

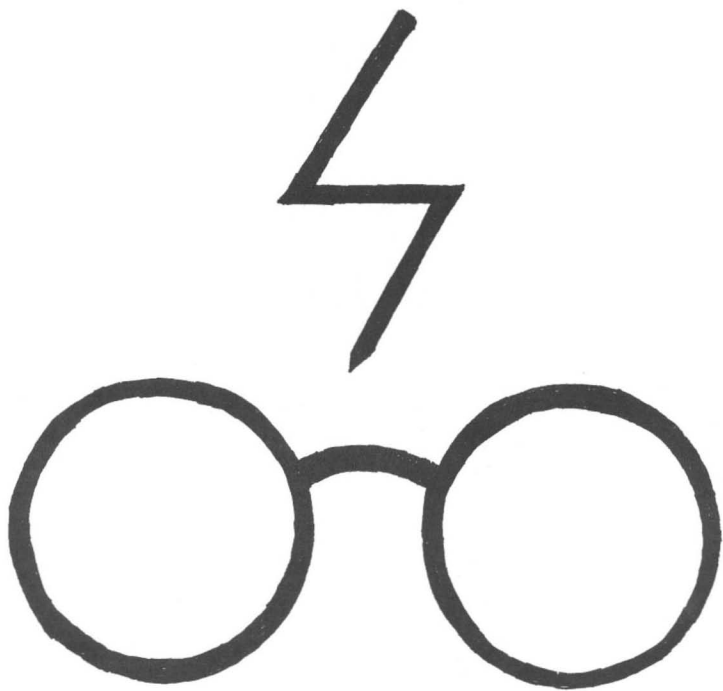
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HARRY POTTER

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Coke magic-up Book Token deal

Book Tokens has signed a deal with Coca-Cola to be part of an 'instant win' promotion on 25 million cans of the soft drink in Ireland. Book Tokens hopes the promotion, which forms part of Coca-Cola's sponsorship of the Warner Brothers' film *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, will lead to the redemption of up to forty thousand £5 or IRE£5 tokens. The Booksellers Association-owned company reported an increase of 8.8% in sales to the Republic of Ireland since last year.

Online door closes...

Contentville.com closed its online doors on September 28th. A note posted to the site by Steve Brill said, "We appreciate your business, but unfortunately we simply were unable to entice enough people for us to see our way to a viable enterprise. All items previously ordered and paid for will be shipped as scheduled." Contentville sold books, online reprints of many magazines, e-books and Cliffs Notes.

The site received brief notoriety in the summer of 2000, when authors learned that their articles were being reprinted without their knowledge. That situation was resolved with an agreement between Brill and The National Writers Union (NWI), which resulted in authors receiving compensation through the NWU's Publication Rights Clearinghouse.

The price of immortality

Ken Follett will be making a guest appearance in a forthcoming Terry Pratchett novel, and has donated over £2000 to charity for the privilege. At the charity Immortality Auction on October 16th, run by the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, when bidding was too sluggish for Follett's liking he began bidding against himself. He is now hoping to appear as a giant and, less optimistically, to die during a drunken orgy, but Pratchett was making no promises.

"I don't write that sort of material so he'll just have to wait and see," said Pratchett, eyeing Follett's bouffant locks with a gleam in his eye and his hat firmly in place over his own lack of curls.

This year the amount raised by each author was Margaret Atwood £200, Pat Barker £200, Ken Follett £350, Robert Harris £220, David Lodge £1,000, Ian McEwan £280, Raymond Benson £180, Zadie Smith £300 and Terry Pratchett £2,200.

This was the second Immortality Auction run by the Medical Foundation, with a similar event last year featuring authors Sebastian Faulks, Nick Hornby, Kathy Lett, Louis de Bernières, Hanif Kureishi and Jim Crace.

Final Adams book recovered

A major part of the last, unfinished, book in the *Hitch Hiker* sequence has been discovered on Douglas Adams' personal computer. Adams had been working off and on the project, entitled *The Salmon of Doubt*, for the eleven years up to his death earlier this year. There are now plans to publish the novel in its unfinished state. The script was located by Adam's personal assistant and his widow, Jane Belson.

...But another opens

The Infinite Matrix, the SF webzine edited by Eileen Gunn, has re-launched after receiving funding from an anonymous benefactor. Described as "a journal for people who love science fiction as a literature of ideas", the webzine was announced in late 2000, then lost funding, though a one-shot issue eventually went online in August 2001.

The webzine features daily columns from Bruce Sterling and Terry Bisson, a novel excerpt by Kathleen Ann Goonan, and contributions from Richard Kadrey, and Simon Ings plus *Ansible* links from David Langford. You can find it at <http://www.infinitematrix.net>.

The OED needs you!

The Oxford English Dictionary have set up a web page at http://66.108.177.107/SF/sf_citations.shtml as part of a pilot project that will allow "knowledgeable aficionados" to help the OED with words associated with a special field of interest. Their first subject is science fiction literature.

The idea started when Sue Surova, a freelance researcher for the OED, posted a message on a discussion group looking for early examples of the sf usage of the word 'mutant' as "a person with freakish appearance or abnormal abilities as a result of a genetic mutation". The earliest example the OED had for this sense was 1954 -- but the dictionary's editors knew the word must have been used earlier. A 1938 example was quickly found, and a plan for further research was formed.

They are seeking evidence for the earliest citation of each of their list of terms used within the genre as well as sf criticism and fandom. Plus they are open to suggestions to any other common terms they may have missed but not words only used by one author or in one sub-genre. They already have the origins of 'dalek', 'robot', and 'grok' but if you can help with terms such as 'inner-space', 'planetary romance' or 'conrunner' see the website for more details.

DTI Publishing Probe

The Department of Trade and Industry has launched an investigation into the competitiveness of publishing in the UK. The study, apparently the largest analysis ever conducted on any sector of British industry, will examine the "current and future competitive position" of the sector. The investigation is to be co-managed by UK Publishing Media, an industry body set up by the Publishers Association, the Newspaper Society, the Newspaper Publishers Association and the Periodical Publishers Association. The study will be carried out by consultancy firm Pira International, with the findings and an action plan due to be published in June 2002.

— EDITORIAL —

THE EARTH MOVED

The day after I sent my first issue of *Matrix* to the printers the East Midlands was struck with its worst earthquake since 1750 — 4.1 on the Richter scale (I don't think the two events are related, but you never can tell...) I wasn't far from the epicentre and given the current political climate my first thought went on the rumbling and shaking started was 'Oh my God, they've nuked the airbase!' ... it being only three miles away.

I'm writing this a couple of weeks before Christmas and no-doubt when you read this you'll be fully sated by the celebrations; the run-up seems to have gone on for ever this time around — my gran's old prediction seems to be coming true; they *really* will be putting the tinsel out with the Easter Eggs next. At least this year we have some festive films at the cinema — of course by now you will know which fantasy is king — *Lord of the Rings*' review will have to wait for the next issue but later you'll see what I thought of *Harry Potter*.

This issue welcomes Steve Green and his 'Checkpoint' column covering the world of fandom, including local groups and conventions. He starts with a look at the latest *Novacon* and the build up to the possible *Glasgow Worldcon* in 2005. We also have the first 'teenie' 'Out of Focus' column from Simon Morden for when the mailing does not include a Focus. Plus atomic physicists, *Star Wars* costumes, a cognitive science journal, a French convention, *Rice and Salt* and loads more, but unfortunately no partridge in a pear tree — maybe next year...

Remember *Matrix* always needs your letters for its, now, prize-giving letter column and remember the Noticeboard is free for announcements, for sales, want ads, or even lonely hearts! So make it your New Year's resolution to get writing.

Apart from all that a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

'till next time —
cheers,
Gary

Second James White Award presented in Belfast

The 2001 James White Award, established to honour one of Ireland's best loved science fiction writers, was presented on November 3rd to David D. Levine for his short story 'Nucleon'. Levine receives a cheque for \$150, a trophy and publication in *Interzone*. The final judging was conducted by Michael Carroll, Ian McDonald, Kim Newman, David Pringle, and Mike Resnick.

The Award was presented at a ceremony in Queens University Belfast by White's daughter, Patricia Larkin. Levine is editor of SF fanzine *Bento*, a Clarion graduate, and he placed second in the third quarter of this year's Writers of the Future contest. The other four stories shortlisted for the final round of judging were: 'Extemophenia' by Janet Barron, 'Fear of the alien' by Lannah Battley, 'The Last Whippoorwill' by Claran Cloniffe, 'Rainmaker on the Run' by Jetse de Vries



2001 World Fantasy Award Winners

The 2001 World Fantasy Awards for works from 2000 were presented at the World Fantasy Convention held at the Delta Centre-Ville Hotel in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on November 4. The winners were:

Best Novel: Tie between *Declare* by Tim Powers (Subterranean Press; Morrow 2001) and *Galveston* by Sean Stewart (Ace Books)

Best Novella: 'The Man on the Ceiling' by Steve Rasnic Tem & Melanie Tem (American Fantasy)

Best Short Fiction: 'The Pottawatome Giant' by Andy Duncan (*Sci Fiction*, 11.01.00)

Best Anthology: *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora*, Sheree R. Thomas, ed. (Warner Aspect)

Best Collection: *Beluthahatchie and Other Stories* by Andy Duncan (Golden Gryphon)

Best Artist: Shaun Tan

Special Award Professional: Tom Shippey (for J.R.R. Tolkien: *Author of the Century* (HarperCollins UK; Houghton Mifflin 2001))

Special Award Non-Professional: Bill Sheehan (for *At The Foot Of The Story Tree: An Inquiry into the Fiction of Peter Straub* (Subterranean Press))

Lifetime Achievement: Frank Frazetta

Cordwainer Award passed to Stapledon

On Monday November 5th, the Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award was officially handed over to John Stapledon, the son of the author of *Last and First Men*, *Star Maker*, *Odd John*, and *Sirius*. John Clute, co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* and one of the award judges, presented the award at a gathering sponsored by the Science Fiction Foundation at the Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, which holds the Olaf Stapledon Archive and the Science Fiction Foundation, and hosted by Andy Sawyer.



John Clute presenting the award to John Stapledon

Le Guin and Marley share Endeavour Award

Ursula K. Le Guin and Louise Marley share this year's \$1,000 Endeavour Award which was presented on November 9th at OryCon science fiction convention. Ursula K. Le Guin won for *The Telling* and Louise won for her fifth book, *The Glass Harmonica*. They each received an engraved glass plaque created by artist Ashley J. Harper.

The Endeavour Award honours a distinguished sf or fantasy book, either a novel or a single-author collection, by a Pacific Northwest writer, first published in the year preceding the award.

Clarke gets 'beamed'

Arthur C Clarke appeared at a tribute to 2001: *A Space Odyssey* ... as a hologram. The event was hosted by *Star Trek: The Next Generation's* Patrick Stewart in November at the Playboy Mansion. The tastefully sounding party featured a replica of the book and film's famous enigmatic blank monolith at the mansion's entrance surrounded by three actors dressed in ape-suits waving bones. Clarke, who was at his home in Sri Lanka, attended virtually via three-dimensional holographic technology created by the company Teleportec. "Beam me up, Scotty, indeed," Clarke said as he appeared.

News items by Janet Barron and Gary Wilkinson

SF fans not 'geeks' shock

According to research announced by the Sci-Fi channel the image of the typical sf fan as a reclusive 'Trekkie' nerd is completely wrong (like we need telling). The first *Star Trek* series and *Next Generation* is now seen as passé by serious sf enthusiasts. The research, conducted by research firm Murrur, reveals that in the new millennium there is a feeling that the world is catching up with sf. As a result, the dedicated sf fan is today far more interested in the area where sf-meets-human stories. 'Alien'-based drama, although still popular, does not satisfy the speculative nature of the modern sf fan who is preoccupied with a broader range of subject matter. The survey also reveals that hardcore sf fans are not unsocial, inarticulate ultra-geeks but are in fact, extremely switched-on.

Mark Ratcliff, the MD of Murrur,

commented: "The serious science-fiction enthusiast knows exactly what the latest music is and is well versed on the latest technology and media. He or she generally has an inquisitive mind and likes to adopt a skewed take on reality."

Researchers also found that the sequels to *The Matrix* were the most anticipated movies scheduled for release; while *Attack of the Clones* is seen as the last chance to save the *Star Wars* franchise after the woeful *Phantom Menace*.

Janet Goldsmith of Universal Studios Networks (which owns the Sci-fi channel) added: "This research demonstrates the view that the science fiction genre is not simply concerned with little green men, but covers a wide and diverse spectrum." Try telling the mainstream press.

Gary Wilkinson rounds up all that's happening in film and TV

After the attack

More films have been effected by the consequences of the terrorist attack on America. *Spiderman* has been re-edited to scrub out the World Trade Center from its background using CGI and the film's trailer was withdrawn from cinemas. *Men in Black 2* has had its final scenes re-shot as the climax extensively featured the two towers.

As the first episode of the ill-fated *X-Files* spin-off, *The Loan Gunmen*, featured a plane hijacked with plans to crash into the World Trade Center it is unlikely to ever be shown again. Other TV programs pulled include, rather bizarrely for to anthrax fears, the 'death by excessive envelope licking' episode from *Seinfeld*.

Potter props magicked away

Hertfordshire police are investigating thefts from the film set of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* after items, including a wizard's hat and three gold coins, were offered for sale on the internet. The thefts are presumed to have taken place from Leavesden Studios last February during the shoot.

Bad girl

Rumours abound that the new twist in the latest series of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* about to hit the States is that one of the Scooby gang is going to turn evil. Number one bet is Willow becoming a big bad witch.

