthly news magazine of the
**British Science
Fiction Association**

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entirely by unpaid volunteers

● It's all change at Matrix, with a new editorial team and a new look. Don't hesitate to let us know what you like (or don't) about the new format - and get involved by suggesting articles!
● We hope you find within these pages the kind of information and entertainment you are used to from Matrix. This is our maiden voyage and it may take a couple of issues for things to bed in, but this debut should serve as a taste of things to come in Matrix.

- Brian J. Robb

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"There is no spoon!"

BSFA

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Free magazine for BSFA Members!

This mailing features a special offer for all members: a free copy of **The Third Alternative**, an SF magazine in A4 glossy colour.

Issue 20 (published 1 June) features an interview with Michael Moorcock and a cinema section on David Cronenberg, as well as regular columnist Peter Crowther. There are also new stories from Ian Watson, James Van Pelt, Liz Williams, Mat Coward, Tim Leers, James Harris, Alexander Glass, Brian Ruckley, and artwork by David Checkley, Wendy Down and Roddy Williams.

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● New editor(s) are being sought for Focus, as Carol Ann Kerry-Green and Julie Venner prepare to move on after six years. Interested parties should contact Carol at the address above.

All you need to do to get your copy of the magazine is to contact Paul Billinger at the usual address (1 Long Row Close, Eversdon, Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 3BE) and ask for your free issue of TTA; please include your name, the address you'd like the magazine to be sent to, and your BSFA membership number if possible.

If you're interested in getting hold of future issues, send £3 (£1 for four issues) to TTA Press, 5 Martins Lane, Witcham, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2LB.

- Claire Brailey & Mark Plummer.

NEWS

Coverage of all
that's happening
in the worlds of
Science Fiction

Stephenson takes SF to mainstream

Author Neal Stephenson's new novel *Cryptonomicon* came second only to *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* in internet hype during May.

Advanced on-line orders put the much discussed novel at No. 3 on the Amazon.com site.

Preview copies and fan buzz on the internet helped push the novel to bestseller status, despite its unusual approach to science fiction.

'What I am doing here is giving the science fiction treatment to characters, times and settings that are not the usual province of SF,' claimed Stephenson during an on line interview.

'Half of the novel takes place during the Second World War and half during the present day - none of it in the future, and none in any sort of fantasy world.'

Appeal

Despite this unusual approach, Stephenson is sure the novel will appeal to SF readers.

'People who are accustomed to reading conventional (i.e. non-SF) novels will probably find that I come at these topics from weird angles,' he noted.

'People who are accustomed to SF will probably recognise my approach as being SF-ish, even though the time and place aren't.'

Stephenson is 'reasonably confident' that his new work will catch on with SF fans and may bring him a whole new audience.

Cryptonomicon is the first book in what Stephenson's publishers are calling a 'book cycle', which the author claims sounds 'a lot more pretentious' than a simple trilogy.

Bradbury, Silverberg join SF Hall of Fame

Veteran authors Ray Bradbury and Robert Silverberg are to be inducted into this year's Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame, along with Jules Verne and A. Merrit who gain entry posthumously.

The decision was announced at ConQuest 30 in Kansas City on May 29 and the event will take place on July 9 alongside the presentation of the John W. Campbell and Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Awards at the University of Kansas.

Founded in 1996, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame was set up by the J. Wayne and Elsie M. Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction at the University of Kansas. Members of the Hall of Fame are selected by the Board of Directors: Robin Wayne Bailey, James Gunn, Joe

Haldeman, Larry Hopkins, Ted Poovey, Keith W. Stokes and William Tienken.

Previous inductees include BSFA President Arthur C. Clarke, Hal Clement, Frederik Pohl, A. E. van Vogt, Andre Norton and Jack Williamson. Posthumous inductees have included Isaac Asimov, John W. Campbell Jr., Hugo Gernsback, Robert A. Heinlein, C. L. Moore and H. G. Wells.

● *Straczynski wins Bradbury Award - see page 4*

● *Hugo nominations for 1999 in full - see page 5*

Dune deal for Bantam

Frank Herbert's *Dune* series is set to continue under the control of the author's son, Brian Herbert and *The X-Files* and *Star Wars* author Kevin J. Anderson.

Bantam will be publishing *House Atreides*, the first in the new *Dune* series, in hardback in the US in October.

Chronicling the events which lead up to Herbert's original *Dune* book (first published in 1965, filmed by David Lynch in 1984) the series will go under the title of *Prelude to Dune*.

The pair are working on the second book in the series, entitled *House Harkonnen*, with the first

draft coming in at close to 900 pages long. The third volume in the prequel series is tentatively entitled *The Space War*.

For spice girls (and boys) who can't wait, the first *Dune* fiction in 15 years will see print in July's issue of *Amazing Stories*. As a taster for the new novels, Herbert and Anderson have collaborated on the short story *A Whisper of Caladan Seas*.

● *Ian McDonald won the 1999 Kurd Lasswitz Award for Best Foreign Novel for Sacrifice of Fools.* The award, the equivalent of the Nebula, has been given since 1981 by German SF professionals and was presented at Eurocon '99 in Dortmund, Germany, on May 22nd. Christopher Priest was a previous winner for *The Glamour* in 1988.

Arthur C. Clarke
Awards photos

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Awards Special:
Hugo, Nebula &
Asimov Awards

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Rankin signings

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Media news

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Straczynski to become a rock star

According to J. Michael Straczynski he's become a rock star.

The *Babylon 5* and *Crusade* creator has been honoured by the Kitt Peak Observatory in Tucson, Arizona which has named an asteroid after the writer.

Discovered in 1992 the rock is now officially designated "8379 STRACZYNSKI".

'Suffice it to say, it is a tremendous honour,' said Straczynski of his journey into space.

Horrible!

British horror author Ramsey Campbell and maverick film director Roger Corman will receive the Bram Stoker Award for Life Achievement.

The award is given each year by the Horror Writer's Association to those whose work has substantially influenced the horror genre.

Arthur C. Clarke gets stamped

● Arthur C. Clarke is being honoured by his adoptive country of Sri Lanka with a stamp "showing my portrait superimposed on the geostationary satellite configuration" commemorating 50 years of communications. First day of issue was 19-02-99. Sir Arthur added: "I never imagined this would happen when I sorted mail in Bishops Lydeard post office 65 years ago."

● At the end of April David Langford delivered the text commentary (plus 6,000 words of picture captions) for *A Cosmic Cornucopia*, a new selection of Josh Kirby's paintings which Paper Tiger have scheduled for publication on 7th October. There's also a brief introduction by Tom Holt.

● L Sprague de Camp (91) is fully recovered from his November hip replacement and is now walking again.

● Michael Moorcock had sold mainstream novel *King of the City*, a collection, *London Bone*, three new Elric fantasies and reprint rights to *Mother London*, all to John Jarrold for the Scribner and Earthlight imprints.

● Peter F. Hamilton's *The Naked God*, which concludes the trilogy begun with *The Reality Dysfunction*, was delivered to Betsy Mitchell at Warner. The manuscript weighed in at a healthy 460,000 words.

● Caitlin Kiernan's *Silk* won the Barnes and Noble Maiden Voyage Award for best fantasy or SF first novel.

● Michael Crichton polled 8th in Forbes' 10 highest earning celebrities with \$65 million in 1998, under Steven Spielberg (\$175 million) while Stephen King (who has traded deals on royalty shares over large advances last year) dropped off the list.

Babylon 5 creator scoops Ray Bradbury Award

SFWA gong given for only the second time

Creator and writer of the *Babylon 5* TV show J. Michael Straczynski was awarded the Ray Bradbury Award for Dramatic Screenwriting by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) at the Nebula Awards Banquet in Pittsburgh on 1st May.

The Award is only given rarely at the SFWA President's discretion. The only previous winner of the Ray Bradbury Award was James Cameron for his screenplay for *Terminator 2* in 1992 at the instigation of the then-SFWA President Ben Bova.

Paul Levinson, the current SFWA President who nominated Straczynski, said that the SFWA membership had voted to reinstate the Dramatic Nebula Award, but as eligibility for this would begin in January 1999 it was felt important to grant the Bradbury Award in recognition of Straczynski's achievement. 'It signals to the world SFWA's deep

interest in dramatic media,' noted Levinson.

The planned five year run of *Babylon 5* concluded in 1998, with Straczynski scripting 91 of the series 110 episode total.

The Nebula Award banquet made two other special awards alongside that to Straczynski. Hal Clement (Harry Stubbs) received the SFWA Grand Master Award, and William Tenn (Phil Klass) received the Author Emeritus Award. Analog editor Stanley Schmidt served as toastmaster at the ceremony, and editor David G. Hartwell was guest speaker. Both are Hugo nominees this year. ● *Hugo Awards*, Page 6.

Ellison's audio Oscar

Harlan Ellison was a double winner among the 25 who saw success in the 1999 Audie Awards, presented by the Audio Publishers Association.

Ellison won in his own right in the category for Solo Narration - Male for his reading of Ben Bova's novel *City of Darkness*, rereleased by Dove Audio in the US. He won a second Audie as part of the cast of *Titanic Disaster* (also released by Dove) which included David Ackroyd, Susan Anspach, Patrick Macnee and Michael York, among others alongside Ellison.

● **Star Wars brings online book wars:** The success of Star Wars titles in Internet sales have seen Amazon.com start a price war by slashing all *New York Times* best-sellers by up to 50% off their list price. The move prompted immediate counter action from online rivals Barnesandnoble.com and Borders.com. There's no indica-

tion that Amazon.co.uk is set to follow suit, despite the fact that the UK variant must be losing business to it's US parent where it is often cheaper to buy the same books even when the cost of shipping is added.

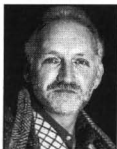
● **Millennium fever hits SF publishing:** According to *Publisher's Weekly*, publishing schedules for the coming months are set to be clogged up with Millennium books - none more so than in the SF category. Titles scheduled for release over coming months in the US include Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois's theme anthology *Armageddons* (Ace, December) and William Gibson's *All Tomorrow's Parties* (Putnam, October), a semi-sequel to *Idoru*. In a neat gimmick, a new edition of BSFA President Arthur C. Clarke's original 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (NAL, October) with a new intro by the author, will be issued at the millennium price of \$20.01.

Norton library opens

● High Hallack, the Andre Norton Genre Writers' Research and Reference Library at 114 Eventide Drive, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, opened on 28th February, also celebrating Norton's 87th birthday earlier in February. The 10,000 volumes include fiction and non fiction, Wiccan and pagan lore.

● **Writer's Choice Literary Journal** at members.sprecc.com/writer/ is a very discerning magazine with links to a huge set of seemingly up to date writer's markets and guidelines, for those interested. - Roy Gray (whose story "Neutrino CAT" can be found at members.sprecc.com/writer/htm7/ncat1.htm).

Rankin snuffs it



● Robert Rankin will be signing his new hardback *Snuff Fiction*, published 8th July 1999 and *Apocalypse*, now out in paperback, during a July signing tour. The dates are:
3 July - Sproutlore Thames Riverboat Extravaganza, 12:30pm, Contact: James Bacon on 0035318683049 for tickets
6 July - Waterstones, Canterbury, 7pm
7 July - Waterstones, Guildford, 1 - 2pm
7 July - Sci-fi evening at Ottakars, Banbury, 7pm; 8 July - Red Lion Books, Colchester, 5:30pm
9 July - Waterstones, Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Brierley Hill, 1 - 2pm
10 July - Andromeda, Birmingham, at 12 noon
13 July - Waterstones, Manchester, 7pm
14 July - Waterstones, Hull, 7pm
15 July - Waterstones, Edinburgh, 7pm
17 July - James Thin Booksellers, from 1:30-2:30pm.

Tricia Sullivan's not "Dreaming" as she wins Clarke Award

Report and photos by Janet Barron

Tricia Sullivan's *Dreaming in Smoke* was announced as the winner of the Arthur C Clarke Award, for best science fiction novel published in 1998, at a ceremony in London's Science Museum on 19th May. An American presently living in London, *Dreaming in Smoke* is her third novel.

Stephen Baxter, as vice president of the BSFA, first presented a BSFA Special Award to editor, David Pringle for *Interzone's* long-term contribution to science fiction (see report below). Baxter praised *Interzone* for tenacity, talent and tact over seventeen years, and declared it to have made a great deal of difference to a number of writers, and to British science fiction in general. David Pringle accepted, highlighting the labours of Andrew Tidmarsh and Andy Roberts on the publication.

Angie Edwards, Sir Arthur's niece, was present and relayed a message of support for the BSFA from her uncle who was 'in cracking form' and writing up a storm. David Pringle then

announced the Award and made the presentation, including a cheque for £1000.

In a short and spontaneous speech, looking both delighted and stunned, Tricia Sullivan expressed her gratitude and surprise. She had no prepared acceptance speech, she told the audience, because she had convinced herself she would not win.

Dreaming in Smoke, she said, was the hardest of her novels to write. She had nearly given up on it at times, only to be exhorted by her agent to keep going, and even now she found some of its content unpleasant to contemplate.

Four of the six nominees attended the ceremony; Sullivan, Christopher Priest (*The Extremes*), Ken McLeod (*The Cassini Division*) and Alison Sinclair (*Cavacade*).

The panel of judges, who deliberated for a record length of time before reaching their verdict, consisted of Tanya Brown



ABOVE: Stephen Baxter hosted the event; A surprised Tricia Sullivan accepted her award from fellow winner David Pringle; BELOW: Nominees (L-R) Ken MacLeod, Alison Sinclair and Christopher Priest.

PHOTOS: JANET BARRON



and Claire Briarley for the BSFA, and John Clute and Farah Mendelsohn for the Science Fiction Foundation under the chairmanship of Paul Kincaid.

Many other writers, editors, and those active in the sf field

were present, including Judith Clute, Chris Evans, Elisabeth Hand, Michele Hodgson, Robert Holdstock, David Langford, David Garnett, Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Maureen Speller Kincaid and Brian Stableford.

Asimov's and Analog Awards winners:

At a breakfast celebration during the Nebula Awards weekend, Dell Magazines announced the winners of their annual awards:

Asimov's Science Fiction - Thirteenth Annual Readers' Award

Best Novella: "Oceanic" by Greg Egan (August 1998)

Best Novelette: "Echea" by Kristine Kathryn Rusch (July 1998)

Best Short Story: "Radiant Doors" by Michael Swanwick (September 1998)

Best Poem: "egg horror poem" by Laurel Winter (July 1998)

Best Cover Art: John Foster

Best Interior Art: Alan Giana

Analog Science Fiction and Fact -

Analogue Winners

Best Novella: "Aurora in Four Voices" by Chatherine Asaro (December 1998)

Best Novelette: "Zwarte Piet's Tale" by Allen Steele (December 1998)

Best Short Story: "Moon-Calf," by Stephen Baxter (July/August 1998)

Best Fact Article: "The World's Simplest Fusion Reactor" by Tom Iigon (December 1998)

Best Cover Art: Bob Eggleton, July/August 1998 for "The Ice Dragon's Song"

Special award recognises editor David Pringle's contribution to science fiction

Interzone editor honoured at Clarke Awards

On Wednesday 19th May, at the Arthur C. Clarke Award Ceremony, the editor of *Interzone*, David Pringle, was presented with a special Committee Award by the British Science Fiction Association.

This award is in the gift of the committee and was awarded for David's exceptional contribution to British Science Fiction. In spite of the Hugo Award that

Interzone received at the last British Worldcon, the committee felt that the importance of *Interzone*, and David's dedication to it, has not been sufficiently recognised.

The Award was presented by Stephen Baxter, twice winner of a BSFA Award and now Vice-President of the BSFA. In his speech Stephen pointed out the number of writers, including himself, who had their first

breaks in *Interzone*.

I would like to thank Paul Kincaid, administrator of the Arthur C. Clarke Award, for allowing us to make use of the ceremony and for arranging to ensure that David Pringle would be attending. I would also like to thank Stephen Baxter for presenting the award and Colin Odell and Mitch Le Blanc for designing and producing the award trophy.

- Christopher Hill,
BSFA Awards Administrator.

Swanwick in Hugo triple

Michael Swanwick, Greg Egan top Hugo list

For the first time an author has been nominated three times in the Short Story category for this year's Hugo Award nominations. Michael Swanwick, the American author whose novel debut was 1985's *In the Drift* and is best known for 1987's *Vacuum Flowers*, has matched the achievement of Norman Kagan who had three novelettes on the very first Nebula Awards ballot (which was unusually long with a total of 19 nominations in the novelette category in 1966, the award's first year).

It's unusual on a major awards ballot for an author to allow more than one nomination, often withdrawing one or more of the nominated works to avoid competing with themselves. It appears that this time Swanwick chose to let his multiple nominations stand.

As a result of this unusual triple nomination, Swanwick now has the most cumulative nominations at 10 in the fiction category of any writer who has never actually won a Hugo Award (bypassing Michael Bishop, whose nomination total now stands at nine). Editors David G. Hartwell and Stanley Schmidt have also never won, despite notching up 20 nominations each, while other people just can't help winning repeatedly (such as David Langford!).

On this year's ballot, acclaimed Australian author Greg Egan gains his fourth and fifth nominations, for *Oceanic* in the Novella category and *The Planck Drive* in the Novelette category. First timers this year include Mary Doria Russell, Catherine Asaro, Ian R. MacLeod, Robert Charles Wilson and Ellen Klages.

SFNA Nebula Awards

Announced May 1st, 1999 in Pittsburgh, PA, the Nebula Awards are voted on, and presented by, active members of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, Inc.

Founded as the Science Fiction Writers of America in 1965 by Damon Knight, the organisation began with a charter membership of 78 writers; it now has over 1,000 members, among them most of the leading writers of science fiction and fantasy.

Novels - Joe Haldeman:

Forever Peace (Ace, Oct97)

Novellas - Sheila Finch:

Reading the Bones (F&SF, Jan98)

Novelettes - Jane Yolen:

Lost Girls (Realm of Fantasy, Feb98)

Short Stories - Bruce Holland Rogers:

Thirteen Ways to Water (Black Cats and Broken Mirrors, Martin Greenberg and

John Helfers, Ed., DAW, June98)

Grand Master: Hal Clement

(Harry Stubbs) ; Author

Emeritus: William Tenn (Phil

Klass) ; Bradbury Award: J.

Michael Straczynski

Dick Award goes to Ryman's Print Remix

The print version of Geoff Ryman's web-based experimental fiction 253, under the title 253: *The Print Remix* (St Martin's Griffin) scooped the Philip K. Dick Award.

The award is for a "distinguished science fiction book published as a paperback original in the US during 1998". The award was announced April 2nd at Norwescon 22 in Seattle Washington. Paul Di Filippo's *Lost Pages* (Four Walls Eight Windows) received a special citation.

The Hugo Award Nominations are:

Announced at Aussiecon 3, the 57th Annual World Science Fiction Convention the Hugo Awards and the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer. Winners are determined by a vote of WSFS members. Winners will be announced at the convention in Melbourne, Australia, during the September 2nd to 6th, 1999.

Best Novel

Children of God, Mary Doria Russell (Villard); *Darwinia*, Robert Charles Wilson (Tor); *Distraction*, Bruce Sterling (Bantam Spectra); *Factoring Humanity*, Robert J. Sawyer (Tor); *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, Connie Willis (Bantam Spectra)

Best Novella

"Aurora in Four Voices", Catherine Asaro (Analog, Dec 1998); *"Get Me to the Church On Time"*, Terry Bisson (Asimov's, May 1998); *"Oceanic"*, Greg Egan (Asimov's, Aug 1998); *"Story of Your Life"*, Ted Chiang (Starlight 2, Tor, Nov 1998); *"The Summer Isles"*, Ian R. MacLeod (Asimov's, Oct/Nov 1998)

Best Novelette

"Divided by Infinity", Robert Charles Wilson (Starlight 2, Tor, Nov 1998); *"Echea"*, Kristine Kathryn Rusch (Asimov's, Jul 1998); *"The Planck Drive"*, Greg Egan (Asimov's, Feb 1998); *"Steamship Soldier on the Information Front"*, Nancy Kress (Future Histories 1997; Asimov's, Apr 1998); *"Edamame"*, Bruce Sterling (Asimov's, Oct/Nov 1998); *"Time Gyro"*, Ellen Klages (Bending the Landscape: Science Fiction Overlook, Sep 1998); *"Zwarte Piet's Tale"*, Allen Steele (Analog, Dec 1998)

Best Short Story

"Cosmic Corkscrew", Michael A. Burstein (Analog, Jun 1998); *"Maneki Neko"*, Bruce Sterling (F&SF, May 1998); *"Radiant Doors"*, Michael Swanwick (Asimov's, Sep 1998); *"The Very Pulse of the Machine"*, Michael Swanwick (Asimov's, Feb 1998); *"Whiptail"*, Robert Reed (Asimov's, Oct/Nov 1998); *"Wild Minds"*, Michael Swanwick (Asimov's, May 1998)

Best Related Book

The Dreams Our Staff Is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered the World, Thomas M. Disch (The Free Press); *Hugo, Nebula & World Fantasy Awards*, Howard DeVore (Advent Publishers);

Science-Fiction: The Gernsback Years, Everett F. Bleiler (Kent State University Press); *Spectrum 5: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art*, Cathy Fenner & Arnie Fenner, eds. (Underwood Books); *The Works of Jack Williamson: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide*, Richard A. Hauptmann (The NESFA Press)

Best Dramatic Presentation

Babylon 5: "Sleeping in Light"; Dark City; Pleasantville; Star Trek: Insurrection; The Truman Show

Best Professional Editor

Gardner Dozois; Scott Edelman; David G. Hartwell; Patrick Nielsen Hayden; Stanley Schmidt; Gordon Van Gelder

Best Professional Artist

Jim Burns; Bob Eggleton; Donato Giancola; Don Maitz; Nick Stathopoulos; Michael Whelan

Best Semiprozine

Interzone, David Pringle, ed. *Locust*, Charles N. Brown, ed. *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, Kathryn Cramer, Ariel Hamon, David G. Hartwell & Kevin Maroney, eds. *Science Fiction Chronicle*, Andrew I. Porter, ed. *Speculations*, Kent Brewster, ed.

Best Fanzine

Ansible, Dave Langford, ed. *File 770*, Mike Glyer, ed. *Mimosa*, Richard & Nikki Lynch, eds. *Plokiat*, Alison Scott & Steve Davies, eds. *Tangent*, David A. Truesdale, ed. *Thyme*, Alan Stewart, ed.

Best Fan Writer

Bob Deveny; Mike Glyer; Dave Langford; Evelyn C. Leeper; Steven Kincaid; Speller

Best Fan Artist

Freddie Bauer; Brad Foster; Ian Gunn; Teddy Hauer; Joe Mayhew; D. West

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer (Not a Hugo)

Kage Baker*; Julie E. Czerneda*; Nalo Hopkinson*; Susan R. Matthews*; James Van Pelt*

*denotes second year of eligibility

• Several of the categories have six or more nominations due to ties for 5th place.

Taking a sideways look at history in SF

The shortlist for the Sidewise Awards for fiction dealing in alternate history for 1999 is:

Long Form:

Dinosaur Summer, Greg Bear; *Making History*, Stephen Fry; *Climb the Wind*, Pamela Sargent

Short Form (<60,000 words)

The Wire Continuum, Stephen Baxter & Arthur C. Clarke (Playboy, 1/98)

The Summer Isles, Ian R. MacLeod, Asimov's, 10/98)

Waiting for the End, Robert Silverberg, (Asimov's, 10/98)

US, Howard Waldrop, (Event Horizon)

BOOKS

Forthcoming Books and Publishing Schedules

Compiled by Janet Barron

Key to book listings:

hp = hardback
tp = trade pb
pb = paperback
NOIP = Now out in paperback
= Reissue
= nonfiction
All others, first UK edition.
Comments in quotes are from publishers PR.

● Iain M Banks

Inversions (Orbit June pb £6.99)
Clarke Award nominee, NOIP.

● Iain Banks

The Business
(Little, Brown Aug hb £16.99 288pp)
Kate, techno-trend evaluator, caught up in the latest power-play of the obscure, global, millennia-old Business must peel away the assumptions of a lifetime.

● James Barclay

Dawntooth: Chronicles of the Raven (Victor Gollancz July tp £9.99 320pp)

A new British fantasy writer 'in the style of David Gemmell'.

● Julie Bell

Soft As Steel (Paper Tiger June illus pb £14.99 128 pages)

● Alfred Bester

The Demolished Man
(Millennium July pb £6.99)
Masterworks series.



extinction guaranteed in 200 years, private space entrepreneur Reid Malenfant plans to launch a rocket to explore a recently discovered near-Earth object of unexplained origin - and the pilot will be an enhanced squid! From the author of *Voyage, Titan and Traces*.

● David Brin

Foundation's Triumph
(Orbit July hb £16.99 336pp)
The Second Foundation Trilogy continues, as authorised by the estate of Isaac Asimov.

● Poppy Z Brite

Self-made Man (Orion July hb/tp £16.99/£9.99 192pp)
Second collection of stories following the acclaimed *Exquisite Corpse*.

● Jim Burns

Transluninal: The Paintings of Jim Burns
(Paper Tiger Aug £14.99)



● Jonathan Carroll

The Marriage of Sticks
(Victor Gollancz May £16.99 283pp)
'Just one click of the dial away from normal — just one click — and everything we know for certain vanishes.' Another fantastic journey into Carroll's wondrous world of offbeat magic, bizarre characters and strange happening. Featuring the return of Frannie McCabe and a brilliantly original take on the vampire myth (yes, it is possible!).

● Mark Chadbourne

World's End: Book One of the Age of Misrule
(Victor Gollancz July hb/tp £16.99/£9.99 384pp)
'The old gods and myths are awaken-

ing to reclaim contemporary Britain as their own.'