Meanwhile *Buffy* creator Josh Whedon has stated that there will be no more cross-over episodes between *Buffy* and *Angel* and each show "must go its own way".

Smallville big

Smallville, the new series featuring a young Clark Kent aka Superman, pulled in a huge audience for its first episode when it was broadcast on 16th October in the USA — though there were moans from Supe's hardcore fans that the hero will not be wearing his famous suit in the program.

In the show *Smallville*, Superman's 'home' town, is the centre of weird events (hey — just like *Buffy*) caused by a meteor shower from the destroyed Krypton which also brought Superman to the town. In the program Clark is a geeky high school student (and just like *Buffy*, kinda), dating girls etc. There he also meets up with his later arch-enemy Lex Luthor and a gradual enmity starts to develop between them.

More mini-series at Sci-Fi

Following on from their *Dune* mini-series, the Sci-Fi channel are to start filming a sequel. *Children of Dune* will actually be based on the second and third book in Frank Herbert's epic sf series. The sixteen week shoot will start filming in Prague in April 2002.

The Sci-Fi Channel also plan to adapt another sf novel: Ursula Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven*. Lukas Hass plays a man who can change reality by dreaming. Also starring is James Caan who plays a psychiatrist who ostensibly is trying to cure Hass but actual wants to use him to create his own personal utopia. The director is Philip Hass who also plans to adapt Le Guin's classic *The Left Hand of Darkness* plus her *Earthsea* series.

Bat's back

Well it looks like *Batman* and *Robin* did not entirely kill off the *Batman* film series. Comic fandom's dream project may be about to reach fruition. Very early pre-production has apparently started on superhero team-up *Batman and Superman* directed by Wolfgang Paterston from a script by Andrew Kevin Walker, famed for ultra-dark *Se7en*. Nothing on casting yet though George Clooney may return as Batman and John Travolta is rumoured for *Superman* (sure, a 'fat' Superman, I can see that).

Darren Pi Aronofsky's prequel project, *Batman: Year One* based on Frank Miller's comic book is in production though the rumoured live action film based on the cartoon series *Batman Beyond* is currently out in limbo.

Knight Rider returns

Yes, the quintessential '80s series starring KITT the talking car and David Hasselhoff as ex-cop Michael Knight may soon be back on our screens as a revamped new show, *Super Knight Rider 3000*.

"Knight Rider is coming along great we are very very close to putting the whole deal together. We're negotiating with a major studio," Hasselhoff said recently. The original program ran from 1983-87 on ITV gaining a pretty respectable average of 13m viewers for its 91 episodes.

The new show will feature Hasselhoff as the same character literally resurrected. He is brought back to life after being poisoned.

This is an upturn for Hasselhoff after his failed attempt to revise *Baywatch* as a TV movie *Baywatch Blast* set in Hawaii — which was postponed due to actor's (including Pamela Anderson) worries about travel.

Beb loses Trek to 4

The BBC have lost a bidding war for *Star Trek Enterprise*. This ends the corporation's 32-year link with the show after broadcasting the *Original Series* back in 1969. Channel 4 will show *Enterprise* in the latter half of 2002, after the program is first broadcast on Sky One. The BBC were outbid by Sky for total rights. Sky then sold on the terrestrial rights to C4.

A BBC spokesman commented: "We were never approached by Sky for the secondary rights. Sky has promised a lot of money while the BBC offered what it thought was the market price for *Enterprise*."

Launched in September in America on UPN the show looks to be a big hit already.

Janeway in new Trek movie

The latest in the seemingly never-ending *Star Trek* film series, *Nemesis*, will feature Kate Mulgrew, the star of the recently finished *Voyager*, although only in a cameo opposite star Patrick Stewart.

Mulgrew revealed at a recent convention in Philadelphia that she was "ordering Picard around" in her four days of filming.

The film will feature the *Next Gen* crew facing Romulans and/or a clone of Picard and/or a planet-smashing super-weapon according to the latest rumours.

Farscape's voyage extended

The producers of the quirkier sf show on

television have committed to another two years of the show — making a minimum of five seasons. There are also plans for a second show in a similar vein plus a possible *Farscape* movie. Despite its eccentricities the program has grown in popularity and is now the number one show on the Sci-Fi Channel.

Doubts had been cast due to the show's high budget although it acts as an excellent showcase for the talents of Jim Henson's Creature Shop.

There are no plans for any characters to follow Zhaan's, played by Virginia Hey, departure, though due to Paul Goddard's commitment to other projects his character of Stark will be absent from the program for several episodes.

Bana for Banner

Director Ang Lee has named the actor who will be playing Bruce Banner in his forthcoming *Hulk* as Australian Eric Bana. Bana, who has had a successful career as a stand-up comedian, is most well-known for starring as the infamous eponymous Australian criminal in the 'comedy/biography' *Chopper*.

Eleven years of hurt

Dr Who is to have, at last, a new series — but only on the internet. Fifteen ten minute episodes will be produced as a follow up to the successful *Death Comes to Time* on the Beeb's web site. Again Sylvester McCoy stars along with Sophie Aldred as Ace with support from Stephen Fry and John Sessions.

The episodes will be 'broadcast' at the traditional time slot of Saturday tea-time. Rumours persist that if these are successful a proper television series, sort of a *Next Gen* style update, or even a cinematic film may follow.

Lift off

Well they tried for a game show on the Mir space station but it burnt-up; now MirCorp, the company run by Dutch space enthusiasts, are having another go. They will see thirteen-part show *Ancient Astronaut* will see five teams competing for a flight to the International Space Station. The contestants will perform task using ancient tools at sights such Stonehenge and the Pyramids. The members of the winning team will then compete as individuals at Star City, outside Moscow for the big prize. The two winners will have to wait until 2003 for their slot on a Soyuz mission to the international space station for up to ten days.

NASA have been critical of the company's past endeavours including organising Dennis Tito's trip, when the multimillionaire paid to become the worlds first 'space tourist'.

Danny McGill the chairman of MirCorps US joint-promoter Image World Media enthused: "We feel we ... are creating the most valuable air time in history!"

Hoofing!

Not so much 'bullet' but 'song and dance' time; the *Matrix* sequel will be featuring a major musical sequence. Charles Moulton has been appointed choreographer for a mega-huge dance number with over a thousand performers to be filmed in San Francisco's Alameda Naval base filling in as the human stronghold Zion.

"EVERY CHILD IN OUR WORLD WILL KNOW HIS NAME"

Gary Wilkinson is entranced by *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

From just being a series of popular children's books, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* has, in recent years, become a genuine cultural phenomenon. And something I've been trying to avoid. How could something that has been hyped to that extent be any good? The ultra-popular — *The Sun*, *Coronation Street*, *Westlife* — have to be rubbish, right?

Well, with the inevitable film appearing at our cinemas I thought I had better investigate. Boy, was I in for a surprise — the book was truly excellent: exciting, thrilling, captivating and above all funny; a children's book with genuine adult appeal. Now I realise why it's been so successful. But is the film as good?

For a start the movie is a virtual page by page adaptation of the book. For the uninitiated Harry Potter is a wizard. When he was only a baby his parents were killed by the evil Voldemort whilst defending their son, leaving Harry with a distinctive lightning-bolt scar on his forehead. Orphaned, he is left in the care of the thoroughly nasty Dursleys, who are typical Muggles — non-magical people. Harry remains in ignorance of his heritage until a series of owl-delivered letters offer him an invite to Hogwarts' School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Soon he is being escorted by the giant Hagrid to buy all his school supplies — including wizards' hat and cloak, wand and owl — from the shops in the hidden Diagon Alley with money withdrawn from Gringotts bank. Then it's on to King's Cross station to catch the Hogwarts express from platform 9^{3/4}. What follows are typical boarding school japes spiced up with magic and mayhem along with a plot involving the eponymous Philosopher's Stone (or Sorcerer's Stone if you're a, presumably, too-ignorant American).

There had been to worried grumbings in the media when it was announced that Chris Columbus had been appointed director. After all this was the man who had brought us *Home Alone* and *Mrs Doubtfire*. However dig a little deeper and you find that he started his career by writing *Gremlins* and the fantastical *Young Sherlock Holmes* and he is obviously at home with the material. Rowling has had the clout to get the film version of her book that she wanted and at least we have been spared the horrors of Spielberg's proposed Americanisation of the novel, but it would have been interesting to see Terry Gilliam's 'dark' version.

The difficulty in any adaptation was to make a very visual novel filled with detail real for its huge readership. Not every kids' 'best bit' is going to be here, but most of them are. And it looks great. Columbus — ably helped by John Seale's cinematography and production designer Stuart Craig who won Oscars for his work on *Ghandi* and *The English Patient* — proves to be a fine visual stylist, bringing the splendours of Hogwarts to life.

Maybe some of the humour has been lost in the translation from page to screen — it's more likely to raise smiles rather than outright laughs but the dark elements have been retained; the creepy bits helped via a lush John Williams score.

A large proportion of the great and the good of British acting talent have been assembled for the film. So it's not really surprising that they threaten to dominate the children. Daniel Radcliffe as Harry faced an almost impossible task

but for the most part he succeeds. Critics have complained about his lack of acting ability but his 'ordinary' performance grounds the viewer, highlighting the weirdness around him. Also it shows Harry in awe of his new abilities and the strange situations he has found himself in; plus he visibly matures as the film progresses. Rupert Grint is also good as Harry's scruffy best-friend Ron but the best of the main children is Emma Watson as Hermione, giving a performance just the right side of stage-school brattyness.

However it's the adults who really shine. Robbie Coltrane just about steals every scene he is in as the giant Hagrid. Maggie Smith is fine in *Jean Brodie*-mode as the deputy-head Professor McGonagall. Alan Rickman is absolutely excellent in the small but key role of the sinister sneering Professor Snape. Perhaps Richard Harris is a bit of a let-down as Headmaster Albus Dumbledore; not quite as dotty as the character in the book. A multitude of other famous actors appear in cameo roles, of which John Hurt, as the wand salesman Mr Ollivander is a real stand-out.

The actor's jobs are made doubly difficult due to the huge number of special effects in the film — almost every scene features some form of effect. Many teams of special effects technicians were used from a number of different companies (the end titles seem to go on forever) and integrating them all together must have taken some effort. Although some are a bit ropy in places — there's a centaur that looks like it's been done by Harryhausen on an off-day, though Columbus does his best to interestingly frame it, the camera slowly circling around as it talks to Harry. However most of the special effects really work such as in the great hall with its open-sky illusion and floating candles. But the triumph is the Quiddich scene. Quiddich is the wizard's sport. Seven players on each team chasing after four balls on flying broomsticks. Fans have been wondering how the film was going to handle it. Well the scene is an instant classic — the game presented as unbelievably fast, dynamic and exciting.

Many years ago when I saw *Star Wars* it ignited a life-long love of the fantastic. I'm sure this film will do the same to many of the kids who are now the age that I was when I first saw Lucas' film (And I fanatically re-read the 'book' — the film's adaptation). But after the triumph of the sequel *Empire* it was all downhill. Lucas should be strapped in a chair and forced to watch *Philosopher's Stone* — this is how you make a film that can appeal to everybody, both its target audience and adults, plus combine the best of special effects with the best of actors, its two and a half hours seeming far too short, leaving you wanting more. Will this be the first in — what is it? seven! — at least seven films based on the proposed seven Harry Potter novels that Rowling is planning to write? Time will tell. But I predict that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* will become a much-watched Christmas classic in future years.

I'm sure there will be a lot of kids, young and old (myself included), wondering why *they* didn't get sent off to Hogwarts! Meanwhile I'm off to the bookshop to buy up the rest of series. Roll on *The Chamber of Secrets*.

"EXTERMINATE!"

Gary Wilkinson *rewinds The Davros Boxed Set*

Recently appearing on a TV top ten of 'favourite villains', Davros was always a personal favourite of mine as well. Now all five of the *Doctor Who* stories featuring the Dalek's creator have been combined into one limited edition boxed set of videos (only available from WH Smiths).

In date-transmitted order we start with a genuine stone-cold classic, voted in at least one poll as the greatest *Who* story ever: *Genesis of the Daleks*. The Tom Baker doctor is recruited by another Time Lord to go back to the Daleks' origins and destroy them at their birth to prevent them taking over the whole universe in the far future. The Doctor, along with able assistants gutsy Sarah Jane Smith and clumsy Harry Sullivan, are thrown into the middle of the Thal/Kaled war. Soon they enter the Kaled scientific bunker led by the crippled evil genius Davros... And eventually plenty of the Daleks turn up too with their: "Exterminate!"; "I obey." and my own personal favourite "Vision impaired, I cannot see!"

Even though it does show its age in places this is a truly great drama, not just for sf but on any level: dark, gothic and genuinely scary; especially in the final episode when the Daleks turn on their creator. Perhaps a little padded at 142 minutes (lots of the usual running down corridors) it only stops being the perfect *Who* story because there's no Tardis!

Tom Baker again for *Destiny of the Daleks* along with fellow Time Lord Romana. In fact we see the 'birth' of Lalla Ward's Romana MkII, in a comedy 'sketch' written by the script-editor of the time, Douglas Adams, at the beginning of the first episode as well as stricken K9 with 'space-laryngitis'. In fact Adams' hand is on the whole script — at one point the Doctor takes time out to read a history of the universe by one Oolon Colluphid.

The Daleks have reached an impassable deadlock in their space war with the robotic Movellans (who look like backing singers for *Boney M*) so they dig up Davros for advice. Instead of the sinister Hitler-like scientist, Davros has this time around been reduced to the level of a pantomime dame. Tom Baker's charisma shines through again and Lalla Ward is delightful but this is poor in comparison to the other videos in the collection.