● Arthur C Clarke

Expedition to Earth
(Orbit May tp £9.99)
First collection of Clarke's short stories including *The Sentinel* the story which inspired the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*

● ## John Clute & John Grant

The Encyclopedia of Fantasy
(Orbit April pb £19.99 1076 pp)

● # David Eddings

The Tamuli Omnibus
(Voyager July pb £12.99 1456pp)
Domes of Fire, The Shining Ones, and The Hidden City out in one wrist-spraining volume.

● # Philip K Dick

Martian Time Slip
(Millennium July pb £6.99)

Beyond Lies the Web
(Millennium Aug pb £6.99)

Second Variety
(Millennium Aug pb £6.99)

Martian Time Slip
(Millennium Aug pb £6.99)

Masterworks series.

● Christie Dickason

Quicksilver (HarperCollins July hb £16.99 322pp)
'Intrigue and romance set in 17th-C Europe. Ned Malise has been arrested on suspicion of being a werewolf. And he thinks his accusers may be right...'

● Stephen Donaldson

Reave the Just and Other Tales
(Voyager May hb 357pp)
● Gardner Dozois (Editor)
The Mammoth Book of Best New SF 12
(Robinson Aug pb £8.99 736 pp)

● Greg Egan

Teranesia (Victor Gollancz Aug hb/tp £16.99/£9.99 352pp)

One to watch for.

● Greg Egan

Luminous
(Millennium Aug pb £6.99), NOIP

● Steven Erikson

Gardens of the Moon: A Tale of the Malazan Book of the Fallen
(Bantam April tp £9.99)

First in a multi volume high fantasy by a Canadian now living in the UK. 'Not only attempts to be huge in scope [...] actually succeeds in doing so.' VL Vector 205

● Maggie Furey

The Heart of Myrial
(Orbit July £16.99 432pp)
First in new series.

● Julia Gray

Fire Music
(Orbit July £6.99 544pp)
Sequel to *Ice Mage*.

● Mike Jefferies

The Ghosts of Candleford
(Voyager July pb £5.99 320pp)
Billed as 'A classic tale of the supernatural.'

● Raymond E. Feist

Krondor: The Assassins
(Voyager July hb £16.99)

● Graham Joyce

Indigo (Michael Joseph July tp £9.99 256 pp)
Occult psychological thriller.

● Katherine Kerr

The Black Raven
(Voyager July hb/tp £16.99/11.99)
Second in the Dragon Mage series.

● Mercedes Lackey

& Larry Dixon
Owlsight (Victor Gollancz July hb/tp £16.99/£9.99 304pp)
Follow up to *Owlflight*.

● # Fritz Leiber

Lean Times in Lankhmar
(Millennium Aug pb £6.99)
Masterworks series.

● Valery Leith

The Company of Glass
(Victor Gollancz Aug hb/tp £16.99/£9.99 352pp)

First volume of epic fantasy 'ripe with magic, action and intrigue'.

● ## Bob McCabe

Dark Knights and Holy Fools: The Art and Films of Terry Gilliam
(Orion Media Aug illus hb £20 192pp)

● Anne McCaffrey

The Tower and the Hive
(Bantam June hb £16.99 296 pp)

● Anne McCaffrey

and Margaret Ball

Acorna's Quest

(Corgi July pb £6.99 416pp), NOIP

● Patrick McCormack

Albion: The Last Companion
(Robinson July pb £7.99 416pp)

Albion: The White Phantom
(Robinson July tp £7.99 400pp)

● Elizabeth Moon

Hunting Party

(Orbit July £5.99 384pp)

● Sporting Chance

(Orbit Aug £5.99 400pp)

● Stephen Baxter

Time
(Voyager Aug hb £17.99 608pp)
'The millennium's last great sf novel.' The year is 2010 and the Y2K crisis has come and gone, but time is running out for the human race. With

Winning Colours

(Orbit Sept £5.99 432pp)

'Fast paced' space opera from ex-marine Moon, author of fantasy trilogy *The Deeds of Paksenarrion*.

● **L. E. Modest Jnr****The White Order**

(Orbit June pb £6.99 566pp)

Another doorstep addition to the Saga of Recluse.

Adiamante

(Orbit Aug pb £6.99 320pp)

Far-future science fiction.

● **Kim Newman**

Life's Lottery (Simon & Schuster Aug hb £16.99 496 pp)

'A high-concept interactive novel about the precarious nature of human destiny.'

● **Bad Dreams** (Simon & Schuster Aug hb £5.99 320 pp)

● **The Night Mayor** (Simon & Schuster Aug £5.99 192 pp)

● **Terry Pratchett**

Discworld Assassins' Guild Yearbook and Diary 2000

(Victor Gollancz Aug hb £8.50 +VAT 128pp)

Beat that Christmas rush....

● **Frederick Pohl****Gateway**

(Millennium May pb £6.99)

Masterworks series.

● **Christopher Priest****The Extremes**

(Scribner Aug pb £6.99 352 pp)

Clarke Award nominee, NOIP.

His best yet...JB, *Vector 201*

● **Robert Rankin****Snuff Fiction**

(Doubleday July hb £16.99)

Catch Rankin on his signing tour....

Apocalypso

(Corgi July pb £5.99), NOIP

● **Geoff Ryman****Unconquered Countries**

(Voyager July pb £6.99)

Ryman's four novellas now issued in one collection.

● **Robert J Sawyer****frameshift**

(Voyager July pb £5.99 352pp)

Biotech thriller from Nebula award winner, billed as 'A morality tale for the Genetic Age.'

● **Martin Scott****Thraxis**

(Orbit April pb £5.99 220pp)

Thraxis and the Warrior Monks

(Orbit May pb £5.99 247pp)

Thraxis at the Races

(Orbit June pb £5.99 245pp)

Comic capers of the barbarian kind.

● **Paul M Sammon Ridley****Scott: The Making of his Movies**

(Orion Media July hb £12.99 144pp)

● **Robert Silverberg** (Editor)**Far Horizons**

(Orbit June, £17.99, 482 pp)

'Eleven masters of science fiction return to their legendary worlds.' Includes new stories by Ursula Le Guin, Greg Benford, Nancy Kress and Greg Bear.

● **Cordwainer Smith****The Rediscovery of Man**

(Millennium May pb £6.99)

Masterworks series.

● **Tricia Sullivan****Dreaming In Smoke**

(Millennium Aug pb £5.99)

Clarke winning novel NOIP

● **Olaf Stapledon****Last and First Men**

(Millennium June pb £6.99)

Masterworks series.

● **George R. Stewart****Earth Abides**

(Millennium June pb £6.99 252pp)

Masterworks series.

● **Peter Straub****Pork Pie Hat**

(Orion hb £6.99 80 pp)

Straub does a Stephen King; publishing in novella form.

● **John Whitbourn****Downs Lord Dawn**

(Earthlight Aug pb £5.99 352pp)

'A blackly witty tale of dooms between worlds, and alternative history.'

● **Gene Wolfe****The Fifth Head of Cerberus**

(Earthlight Aug pb £6.99 252pp)

Masterworks series.

● **Roger Zelazny****Lord of Light**

(Millennium May pb £6.99 261pp)

Masterworks series.

● *Details are correct at press time and based on publisher supplied information. Check with bookshops for changes to book schedules between issues of Matrix.*

Win X-Files Novels!

The X-Files novel *Skin* by Ben Mezrich (HarperCollins) can be yours. To win one of 10 copies, send answers to these 10 X-related questions to the Editorial address on Page 2.

X Questions**by Gary S. Dalkin**

I: Who created The X-Men were created in 1963?

II: Who played Dr Xavier in a 1963 film?

III: Leo McKern starred in which 50's creature feature?

IV: Which 1980's UK SF horror film stars Bond girl to be Maryam D'Abbo?

V: The name of a fanzine by Richard and Pat Lupoff?

VI: Capital city founded in 1256, as immortalised in 1816?

VII: The answer to 6 is also the title of a musical fantasy film starring which pop group?

VIII: The Creeping Unknown is also known as?

IX: In The X Files who played Patient X?

X: Episode X of The X Files has what title?

Jo's Timewasters**Think of a Number!**

This month I have three sums for you:
A) Deduct Tom Dirsch's apartment block from the year of Orwell's *Big Brother*; divide the result by Vera Chapman's damels; add the number of gates from Limbo; multiply the result by the number of keys to Eden....

B) Add together three *Odysseys*. Graves' days in New Crete, Ballard's number to Centaurus and one-quarter of the minutes in Aldis's hour; then subtract half of Heinlein's revolt....

C) Divide the number of names of God by the number of Aldis's spree; add to the result Fahrenheit and Golem, then subtract the number of light years from Sol....

A+B+C = the number of light-years from home or half the leagues under the sea. Answers to A, B and C please, with the workings.

Results of Competition 137:

I wrote a pretty good answer for this myself; just as well, as it turned out, for since you imaginative people out there produced just ONE entry, so the prize goes to Nigel Parsons.

Prize for correct entries to this month's competition will win a set of Colin Greenland's *Talbitha Jute* trilogy.

● Solutions to Jo's

Timewasters should be sent to John Ollis, 49 Leighton Road, Corby, NN18 0SD.

Short list grows for BSFA Awards

The current nominations are listed below, but first a quick reminder of the rules for nomination. Nominations for any of the categories can be sent at any time during the year.

Please remember that it is the items with the most nominations on the closing date for submissions that will be shortlisted. So please remember if you want something to appear on the short-list then nominate it even if it is already in the list of nominations.

The eligibility rules are as follows:

Best Novel. First published in the UK in the calendar year 1999.

Best Short Fiction. First appearance in the calendar year 1999, irrespective of country of origin (thus stories in non-UK magazines and original anthologies are eligible).

Best Artwork. First appearance in the calendar year 1999.

The closing date for nominations is 28th January 2000. You have plenty of time, but please remember to keep sending nominations throughout the year. If you are not sure whether a particular item qualifies please send it anyway. I would rather receive a

nomination and have to discard it than not receive nominations!

Current Shortlist**Best Novel****Children of God**

by Mary Doria Russell

The Bones of Time

by Kathleen Ann Goonan

Headlong

by Simon Ings

ThigMOO

by Eugene Byrne

Best Short Fiction**The Gateway of Eternity**

by Brian Stableford

(*Interzone* 139/140)

Gorillagram

by Tony Ballantyne

(*Interzone* 139)

Best Artwork

Cover, *Matrix* 136, Colin Odell

● **The search goes on for**

new editor(s) for Focus, as Carol Ann Kerry-Green and Julie Venner prepare to move on after six years. Interested parties should contact Carol at 278 Victoria Avenue, Hull, HU5 3DZ or email her with ideas on metaphor@enterprise.net.

COLUMNS

Professionals and fans write on the varied worlds of science fiction

Addicted to Pulp!

Magazine fan **GLEND A PRINGLE** shares her obsession with pulp fiction.



I guess you could say I have an obsessive personality. You see I'm a science fiction magazine addict. Other people have drugs, trainspotting, or even chocolate - I have SF magazines.

The sound of one of the 11 magazines I subscribe to dropping through my letterbox starts my pulse racing. The mere glimpse of a tattered old copy of *Astounding* and you've got my undivided attention.

I am a child of the space age. The Gemini and later Apollo space missions kept kids like me glued to the TV for hours. The space program may have been a giant leap for mankind, but it was a small leap for me to pick up that digest-sized magazine with a rocket on the cover.

SF magazines have short stories, novelettes, and novellas written by old favourites and new, up-and-coming authors. They include the occasional poem and cartoon, as well as news of what is going on the world of SF. You can expand your mind with some challenging science columns and read reviews of books, TV shows and films. If you lead a busy life you can dip in and out or, if you're greedy like me, you can gobble the whole thing down at once like some kind of mind candy. If you only read SF books, you're missing so much!

One of the oldest pulps is *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (or FSF). FSF's many editors have included such luminaries as Anthony Boucher, Avram Davidson, Joseph and Edward Ferman, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and, currently, Gordon van Gelder. It has won eight Hugos for Best Magazine (a category that no longer exists) and several Best Editor Hugos. Among its many award-winning stories are the precursors to: *Starship Troopers* (Heinlein), *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (Miller) and *Flowers for Algernon* (Keyes). Everybody you've ever heard of has had a story within these venerable covers.

The best part of FSF is a treasure trove of stories. The January 1999 issue is fairly representative of the range and mix whatever your tastes. Ian Watson's *Caucus Winter* presents a chilling look at quantum computers achieving spontaneous consciousness. In *Joy to the World*, David Bischoff takes a slightly irreverent approach to both Christianity and a certain well-known computer software entrepreneur. The protagonist of *Tir Na Nog* by Lisa Tuttle finds a novel solution to a love triangle that will appeal to cat lovers. Terry Bisson's *Smoother* confirms his place as a master of the short-short story form, even when the subject is something as big as global disaster. And, finally, Robert Reed makes us wonder how much control we have over our own destiny in *Will Be*.

Subscriptions are \$38.97 a year for non-US subscribers from: Fantasy & Science Fiction, 143 Cream Hill Road, West Cornwall, CT 06796, USA. The website is located at www.fsfmag.com.