Moving on to *Resurrection* we have Peter Davidson's interpretation of the Doctor, along with Aussie Tegan and alien Turlough, in rather confusing nonsense involving a time tunnel from contemporary London to a prison/space-ship in the future that holds Davros. We get some soldiers, but no UNIT unfortunately, versus the Daleks (who are looking very scruffy by now). Lots of gun-fights and plenty of the pepper-pots go up in smoke to reveal the horrible green monsters inside. Okay as it goes, but I could not help thinking of Victor Lewis Smith's 'gay Daleks' when the anti-Dalek virus gets to work and they start expiring whilst spurting white foam from their casings.

Once you get to *Revelation*, with Colin Baker, *Who* had gone officially tits-up and not just because we have Peri as his assistant! But actually this turns out to be surprisingly good, though about as camp as you can get. The script is based on Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*, set in the mausoleum of Tranquil Repose where the rich and powerful wait in suspended animation for the cure for their fatal

illnesses to be discovered. Unfortunately the place has been taken over by Davros in his role as the 'Great Healer' busily turning the semi-dead into a new (non-scruffy) army



of Daleks — there's a very sinister scene featuring a half-man/half-Dalek that would not look out of place in Japanese mental metal mutants movie *Tetsuo*.

There's some great acting going on here as well. For once Colin Baker is not too obnoxious and Alexi Sayle is obviously enjoying himself as The DJ, playing rock and roll to the half-dead (a comment on Radio 1 at the time I think) and zapping Daleks with his sonic ray. He's obviously a fan — I remember a great joke from his television series about how the Daleks would not necessarily be a bad thing: okay they'd exterminate millions of people but think of the boost to the arms industry!

I have some bad memories about the McCoy *Doctor Who* (especially the 'Bertie Bassett' monster) but *Remembrance* (also reviewed in DVD form by Gary S. Dalkin in *Matrix* #152) proves that there was at least one good story. Daleks on Earth are an exciting prospect though they do look a bit wobbly on rough ground. However we are presented with one of the best cliff-hangers in *Who* history when the Doctor thinks he's safe at the top of a flight of stairs but then one of the metallic menaces starts floating up after him ... arghh, get behind that sofa! Ace in her first full story is, well... ace, thwacking Daleks with her baseball bat — "Wicked Professor!"

The story has a lot of surprising twists plus plenty of in-jokes being set in 1963, in and around a certain Trotter's Lane junkyard and Coal Hill School.

Plus at least the Daleks get a decent swan song, something that can not be said for the last screen appearance for the Doctor himself...

Each video has informative sleeve notes and overall *The Davros Collection* is an excellent addition to any video collection.

"THAT WAS TRULY DIABOLICAL"

Gary Wilkinson looks at horrible TV

Oh, Steve where did it all go wrong!

Steve Coogan got his big break when Jonathan Ross imported 'zoo' TV from America for his *Saturday Zoo*. Coogan shuffled on in a blond mullet wig and shell-suit to bring us Paul Calf, a student-hating Mancunian based on one of the locals in the pub Coogan frequented when he was a drama student. And thus a star was born. From cult-success with *Paul Calf's Video Dairy* Coogan went onto *The Day Today* and created a comedy icon with Alan Partridge, a cringe-inducing television presenter. Partridge got his own show with *Knowing Me, Knowing You* and the sequel, *I'm Alan Partridge* was, possibly, the funniest television show of the nineties.

But then the rot set in. One of Coogan's first television appearances was alongside Jimmy Tarbuck on a variety-show doing a ghastly sub-*Comedians* 'impressions' routine and there has been a decided undercurrent of dodgy material throughout Coogan's career. However up until recently this has been over-shadowed by the sublime brilliance of Partridge. Unfortunately now Coogan seems to have brought this duff stuff to the fore. Truly awful was the completely unfunny Latin singer Tony Ferrino. More recently we had the flop film *The Parole Officer*. And now we have *Dr Terrible's House of Horrors*.

The centre of the big new line up for 'Monday Comedy', *House of Horrors* is sandwiched between the rather splendid spoof chat show — an 'Asian' version of *Mrs Merton* — *The Kumars at No. 42* and the dire *Mr Charity*. So what's the jam like in this sandwich? Not sweet, I'm afraid.

Dr Terrible's House of Horrors is supposed to be a spoof of the 'classic' British horror of the Hammer era. Each story is presented by Coogan under a ton of make-up as *Dr Terrible* — the humour about as stiff as Coogan's face. The first episode, 'Lesbian Vampire Lovers of Lust' — the title was the funniest thing about it — was based around all those female vampire films such as *Vampire Lovers* and *Twins of Evil*. It was bad. A pity because they obviously tried really hard. The sets and acting — check the pause of the vampire, mouth gaping, fangs bared, before sinking into the bared neck — were spot on. And they even electronically doctored it in post-production to make it look like they were using 1970s film stock. But the 'humour'...! I mean — "The mirror... it doesn't reflect you!", "It's not a very good mirror" — how could anyone think that was funny? And that's one of the better jokes. The rest are dire single entendres that would have been rejected from the worst *Carry On* script. Coogan played Captain Hans Broken — explaining his injuries: "A large Turk surprised me from behind but I didn't let him interfere with my wedding arrangements." Or how about — "Can I have your cherry?" when the main female vampire lusts at his fiancée over the dinner table. Even gratuitous nudity, dancing twin sisters, sinister Puritans or the surprise appearance of Diana Rigg could not get this above dreadful.

And there was worse to come... the next two episodes achieved an almost surreal level of awfulness. 'Frenzy of Tongues' was some rubbish involving a Fu Manchu type villain in Victorian London and giant crabs. 'Curse of the Blood of the Lizard of Doom' had a Scottish doctor (cue bad accent) treating burns victims with 'lizard serum' — I think you can

guess the rest. They were both utterly unfunny — the 'humorous' lines delivered in an arch-'how wacky' tone dropping from the actors' lips like lead shot. I watched both of these with slack-jawed astonishment that people had



Alyson 'Willow' Hannigan

actually been paid to produce this.

But wait, what's this, a decent episode? Well not quite — the last one I've seen is only 'good' in that is not as bad as the rest. Set in the '70s, in 'And Now The Fearing...' a millionaire, a radical writer/dolly bird and an architect share a lift in the newly built modernist Amicus tower — each one has been having a recurring nightmare... Instead of a Hammer influence this one recalls the anthology films of film studio Amicus such as *Dr Terror's House of Horrors*, *From Beyond the Grave* and *Asylum* when a clutch of different characters would relate/be involved in a different horror story each with a twist ending. Actually one of the stories here, about a haunted card table, was quite good helped by having Julia Davis of *Kick the Pony* starring — I actually smiled. Pity the rest were junk.

"That was truly diabolical," Dr Terrible drools at the end of each episode. Couldn't agree more, pal — or as Paul Calf would have said: "bag o' shite!"

Something that does successfully combine horror and comedy is of course *Buffy the Vampire* slayer. And *Dr*

Terrible is always going to look terrible against it. In fact almost everything on television looks terrible compared to *Buffy*. From its beginnings as a rather poor movie and okay first series it has blossomed into one of the best shows on television. Unlike its near contemporary *The X-Files*, it has actually grown over the years its arcs actually coming to conclusions instead of spiralling around forever. It fully developed then slashed out the Buffy/Angel relationship and moved onto something else when they created the *Angel* spin-off (which I cannot really judge due to the way Channel Four totally screwed it up.)

Recently the characters have grown up and gone to university. The mayor story line was great but once in uni, 'The Institute' was even better. The series currently being shown on BBC2 at the moment could have been a disaster... a partial reboot of the plot to bring in another character has real disaster potential. But so far its been brilliant — Buffy's new sister being an excellent new character. And they have had the courage to give the one poor character — Riley — the boot and open the way for Spike to develop into the new love interest for the Slayer (she sure loves them bad guys).

The series can be tough and gritty when it wants to be and for a supposedly light entertainment it has handled serious subjects with some skill. Look at the transformation of Willow from geek best friend character to fully independent empowered lesbian witch and how sensitively they handled it. In fact all the actors and actresses have grown with their roles and have really developed into fully rounded characters even if they still keep largely within their 'mentor', boyfriend, side-kick roles. The humour is the witty wise-cracking verbal word-play that is actually a throwback to the old screwball comedies like *His Girl Friday* and *Bringing Up Baby* which is no surprise when you consider just how strong the female parts in *Buffy* are. And of course everyone looks gorgeous.

Of course *Buffy*'s not really horror, more fantasy (with a fair amount of science fiction in several episodes) — there's not that all-pervasive fear of death that permeates the best horror, instead the angst of adolescence outward projected as blood-sucking fiends — but it's probably all the better for it. However, be careful, it is one of the most addictive programs currently on the television — a few episodes and you're hopelessly hooked. (The most addictive, narrowly beating *The Sopranos*, is of course the king of day-time, *Watercolour Challenge* — just say no, kids)

It's a pity that *Randal and Hopkirk (Deceased)* remains a vanity project for 'my best years are behind me' Vic Reeves and 'wooden' Bob Mortimer, despite having some decent writers behind it. I thought that it had the potential for a British *Buffy* but although the second series had some things to recommend it, overall it's not even in the same game as *Buffy* never mind the same league. However *Watcher/Librarian Giles* is coming back to our shores in the near future for another *Buffy* spin-off, *Ripper*. British *Buffy*, I can hardly wait! And finally a round of applause for the guy who 'scores' the current series of *Buffy* — I bet he's a fine soloist!

Of course if you want British horror right now you've got to flick over to Channel 5 for *Urban Gothic*. Now this is one program I really want to like but ... unfortunately, I can't completely.

Although 5 is more well-known for stuffing its programming with lame filler, but amongst the dross are one or two examples of some rather good original programming. For instance the art history show, *Great Artists*, would not look out of place on either Channel 4 or BBC2. And we also have *Urban Gothic*.

The first series of thirteen half-hour contemporary horror tales were all written by 23-year-old newcomer *Tom de Ville* (a pseudonym?). It was kind of skuzzy, scruffy and punkishly violent, covering just about every horror trope including ghosts, werewolves, voodoo, androids, Satanism — even post modern Scream-style stuff. Not every episode worked but the best, like 'Vampirology' a mock docu-soap about a yuppie vampire, were superb.

For the second series extra writers have been brought in and there is some quality acting talent employed. However, so far the magic of the first series is just not there.

The first episode 'Sandman' had real potential, having the guts to base itself on possibly one of the most wired and wonderful and definitely post-modern shows of recent years — the Channel 5 game show *Touch the Truck*. Presented by Dale Winton the rules were simple: keep your hand on the truck (a whopping big 4X4), don't fall asleep and you win the truck. Brilliantly the eventual winner was a non-driving road-protestor who went on to sell the truck to fund his attempted entry into Parliament! Beyond parody really and 'Sandman' with its 'Snooze You Lose' game show rapidly became confusing as it wandered into 'are they awake, are they asleep?' / *A Nightmare on Elm Street* territory. 'Membrane' started well, coming on like a first-person shoot-em-up video game like *Quake* involving undead and the human genome project but again fell into, this time sub-Prisoner, confusion. The disgusting 'Eater' written by Peter Crowther had a strong start but became an utterly predictably story about a shape-shifting alien cannibal.

However, 'Necromance' written by Dominic McDonagh was rather good. Get this: a girl, Poppy, kills herself over a boy, Corum, loving another. Except that Corum is a practising necrophiliac, the 'another' is a corpse and Poppy comes back from the dead. Surprisingly this was rather sweet and heart-warming, helped by an excellent performance by Susan Burnett as Poppy, as she gets her revenge on the two-timing Corum.

You get the feeling half an hour is just not long enough to build up the horror and explain the plot of most of these episodes and they become too rushed and confusing. And Channel 5 currently seem to have put the show in suspension, replacing it with a weird-films clips show. A pity because I think with just a little more effort this has the potential to become horridly good.



The Urban Gothic symbol that reoccurs in several episodes. It means God ... or something

ATOMIC

Gary Dalkin figures out Copenhagen

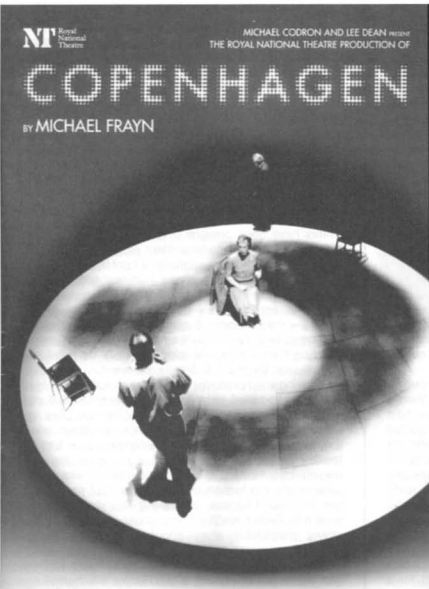
Having won ten major theatre awards, including three for Best Play the Royal National Theatre's touring production of Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* might barely seem to require another review. It is though a genuine work of science fiction, being about science and scientists. More than that, Frayn's drama has a snail sensibility, and is one of the most interesting pieces of genre interest I have encountered in some time.