● *Magazines for review, including small press and fanzines, should be sent to Glenda Pringle, 22 Mead Way, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 2BJ. She can also be reached via email at: chris@kidlington66.freeserve.co.uk.*

In the SF Business

Earthlight editor **JOHN JARROLD** throws some light on SF publishing.



One of the questions I get asked most often is: "Why the hell did you publish that?" So I guess it might be interesting to go through the process of choosing the authors I publish. Although this is obviously my process, and not everyone works the same, I've sat in editorial meeting at three different publishers over the past eleven years, and differences are minor rather than major.

One of the old-time song writers said he was most often asked what came first, the music or the lyrics. His answer: "The phone call." Which is to say that writing songs is a business, as well as an art. Publishing is similar - it certainly ain't a science.

I get around forty typescripts a week from members of the public, and thirty or so from literary agents. And yes, I do take the agented authors more seriously. Since I do all the reading for Earthlight myself (which was also the case when I was at Legend and Orbit) I decided years ago that I would give an unsolicited book ten pages to interest me. If there's no bell ringing by then, I move on to the next script. With books from agents, I will quite often have discussed the author, or know his or her work already. In some ways, the agent acts as a cut-out for publishers - although I've certainly seen truly awful typescripts come overflying with praise from agents!

The first thoughts which come to mind with any project are, firstly, "Do I like this?" and secondly, "Can I sell this?". I've certainly turned down books I loved if I didn't honestly feel they were commercial enough to sell. If an author's first book doesn't sell, it has become considerably more difficult, over the past ten years, to sell their second book. This is largely because the book trade now works on computer sales - say a shop sold five copies of an author's previous book - you're going to have to work very hard to get them to take ten of their new work.

This is where marketing comes in, and I'll talk about that next time. However, editorial enthusiasm counts for a great deal in-house - for instance, I made several people at Random House read Ken MacLeod's *The Star Fraction* as soon as I'd finished it and realised I had something very special on my hands. It meant there was a real buzz throughout the company from day one, which can only help.

That was a case where I saw an author whose work I loved, and who was obviously commercial - by which I don't mean "downmarket". The two terms are not synonymous.

But, in the final analysis, the decision process has a degree of subjectivity: I've taken on authors that other publishers have hated, and vice versa. Sometimes we have all got it right, and sometimes we fail dismally, in sales terms. You really can't second-guess the public, which is a very good thing, since we would be dealing in absolutes if that was the case - and, as I said before, publishing isn't a science. Not even science fiction publishing.

Cinema fails to

Why, when we expect the *cyberspace* of science fiction to be a *visual* experience, do visual renditions so *fail* to spark our imagination, asks **Brigid Cherry?**

VR's fictional past

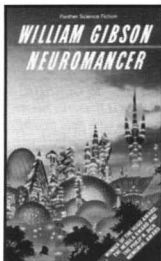
Often dismissed as no more than the prime cliché of the cyberpunk movement inspired by William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, virtual reality has become a staple of science fiction during the past twenty years. However, the concept of alternate realities with which ordinary humans can interact goes back much further than cyberspace cowboy Case.

If the film *The Matrix* proves anything (along with the recently released David Cronenberg film *eXistenZ*) it's that Philip K. Dick was even further ahead of his time than many people give him credit for. His stories constantly question the nature of reality, bringing the reader and his characters face-to-face with questions that are more metaphysical than mechanical. Cronenberg acknowledges his debt to Dick's work by featuring a take-away box labelled 'Perky Pat'.

From Lewis Carroll to Tad Williams, the attraction of alter-

nate universes based on games or computer networks has been clear. Along the way writers like E. M. Forster (*The Machine Stops*, 1909) and Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*, 1932) seemed to spin a vision of a media-obsessed future uncannily like the one we now occupy.

However, it is from the early 1980s onwards that virtual reality fiction really came into its own with a variety of the genre's best talents turning their attention to the kind of material that Dick had spent his writing life obsessing about. This growth of VR fiction coincided with the beginnings of the computer game industry and theme-park based holidays. As time has gone on, science fiction, computer games and theme parks have competed with one another to stay ahead of the game. Fiction (recreating a writer's world in your own head through the act of reading) always seems to be several steps



ahead of hard reality.

Authors like John Varley (Titten series, 1979-84), Larry Niven (Dream Park sequence, 1981-91), Vernor Vinge (True Names, 1981) and Greg Bear (Queen of Angels, 1990) have tackled the possibilities offered by VR.

- Brian J. Robb

"The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel."

William Gibson introduces the world of *Neuromancer* with an allusion to the visual media which provides the reader with a simple, yet vivid, picture unambiguous in either its visualisation or its connotations.

Gibson's descriptions of cyberspace in his cyberpunk texts remain the benchmark whereby science fiction has measured tacts of virtual reality, but the visual media themselves have failed to adequately capture the terrors and wonders of VR rendered so skillfully with words.

Why, when we expect the cyberspace of science fiction to be a predominantly visual experience, do visual renditions so fail to spark the imagination?

Picture this. "And in the bloodlit dark behind his eyes, silver phosphores boilling in from the edge of space, hypnagogic images jerking past like film compiled from random frames. Symbols, figures, faces, a blurred, fragmented mandala of visual information." The Hollywood film industry, for all its computer trickery and industrial light and magic, cannot recreate those images so effortlessly created in the bloodlit spaces behind the readers eyes.

Johnny Mnemonic is so far the only adaptation of a Gibson novel. Although *Neuromancer* was optioned as long ago as 1987, it seems destined to remain in development hell, which is probably all for the

best. Robert Longo's film version of *Johnny Mnemonic* hardly did the written word justice.

Nor did films like *Lawnmower Man* or *Disclosure* live up to the expectations of even the Stephen King or Michael Crichton reader. Given the speed of the technological progression, it's no wonder that so many cinematic recreations go awry. "I know this, this is UNIX!" says the young computer geek in *Jurassic Park* (another Crichton creation), but how many computer programmers and users in the audience merely guffawed at the ignorance on display.

As with many other book-to-film flops, turkeys and disasters, the images created on screen can never live up to the images in the mind of the fan. Cinema, which at its best can be a pure and inspirational art form, so often falls foul of the paltry imagination of commerce.

The written word relies on our imagination to bring the characters, settings and events to life. No matter how skilled the film designers or how visionary the director, the screen recreations will never quite match the mental images drawn from the book, coloured as they are by our personal and experiential backgrounds.

Tad Williams' *Otherland* is safe as long as it stays locked inside the pages of his trilogy, freed only in the minds of the reader drawing on their own intertextual knowledge of history, art and popular culture which frequent his virtual reality in the distorted forms of the great empires of the Americas, the fantastical Kansas of *The Wizard of Oz*, ancient Egypt as home of the animal-headed gods and the ruined London of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*.

Otherland works because the characters are convincing and their responses believable. They bring their own verisimilitude with them

be virtually reel

whatever reality they are inhabiting, be it actual or virtual. Films, especially Hollywood films tailored to the box-office and the eighteen to twenty-four year old male demographic, frequently dispense with such concerns, relying instead on special effects and action set-pieces for their impact and effect. They just don't tell good stories that keep you turning the page as Gibson or Williams might. No wonder, then, that we remain unconvinced by their virtual worlds.

But film makers return again and again to the fertile world of virtual reality, be it high-tech or low-tech. Why do they keep trying when so many attempts go wrong?

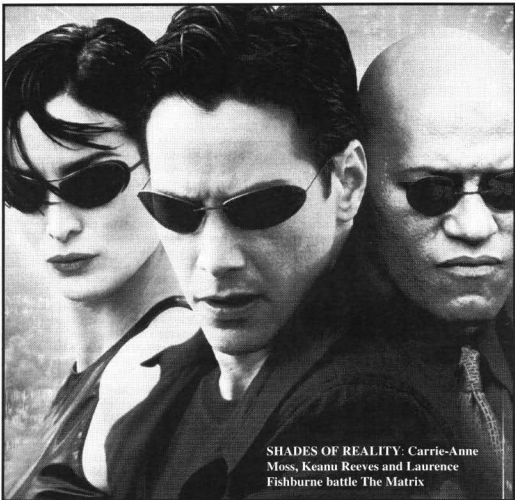
The lure of VR is undoubtedly strong. Living as many of us do now in a world where the media has expanded to embrace the Internet and all its attendant peripherals, one can't expect the visual media to ignore it. The truth is, when you scratch the surface or seek out films outside the mainstream, representations of virtual realities, with or without the mediating technology of computers, can be successfully created in visual form.

David Cronenberg uses an hallucination of cyberspace to question our assumptions about the stability of the world in which we live, though he disturbed and disorientated far more subtly in *Videodrome* than he did in the recent fragile conceit which was *eXistenZ*.

Cronenberg's VR role playing game works because it is so very close to the worldview we have seen in his films before. Gristle guns that shoot molars, living squelchy games consoles constructed in trout farms or mutant fish in the special at the local Chinese restaurant are what we have come to expect from the deep pool of Cronenberg's unconscious.

What disturbs most is that we cannot trust what we view, more disconcerting that the unknowability of the 'truth' at the end of the film is the moment when Jennifer Jason Leigh's character, whom we have come to rely on as the voice of authority in this virtual (but so close to actual) world, behaves like a constructed games personality. The key here is that the experience is hallucinatory and closer to dream or memory than a computer generated world.

And this is how VR in the cinema seems to work best. In *Until The End of the World*, Wim Wenders much maligned piece of millennial



SHADES OF REALITY: Carrie-Anne Moss, Keanu Reeves and Laurence Fishburne battle *The Matrix*

cinema, its addictive virtual reality is created not from the inside of a silicon chip, but directly from the human mind. In *Strange Days* Kathryn Bigelow similarly persuades us that experiences can be recorded and played back. These may not represent the interactivity of VR but in their sensual and impressionistic visualisation they may hold more power for the cinema viewer. The debt owed here is more to Philip K. Dick, who taught us how to distrust our own senses, than to Gibson, who gave us the vision for cyberspace. It seems that the former has more scope and better prospects for the cinema than the latter.

Artists working in the medium of film can and do play better mind tricks than the artisans of the Hollywood industry ever could and may have far more in common with the masters of the written word. Books and films, as has been amply demonstrated before, rarely translate well - but perhaps we can love both mediums, each for their own merits.

● **Brigid Cherry** is a film writer and academic researcher with a special interest in audience studies. She is a contributor to the forthcoming BFI book *Identifying Hollywood Audiences* (1999).

Features



Millennium's master of SF

Millennium's series of SF Masterworks have brought long out-of-print classics of the SF genre to old and new audiences every month. Millennium's Editor Malcolm Edwards explains the selection of titles.

What were the origins of the series?

When I joined Orion at the beginning of last year I decided that a substantial relaunch of the Millennium list was needed. That meant acquiring new authors, obviously, but when I started looking at the SF shelves in bookshops, I realised how few of what I considered to be the key SF books published before 1980 were still in print. A few major authors were still there - Clarke, Asimov, *Dune* etc. - but most of it was gone. (I haven't been doing much SF publishing in recent years, otherwise perhaps I'd already have known this.) It seemed to me that there was a great opportunity to publish a list which really would include a high proportion of titles which everyone would agree were cornerstones of the genre.

How were the titles chosen (most seem to be Hugo or other major award winners)?

I drew up a long list of obvious titles, which in the first instance I circulated to the people in the company who are interested in SF (editors Simon Spanton and Caroline Oakley, plus our Marketing Director, Anthony Keates). I tried to confine it to titles which I felt would have contemporary appeal as well as historical significance, though since it's thirty years since I read some of the books, that involved a fair amount of guesswork. I therefore decided to ask around.

Who was involved in or advised on the selection?

I sent my revised long list to a lot of writers, critics, booksellers etc. and asked them to indicate (a) which titles they would recommend reprinting and (b) for which titles they were willing to provide quotes which we could use on the cover. The response was terrific: one of the great things about the SF field is still that writers care about its history. Who responded? I got lists back from Steve Baxter, Paul McAuley, James Lovegrove, Peter Hamilton, Steve Jones, Dick Jude, David Pringle, Jo Fletcher, Brian Stableford, Colin Greenland, Terry Pratchett, Lisa Tuttle, Peter Nicholls, Joe Haldeman, Ursula Le Guin, Arthur Clarke, Jim Burns, Greg Bear, Garry Kilworth, George R.R. Martin, Mike Marshall Smith, Kim Stanley Robinson, Rog Peyton, Andy Sawyer . . . I've doubtless forgotten some. Bill Gibson left a message on my answering machine with a quote for Gene Wolfe's *Fifth Head of Cerberus* which I chickened out of putting on the cover ('Memorably weird as fuck'). Iain Banks didn't want to single out titles, but volunteered a blanket endorsement for the series, which duly appears on every book. A strong consensus

emerged on a lot of the titles, as did a consistent disbelief that books like *The Forever War*, *Gateway*, *The Stars My Destination* really were out of print. From this it was fairly straightforward to put together a list of titles, and also to be able to package them with recommendations from key contemporary authors. If you're going to reissue Cordwainer Smith, say, what better than to be able to provide endorsements from writers as various as Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter and Ursula Le Guin; if you want to persuade contemporary readers of the importance of Olaf Stapledon it's far preferable to have Kim Stanley Robinson, Arthur Clarke and Steve Baxter (again) saying so than the publisher.

What convinced you that there was a market for these archive titles?

Well, when I was at Gollancz in the 1960s I published a not-dissimilar series, Gollancz Classic SF, which did pretty well, but ran its course, as these things tend to. It seemed to me that, as I've said, the chance was there to do a much better and more comprehensive modern equivalent. It seemed to me that, if done right, there had to be a sufficient market to make it work. Partly that's a matter of faith (you have to believe, as a publisher, that if you publish books well they will succeed!), partly a feeling that while backlist sales across the whole publishing field have been eroded in recent years, the rise in (a) superstores and (b) Internet selling means that there is more opportunity than for a long time to get your backlist titles to their readers.

Was the selection limited by title availability and were there any on your wish list you have been unable thus far to secure?

Some limits, obviously, but surprisingly few, and when the Orion group acquired Gollancz last October quite a high proportion of those became available to us. I've been unable to fulfil a lifetime ambition to publish an edition of *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, because Orbit has it printed; I'd have liked to have been able to include *Dune*, *Fahrenheit 451*, one or two others. Some books I went back and reread, and decided, rightly or wrongly, that they hadn't worn well (*Way Station* is an example). But you can never do everything.

What sort of response (fan, publishers, critics, etc.) have you had?

All the prepublication response was, as I've said, gratifyingly positive. I haven't seen much in the way of review coverage or comment, apart from some nice mentions in *SFX*. Bookshop response has been good, and the coverage on Amazon has been very positive.

The titles planned to the end of next year are:

June 1999

11 Last And First Men

by Olaf Stapledon

12 Earth Abides

by George R. Stewart

July

13 Martian Time-Slip

by Philip K. Dick

14 The Demolished Man

by Alfred Bester

August

15 Stand On Zanzibar

by John Brunner

16 The Dispossessed

by Ursula Le Guin

September

17 The Drowned World

by J.G. Ballard

18 The Sirens Of Titan

by Kurt Vonnegut

October

19 Emphyrio by Jack Vance

20 A Scanner Darkly

by Philip K. Dick

November

21 Star Maker

by Olaf Stapledon

22 Behold The Man

by Michael Moorcock

December

23 The Book Of Skulls

by Robert Silverberg

24 The War Of The Worlds

by H.G. Wells

& The Time Machine

by H.G. Wells

January 2000

25 Timescape

by Gregory Benford

February

26 Flowers For Algernon

by Daniel Keyes

March

27 More Than Human

by Theodore Sturgeon

April

28 Ubik by Philip K. Dick

May

29 Engine Summer

by John Crowley

June

30 A Case Of Conscience

by James Blish

July

31 Man Plus by Frederik Pohl

August

32 Dr Bloodmoney

by Philip K. Dick

September

33 Pavane by Keith Roberts

October

34 The Lathe Of Heaven

by Ursula Le Guin

November

35 The Invisible Man

by H.G. Wells

December

36 Now Wait For Last Year

by Philip K. Dick

There are many worries that modern readers might not take to some older-style titles?

Well, as I say, we've tried to stick to titles which we do think have enduring appeal, rather than publish a series of historical curiosities. But really, there's no point worrying about the people who aren't going to be interested.

How successful has the series been over the first six months?

Each of the first three titles is currently being reprinted, which is immensely encouraging. (The print runs weren't vast, but still, that indicates a degree of success.) We've sold 45,000 books in five months. Actually, I'm delighted by the figures.

Are there plans to extend the run and what titles do you have coming up?

We're continuing with two a month up to the end of the year, and then dropping to one a month (you need to publish more quickly at the beginning, to build up an identity for the series; but after a while you need to throttle back, or you run the risk of flooding the market you've established). It's been fun to do, and I think it's been worthwhile. I'd be interested in people's responses/recommendations. Malcolm Edwards, thank you very much.

● See above for the SF Masterworks titles scheduled to December 2000.

REVIEWS

MacLeod banks on being the best

The Sky Road

Ken MacLeod

Orbit Hardback, £16.99, 291pp

Published 3rd June 1999

Reviewed by **Brigid Cherry**

Ken MacLeod's fourth novel is set in the same universe as his previous titles - the Arthur C. Clarke short-listed *The Star Fraction*, *The Stone Canal* and *The Cassini Division* (now released in paperback).

David Reid, who features in *The Cassini Division* as leader of the New Mars colony, appears again in *The Sky Road* indulging in some ideological manoeuvring with Myra Godwin, political leader of one of the last enclaves of socialism and perhaps, as the Deliverer, the saviour of the world.

The story really centres, however, around Clovis, a wannabe graduate student of history from Glasgow, and Merrial, a gypsy with computing skills forbidden to the city folk.

When Clovis meets Merrial, or rather is found by him, whilst working on a project to launch a space mission from the west coast of Scotland, he gets drawn into the intriguing events of the 2050s which may have closed off the avenues of space exploration forever.

The story becomes really nail biting when Clovis breaks into the history department at Glasgow University and absconds, not just with the contents of the illicit computer systems secreted away at the back of the library, but with Godwin's papers. Do either set of artefacts from the past hold the key to the future? Yes, but in ways that are often circuitous.

Set both in the early years of the next century and a farther distant future, *The Sky Road* weaves a

rhythmic pattern of events that though temporally remote are strongly interconnected.

The two worlds are totally different - though recognisably connected, the contrasts are often unexpected and there are quite a few surprises on the route to unravelling the mystery of the relationships between the two. Political intrigue is at the heart of both.

"MacLeod's writing is thoughtful and insightful, but more than that he doesn't stop short of spinning a good yarn. He tells a story which challenges and gets the reader thinking."

MacLeod is at his best when setting his futures very firmly in the present and he develops the old Cold War tensions between Capitalism and Communism in interesting ways. So here we have the familiar old ideologies, whilst redundant in terms of world power, living on in almost unrecognisable forms.

Nothing and no one are quite as straightforward as they appear. Most interestingly, information technology has become a convincing form of magic - the ghost in the machine was never quite as envisioned here. MacLeod's writing is thoughtful and insightful, but more than that he doesn't stop short of spinning a good yarn, he tells a story which challenges and gets the reader thinking.

He is a strong storyteller. Not only are his characters believably motivated and well constructed, but their political beliefs and persuasions well drawn out. Iain Banks, with whom MacLeod is closely linked, has said that MacLeod is going to be a major writer. Banks should look out because the proof here is that he is already rivalling the emperor of Scottish science fiction for pole position.

Book of the Month

The Matrix view of science fiction books, films, TV and multimedia

Forthcoming US titles

Given that many more people than ever before are ordering their monthly fix of new SF novels direct from the States courtesy of Amazon.com, *Matrix* felt it would be useful to highlight some of the forthcoming American titles:

Ancients of Days

(The Second Book of Confluence)

Paul J McAuley, Avon/Eos

(hardcover, 400 pages, \$16 US)

Publication date: August, 1999

Paul McAuley continues one of this ongoing SF series with this sequel to *Child of the River*.

The Rainy Season

James P. Blaylock, Ace

(hardcover, 258 pages, \$21.95 US)

Publication date: August, 1999

'It's a gray, wet winter in southern California, and Phil Ainsworth is alone. The sudden death of his young wife has left him shaken, and he senses an eerie presence in the big old house he inherited from his mother. Then a late night phone call brings him more bad news: Phil's sister has died, leaving her ten-year-old daughter Betsy in his care. It seems like a bad time to bring a child into this unhappy house, but the child is the only family he has left. What he doesn't know is that Betsy is a very special child. She can sense powerful emotions from the past, hear voices of the dead, and see the uncanny powers closing around this house ...'

Lord Demon

Roger Zelazny and Jane Lindskold,

Avon/Eos (hc, 288 pages, \$23)

Publication date: August, 1999

Following Roger Zelazny's death in 1995, author Jane Lindskold (*Changer*, *When the Gods are Silent*) has been finishing off Zelazny's unfinished works.

Crime Zero

Michael Cordy

Morrow

(hardcover, 192 pages, \$25 US)

Publication date: July, 1999

Near-future crime thriller by author of *The Miracle Strain*.

FILM

Critical comments
on science fiction
in the cinema and
released on video



The Matrix spoon feeds up vapid VR

The Matrix

Directed by The Wachowski Brothers

Starring Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss

Released 11th June 1999, 139 minutes, cert 15

Reviewed by Brigid Cherry

**Bad Film
of the Month**

Virus claims B-movie crown

Virus is a gloriously honest SF B-movie, with no pretensions to be post-modern in the way that *Scream* tackled the horror genre previously.

The cast, including Jamie Lee Curtis as a navigator, William Baldwin as the muscle and Donald Sutherland as an old sea salt with a hilariously wandering accent, take the thing so seriously that the viewer can too.

An alien entity beams down from the Mir space station and sets about decimating the crew of a Russian science vessel, later found adrift at sea by Sutherland and his unhappy crew. Laying claim to the ship for salvage, the crew end up battling machines built using the ship's high-tech labs which regard humans as a virus infecting the Earth.

It's not original, nor deliberately funny, but *Virus* is a lot of fun if approached properly.

- Brian J. Robb

'There is no spoon!' Keanu Reeves yells triumphantly in *The Matrix* whilst riding up a lift shaft the hard way by hanging on to the cables.

If that's the case, you might think, how the heck am I going to eat my Haagen Dazs? Because that's going to be a more worrying concern whilst watching this film than the fate of any of the characters.

Acting in *The Matrix* consists largely of frozen poses and the spitting 'g out't of the endz'z of every other word, whilst the plotting is by the numbers and the dialogue facile. 'It's our way or the highway' is the kind of clichéd line which should be expunged from scripts even before the first draft. It certainly makes you want to take the highway straight out of the cinema.

The Matrix undoubtedly belongs to the growing genre of cyberpunk films which utterly fail to capture cyberspace. It's the present. But no, it's the future. Mankind is simply living in a construct of the present in order to provide power for the machines which have taken over the world.

Artificial Intelligence it seems will be the downfall of mankind and we'll all have to live artificial lives in cyberspace or become resistance fighters. This is the same ideological subtext as *The Terminator* films which preach of global desecration as the punishment for the false idolisation of technology. Which is a valid concern of science fiction of course, but mainstream filmmakers often forget that SF tells us more about our present than our future. *The Matrix* is an empty decoy, telling us

nothing, except that teenage boys feel at odds with the world (hah, who doesn't?).

The Matrix also joins a number of films which have blatantly stolen the ideas of Philip K. Dick and failed utterly to do them justice. There are moments early on in *The Matrix* where some seeds are laid for some teasingly imaginative mind play, but whereas David Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* or *Videodrome* genuinely did toy with the audience something rotten, *The Matrix* falls back on the generic competencies of the games console jockey. It even has Reeves's hero

"It could have been funny. Some moments of the film are, but instead of relying on B-movie sensibilities mingled with big budget effects used imaginatively the Wachowski Brothers pretend to "Art". And Art, pretty though the effects are, fails to materialise."

following the cheat's walkthrough of the game by phone at one point. It could have been funny, some moments of the film are, but instead of relying on B-movie sensibilities mingled with big budget effects used imaginatively (as, say, *Dark City* did), the Wachowski Brothers pretend to "Art". And Art, pretty though some of the effects are, thoroughly fails to materialise.

Martial arts and John Woo-style bullet fetishisation, however, there are plenty and if jazzy fight scenes and loving close-ups of guns are what it takes to amuse you, then this is a good time-waster.

When all is said and done, *The Matrix* is a boy flick - heavy on the action, thick with trite dialogue, rent with weak plotting, light on emotion and lacking in meaningful depth.

The Matrix succeeds in its intent to make a lot of money. What it doesn't do is erase the hideous memory of Keanu's previous excellent adventure in cyberspace, *Johnny Morone*.

Critics maul Menace, but fans rejoice

Report by Brian J. Robb

The wait for a new instalment in George Lucas' Star Wars saga may have been 16 years, but most critics reviewing the film were not impressed with *The Phantom Menace*.

While it seems impossible for any film to live up to the hype which has surrounded *Star Wars Episode One*, most fans were not prepared for the film to be panned by the mainstream media.

The attacks began with *Variety*, the movie industry trade paper, which took a bite out of the film a full ten days before release, breaking the press embargo on reviews.

'As the most widely anticipated and heavily hyped film of modern times, *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* can scarcely help being a letdown on some levels, but it's too bad that it disappoints on so many,' *Variety* critic Todd McCarthy wrote following an early screening for select critics.

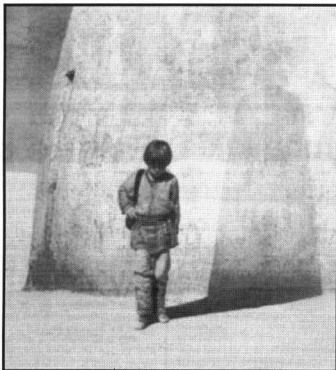
'While the film hardly lacks for visual creativity, it lacks resonance, freshness and a sense of wonder. *Phantom* is easily consumable eye candy, but it con-

tains no nutrients for the heart or mind,' McCarthy claimed.