Margrethe, discussing whether to accept a visit from Heisenberg — why has he come to Denmark? And will Bohr be seen as a collaborator for speaking with his old colleague — before presenting one possible version of the 1941 encounter. Then, interwoven with the first meetings between the two men in the 1920s, the play offers three possible versions of the 1947 meeting, in which they argue over Heisenberg's intentions in 1941, and over his actions during the course of WWII when he worked on Germany's atomic reactor programme. The three characters look back, as often from a vantage point from beyond their own deaths as from 1947. Memory, the passage of time, and in Heisenberg's case his own, possibly self-deceiving character, making them each not entirely reliable narrators. Much is made of parallels between Heisenberg's famous 'uncertainty principle' and the uncertainty of knowing the past, of even understanding one's own past motives. With the three versions of the 1947 meeting the drama entertains, though never mentions 'many worlds' physics, or simply good old parallel realities. Perhaps all these possibilities are true. Perhaps none. The play itself necessarily adds a further level of distancing, both in space and time. The events are filtered through a fourth mind, Frayn's, on the way to being assimilated and reinterpreted by a fifth, that of the audience. Each member of which is the centre of the universe.

Copenhagen is modern, schematic, and clever in a middlebrow way; voices, memories, and imaginations echoing and overlapping. Its subjects are, beyond physics, moral responsibility and duty, humanism and the nature of reality and memory. Frayn's text has been dismissed as an oversimplification by some, with too many conversations of the snail info-dumping sort — "as you know, Heisenberg, in 1937..." and reviled by others for being too intellectual, for requiring a detailed knowledge of physics. Neither charge really stands up. Certainly there is info-dumping, but it is a necessary evil to set the ever shifting scene in a play which ranges over a quarter of a century through the memories of three analytical people. A certain amount of background has to be explained, though depending on how much one already knows, the amount detailed may become alienating. No one with a layman's knowledge of the last century's most famous developments in

physics should find anything difficult. Indeed, Frayn, in walking a tightrope between explaining too much and too little has been accused of dumbing-down. For every theoretical concept he offers concrete real world analogies. The world of the play is hermetic, informing us of everything we need to know to understand Frayn's perception. Science becomes a metaphor anyone who can grasp skiing or card playing can grasp. What may make *Copenhagen* seem more intellectually demanding than it is, is the sheer speed at which the drama is delivered.

There are only three characters, and all three actors are on stage virtually all the time. Anna Carteret is Margrethe



The background is largely true. In 1941 the half-Jewish Danish physicist Niels Bohr met in Nazi-occupied Copenhagen with his German former protégé Werner Heisenberg, and had a disagreement. In 1947 they met again, and agreed to differ. What they discussed, and what they disagreed about in 1941, has been subject to much conjecture. Was the possibility of an atomic weapon at the heart of it? Did Heisenberg seek a form of absolution? Did he come to boast; to suggest undermining both the German and the Allied atomic programmes? All these, and more have been suggested.

Michael Frayn's play begins with Bohr and his wife,

Bohr, David Horovitch, Neils Bohr and Alexander Hanson, Werner Heisenberg. Whatever else one may think of the play, it offers acting master-class potential for its male cast; while Anna Carteret is excellent in the least demanding role she has least to say — she is the counterweight, a calming voice of moral reason. Though Bohr was the slower, more methodical intellect, Heisenberg the rampaging mathematical firebrand, both actors have long passages wherein they deliver their dialogue at a furious tempo, often with intense emotion. The complex, at times overlapping argument and counter-argument is delivered with split-second timing, creating the impression of unforced natural spontaneity. The amount of dialogue the two actors have is breathtaking. One forgotten or misplaced line and the argument would be in-danger of collapsing, yet they bring the whole thing off with a precision few could match, switching from friendship to outrage in seconds, from past to future in a line. These are quite simply great performances.

Copenhagen is ingeniously conceived. The play is performed in the round, with seating for about three-dozen provided in raised boxes behind the actors, rendering the impression of a jury sitting judgement on history. Did these men really hold the fate of which cities would live or burn in their hands? The only props are three chairs. There are no costume changes, no music, a handful of lighting effects, a few sound effects. The drama takes place in a circle, the characters constantly arcing around one another, always returning to the same point in space and time. A stem, leading from the circle between the audience at the rear may suggest the stalk, the circle, a mushroom cloud.

The play of course proves nothing in the end. It is, like Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*, (the stage original, not the simplified, sanitised film version) a game, speculating on the private relationship between two historical figures. An author's interpretation of real people, not so long since

dead, become strange attractors and unreliable narrators. It is very British. It may remind one of the novels of Christopher Priest, or John Fowles, particularly of the final hundred pages of *Daniel Martin*, two people in a room taking the past apart. It recalls Nic Roeg's 1985 film *Insignificance*, in which "Albert Einstein", "Joe DiMaggio", "Senator Joe McCarthy" and "Marilyn Monroe" meet in a hotel, the Scientist explains Relativity to the Actress, and the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima. *Copenhagen* is closely based upon Thomas Power's *Heisenberg's War*, while David Cassidy's *Uncertainty*, covers much of the same ground.

Three people, a minimal set, and *Copenhagen* thoroughly engages the attention and imagination for a full-throttle two hours. The performances command the uttermost respect, the finely honed script ensures the audience always knows exactly where it is within the labyrinth. The pleasure of language and idea, and of some elegantly expressed ironies, hold sway over emotion — though the content does become more personally engaged towards the end - the strong first act being surpassed by the more richly argued and constructed second to leave a most satisfying conclusion. We leave the theatre knowing no more about the real Bohrs and Heisenberg than when we went in, but we come away thoroughly entertained and with plenty to think about. We may also be encouraged to read the science facts, as best they are known, Frayn builds his science fiction upon, and that can be no bad thing.

— LOC AND LOAD —

Letters received. Please forward all comments etc to the main editorial address. Letters intended for publication should be marked: 'For Publication'. From the next issue Matrix will be awarding a prize for the best letter received (a copy of Stephan Baxter's Omegatropic in the first instance) so there is now no excuse for not writing!

Barbara Davies queried us about the BSFA's Magazine Chain:

Why does the BSFA no longer advertise the existence of its Magazine Chain?

For many years I have enjoyed being able to read the major American SF and Fantasy magazines for only a small charge. I also appreciate not being lumbered with the magazines permanently, as my house is already threatening to disappear under a pile of unread books! <g>

I'm sure many other BSFA members would like to join if they only knew about it.

After lots of 'wot magazine chain?', Elizabeth Billinger replies on behalf of the BSFA committee:

This is a question Barbara should really have addressed to the Magazine Chain Co-ordinator, but as she has sent it to *Matrix* I will respond with a committee perspective.

As far as the current committee is concerned this must

be one of the BSFA's best-kept secrets (if anyone is operating any other secret activities perhaps they could let us know).

I've just checked back through a random selection of copies of *Matrix* from the last 12 years and found no adverts or other mentions of the magazine chain therein.

This would account for the fact that I was the only person on the committee who was aware of the existence of the magazine chain, and I had interpreted the lack of news about the activity as an indication of its demise.

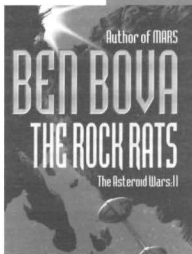
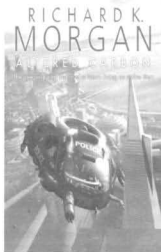
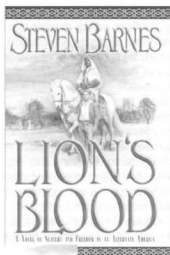
Perhaps Barbara (or anyone else) who participates in the chain and who feels that it should be more widely enjoyed, would like to write an article introducing the concept to the rest of the membership (or reminding those of both long memory and long membership).

This is a service that the BSFA will be happy to support if there is a demand for it, and if it is run in the same accountable way as similar activities such as the London meetings and the Orbiter writers' workshops.

— COMING TO A SHELF NEAR YOU —

Forthcoming books, compiled by Janet Barron

- Mark Anthony**, *Blood of Mystery*, £10.00, TPB - 544 pages (14 Jan, 2002), Earthlight
- Mark Anthony**, *The Dark Remains*, £6.99, PB - 752 pages new edition (2 Jan, 2002), Earthlight
- C Asaro**, *Spherical Harmonic*, £19.99, HB (17 Jan, 2002), Saint Martin's Press
- Clark Ashton Smith**, *The Emperor of Dreams*, £6.99, PB - 548 pages (14 Feb, 2002), Gollancz
- Steve Aslett**, *Only an Alligator*, £7.99, PB - 224 pages (17 Jan, 2002), Gollancz
- N Stephen Baxter**, *Icebones*, £6.99, PB - 288 pages new edition (14 Feb, 2002), Victor Gollancz Science Fiction
- Brom**, *Offerings* £20.00, HB Artwork (Nov 2001), Paper Tiger
- Brown N. M.**, *Hunted* £5.99, PB - 368 pages (14 Jan, 2002), Bloomsbury
- Ben Bova**, *The Rock Rats*, £17.99, HB - 448 pages (7 Feb, 2002), Hodder & Stoughton General
- Humphrey Carpenter**, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A biography* £6.99, PB - 400 pages (Jan, 2002), HarperCollins
- Chaz Brenchley**, *Hand of the King's Evil*, £7.99, PB - 608 pages (17 Jan, 2002), Orbit
- Colin Bruce**, *Conned Again Watson*, £7.99, PB (7 Feb, 2002), Vintage
- Chris Bunch**, *Corsair*, £6.99, PB - 496 pages new edition (7 Feb, 2002), Orbit
- Steve Cockayne**, *Wanderers and Islanders*, £10.99, PB - 288 pages (7 Feb, 2002), Orbit (Debut novel)
- Elaine Cunningham**, *Dark Journey*, £5.99, PB - 384 pages (7 Feb, 2002), Arrow
- Vincent Di Fate**, *The science fiction art of Vincent Di Fate*, £5.99 HB, Artwork, (22 Feb 2002) Paper Tiger
- Stephen Donaldson**, *Girl in Landscape*, £7.99, PB - 544 pages new edition (18 Feb, 2002), Voyager
- Greg Egan**, *Schild's Ladder*, £16.99/£9.99, HB/PB - 352 pages (21 Feb, 2002), Victor Gollancz Science Fiction
- David Farland**, *Wizardborn*, £6.99, PB - 672 pages new edition (2 Jan, 2002), Earthlight
- Maggie Furey**, *Spirit of the Stone*, £6.99, PB - 544 pages (17 Jan, 2002), Orbit
- David Gemmell**, *Drenai Tales Vol 2*, £12.99, PB - 768 pages (3 Jan, 2002), Orbit
- Harry Harrison**, *Stars and Stripes Triumphant*, £17.99, HB - 512 pages (7 Feb, 2002), Hodder & Stoughton General
- Elizabeth Haydon**, *Destiny*, £12.99, HB - 512 pages (17 Jan, 2002), Victor Gollancz Science Fiction
- Robert Holdstock**, *Celtika*, £6.99, PB - 448 pages new edition (14 Jan, 2002), Earthlight
- N Tom Holt**, *Nothing But Blue Skies*, £6.99, PB - 256 pages new edition (17 Jan, 2002), Orbit
- Tom Holt**, *Falling Sideways*, £16.99, PB - 416 pages (17 Jan, 2002), Orbit
- N Kim Hunter**, *Knight's Dawn*, £6.99, Orbit
- William King**, *Grey Hunter*, £5.99, PB - 288 pages (4 Feb, 2002), Black Library
- Mercedes Lackey**, *The Black Swan*, £6.99, PB - 384 pages new edition (10 Jan, 2002), Gollancz
- Jonathan Lethem**, *Girl in Landscape*, £6.99, PB - 288 pages (18 Feb, 2002), Faber and Faber
- R Megan Lindholm**, *Harpy's Flight*, £5.99, PB - 320 pages (14 Jan, 2002), Voyager
- Holly Lisle**, *The Courage of Falcons* £6.99, PB - 432 pages new edition (14 Feb, 2002), Gollancz
- N Juliet Marillier**, *Daughter of the Forest*, £6.99, PB - 560 pages new edition (2 Jan, 2002), Voyager
- Juliet Marillier**, *Son of the Shadows*, £6.99, PB - 560 pages new edition (2 Jan, 2002), Voyager
- Anne McCaffrey**, *Freedom's Ransom*, £16.99, HB - 329 pages (4 Feb, 2002), Bantam Press
- N Anne McCaffrey**, *The Skies of Pern*, £6.99, PB - 592 pages new edition (4 Feb, 2002), Corgi
- Graham McNeill**, *Nightbringer*, £5.99, PB - 288 pages (7 Jan, 2002), Black Library
- L.E. Modesitt Jr**, *The Shadow Sorceress*, £6.99, PB - 592 pages (7 Feb, 2002), Orbit
- Michael Moorcock**, *The Dreamthief's Daughter*, £5.99, PB - 352 pages new edition (4 Feb, 2002), Earthlight
- Richard Morgan**, *Altered Carbon*, £16.99, HB £10.99, PB - 400 pages (Feb, 2002), Gollancz
- * Terry Pratchett**, *The Fifth Elephant*, £7.99, PB - 96 pages (Feb, 2002), Methuen Publishing Ltd
- * Terry Pratchett**, *The Truth*, £7.99, PB - 96 pages (21 Feb, 2002), Methuen Publishing Ltd
- R Sheri S. Tepper**, *Grass*, £6.99, PB - 544 pages new edition (14 Feb, 2002), Gollancz Paperbacks
- Sheri S. Tepper**, *The Fresco*, £6.99, PB - 416 pages new edition (14 Feb, 2002), Victor Gollancz Science Fiction
- Orson Scott Card**, *Shadow Puppets*, £17.99/£10.99 HB/TPB 384



Stephen Baxter looks at how things might, or might not, have been different

Stan Robinson's new book, *The Years of Rice and Salt* (HarperCollins, March 2002) is a remarkable novel — densely written and intellectually daunting — and it springs from a classic alternate-history premise. What if the Black Death had destroyed Europeans altogether? How would history have unfolded without Shakespeare and Einstein and Pizarro?

I have committed alternate history several times myself. But I have to admit I'm coming to doubt its central thesis — that history could have been deflected significantly if a key battle had turned out differently, or a key individual had acted otherwise. Perhaps such 'Great Person' theories are too simplistic; the forces that really shape our destinies are much larger. Jared Diamond in his *Guns, Germs and Steel* (Jonathan Cape, 1997) sets out compelling arguments along these lines.

In 1532 the conquistador Pizarro, with less than two hundred ragtag Spanish soldiers but armed with guns and horses, defeated Atahualpa, absolute ruler of all the Incas, and his *eighty thousand* troops. Within thirty years would follow the conquest of the two largest American empires, the Aztecs and Incas. Could it have happened the other way around (as in Christopher Evan's wonderful *Aztec Century*)?

Well, Pizarro had a lot of unfair advantages. He had come from a culture based on millennia of intensive farming, and the cultural and technical innovations that had followed. Eurasian agriculture had begun in south-west Asia, where most of the world's useful wild grasses already grew native. But the Americas had only three of these grasses, Australia none at all, and their agriculture had a much more difficult start.

Likewise things might have gone different if colonising Europeans on horseback had been met by North Americans riding mammoth, by Bantu on zebra or rhinos, and by aboriginal Australians on giant kangaroos. But none of these animals were domesticable. Eurasia hosted wild herds of thirteen of the fourteen most useful large domesticable mammals: North America, Australia and sub-

Saharan Africa had none of them. This uneven distribution was a relic of the end-Ice Age extinctions.

So Eurasians, who happened to be favoured with the most useful crops and animals, enjoyed several advantages. But the Europeans' key weapon in their conquest of the world proved to be 'crowd diseases' — like measles, smallpox and bubonic plague — plagues transferred from the social animals they had domesticated, and incubated for thousands of years in European cities. Natives of remote lands had no previous exposure, no defences, and quickly succumbed.

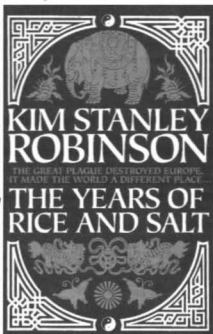
So Pizarro was bound to win — or if not Pizarro, the next conquistador, or the next.

And bubonic plague probably could not have exterminated all Europeans. The plague hit Europe with full ferocity in the 14th century thanks to new trade routes to China. But the plague had first appeared in Europe in Roman times, and European populations had at least some resistance. In all just (just!) a quarter of Europeans were killed by the Black Death — compared to 95% of native North Americans killed during the European conquests.

Much alternate history, sadly, is probably bunk. Some chance events are so huge they cannot but help to change history, the dinosaur-killer comet being the classic example. And evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould argues persuasively that all life is contingent; with a slightly different fall of the biomolecular dice, nothing like humans might have evolved at all. But given the human situation at, say, the end of the last Ice Age, perhaps the broad shape of what followed was inevitable.

History's broadest patterns have nothing to do with Great Persons — as one Great Person, Otto von Bismarck, opined: "The statesman's task is to hear God's footsteps marching through history, and to try to catch onto His coat-tails as He marches past".

Omegatropic, the collected non-fiction of Stephen Baxter plus two rare short stories is still available from the BSFA, 1 Long Row Close, Everdon, Daventry, Northants, NN11 3BE hardback £20; paperback £8; Postage free for BSFA members, otherwise £1 for the first book and 50p for each additional copy in the UK. Cheques payable to: BSFA Ltd. If ordering in the USA please see the BSFA's website: www.bsfa.co.uk.



pages, Orbit

N Robert Silverberg *The King of Dreams*, £6.99, PB - 528 pages new edition (14 Jan, 2002), Voyager

Boris Vallejo and Julie Bell *Sketchbook; the other artwork of Boris Vallejo and Julie Bell* £20.00, HB, Artwork, (November, 2001) Paper Tiger

Eric Van Lustenbader, *The Pearl Saga Volume 1: The Ring of Five Dragons*, £6.99, PB - 600 pages new edition (4 Feb, 2002), Voyager

John Whitbourn, *Downs-Lord 3: Doomsday*, £5.99, PB - 352 pages (4 Feb, 2002), Earthlight

N David Zindell, *Neverness*, £7.99, PB - 688 pages new edition (18 Feb, 2002), Voyager



KEY

N Now out in Paperback
R Reissue
NF Non Fiction
***** Watch out for these

HB Hardback
TPB Trade Paperback
PB Paperback

All others, first UK edition. Unless references are given, all quotes are from the publisher.

AN IRONING BOARD ON A DUCK POND

TWO DANISH PASTRIES

Martin Sketchley dresses up.

Come on, admit it — you've all fantasised about being your favourite characters and gone around pointing at people making raygun noises haven't you? You haven't? Maybe it's just me then. (No wonder people look at me oddly in Sainsbury's.) But even if this is not the case, I'm sure everyone reading this has at some point wished they could enter the world of their favourite film or TV show. Ever want to be General Urco from *Planet of the Apes*? A *Star Wars* Stormtrooper? Darth Vader?! Well, in this issue of *Matrix* I'll be pointing you in the direction of a few web sites that might be able to help you do just that. You won't find instructions how to make your own Klingon costume from a few rags and bit of old fishing net here, though; instead, I've tried to find sites offering for sale either genuine costumes or accessories actually used in the making of SF films or TV shows, or failing that, high quality replicas.

Let's start at the top, with a look at Shafton Inc. This company, in business since 1975, bills itself as "the character builders" — a pun which is, I'm sure, more than intended. Manufacturing "high quality, durable and accurate" costumes its client list is impressive, including Universal Studios, MGM and Warner Bros. The company can build just about any costume you want, with a service that includes consultation on design and complete involvement in development. Shafton's experience in manufacturing such products means that problems can be dealt with quickly and effectively. Furthermore, any costume ordered is bespoke, designed to your specific requirements, and tailored to fit the individual who will be wearing it. Due to some of the prestigious names on its client list its costumes are likely to be very expensive, but it has to be remembered that the company offers full "dressing and cleaning instructions" (presumably these are in reference to the costume rather than being general personal advice) and also the option of "hand cable animation"; while this initially appears to have rather crude undertones it actually means the head of a full costume can have moveable facial features. The ramifications of this are astonishing, and I can't help wondering if Shafton should start attending SF conventions, where late in the evening many people seem completely incapable of any kind of facial movement...

However, there's something lacking here. Yes, the company provides highly technical costume solutions to a number of major players in the sf field, but for the fan there's no nostalgia in its offerings. If you want to cause a stir in the

Eastercon masquerade and have many tens of thousands of dollars to spend, then look no further. But what we're really looking for is items we've seen in action on the screen.

Scifihollywood.com is much more promising, and the first thing that catches the eye is *Battlestar Galactica* costumes for around \$1,000. However, *Battlestar Galactica* never really did it for me. I liked the shiny Cylons, yes, but there were lots of precocious kids and that annoying daggit thing scampering around all over the place. So, moving on, the site also offers a gorilla costume from *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*. This was apparently intended for use in

background shots when the gorilla army is seen marching across the river, but is in fact in close up in several shots. However, consisting of light cotton pants and shirt, vinyl vest and gloves and a brown ammunition belt, it doesn't really grab me as a must-have item at \$1,250.

There's lots of stuff from *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, including what is referred to simply as "brown jumpsuit". Apparently this was "worn by Buck Rogers throughout the first season", and costs \$2,500. Even assuming it's been washed



Four guys show off their stormtrooper outfits (plus R2) on the Heroes for Sale site

thoroughly, still it doesn't appeal. For some reason I find myself far more drawn to "Erin Gray main costume". Apparently this is the Colonel Wilma Deering outfit: "skin-tight green satin pants with a matching green satin jacket with zipper front closure." I have to admit that even at \$3,500 I'm tempted for a moment. However, it has to be said that I've put on weight since turning 30, and am not sure whether skin-tight pants are me any more. Green's not my colour anyway...

The site also has an item from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. This is apparently a genuine "alien costume" from the film comprised of a full bodysuit and oversized head. However, while attractive the rarity of the outfit places it beyond the reach of all but the most avid fan, commanding a price of \$9,000.

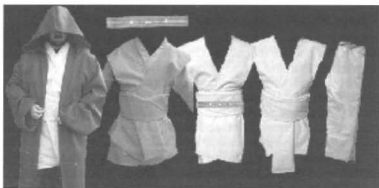
The final item that really interests me on this site is a Sandman costume from *Logan's Run*. Apparently used in both film and TV series, it consists of a black long-sleeve shirt in polyester, and a black polyester vest with a wide grey cloth stripe across the chest. At \$1,000 this seems like a relative bargain. But who's going to know you're supposed to be a Sandman in Sainsbury's? People will just think you have a thing for polyester. Maybe it's time to try elsewhere.

(Asda, perhaps?)

Heroes-for-sale.co.uk offers some fairly exciting items. The first that really catches my eye is "Obi-Wan Robes". However, although one of the cheapest offerings yet found at £220, it looks more like a collection of discarded thermal underwear than the costume of one of SF's most famous movie characters. There are lots of other *Star Wars*-related costumes for sale here, though, including characters from *Phantom Menace*. However, the majority don't have price tags, and instead prospective customers are required to contact the vendors, something which always irritates me. Although not costumes, worth a mention nonetheless is the exciting Boba Fett "life-size deluxe" replica costing a little under £3,500, R2-D2 for £5,799 and C3-PO for £8,199.

Should you want a costume for just one occasion (rather than to wear when shopping) the site also offers a range of sf costumes for hire, including Darth Vader, Boba Fett, and a what is referred to as a "battle droid" from *Phantom Menace*, although how this would be worn isn't clear to me as it seems to consist of nothing but a metal skeleton. Also available are "droid" (R2-D2) and Princess Leia, but whether the latter outfit includes a Danish pastry to hang on each ear isn't stated.

OK, I know I said we weren't going to look at costume-making, but studiocreations.com gives full instructions on how to produce your own authentic *Star Wars* Stormtrooper and Tusken Raider outfits, among others. Making a Stormtrooper costume looks pretty complicated to be honest, with instructions on vacuum forming and sculpting included, but if the screenshots are anything to go by the end result is well worth it. Just watch out for an old guy trying to tell you that these aren't the droids you're looking for when wearing it. A few speeder bikes are also available at \$2-3,000 a piece, but apparently there are no kits due to lack of demand. One thing that's particularly exciting on the site is instructions of how to build a "full metal blaster".



"Obi-Wan Robes".

Apparently this takes only 24hrs and costs about \$50, with all materials available from your local hardware store and scrap yard. It looks very cool indeed, but no doubt the example on the site was made by someone with much welding experience and who is generally far better at making things than I'm ever likely to be.

If you really can't afford to re-mortgage the house in order to buy an authentic costume or replica, and don't have the skills to make such items, what options are left? Perhaps a visit to script-o-rama.com and downloading a script from your favourite SF film or TV show might help. There are many available at no cost, including *Star Trek* in its various guises, *Buffy*, *Blake's 7*, *Seaquest DSV*, *Terminators 1 and 2*. There are loads of them, be they first drafts, fourth drafts or shooting scripts. So, armoured with genuine dialogue and setting descriptions of the screenwriter, you could act out your fantasies to your heart's content, completely authentically, whether in your local supermarket or living room. If you find it difficult to remember lines you could even be a character like Holden from *Blade Runner*, he who has the misfortune of interviewing Leon in the film's first few minutes. He's subtle and short-lived, but still has great depth. And I tell you, there's great fun to be had confusing the checkout person in Sainsbury's by telling them a turtle's the same thing as a tortoise. Honest.

If you have any specifically web-related news that might be of interest to Matrix readers, or ideas for future articles, please send me an e-mail, and include any relevant URLs.

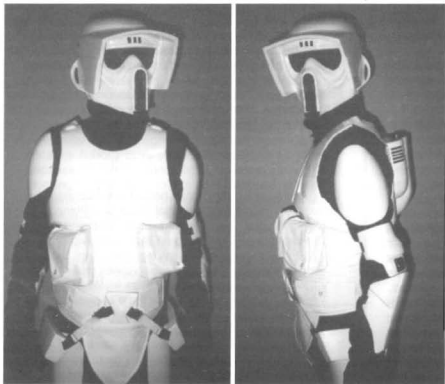
URLs of relevance:

www.shaftoninc.com/
www.scifihollywood.com/
www.heroes-for-sale.co.uk/
www.studiocreations.com/howto/index.html
www.script-o-rama.com

Martin's own site is:

www.msketchley.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

(Also see the BSFA's web site — www.bsfa.co.uk — for these links.)



Another *Star Wars* outfit from the *Heroes for Sale* site

Glenda Pringle looks for *sf* in a science mag

I think it is always interesting to come across a SF-related article in a non-SF magazine. Often the venue itself is more interesting than the article of course, but the very fact that this or that learned organ finds something in the SF genre worthy of mention never ceases to amuse me. A recent case in point will serve to provide an illustration. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* is a specialist academic magazine published by Elsevier Science for students, academics and professionals working in any of the many subdisciplines engendered by the term 'cognitive sciences'. It is one of a whole stable of 'Trends' magazines that range through a gamut of science topics. Glossy, snappy, containing anything from news and review articles to lists of forthcoming conferences, these publications remind me of a sort of *Interzone* for scientists. (Mind you, I also thought they might be useful for budding SF authors to keep up to date with the latest developments, but I suppose the forbidding subscription cost of these mighty publications might be just a tad steep for mere mortals! However, those who are feeling flush might want to visit the website <http://tics.trends.com> for a closer look.)