The New York screenings of the long awaited prequel was held on Saturday, 8th May 1999. As well as the *Variety* review, the *Los Angeles Daily News*, *New York Daily News* and the *Toronto Star* ran early reviews, infuriating distributor 20th Century Fox. The *Los Angeles Daily News* even went so far as to run the review on it's front page of Sunday 9th May, denoting the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade to second lead.

Other reviews were similar to *Variety* in tone. A poll of major reviewers in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington D.C. by *Variety* reported that 17 critics liked it, nine did not and 28 were mixed.

As for the fans, they reckoned that the movie was critic proof with many lining up for weeks in the US and British fans



SHADOWS OF EMPIRE: Young Anakin contemplates his future in the long-awaited *The Phantom Menace*

flying to the States specifically to see the movie before its UK release.

'Regardless of what the critics said, people made up their minds several months ago whether they were going to see it,' said Gitesh Pandya of the Web site boxofficeguru.com.

The Phantom Menace, one of the most widely anticipated movies in history, grossed \$61.8 million for the Friday-to-Sunday period, said distributor 20th Century Fox. Record holder *The Lost World* pulled in about \$72 million during the Memorial Day holiday weekend of 1997.

With a tally of \$105 million over the five days since the film opened on Wednesday 19th May, *The Phantom Menace* squashed *The Lost World* five-day record of \$98.8 million. It also triumphed over *The Lost World's* single day record of \$26.1 million with \$28.5 million.

Up to 94 percent of the audience members surveyed rated the movie as excellent or very good, and 85 percent said they would definitely recommend it - but most of the first audience surveyed would have been fans of the *Star Wars* franchise.

Industry experts have predicted that *The Phantom Menace* will end up with about \$1 billion world-wide. The record is held by 1997's *Titanic*, which pulled in \$1.8 billion thanks in part to repeat attendance by female fans of heartthrob actor Leonardo DiCaprio. It remains to be seen whether repeat viewing by the world's *Star Wars* fans can have the same effect at the box office for *The Phantom Menace*.

● **Star Wars Episode One:** *The Phantom Menace* opens in the UK on 16th July 1999 - but you knew that already, right?

The Matrix is the first summer blockbuster

Taking over \$150 million in just three weeks, the Keanu Reeves kung-fu VR film *The Matrix* became the first blockbuster of the summer of 1999.

It was closely followed by *Star Wars - Episode I: The Phantom Menace* which claimed over \$200 million in two weeks.

Expected hits over the next few months include Will Smith's *The Wild, Wild West* (UK release 13 August), *The Mummy* (out now) and the *Austin Powers* sequel.

It's unlikely that any film this year will eclipse the box office performance of *Star Wars*.



DREAM ON: Keanu Reeves in *The Matrix*

Reviews

MEDIA

Reviews of recent
science fiction
television, radio,
and soundtracks

tube tales

Failure is the fate of SF TV

● **Spielberg Taken by alien abduction**

Director Steven Spielberg has committed to produce a 20-hour TV mini-series about alien abduction entitled **Taken**. The series will initially air on Sci Fi in the US in the third quarter of 2000. Going into production this summer, the series will cover individual incidents over a 50 year period that involve the lead character.

'As a 20-hour miniseries, the project can give us the opportunity to involve viewers in a way that combines the narrative scope of movies with the luxury of unfolding that adventure over a much longer period of time,' said Spielberg. 'There clearly was no other place but Sci Fi Channel for a project of this magnitude.'

The Sci Fi Channel plans to screen the series in two hour installments over a ten day period, with the \$40 million project being touted as a major series. No casting, writing or directing decisions have yet been made.

● **Fox grabs Phantom**

The Fox Network in the US is promising to show **Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace** on television uncut and commercial free as soon as November 2000, following a deal between Lucasfilm and the network for TV rights, according to *The Los Angeles Times*.

● **Buffy falls to graduate**

After being messed around by BBC2, dumped then revived by Sky TV, **Buff the Vampire Slayer** faces new troubles in the US, where the season finale looks set to be axed due to concerns over high school violence following the Columbine shootings earlier this year.

The Warner Network pulled the season finale from its May 25 debut because the episode features 'acts of violence at a high school graduation ceremony. It is out of sympathy and compassion for the families and communities that have been devastated by the recent senseless acts of violence perpetrated on high school campuses that we have decided to delay this

SF TV Review

Deep Space Nine, Voyager, First Wave, Prey, The Last Train, Highlander: The Raven, Brimstone

Reviewed by **Brian J. Robb**

The world of television science fiction continues to be dominated by the *Star Trek* franchise, despite the challenges of strong contenders like the ultimately disappointing *Babylon 5*.

With *Deep Space Nine* drawing to a close Stateside, soon *Voyager* will be the sole *Trek* show on the air and perhaps there'll be room to breathe for some of the newer contenders out to be crowned king of TV SF. Here's a round-up of the merits (or otherwise) of some of the recent series running on UK TV.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

The sixth season of *DS9* wobbled to a dramatic conclusion, after starting with something of a whimper in the six-episode Dominion War arc story. Too many comedy episodes centring on Quark, the Ferengi and Bashir padded out a season which gave the impression of furiously treading water until the seventh and final season came around. Even dramatic events like the death of Dax were tossed into such a mixture of soap opera, high melodrama and low comedy that any serious dramatic impact which could have been gained from the departure of one of the show's stars was totally lost. Only the final episode, which saw a demon possess Gul Dukhat showed any flair and held out the promise that things might be looking up for Season 7, due for transmission on Sky One this autumn.

Star Trek: Voyager

What a difference a year makes. With *DS9* disappearing up its own wormhole, the long disdained *Voyager* has romped into the top spot as the hot *Trek* show. While the arrival of Seven gave the series a much needed (hormonal) boost last season, the opening episodes of year five have shown a new maturity and better outlook for the series that most had written off. There's less concentration on Seven now and, surprisingly, there seems to be less emphasis on the captain, too (perhaps reflecting Kate Mulgrew's unhappiness with her role). That gives some of the minor characters room to grow - none more so than oft neglected Harry Kim in the 100th episode, *Timeless*. A *Voyager* time travel tale which actually works without a ton of technobabble, the plot sees a future Harry (who survived an experiment with a slipspace drive along with Chakotay) attempting to eliminate himself and his future by sending a message back in time to *Voyager* to avert the original disaster. Effective, simple special effects and equally effective acting from Garrett Wang, Robert Picardo and Robert Beltran make this episode a winner and *Voyager* a show to keep an eye on - even for non-Trekkies like me.

Highlander: The Raven

Cancelled - no surprise there, then.

First Wave

On the new series front, *First Wave* looks set to enjoy a long-lasting future given that the Sci-Fi channel have commissioned further seasons of this *X-Files*-meets-*The Fugitive* clone. Made by Francis Ford Coppola's TV production company, *First Wave* sees a clandestine invasion of Earth by morphing creatures called the GWA (what's that? Greys With Attitude?) who more often than not take the form of buxom women in order to fox humanity. Cade Foster (Sebastian Spence) finds himself caught up in a GWA experiment, blamed for the death of his wife and on the run determined to expose the alien conspiracy. He's aided by Paranoid Times web-site editor Crazy Eddie (Rob LaBelle), whose disdainful, hippie-style attitude to everything makes the show worth watching. Actually, *First Wave* is an incredibly variable show, sometimes actually very inventive (as in the pocket universe show), sometimes downright dull. And what other show would dare try to get away with a clips show as a season climax? (Oh, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, of course! *Shades of Grey*, anyone?)

Prey

Even more variable than *First Wave* was the short-lived *Prey* (buried by Channel 4 at around midnight on Thursdays recently). This had quite a neat premise - Man wiped out Neanderthals and now a new species has evolved and aims to wipe us out. An attractive cast battled with enhanced enemies, gossily by peering at things through microscopes in various labs. Relationships built quite nicely, the almost asocial nature of the early episodes was engaging, but ultimately *Prey* didn't really amount to much. It did give Larry Drake a good chance to try out his *X-Files* style chops for a while, but watching a fat man being mysterious just isn't enough to keep an audience (although it worked well enough for Sydney Greenstreet).

The Last Train

This brave attempt at mainstream, peaktime SF on ITV turned out to be a 90s version of Terry Nation's *Survivors* and somewhat surplus to requirements. The well known limitations of British SF television were to be found here in abundance - limited special effects, much wandering around semi-desolate landscapes, a bunch of unlikeable characters largely played by unknown actors and a serious lack of imagination in both writing and direction. When the best British-made SF television on at the moment turns out to be reruns of Troy Kennedy Martin's 1985 eco-thriller *Edge of Darkness*, you realise how the quality of imagination of TV scriptwriters, like *The Last Train*'s Matthew Graham, has fallen in the past 15 years.

Brimstone

This quickly cancelled show turned out to be yet another TV knock-off of *Seven*, complete with rain, murder and supernatural beings. Peter Horton (*thirtysomething*) not only stars as the undead, indestructible hero (not much room for tension there then) but is also the executive producer of this pointless rehash of atmospherics which works on the big screen, but not TV. Mind you, the pilot gave Peter Woodward the chance to chew the scenery.

Continues on opposite page

Mummy success revives Bride and Creature flicks

So pleased is Universal Pictures with the box office success of its *The Mummy* remake that it's preparing to pull the trick off a second time with a remake of *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

The modern-day rethink of *The Mummy*, based on the 1932 Boris Karloff movie, passed the \$100 million mark within a month.

Variety reports that producer Brian Grazer is preparing to remake *The Bride of Frankenstein*, originally filmed by James Whale in 1935. Universal has been working on a *Bride* remake for years, with both Anne Rice and *Eve's Bayou* scribe Kasi Lemmons having worked on scripts. *Ghostbusters* director Ivan Reitman is being lined up to helm *The Bride of Frankenstein* remake. Grazer wants his *Bride* to have a near future setting. "You can create a whole sensibility of the time, from fashion design to music," he explained to Variety.

Also slated for an update is *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. This one is said to be a more "campy" version of the well known tale, set in a newly built Florida apartment complex. Universal have asked *The Mummy* director Stephen Sommers to come aboard the project which is being developed through Will Smith's Overbrook production company, suggesting a possible starring role for the one-time man in black.

As for *The Mummy* itself, its success at the box office has resulted in a fast-track sequel being given the go-ahead. Variety reported that Director Stephen Sommers, and Producers Jim Jacks and Sean Daniel will soon meet with Universal to discuss a sequel. Brendan Fraser is expected to receive \$10 million for *The Mummy 2*, which will focus on the creature resurfacing in London. Daniel says "the ideas for the sequel are getting good - and fast!"

● The Matrix sequel hits the web

A semi-sequel to the hit film *The Matrix*, directed by the Brothers Wachowski, is already available on the internet. The comic book follow-up to the first blockbuster movie of the summer season has been written by the Wachowskis and illustrated by Geoff Darrow, storyboard artist for the film. Fans of the movie can download the sequel from the Official Matrix web site. The Wachowskis' new movie is likely to be a screen version of the DC comic *V for Vendetta* with a sequel to *The Matrix* to follow.

● Race to Mars

Warner Brothers has joined the cinematic race for the red planet with the imaginatively titled *Mars*, to be directed by ad maker Anthony Hoffman, hoping to beat Disney's similarly themed *Mission to Mars*.

Carrie-Anne Moss, currently to be seen opposite Keanu Reeves in the SF action hit *The Matrix*, will share top billing with Val Kilmer in the flick. Moss has agreed to play the pilot who stays in orbit while an expedition led by Kilmer begins exploring the Martian surface. The team of explorers who reach the planet die one by one, leaving Kilmer as the sole survivor. His only hope is the female astronaut orbiting the planet in the mission spacecraft. Formerly entitled *Alone, Mars* is expected to debut in the US in April 2000.

● Driven to bring Fountain Society to screen

Director turned novelist Wes Craven has struck a deal with Steven Spielberg's Dreamworks to bring his own novel *The Fountain Society* to the big screen. Having sold the novel to Simon & Schuster for \$1 million, Craven has now sold the screen rights to Dreamworks for a further \$1 million, with himself attached to direct and executive pro-

duce, which could bring his payment to a total of \$5 million. *The Fountain Society* tells the story of Dr Pater Janze, a weapons expert dying of cancer who unwittingly becomes part of a secret Government genetics project exploring cloning and the fountain of youth. Shooting is tentatively scheduled for spring or summer of 2000 after Craven has wrapped on *Scream 3* which started shooting this month and will be released in the US on December 10th 1999.

● Stolen Menace returned

A print of *Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace* stolen during the weekend of May 21 from a theater in Menomonee, Wisconsin was recovered by police. Three men, allegedly involved in the theft surrendered to authorities on May 26, bringing the missing film reel along with them. Speculation was that the theft was part of a plot to make bootleg copies of the movie, although police said the motive had not yet been established. The 40-pound reel was worth a reported \$60,000 on the black market. Despite cinema security, just a week after *Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace* opened videotaped bootleg versions of the film were showing up on city streets from New York to Los Angeles. Tom Sherak, distribution chief for the 20th Century Fox's film group, said bootlegging was a fact of life in the movie industry. "The bottom line is, it happens on just about every movie," he said. "There's not much we can do other than wait for the police to do their job."

● Rollerball may roll again

John McTiernan, director of *The Last Action Hero* and *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, is in negotiation with United Artists over a remake of the 1975 SF movie *Rollerball*. The film was based on the William Harrison novel *Roller Ball Murders* and featured James Caan as the star player of a violent future sport.

● Snark bite

City of Lost Children co-director Marc Caro has signed on to helm the SF adventure film *Snark* for Pathe Pictures, according to Variety. The film is loosely based on Lewis Carroll's poem *The Hunting of the Snark*.

REVIEW

Stephen Baxter's Voyage

Radio 4's multi-part adaptation of Stephen Baxter's *Voyage* brought what can sometimes be a rather dry read to dramatic life. Baxter's book deals with an alternate history in which Kennedy was not assassinated (his wife dies instead) and the space shuttle program is by-passed in favour of the development of nuclear fueled craft and a manned mission to Mars. Baxter tells a great story, but sometimes in print his enthusiasm for the technical details of space flight gets in the way of the drama concerning his characters.

That wasn't a problem in Dirk Maggs' radio version (billed as an audio movie). Although much of the dialogue was lifted from the book, there was a whole lot less technical detail to wade through, so the drama shone through instead. The combination of the actors, music, sound-effects and an economical and engaging script made this *Voyage* a pleasure.

As in the book, the most dramatic scene is the doomed flight of Apollo-N which deservedly took up the whole of episode 3, although the emotional aftermath of the tragedy was glossed over in the following episode which seemed to be treading water until the big finale in episode five. The one thing radio cannot do as well as prose is the interior life of the characters (although clumsy sections of characters talking to themselves or musing aloud seem inevitable in this kind of adaptation).

If you missed the radio broadcast (buried at 11pm on Monday nights and not trailed anywhere on Radio 4 - and I'm a frequent listener) *Voyage* gets a well-deserved release on tape from BBC Audio this month. If you enjoyed the book then snap up the tape and hear the drama inherent in Baxter's story brought to greater life by Dirk Maggs. - *Brian J. Robb*.

tube tales

(continued from previous page)

broadcast," said Warner's TV head honcho Jamie Kellner.

Graduation Day, Part Two, features toddlers battling a 60-foot-long demon serpent. Warners said it will air both parts of the finale later during the summer months.

● Voyager plans future

With shooting on the sixth season of the now solo *Trek* series underway, rumours are rife about developments through the season. They include writer Ron Moore (co-writer of *First Contact*) penning a *Day of Honor*-related B'Elanna episode which sees Torres return to her more aggressive first-season Klingon roots; one of the crew from the *Equinox* (featured in the season five finale) is set to join *Voyager* in a recurring role; Seven-of-Nine's involvement will decrease even further next year as the producers fear her over-use; there'll be more romance aboard the ship, including a revival of the long-dormant Torres/Paris relationship, which may then come to a sticky end; the ship's Doctor hologram, is set to undergo yet another personality change; and finally *Voyager* will at last make a return to Earth (just in time to prepare for a new movie franchise at the end of year seven!).

● Cameron jumps to TV

Titanic director James Cameron has a series of TV projects underdevelopment while he considers his next feature film, which may be a second *Terminator* sequel. In production in Toronto is *Dark Angel*, starring 18 year old actress Jessica Alba as 'a genetically enhanced superhuman living in the 21st century where police control everything'.

● Hercules to Boldly Go...

Kevin Sorbo has quit his role as Hercules in *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* to take the leading role on Gene Roddenberry's *Starship*, another series based on the late *Star Trek* creator's notes for unrealised pilots. The series may sound familiar, following the adventures of the crew of a space exploration vessel under the command of a heroic captain (Sorbo).

Tribune Entertainment, behind *Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict*, have bought the rights to Gene Roddenberry's *Andromeda* as well as the *Starship* show. *Andromeda* is about a scientist on the planet Korykya who is accidentally sent 500 years into the future and has to find his way back to his own time. Both series have been developed by Roddenberry's widow Majel Barrett Roddenberry.

EVENTS

Forthcoming
conventions,
signings and
local meetings

1999

16-18 July Baroqueon

Annual role-playing con at New Hall College, Cambridge
Guest: Mary Gentle
Reg £18, Supp £4.50
Contact: 8 Saddler's Close, Baldock, Herts, SG7 6EF
baroqueon@philm.demon.co.uk
www.philm.demon.co.uk/Baroqueon/main

16-18 July Nexus 99

SF/media con in Bristol
Contact: 1 Lullington Road, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2LN
nexus@cosham.demon.co.uk
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 Marwood, Reg £45
Contact: 38 Rochford Avenue, Loughton, Essex, IG10 2BS
mf62@btinternet.com

13-15 August Wincon V

The 1999 Unicorn at King Alfred's College, Winchester
Guests: Diana Wynne Jones, John Barnes, Warren Ellis
Reg £25 att, £15 supp, set to rise again on 1 July
Contact: 53 Havant Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants., PO2 7HH
wincon@pompey.demon.co.uk
www.pompey.demon.co.uk/wincon

14-15 August Fincon

Turku, Finland
Guest: Connie Willis
www.ufu.fi/sfs/fincon

26-29 August Conucopia

Anaheim Marriott Hotel
Anahiem, California
Guests: Jerry Purnelle, 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 August Polcon

Polish national convention in Warsaw
klub@rassun.art.pl
www.rassun.art.pl

27-30 August Galileo IV

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

28-30 August Shinnenkai 99

Annual anime con at the Radisson Hotel, Heathrow, Reg £30 to £1 Aug, £35 on door
Contact: PO Box 110, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7YH
shinnenkai@new-moon.demon.co.uk
www.ndirect.co.uk/~newmoon/shinnenkai

2-6 September AussieCon 3 (1999 Worldcon)

Melbourne, Australia
Guests: Gregory Benford, Bruce Gillespie, the late George Turner will be honoured
Info until July 31, £100
info@aussiecon3.worldcon.org
UK Agent: Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Road, Reading, RG1 7TT
martinhoare@ciix.co.uk

3-5 September Festival of Fantastic Films

Sacha's Hotel, Manchester; Reg £50
Contact: 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford, Manchester, M7 3QP

10-12 September Masque 7

Costume con, University of Wolverhampton, West Midlands
Reg £30 until 1 Aug, then £35
Contact: 130 Hampstead Hall Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, B20 1JB

17-20 September Breakaway - Cult TV 1999

Media con, linked to Space 1999
Ponson's Sand Bay Holiday Village, Weston-Super-Mare
Guests: Simon MacCorkindale (Manimal), Frazier Hines (Dr Who)
Reg (includes 3 nights board) £128
Contact: PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE7 1ER, 01173 205009
cultv@gcoities.com
www.gcoities.com/TelevisionCity/2042

17-19 September Fantasycon 23

The British Fantasy Society annual event
Britannia Hotel, Birmingham
Guests: Robert Rankin, Raymond Feist, Louise Cooper, Graham Masterton, Mike Tucker
Reg £50 att, £40 daily, £25 supp
Contact: David J. Howe, 46 Oxford Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 6DT

25-26 September Hypotheticon

"Scotland's other national convention"
Central Hotel, Glasgow
Reg £15, under 15s £10, < 5s free, £5 supp
Contact: Flat 02, 11 Glegghorn Street, Glasgow, G22 5RN

2 October Rebellion 99

One day Star Wars convention
Moat House Hotel, Northampton
Contact: Rebellion 99, Kentstone Close, Kingshorpe, Northampton, NN2 8UH

8-10 October Octicon 10

Irish national con
Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin; Guest: Robert Rankin
Reg £18 to £1 Aug, £22 on door
Contact: 43 Eglinton Rd, Donnybrook, Dublin 4, Ireland
UK c/o: 18 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX

6-11 October Gaylaxicon 1999

10th annual convention for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered fans and friends, Washington DC, USA
Guests: Diane Duane, Nancy Janda (artist)
Contact: PO Box 656, Washington DC, 20044
Gcon1999@aol.com
www.gaylaxians.org/GNetwork/index

23-24 October CONvergence

Media con
Stakis Bristol Hotel
Guests: Michael Sheard, Warwick Davis, Jacqueline Pearce
Attendance limited to 200
Reg £35
Contact: 46 Brins Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8XU
mal@nexuscon.demon.co.uk

30-31 October MR James Weekend

Celebrating 20th anniversary of Ghosts & Scholars magazine
Royal Victoria & Bull Hotel, Rochester, Kent
Reg £25
Contact: 150 Elstree Park, Barnet Lane, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 2RP

5-7 November Novacon 29

Birmingham's annual SF con
Britannia Hotel, Birmingham
Guest: Ian Stewart (chaos theory mathematician)
Reg £32, £35 at door
Contact: 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, W.Midlands, DY9 8SS

12-14 November ArmadaCon 99

Cophorne Hotel, Plymouth
Guests: Stephen Baxter, Michael Sheard, Lionel Fantome
Reg £27, £22 concessions or £11/day
Contact: PO Box 38, Plymouth, Devon

27 December-2 January 2000 Millennium (Europe)

EVENT CANCELLED

2000

4-6 February 2000 Diddgeri-12 (Diddgeri-douze)

Filk con
Forte Posthouse, Milton Keynes
Guests: Brian Biddle, Urban Tapestry
Reg £22, unwaged £11
Contact: 119 Whitehill Lane, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5LU

21-24 April 2000 2KON (Eastercon)

Annual UK convention
Theme is Celtic SF and Fantasy
Central Hotel, Glasgow
Guests: Guy Gavriel Kay, Deborah Turner Harris, Katherine Kurtz
Reg £25 (£30 from 1 Dec), £20 unwaged, £15 supp/unior (8-15), infants (0-7) free.
Progress Report 1 available now.
Contact: 30 Woodburn Terrace, St Andrews, KY16 8BA
2kon@dcs.st-and.ac.uk
www.theory.cs.st-and.ac.uk/2kon

28 April-1 May 2000 AD 2000

Star Trek Event
Palace Hotel, Manchester
Reg £50, riving to £55 in July 1999
Contact: SAE to Sector 14 (AD 2000), PO Box 3870, Troon, Scotland, KA10 7PZ

26-29 May 2000 CostumeCon 18

Hartford, Connecticut
Reg \$50 to \$9 Aug 1999
Contact: 11 Winter Street, Amesbury, MA 01913-1515, USA
info@cc2000.org
www.cc2000.org

2-6 August 2000 Eurocon 2000

Gdynia, Poland
Reg £10
Contact: Gdansk Klub Fantasyki, PO Box 76, 80-325, Gdynia, Poland

Listings continue
on opposite page

MEETINGS & EVENTS COUNTRYWIDE

31 August-4 September 2000

Chicon 2000

58th WorldCon
Chicago, Illinois, USA
Guests: Ben Bova, Bob Eggleton, Jim
Baen, Bob & Anne Passovoy, Harry
Turtledove (toastmaster)
Contact: PO Box 642057, Chicago,
Illinois 60665, USA
UK Agent: Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst
Road, Reading, RG1 7TT
martinhoare@cix.co.uk

2001

29 December-1 January 2001
HogmanayCon

Celebrating the REAL Millennium
Central Hotel, Glasgow
Guests: Spider & Jeanne Robinson,
Sydney Jordan, Prof. Oscar Schweighofer
Reg £25 att, £5 supp.
Contact: 29 Avonbank Road, Rutherglen,
Glasgow, G73 2PA
john@gelsaba.demon.co.uk

13-16 April 2001

Paragon

Eastercon 2001
Norbreck Hotel in Blackpool
Guests: Michaels Scott, Rohan, Stephen
Baxter, Lianne Norman, and fan guests
Clair Briley and Mark Plummer
Membership currently £25 Attending,
£15 Supporting, £12.50 Junior and £5 Child.
Contact: Steve Lawson, 349 Myrtle Road,
Sheffield, S2 3HQ.
steve.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk

30 August-3 September 2001

The Millennium Philcon

The 2001 WorldCon
Pennsylvania Convention Centre and
Pennsylvania Marriott Hotel
Guests: Greg Sear, Stephen Youll, Gardn
Dzoio, George Scithers, Esther Friesner
(toastmaster)
Contact: Suite 2001, 402 Huntingdon Pike,
Rockledge, PA 19046, USA
phil2001@netaxs.com
www.netaxs.com/~phil2001

About Matrix
Convention
Listings

Information (including updates and corrections) should be sent to the Editorial Address on Page 2. Details should always be checked before travelling. Always enclose an SAE when requesting information. Please mention Matrix when responding.

Thanks due to David Langford's Annsible for some con info.

● Belfast Science Fiction

Group meets alternate Thursdays in the Monico Bar, Rosemary Street, Belfast at 8.30pm. Contact Eugene Doherty 01232-208405, tinman@technologist.com.