The reason why I've picked on *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* (Vol 5, No 10, October 2001 to be exact) is because it contains a review of Steven Spielberg's film *AI: Artificial Intelligence*. Now I am all in favour of the pros reviewing films in their area of expertise. After all, splendidly in-depth reviews of *Pearl Harbor* and *Saving Private Ryan* in the *Military History Gazette* (my husband's purchase, not mine I can assure you) resulted in me enjoying the latter film even though it had some technical limitations and in the desire to wait until the last forty minutes of the former film is released on its own so that I can jeer knowledgeably about the use of the wrong material and spare myself the mushy storyline. Settling down to read the *AI* review I expected to be illuminated in a similar in-depth manner. However, I was disappointed.

I expected the main focus of the review to be a discussion on machine intelligence/artificial consciousness and how to decide whether it is 'real' or not. Can an intelligent machine come to possess a sense of morality (surely a sign of consciousness) or is it always doomed to follow a set protocol programmed into it by its human creators. After all, that was what I was led to believe that Spielberg's film was about – can a robot boy really feel love? This issue was addressed so briefly and cursorily in the review that I came away far less enlightened about the subject than I would have expected from a cognitive sciences magazine. Instead, like any SF or film review magazine, the reviewers concentrated on the background to the film itself, citing as precursors *Metropolis*, *Demon Seed* and, of course, *Bladerunner*. Unlike *HAL in 2001: A Space Odyssey* ("the most rounded character in 2001, complete with massive, murderous flaws"), we're told that Robot David in *AI* "has no understanding of why or how it has emotional cognitive functions in the first place" and therefore his "artificially intelligent traits are no different from those of Arnold Schwarzenegger's cyborg assassin, *Terminator* [in that] he learns, and copies human behaviour and emotions" but without any 'real' understanding. Thanks, but I think I could have worked something like that out for myself...

As you've no doubt gathered by now, I'm far too ill-disciplined to sit down and write a whole column consisting



Cover art from *The Fix* by Simon Potter

of magazine reviews. As I lack an encyclopaedic knowledge of SF magazines that stretches back to the year dot, I would be uncomfortable expounding on something many of you out there know far more about than I do. I'm much happier babbling on about magazine-related things that have caught my eye and that I think are worthy of drawing to your attention. Every now and then, of course, I do straight reviews – like now. I'm happy to say for all you review addicts that TTA Press is doing the job I should be doing for me,

bless them. *the FIX*, now in its second issue, exclusively reviews short fiction including magazines, collections and anthologies and it does it very well. Published six times a year, *the FIX* covers all recent issues of magazines like *F&SF*, *Interzone*, *Realms of Fantasy*, and the somewhat erratic *Indigenous Fiction*, as well as many less well-known titles and crime fiction. The magazine also includes features including personal essays on life-changing books and top ten short fiction lists, a 'morgue' of dead/dying magazines, the entertaining and informative 'Pete's Column' by Peter Tennant and interviews with authors (Ellen Datlow in this issue, for instance). The production standards, as one has come to expect from TTA Press, are excellent and make this a welcome addition to the TTA stable of publications. (Subscriptions for *the FIX* are £12(\$24) for 6 issues and available from: TTA Press, 5 Martins Lane, Witcham, Ely, Cambs CB6 2LB, email: ttapress@aol.com — 'surfers' can check out the website at www.ttapress.com)

Finally, I would like to thank Mark Plummer for responding to the question of magazine availability raised in this column in *Matrix* #151. His letter follows:

As you ask, and in case nobody else answers the question..., I can confirm that *Forbidden Planet* and *New Worlds* in London and *Andromeda* in Birmingham all stock at least *Asimov's*, *Analog* and *F&SF*; and *Andromeda*, along with Ken Slater's *Fantast Medway*, sells these magazines mail-order.

Why can't you get these titles in WH Smith's? Well, some branches did stock them at least into the mid-Nineties. It was always a rather patchy business — they certainly weren't core stock or anything — but a fair number of the large branches stocked at least one of the US digests. Maybe they had a handful of regular customers, enough to make it worth their while, or maybe it was a whim of the branch

JOSH KIRBY 1928 – 2001

Josh Kirby was one of fantasy's most familiar artists due to his paintings illustrating the best-selling book covers of Terry Pratchett's *Diskworld* series, from the paperback of *The Colour of Magic*, back in 1984, onwards. His distinctive organic style perfectly captured the spirit of the books even if they were occasionally inaccurate with warty witches and buxom heroines in chain-mail bikinis.

However it was not just Pratchett. Kirby's work graced the book's of many other sf and fantasy writers, including Brian Aldiss, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Tom Holt and Robert Rankin. His personal list of published book covers running from 1954 to 1999 included over four hundred items — and this deliberately excluded works done to order in genres such as Romances, War stories and Westerns where he had to suppress his natural style.

He was christened Ronald William Kirby, acquiring the nickname Josh whilst studying at the Liverpool City School of Art: "Some wag thought I painted like Sir Joshua Reynolds!"

Kirby started his career producing film posters then moved into book and cover art for magazines in the mid '50s including the first Pan paperback of Ian Fleming's *Moonraker* in 1956. In the 1960s Kirby's work was used for Ray Bradbury's *The Silver Locusts* and *The Illustrated Man* and several inventive covers for Alfred Hitchcock's anthologies of horror and suspense stories. He also produced a number of covers for Robert Silverberg's *Majipoor* novels and a personal sequence of elaborate paintings, *The Voyage of the Ayeguy*, concerning a sf messiah. Kirby had begun a new *Ayeguy* painting shortly before his death.

Kirby was inspired by Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder, whose work you can clearly see influencing the *Diskworld* covers with their swarming

fantastic and grotesque figures. He preferred to work in oils, applied in thin layers, like the old-masters of the Renaissance, which dried slowly and allowed easy alterations. He lingered over each painting for a month, two months if you included reading the novel, working out what visual images to use and preliminary sketching.

Kirby's long unrealised hope was a permanent gallery for his paintings entitled the 'Unseen University Museum Library and Art Gallery.' It would have been a fine tribute to a truly fine artist.



Dave Langford's *The Wyrdest Link*, as featured in *Matrix* #152, will now be Kirby's last cover.

JIM FRANCES 1954 – 2001

Special-effects designer Jim Francis, who worked on projects such as *The 10th Kingdom* and the *Hitch-hikers Guide to the Galaxy* took his own life in October.

He started at the bottom at the BBC, sweeping up the studio for the final series of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. After working on *Doctor Who* and *Secret Army* he was promoted to Visual Effects Assistant on *Blake's 7* for the program's last two seasons where he designed *The Scorpio* the freedom fighter's second ship. He was promoted again to a fully fledged Visual Effects designer for the television version of *Hitch-hiker* designing the Heart of Gold space ship as well as Marvin the Paranoid Android.

He left the BBC to co-found the special effects company SFX-GB, working out of Shepperton Studios. Frances went on to work on a number of small British SF films, including *Grim*, *Breeders*, *Funnyman* and *Hardware* and lately *Kevin and Perry Go Large* and *The Parole Officer*, plus several pop videos as well as returning to television for *Red Dwarf* and *The 10th Kingdom*.

However, whatever medium, his work was always cost-effective due to his apprenticeship working under BBC budgets — The sfx's for *Blake's 7* were rumoured to be produced for an average of fifty quid an episode.

manager. However I have this recollection that Smith's had a 'rationalisation' of their stock list sometime around 1996 after which no branch would stock a title unless they expected to sell at least ten copies; I suspect that was when SF magazines disappeared from their shelves.

I know there's a certain circularity about the availability of SF magazines: nobody stocks them because nobody buys them and nobody buys them because they can't find them because nobody's stocking them and so on. I'm sure it's true that there are some people who don't know about *Analog* et al., people who don't shop at specialist bookshops like FP or Andromeda yet who would buy these magazines if they were able to pick them up in their local newsagents. The first SF magazine I ever bought came from Smith's on London's Victoria Station back in 1988, for instance. However, you have to admit that even those people who can acquire these magazines with ease, the sort of fans who go to conventions and patronise the specialist dealers, don't take advantage of this ready availability. How many BSFA committee members regularly read any SF magazine other than *Interzone*?

— AND THE WINNER IS ... —

All the news on the BSFA awards from **Tanya Brown**

By the time you read this, Christmas will have come and gone: I hope that this traditionally slothful time has been put to good use by all our readers. Yes, if you too spent the festive (alt: *festering*) season lying on the sofa reading, like any sane person, you will now be in a position to offer informed debate on the nominees for the prestigious BSFA Awards! (If this were holiday homework, you would now be asked to compare and contrast metaphors of death in *Passage*, by Connie Willis, and *American Gods*, by Neil Gaiman. But luckily this is not holiday homework.)

Of course, if you *haven't* read at least some of the books that have impressed people enough to inspire a vote, it's not too late. (Consignia permitting, there may even be time for you to nominate something yourself: the deadline is **31st January 2002**.) Voting forms will appear with the next mailing, and the deadline for those will be near the beginning of April. If you're attending the Eastercon in Jersey, you may vote there instead.

It's your award, and your vote counts!

Up-to-date news on the contenders can be found on the BSFA web page (www.bsfa.co.uk), and there'll be an update in each issue of *Matrix* between now and the deadline at the end of next January.

You can nominate a piece of work for the award just by sending me an email (awards@amaranth.avnet.co.uk). There's a handy link on the web page too. Nominate early and often! Remember, the items with the most nominations are those that will appear on the final shortlists in the spring: unlike the jury-based Arthur C Clarke Award, the BSFA Awards are democratically bestowed. If you like something, nominate it for the relevant award — even if others have already done so.

The rules of eligibility are as follows:

Best Novel, for the best novel first published in the UK in the calendar year 2001. This award is (in theory, at least) open to any work of fiction — not just adult-oriented science fiction.

Best Short Fiction, for the best short fiction that first appeared, regardless of country of origin, in the calendar year 2001. Stories in non-UK magazines, anthologies, and even on the web are eligible. Please let me know where the story appeared (anthology title and editor, magazine name and number, URL) as well as the author and title of the short story.

Best Non-Fiction, for the best single piece, anthology or full-length critical work to appear in the UK in the calendar year 2001. Please give author or editor, title, and magazine / journal details if applicable.

Best Artwork, for the best single piece of artwork that appeared in the calendar year 2001. Where possible, please give the artist's name and the title of the work, and where the item appears (magazine name and number, website URL, and so on). Regrettably, animated films are not eligible for this category — so, please, no more nominations for *Shrek*!

Please note that 'advance votes' are not eligible: the book,

short story, critical essay or piece of artwork must actually have been published, not just be due for publication.

If you're not sure whether something qualifies, send in the nomination anyway: I'll check eligibility and let you know.

Nominations for Best Novel

Gridlinked — Neal Asher (Macmillan)
Things Unborn — Eugene Byrne (Earthlight)
Night of the Trifids — Simon Clark (Hodder & Stoughton)
Applesed — John Clute (Orbit)
The Nameless Day — Sara Douglass (Voyager)
The Eyre Affair — Jasper Fforde (New English Library)
American Gods — Neil Gaiman (Headline)
Pashazade — Jon Courtenay Grimwood (Earthlight)
House Corino — Brian Herbert & Kevin J Anderson (Hodder & Stoughton)
The House of Dust — Paul Johnston (Hodder & Stoughton)
Bold as Love — Gwyneth Jones (Gollancz)
The Secret of Life — Paul McAuley (Voyager)
Ares Express — Ian McDonald (Earthlight)
Shadow — K J Parker (Orbit)
Marrow — Robert Reed (Orbit)
Mortal Engines — Philip Reeve (Scholastic)
Chasm City — Alastair Reynolds (Gollancz)
Mappa Mundi — Justina Robson (Macmillan)
Lust — Geoff Ryman (Flamingo)
Wheeler — Ian Stewart & Jack Cohen (Earthlight)
The Resurrectionists — Kim Wilkins (Orion)
Passage — Connie Willis (Voyager)
The Haunting of Alaiabel Cray — Chris Wooding (Scholastic)

Nominations for Best Non-Fiction

Omegatropic — Stephen Baxter
Terry Pratchett — Andrew M Butler (Pocket Essentials)

Nominations for Best Short Story

'Under the Saffron Tree' — Cherith Baldry (*Interzone* 166)
'A New Beginning' — Tony Ballantyne (*Interzone* 163)
'Restoring the Balance' — Tony Ballantyne (*Interzone* 167/8)
'It's Secret Diary' — Suzanne Barbier (*F20 Two*, Summer 2001)
'First to the Moon' — Stephen Baxter & Simon Bradshaw (*Spectrum SF* #6, July 2001)
'Tracks' — Stephen Baxter (*Interzone* 169)
'The Children of Winter' — Eric Brown (*Interzone* 163)
'The City in the Dust' — Matt Colborn (*Interzone* 165)
'Poppy Day' — Michael Coney (*Spectrum SF* #5, April 2001)
'Myxomatosis' — Simon Ings (*Interzone* 165)
'Partial Eclipse' — Graham Joyce (*Interzone* 165)
'Wind Angels' — Leigh Kennedy (*Interzone* 171)
'Cut' — Megan Lindholm (*Asimov's*, May 2001)
'The Two Dicks' — Paul McAuley (*F&SF*, August 2001)
'Isabel of the Fall' — Ian R. McLeod (*Interzone* 169)
'Self Portrait, with Melanoma, Final Draft' — Paul Park (*Interzone* 167)
'The Seventh Series' — Justina Robson (*F20 Two*, Summer 2001)
'Catch the Sleep Ship' — George Zebrowski (*Interzone* 163)

Nominations for Best Artwork

Cover of *Pashazade* by Jon Courtenay Grimwood — artist unknown!
Cover of *Mortal Engines* by Philip Reeve — artist unknown!
'Roach Hotel' — Dominic Harman (cover of *Interzone* 166)
Cover of *Omegatropic* by Stephen Baxter — Colin Odell
Cover of *Gridlinked* by Neal Asher — Steve Rawlings

*F20 Two can be purchased via Enigmatic Press BFS Publications, c/o 3 Tamworth Close, Reading RG3 4EQ

— OUT OF FOCUS —

THE VIEW FROM THE HILL

In the first of his interstitial reports from *Focus*, **Simon Morden** reflects back on how the events of September 11th have effected his and others writing

Authors, film makers and script writers are all in a dilemma. Do you, or don't you? If you do, what do you say without laying yourself open to accusations of insensitivity or worse? If you don't, are you compromising your artistic and moral integrity by not commenting on the most significant event of this year, and possibly of the next decade? Government spin doctor Jo Moore aside, publishing houses, television companies and film studios have been falling over themselves to pull 'sensitive' material. In the immediate aftermath of 11th September, anything deemed to have a passing connection to aircraft, terrorism, tall buildings and disaster was ruthlessly eliminated. Even John Lennon's 'Imagine' was banned from the airwaves by an over-zealous producer.