● 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 for this year's Novacon (See Event Listings). Membership is £15 per year, which includes a monthly newsletter. Contact: Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX. bsfg@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. Contact: Des Lewis on 01255 812119.

● Glasgow SF/Fantasy

Writer's Circle is run in the Borders bookstore and includes members of the Glasgow SF Writer's Circle and several past *Interzone* contributors. The workshop runs on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 8pm. Contact: Gary Gibson at Borders Glasgow or e-mail him garygibson@skiffy.freereserve.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. Contact: Ian & Julie on 01482 447953 or Dave & Estelle on 01482 444291.

● Leeds Alternative

Writers is a group of SF/Fantasy writers aiming at paid publication, meeting on the second Saturday of the month at 2pm in central Leeds. For details please ring Ian on 0113 266 9259 or Sean 0113 293 6780.

● London: The BSFA

London meetings are held at 7pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month, except December, at the Florence Nightingale pub. The nearest stations are Waterloo (mainline or Underground) or Westminster (Underground). Meetings are open to all. For further information contact Paul Hood on 0181 333 6670 or e-mail paul@auden.demon.co.uk.

● London Circle Meetings.

Also at the Florence Nightingale pub, the London Circle meetings take place on the first Thursday of each month, starting at about 5pm.

● Manchester: FONT meets

in Wetherspoon's pub (corner of Piccadilly Gardens, near the railway station) on the second and fourth Thursdays in the month from 8pm onwards. Contact: 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 railway station. Contact: Pete on 01733 370542.

● Portsmouth/South Hants

SF Group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at The Magpie, Fratton Road, Portsmouth.

● Reading SF Group meets

weekly on Mondays at 9pm at the Hope Tap, Friar Street, Reading.

● Surbiton/Surrey SF

Group meets in the Coronation Hall, Surbiton.

● The trAce Online

Writing Community, which connects more than a thousand writers and readers in over 60 countries, is holding an international conference entitled Incubation at Nottingham Trent University over 10th -12th July 2000, offering the chance to meet in a physical space to talk about the nature of writing and reading on the internet.

The group, a vibrant and energetic online culture where text is always the focus, is inviting papers which debate, discuss or demonstrate uses and development of narrative forms on the internet. Questions to be addressed include how on-line distribution affects the content and style of narrative, the building of on-line communities, the re-emergence of experimental forms and questions of copyright and ownership.

Outlines for papers (of around 300 words) to be presented can be submitted on-line (address below) or sent to Incubation, trAce, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham NG11 8NS, UK, tel: +44 (0) 115 9486360, fax: +44 (0) 115 9486364 or email: trace@ntu.ac.uk. Information can be obtained from: Rose Athow, Commercial Administrative Centre, Nottingham Trent University, Burton Street, Nottingham, NG1 4BU.

Further information can be found at a website on-line at: <http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/incubation>.

● Cartoon County '99: Don Lawrence - Science Fiction
Illustrator, 1 - 27 July 1999

● Gardner Arts Centre, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton

Cartoon County '99 brings the first major exhibition of Don Lawrence - the top British science fiction illustrator - to be seen in this country. Resident in Sussex, his reputation has been throughout Europe, where he has previously exhibited and been an honoured guest at various Bande Dessinee Festivals and Conventions. For the last 20 years, he has been published in Holland and Germany, where his series of 23 graphic novels, featuring Storm, have sold over two million copies.

At a time when there is great hype on the release of a new *Star Wars* movie, it is fascinating to see Don's vision of the future. He is a great visual story teller, with a fantastic vision of future worlds. The frames are full of detail allowing many readings of the work. With humour and visual puns mingled with the dramatic action his work keeps you entertained.

His European fans have produced their own website - see <http://allsever.rug.ac.be/~jypoucke/english/storm/donlaw.htm>.

Mail for Matrix should be sent to:

**Brian J. Robb,
Editor, Matrix
18 Belford Mews
Edinburgh
EH4 3BT**

or e-mailed to matrix@centimes.demon.co.uk

Due to space restrictions, letters may be edited for publication

**Gary Dalkin,
Bournemouth, Dorset**

John Ashbrook's article in *Matrix* 137, blaming the *Star Wars* saga for 'almost everything that is bad in the modern American movie', is one of the most badly argued and factually inaccurate pieces I have had the misfortune to endure in a BSFA magazine. Of course John Ashbrook is entitled to whatever opinion he cares to hold, but he would give much more credence both to his argument and to *Matrix* if he got his facts right. All quotes are from John Ashbrook's article.

1: *Superman* [1978] was already in production before *Star Wars* was released. It was not put into production because of the success of *Star Wars*.

2: "For the first time since the fifties films were big events" which argues that *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *My Fair Lady* (1964), *Dr Zhivago*, (1965), *The Sound of Music* (1965), *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), *The Godfather* (1972), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Jaws* (1975) were not events.

3: THX sound is "the industry standard in audio reproduction (now available at a multiplex near you)." THX is not an industry standard in sound reproduction. It is not even a technical process. Rather, it is a badge certifying that THX approved cinema which adhere, in all respects, visual as well as aural, to the highest standards of technical presentation. Far from being available at "a multiplex near you", there is, so far as I am aware, only one THX approved cinema complex in the entire United Kingdom: the Warner West End in Leicester Square. When the THX brand appears on a videotape or laserdisc it simply means that the producer has been mastered to the highest possible level within the technical limitations of the particular medium.

4: John Ashbrook argues that as the *Star Wars* saga continued, George Lucas had less and less input, as he spent more time on the business side of his empire. Ashbrook claims that Lucas had "written, directed and produced" *Star Wars*, that *The Empire Strikes Back* was co-written and co-produced by him (Lucas), while by the time of *Return of the Jedi* "George only had time to fit in a little executive producing." This is not true. Lucas wrote and directed *Star Wars*. He produced none of the three films, but had the same Executive Producer credit on all three. *The Empire Strikes Back* was written by Leigh Brackett and Lawrence Kasdan, with Lucas providing the story, while Lucas then had a shared screenwriting credit with Kasdan for *Return of the Jedi*, as well as providing the story. He therefore was credited with more input on *Jedi* than *Empire*.

5: "By this point Lucas had set up his own film studio, enigmatically named 'Lucasfilm.'" The point referred to is the production of *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). However, *American Graffiti* (1973) is officially credited as a Universal/Lucasfilm/Coppola Company production, meaning that Lucasfilm was in existence at least seven years earlier.

6: Today "every producer in Hollywood wants to reproduce Lucas's success, and chooses to do so by emulating his methods." This apparently involves, in part, having a bankable star attached. Yet one of the most striking things about the *Star Wars* trilogy is that it had no bankable stars attached. The leads were filled by unknowns, with distinguished British character actors in the supporting roles. It is hardly likely that Alex Guinness and Peter Cushing would be considered box-office gold in "Pig's Knuckle, Nebraska."

7: *Star Wars* brought back the personality cults that had pretty much died out with Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. The personality cults surrounding Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher? I must have missed them. Certainly, Harrison Ford became a bona fide movie star, but then movie stars had never gone out of fashion.

8: Next, is the accusation that "Star Wars also succeeded in making films fill the big screens once again", and resulted in more cinema being built. Surely this is a good thing? As I have argued elsewhere, without *Star Wars* there would probably be no commercial cinema today, if only because there would be nowhere left to show films. *Star Wars* actually saved the cinema from what would otherwise have been a direct-to-video only future.

9: Ashbrook suggests that one result of the *Star Wars* trilogy is that audiences "can now be expected to sit still for longer" and that therefore films have "increased from 90 minutes to about 120 minutes". The most successful film of the first three decades of the sound era was *Gone With the Wind* (1939). Running time 219 minutes. The most successful film of the 1950's was *Ben Hur* (1959). Running time 205 minutes. The first film to take more money than *Gone With the Wind* was *The Sound of Music* (1965). Running time 170 minutes. The *Sound of Music* was overtaken at the box office by *The Godfather* (1972). Running time 175 minutes. One could better argue that the *Star Wars* trilogy reduced the average length of blockbusters, which *Titanic* (1995 minutes) has recently restored to the previous epic length. The fact that the average length of films has increased over the last 25 years is more to do with the death of the double-feature, and the end of the supporting feature (15 tedious minutes on how to build a canoe.) Major films throughout the seventies were much the same length as *Star Wars*. *The Exorcist* (1973). *Jaws*

(1975) and the 1970's Bond adventures all clock in at just on or slightly over 120 minutes.

10: Ashbrook tells us that *Titanic* cost \$300 million. Most reliable sources suggest that *Titanic* cost between \$200 million and, at the very most, \$220 million.

11: Finally, John Ashbrook holds George Lucas responsible for all the endless reshoots and remakes which now flood cinemas. It is nonsensical to hold anyone responsible for these other than the people who make them, and the people who continue to go to see them. Film companies make what they think the audience wants. Hollywood is a high risk business. No one, not even George Lucas, could have foreseen the phenomenal wave *Star Wars* was to change the face of the cinema. Back when he was preparing the original film for release, 20th Century Fox had no faith in the film, and even Lucas thought that it would be perhaps a modest success. It makes no sense to blame him for the extent to which people have responded to his work, or for the often very bad films which have followed in the wake of his saga.

**John Ashbrook
Grimsby, N. E. Lines**

Greetings,

Just a brief comment in response to Andrew Butler's complaint in *Matrix* 136 about giving away endings in reviews.

I'm very glad I had the chutzpah to sit. Lazy reviewing is one of my pet hates and, as someone who has composed reviews (mostly films and videos) for some six-or-so years on radio and in print, I have striven to avoid it myself. Obviously, it is not for me to say if I've actually been successful in that, but I am glad Mr Butler had the nerve to do what I never have - point an accusing finger.

So had has the practice of spoiling films and particularly TV shows become (and I'm not thinking particularly of *Matrix* and *Vector* here, but of the entire spectrum of self-reflexive media which chokes our newsagents shelves and fills much needed gaps in our broadcasting schedules) that I now refuse to read anything about anything until I have had chance to consume the product myself and make up my own mind.

Invariably, this proves to be the right decision as there is always something in a preview or review which will reveal best-hidden details.

When the last-but-one issue of *Matrix* came out, I didn't read either of the *Cube* reviews, for this very reason. However, when the film made its way to DVD I finally had the chance to see it and, mind made up, I then took the trouble to read the reviews.

I confess that I was disappointed to read the film's one great surprise so casually given away. Disappointed, but not surprised.

When *The Crying Game* came out, the press-kit contained a cover-note begging reviewers to not give away the ending, but this still didn't deter some from displaying their insensitivity and need to feel superior.

Recently, a film I won't name, bore a quote on the poster declaring something like "the best surprise ending ever!".

Given the nature of the film, this would have led the perceptive mind to the only available conclusion. Thankfully, I didn't see the poster until the day after I saw the film.

So a film's production company conspires against the audience in this matter. A films trailer will invariably contain shots from the show-down, the big explosion at the end, and the good-guy shooting the bad-guy.

As if it weren't bad enough that Hollywood keeps on churning out identically-plotted movies, it adds insult to injury to have the advertising confirm that there's nothing new to be had.

I've lost count of the number of times I've read a synopsis on the back of a book and decided "Well, there's no point in reading that now".

The marketing machines which form the bridge between a writer or filmmaker and their readers and viewers has decided that The General Public doesn't like surprises, that it will only expose itself to familiar stimuli.

They won't read a book unless they know it's going to have a reassuringly happy ending. They won't watch a film unless they know Bruce Willis is going to still be alive at the end.

This received wisdom, based, seemingly, on audience research amongst the down-and-outs of Pig's Knuckle Arkansas, may be true of some people, it may even be true of the majority - but it isn't true of everyone.

This being so, I rather feel that it falls to the reviewers (or at least the ones who aren't in the pay of the film companies) to try and buck this trend and preserve some of the magic of a cinema-going (and, for that matter, a book-reading) experience for those few who may actually care.

When the media producers themselves are bravely targeting their products at the lowest conceivable denominator, the reviewers may well be to uphold the dwindling interests of the highest denominator!

A review denies the watcher or reader the simple pleasure of a first viewing or reading if it hands them any and all enigma on a plate. Do we not deserve the chance to make-up our own minds once in a while?

As far as I am concerned, it is unforgivable for a reviewer to spoil other persons potential pleasure simply because they can. Having the privilege of telling others your opinion carries with it a certain responsibility.

It's a sagely old saying, but it is never truer than when applied to reviewing: Opinions are like arseholes; we've all got one and we all think everyone else's stinks!

Never-the-less, it is not my place, nor Mr Butler's, nor anyone else's, to deprive another person the chance to form their own opinion.

Far from it. I flatter myself that a reviewer might persuade someone to consume something they otherwise would have missed.

Now, you may not agree with that reviewer's opinion, you may hate the things they love, but if you occupy that position having actually taken the trouble to form your own opinion through experience, then the reviewers work was worthwhile.

Being a good, responsible reviewer is not as easy as it may look. No one gets it right all the time, but giving away the ending is a good way of getting it wrong!