Everything except the endlessly repeated images of the event itself. I could see it every time I blinked.

Talking with some writing friends some six weeks later, I enquired: "Has anyone written anything recently?" There was a despondent shuffling of feet and worried frowning. "Not really. Reviewed some stuff. Done a bit of editing. Nothing new."

I was the same. A bout of ill-health had coincided with the middle of September; but I can normally peck out a few words at the keyboard, which becomes a few more words, then the trickle becomes, if not a flood, a decent-sized brook.

What can you, a writer of speculative fiction, write when reality has just trumped your imagination in such a spectacular and grotesque fashion. Someone said on a message board I frequent: "We have to write about what's

possible. No-one would believe us if we came up with this stuff."

Nothing. I just sat there and stared at the empty screen. I stirred a few sentences around, but it wasn't working at all. Deo gratia for *Focus* — I had an editorial to write. Write it I did, about five times; each time completely erasing the previous draft.

But I finally did it, because I hate missing deadlines.

Now I have another deadline staring me in the face. I have a collection of short stories due out next year. I haven't quite finished the stories, and I've hardly started on the introductions, the essays, the art and the video. Plenty of time, you say. And there is, except for two little facts: the whole collection is a future history of religiously-inspired nuclear terrorism, and it's set in 2002.

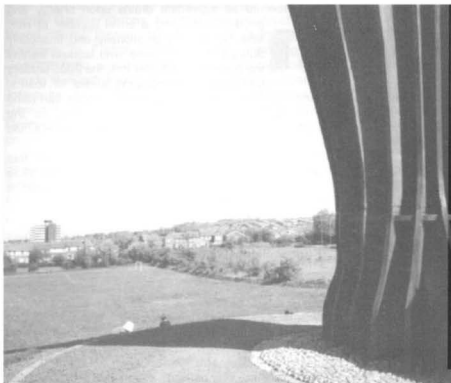
You may consider a project like this not only unwise, but completely unsellable in the current climate. Who on earth would want to read about this while the bombs are still falling? I was thinking precisely the same. Horror is dead, the editorials cried, and the little online community I hang out with trembled at the thought that only romantic fiction would remain.

Our fears were unfounded. The world has changed, but its landscape is strangely familiar. For the vast majority of us, there is still work and family, shopping and sleeping, playing and loving. The spasm of fear that shook us in the darkness was real enough, but the morning showed us a sense of proportion. Comedians are making jokes again. It's allowed to talk about it, even to criticise foreign policy without having your nose punched.

Certainly, the whole tone of the collection will change, but I've found a way through the block by using the eyes and voice of a child, who will grow up and try to understand their place in the grand scheme.

Science fiction has always been involved in the great 'what-ifs' of past, present and future. Writers everywhere have to hold their nerve, and do what they have always done: explore possibilities, entertain and enlighten. There's been enough ill-informed debate, and there is an acute need for light to be shed on the paths we might be tempted to take.

Regarding *Focus*: as you have just read, I have been ill. Ill, as in the doctors think I might have TB. Trust me, it's not half as much fun as you might suspect. Apart from coughing up blood, night sweats and weight loss, it also involves chronic fatigue. So anyone who's waiting for a reply regarding fiction submissions, please bear with me. I'm almost feeling well at the moment ... This doesn't mean I want you to hold off submitting to the next great *Focus* competition! Details in *Focus* #40.



The view of the hill. From the base of the Angel of North. Simon lives just below the church spire you may just be able to spot in the background — the highest point in Tyne & Wyre

In his first column **Steve Green** brings us news of all things fannish

Launching his column "The Electric Fan" for the debut issue of *Nebula* in 1952, the legendary Walt Willis wrote: "Some people are quite baffled by the phenomenon known as science fiction fandom. After all, they point out, you don't find readers of detective stories publishing amateur magazines or travelling hundreds of miles to conventions. Why should readers of science fiction behave the way they do?"

In the half-century since, of course, those self-same "readers of detective stories" have followed in sf's footsteps, publishing their own fanzines, organising their own conventions and roaming the aisles of London's excellent Murder One bookshop. Meanwhile, the science fiction genre has proliferated and its community of fans exploded to an extent which would have astonished the 33 year-old Willis.

This expansion has not been without its cost. When I describe Walt Willis as "legendary", I recognise there are many reading these words who have no idea whatsoever how I'd justify that phrase, nor the vaguest idea why an American fan should in 1978 publish a 600-page hardback volume of Walt's fanwriting. The community has splintered, shed some of its roots, put down others.

So I open this first edition of what *Matrix* editor Gary Wilkinson and I hope will become a regular overview of fannish happenings in the knowledge that whilst we may share a love for the genre in at least one of its myriad forms – else, why belong to the BSFA? – we've arrived at this location via a multitude of routes. Should we perhaps entice you to explore a few new avenues, all the better.

If nothing else, Novacon is a remarkable tale of survival on the convention circuit. Initiated in 1971 as a one-off alternative to the national gatherings held at various locations across the UK since the early 1950s, it rapidly became an annual event administered by the Birmingham Science Fiction Group and confined to the Midlands. Over the past three decades, Novacon has grown from a turnout of under 150, peaking at around 550 in the mid-1980s and then slowly contracting during the 1990s to its current level of 250-300.

Despite the many forecasts of impending doom over the years (my own once among them, I freely confess), Novacon 31 appears to have given the franchise a new lease of life with its relocation last month to Walsall's Quality Hotel. Further, it featured one of the stronger programmes in the series' recent history, retaining the traditional synergy between literary sf (Paul Kincaid discussing the late Keith Roberts), science (NASA envoy Inge Heyer with her hugely enjoyable Hubble slideshow) and desperate fun (even if a couple of the games did cry out for more rehearsal time).

Novacon is also the home of the annual Nova Awards, presented to the fanzine, fanzine writer and fanzine artist judged to have given most pleasure during the previous year (a definition of "best" which remains a bone of contention with certain pundits, not least *Matrix* columnist Greg Pickersgill). This time out, Christina Lake and Doug Bell's *Head* took the fanzine trophy, with 55 points to the 45

garnered by their nearest rival, *Plokta*, whilst artist Dave Hicks stormed his category with almost certainly the largest margin ever seen in the Novas, 125 points to previous winner Sue Mason's 55. Contrariwise, the victory of fan writer Alison Freebairn, whose fanzine *Shebang* (co-edited with Randy Byers) attracted much interest at the Eastercon, was far closer than anyone suspected: both she and Yvonne Rowse scored 47 points, but Alison received twice as many first-place votes and so denied Yvonne a landmark three Novas in a row.

Novacon 32 has already shaken hands with the Quality Hotel on next year's dates – 1-3 November, 2002 – and enlisted *Desolation Road's* Ian McDonald as its guest of honour; in addition to its own programme, the committee has also provisionally agreed to host the James White Award for best sf short story of 2002. For full details, send a reply-paid envelope to 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ, or check out the website at www.novacon.org.uk

Meanwhile, the British bid to secure the 2005 world science fiction convention for Glasgow looks increasingly unassailable. No viable North American rival is in the running, and Seattle has now combined the launch of its own bid for the 2005 NASFIC (an event of roughly similar size held whenever the worldcon leaves US shores) with a pledge of support for Glasgow.

Ironically, the British bid may find its compatriots less easy to convince than the Americans. Past worldcons were widely perceived as significant drains upon energy and goodwill, attracting a small number of new fans but leaving emotionally and financially drained many of those who worked behind the scenes. To counter this, the 2005 bidders envisage an overlapping series of teams, ensuring that those involved in the early stages can hand over to fresh and enthusiastic replacements as the convention looms. (I'm sure any offers of assistance would be warmly welcomed at: uk2005@hotmail.com).

The announcement will be made in California this coming September (these days, the site is decided three years in advance), and I fully anticipate this to retain a running story in these pages for the next four years.

From next issue, I'd like to expand this column to cover more news from local groups and conventions; please forward all snippets, gossip and press releases to the address at the front of *Matrix*

For now, yuletide felicitations to you all.



NOVACON 31

BACK FROM UTOPIA (AGAIN)

Andy Sayer *experiences la convention française at Utopiales 2001*



I don't quite know what the leading figures in French science fiction made of Ian McDonald and I discovering our mutual interest in the Molesworth books with incoherent cries of "The Pukoni!", "Sigismund the Mad Maths Master!" and "as any fule no!" Nor am I quite sure about much of what went on during the awards ceremony,

apart from the fact that Chris Priest (about whose fiction I'd burred happily for twenty minutes earlier in the day after the official announcement that he'd been awarded the annual 'Prix Utopia') got **two** awards, (one also for best short story), because he had two acceptance speeches with him. An awards ceremony in a language you only partly understand is sometimes best dealt with by thinking of the party to follow.

Utopiales 2001 was the International Festival of Science Fiction held in the space-age conference centre, the Cite de Congres, Nantes: birthplace of Jules Verne, from 30th October — 4th November. And it was a splendid affair. This is possibly the largest international gathering devoted to sf literature, film, art, comic books and other related material held in Europe. The guiding light behind the festival is Bruno della Chiesa, who produces an anthology *Utopiales 2001* featuring stories from ten European authors. Deputy Artistic Director is Patrick Gyger, of the *Maison d'Ailleurs* (*The House of Elsewhere*), Switzerland. Together they directed a programme which included Brian W. Aldiss, Octavia Butler, Nalo Hopkinson, Norman Spinrad, James Morrow, Mike Resnik, Gardner Dozois, Keistine Kathryn Rusch, N. Lee Wood, Terry Bisson, Ian McDonald, and just about everyone in French science fiction, including Pierre Bordage (who was President of the festival) and Jean-Claude Dunyach and Ayderdahl, both familiar to readers of *Interzone*. Also present were writers and critics from Denmark, Poland, Belgium, Russia, Holland, Mexico, Germany and other countries: further details can be seen on the website: www.utopiales.org.

Each year a 'grand master' award, the *Prix Utopia* is given. Previous winners have been Jack Vance, Brian W. Aldiss, and Frederik Pohl. This year as I indicated, the award went to Christopher Priest, whose *The Prestige* has just been published in France to enthusiastic reviews.

The festival itself lived up to expectations (apart from me arriving too late to see the Russian movie *Aelita*). The panels were interesting, often too numerous for real discussion (what can you say on a panel with eight people?) but good. There was one on steampunk which seems to be big in France right now that provoked some audience participation, and a 'tribute' panel on Douglas Adams which worked wonderfully thanks to James Morrow's foresight in bringing along a towel... Interesting people I met: including friends from last year, or for the first time, included translator Kirk McElhearn, Russian critic/translator Larissa Mihaylova, Italian writer Valerio Evangelisti, German sf writers Andras Eschbach and Marcus Hammerschmidt,

Dutch writer W. J. Maryson, Danish writer Han Henrik Loyche and Danish sf expert Neils Dalgaard, Mexican sf writer Jose Luis Zarate and scholar / critic Miguel Angel Delgado-Fernandez, artist Patrick Woodroffe (who designed the festival poster) and Polish sf writer Rafal Ziemkiewicz. Donations to the SFF Collection were made by a number of people including Neils Dalgaard, Miguel Angel Delgado-Fernandez, Pierre-Paul Durastanti and Rafal Ziemkiewicz: many thanks.

One of the purposes of the festival is to create and cement links between the various European 'scenes', and many of the panels touched on this activity, and the problems involved in creating a real sense of cross-cultural sf. For some time there has been conversation about creating a well-translated anthology of the best of European sf to be issued in English. A solid proposal was tabled among a group of interested individuals, and some firm moves are to be made. Fingers crossed on this one. On the basis of the French anthologies which have come out of these festivals, there is some remarkable work being done in Europe which we in this country are missing out on.

There was a particularly good *Cafe Literaire* on the festival anthology put together by *Utopiales* supremo Bruno della Chiesa which covered political themes, public manipulation and a number of discussions involving cross-cultural projects, the difficulties involved in getting translated, etc. Somewhere in the distance there are memories of an interesting experiment involving self, Norman Spinrad, Kirk McElhearn, Kathy Morrow, Lee Wood, Ian McDonald and the ultimate sex test — the comparative ability of men and women to stand two paces away from a wall, lean over a chair with their heads against the wall, and stand up holding the chair. So a good time must have been had by someone... More seriously, the designs of books by new publisher *Au Diable Vauvert* (including the French translations of Jim Morrow's books) made me want to weep at the lack of imagination of most British sf publishers. There was a full film programme, most of which I failed to attend, and a terrific display of artwork by most of the top French artists. Once again, the display of *bande dessinees* made me realise how little of this material we ever see in the UK and how limited our discussions of 'comic books' are. The festival is sponsored by numerous organisations including the municipality of Nantes to whom we are all grateful for the opportunity to attend. What we need in this country, I think, is more events like it... but sadly, until local and national government in the UK starts to consider culture important, instead of something to be tagged on to a list somewhere, and literary festivals start to consider sf as something interesting in its own right (full praise, though, to the Edinburgh festival this year!) a British version would be hard to pull together. Maybe we should start inviting the Europeans to our events — how about a French GoH, con organisers?

But watch out for the hotel catering, you'll have a lot to compete with!

EVENTS

Future conventions and other gatherings

30 Jan - 3 Feb 02 - Sci Fi London

Film festival. Curzon, Metro and ICA cinemas, central London. Features several UK Premieres, all-night shows and various events including debate chaired by Andy Sawyer. See www.sci-fi-london.com for details.

9 Feb 02 - Reminiscon Fifty

Hanover Hotel, Schooner Way, Cardiff. Celebrating Lionel Fanthorpe's 50 years in print, with many other guests. 10am-9:30pm, then optional dinner. £15 reg, £35 dinner; all-in £60 inc lunch, tea etc. Contact Fanthorpe Management Consultancy, 48 Claude Rd, Roath, Cardiff, CF24 3QA. 'Supported by Welsh Academi.'

8-10 Mar 02 - McCon V

Senior Common Room, Queen's University of Belfast. Guests announced: Ken MacLeod, Mike Cobley, Ian McDonald, David Wingrove. £15 reg to 7 Mar 02, then £17. Contact 30 Bendigo St, Belfast BT6 8GD.

2-3 Mar 02 - Microcon 2002

Exeter University. Guests TBA. Contact 79 Alphonson Rd, Exeter EX2 8JE. Phone 07740423320.

29 Mar - 1 Apr 02 - Helicon 2 (Eastercon)

Hotel de France, St Helier, Jersey. Guests of Honour: Brian Stableford, Harry Turtle dove & Peter Weston. Membership £35, cheques payable to 'Helicon 2'. Contact: 33 Meyrick Drive, Wash Common, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 6SY; helicon2@smof.demon.co.uk; www.smof.demon.co.uk/helicon2.htm

3-6 May 02 - Damn Fine Convention (Twin Peaks theme)

Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Shepperton, Surrey. Guests of Honour rumoured to be Colin Odell and Mitch Le Blanc. £20 registration until 1st December 2001 (free for Norwegians resident in Norway). Cheques (made payable to 'Damn Fine Convention') to: DFC, 37 Keens Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 1AH. Rooms £30ppn twin or double, £40ppn single. Contact: info@damnfineconvention.org.uk; www.damnfineconvention.org.uk

12 May 02 - Fantasy Fair

10th anniversary event Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. Contact 01477 534626

2-7 Jul 02 - Eurocon 2002

ChotebOr (and Prague), Czech Republic. Guests: Kir Bulychev, Jerry Pournelle, Robert Asprin, J. Morrissey. Info: SFC Avalon, pravada@seznam.cz; www.eurocon2002.scifi.cz

9-11 Aug 02 - ConteXXt (Unicon 20)

University of Gloucestershire (Change: same venue but it's got a different name!). Guest of Honour: Keith Brooke. £25 reg, £15 concessions, small children £1. Contact 17 Cow Lane, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7SZ.

16-19 Aug 02 - Discworld Convention 2002

Hinckley, Leicestershire. Guest of Honour: Terry Pratchett. Guests: Stephen Briggs, Paul Kidby, Dave Langford and more. No memberships after 16/7/02. Contact: SAE to The Discworld Convention 2002, 23 Medora Road, Romford, Essex, RM7 7EP; info@dwcon.org; www.dwcon.org

Note

- Always include a stamped self-addressed envelope when contacting conventions by post.
- Please mention *Matrix* when responding.
- We do our best to ensure the accuracy of this information but always check. Never make a journey to a convention without enquiring first.

Please forward updates, corrections and any information on new events to the main editorial address.

29 Aug-2 Sep 02 - ConJosé (60th Worldcon)

McEnery Convention Center, San José, California. Guests of Honour: Vernor Vinge, David Cherry, Bjo & David Trimble, Ferdinand Feghoot. Toastmaster: Tad Williams. Membership: ask for current rates. Contact: PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-4128, USA, info@conjose.org; www.conjose.org; UK Agents: 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, RG30 2RP; www.sfsoc.org/worldcon/

4 - 6 Oct 02 - Conquest (media con)

Essex County Hotel, Southend-On-Sea. £50 reg, £20/day, £32 two days. Contact: 73 Bournemouth Park Road, Southend-On-Sea, Essex, SS2 5JJ. Tel: (01702) 469093.

19-20 Oct 02 - Octocon 2002 (Irish national con)

Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co.Dublin. GoH China Millville; many other guests. 10 IP. Irish cheques c/o Yellow Brick Rd, 8 BachelorsWalk, Dublin 1, Ireland; sterling to Dave Lally #2 A/C, 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

31 Oct-3 Nov 02 World Fantasy Convention 2002

Hilton Minneapolis and Towers, Minneapolis, MN. Guests of Honour: Dennis Etchison, Jonathan Carroll, Kathe Koja, Stephen Jones, Dave McKean. Membership: \$100 to 4/11/01, then more. Info: World Fantasy Convention, c/o DreamHaven Books, 912 West Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN 55408, wfc@dreamhavenbooks.com, www.dreamhavenbooks.com/wfc.html

1-3 Nov 02 - Novacon 32

Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall (as in 2001). GoH Ian McDonald. £32 reg to Easter, then £35 to 20 Oct 02, and £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

5-6 July 03 - ConStruction (Convention running con)

Cardiff. Info: ConStruction, 37 St Peters Street, Duxford, Cambridgeshire, CB2 4RP, ConStruction@DragonEvents.ltd.uk, www.DragonEvents.ltd.uk

18-21 Apr 03 - Seacon '03 (Eastercon)

Venue confirmed as the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics (same as 2001 Easter event). Guests of honour: Chris Baker, Chris Evans, Mary Gentle. Contact 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR.

28 Aug-1 Sep 03 - Torcon 3/Worldcon 61

Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Canada. Guests of Honour: George R. R. Martin, Frank Kelly Freas, Mike Glyer. Membership: C\$200. Info: Torcon 3, Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1A2, Canada, info@torcon3.on.ca, www.torcon3.on.ca

2-6 Sep 04 - Noreascon 4 (62nd Worldcon)

Boston, Mass. Guest of Honour: Terry Pratchett, William Tenn, (fan) Jack Speer and Peter Weston. \$100 reg to 31 Dec, \$60 for site selection voters, \$35 spp. Mastercard and Visa accepted. Contact PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

NOTICES

Notices are free for all BSFA members -- please forward to main editorial address

Your humble editor is looking for information on Terry Nation's *Survivors* especially videos of the second series onwards and the 'making of' book. Please send info to the main editorial address.

And he also wants lots more notices and letters!

GROUPS

Local groups and other gatherings of fans and writers

Belfast Science Fiction Group

Alternate Thursdays, 8:30pm at the Monica Bars, Rosemary Street, Belfast. Contact Eugene Doherty: 02890 208405; tinman@technologist.com; www.terracon3000.org.uk/sfgroup.htm

Birmingham: Brum SF Group

Second Friday of the month on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel, New St. Membership is £15/year. Contact Martin Tudor, 24Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Willenhall, W. Midlands WV13 1HX. bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk

Cambridge SF Group

Second Monday of the month in The Cambridge Blue, Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

Cardiff SF Group

First Tuesday of the month 7:30pm in Wellington's Café Bar, 42 The Hayes, Cardiff.

Colchester SF/F/Horror Group

First Saturday of the month at 12:30pm in The Playhouse pub, St John's Street. Contact Des Lewis 01255 812119.

The Croydon SF Group

Second Tuesday of the month, 8pm in The Dog and Bull, Surrey Street (by the market), Croydon, Surrey. We are sometimes upstairs or out in the garden. Contact Robert Newman on 020 8686 6800.

Glasgow SF/F Writers' Circle

Alternate Tuesdays at 8:00pm, The Conference Room, Borders Bookstore, Buchanan Street, Glasgow (actual dates are publicised in Borders' events guide, available in store, or ask at the Information Desk). All genres and standards of proficiency welcome. Contact: Neil Williamson 0141 353 2649, or e-mail: neilwilliamson@btinternet.com

Hull SF Group

Second and Fourth Tuesdays, 8.30 to 10:30pm at The New Clarence, Charles Street, Hull. Contact Carol & Steve on 01482 494045 or Dave and Estelle on 01482 444291. Please note that the pub room is not always available so if you intend to come along, please phone first to check on venue, or see: www.mjckeh.demon.co.uk/hulls.htm for the current list of events.

London BSFA meetings

Fourth Wednesday of the month (except December) from 7:00pm at the Rising Sun, Cloth Fair (off Long Lane), EC1. Barbican/Farringdon tube. Check *Asible* for details and guests, or organiser, Paul Hood on 020 8333 6670; paul@auden.demon.co.uk.

London Circle

First Thursday of each month from around 5:00pm at the Florence Nightingale ('Dead Nurse'), on the Westminster Bridge Road/York Road roundabout. Waterloo/ Westminster tube.

Manchester: FONT

FONT meets on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at The Goose on Piccadilly from about 8.30pm onwards. Contact Mike Don on 0161 2262980.

North Oxford

Last Thursday of the month at The Plough, Wolvercote from 7:30pm. Irregular and just starting, so contact Steve and Vikki on 01865 371734 or peverel@aol.com for details.

Norwich Science Fiction Group

Second & fourth Wednesdays from 8:00pm at the Cellar Bar, Ribs of Beef, Fye Bridge, Norwich. Contact 01603 477104; NSFG@cwcom.net

Peterborough SF Group

First Wednesdays at the Bluebell Inn, Dogsthorpe and third Wednesdays in the Great Northern Hotel, opposite station Contact Pete on 01733 370542.

Portsmouth/South Hants SF Group

Second and fourth Tuesdays at the Magpie, Fratton Road, Portsmouth.

Reading SF Group

Now meets every week in the Monk's Retreat, Friar St, Reading. The usual time will be from 9:00pm (probably later in practice), but every third Monday will be from 7:30pm. Some people may decide to meet at the earlier time every week, but this is not official. For details contact:RSFG@onelist.com

Southampton: Solent Green

Every third Thursday, 7:00pm, at The Duke of Wellington, Bugle Street, Contact Matt 01703 577113 werkhaus@tcp.co.uk

Walsall SF Group

First Saturday of every month at 2:00pm in the Meeting Room of Walsall Central Library, Lichfield Street, Walsall. http://members.nbci.com/walsall_sf/

Please forward updates, corrections and any information on new groups and gatherings to the main editorial address.

SIG

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Thanks to all contributors, Carol Ann Kerry Green & Steve Jeffery

Picture Credits:

Page 4, Photo Andy Sawyer Page 19, Photo Simon Morden

Cover and other art, Gary Wilkinson

Corrections:

In Matrix 152:

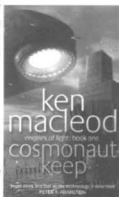
In Tanya Brown's column: And the winner is..., under Nominations for Best Non-Fiction instead of *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* — Andrew M. Butler, Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn it should have been *Terry Pratchett* — Andrew M. Butler (Pocket Essentials). It definitely wasn't Tanya's fault — apologies to all concerned.

Samuel Z. Arkoff was named as Samuel Z. Arkoff.

Stop press:

Dr Terrible starts looking up! 'Voodoo Feet Of Death' which I saw just as Matrix goes to press was very silly but I found myself chuckling along to lines such as: "You cannot defeat da feet" and "beware the feet they outnumber us all two to one!" But then we had the final episode 'Scream Satan Scream' and its back to awful again.

Cosmonaut Keep — Invasion of the Giant Phillishave? Just a thought.



JO'S TIMEWASTERS

Competition 153

Here is a nice, easy comp based on colours, starting with the ...

1. ... Spectrum -- who edited the Gollancz series of anthologies of that name?
2. Kim Stanley Robinson's recent trilogy about Mars had colours in the titles. In which chronological order?
3. What colour connects: a rising star, a border, Easter, and a little box?
4. What colour connects: a millennium, a brain, a hell, and a man of Kilsona?
5. What colour do you associate with the following: DBLF, FGLI, ELNT, GLNO?
6. a) If gray, green, white, blue, yellow and red are not geezenstacks, what are they? Who is to direct Disney's film of tb?
b) How does something green fit in?
c) What colour links all of these together?

Answers by the end of February, please, to John Ollis, 49 Leighton Road, Corby NN18 0SD

Results of competition 151

Clearly there are many c.ps out there judging by the entry. First out of the hat is someone whose TV watching is already curtailed, Gary Wilkinson. (...oh dear - ed)

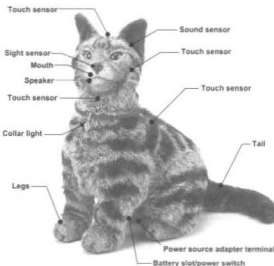
1. *Blake's 7.*
2. *The Martian Chronicles.*
3. *Quatermass and the Pit.*
4. *Star Trek.*
5. *Sapphire & Steel.*
6. *1990.*
7. *Helping Henry.*
8. Glynis Barber.
9. Maggie Wright.
10. John Statton.
11. George Takei.
12. David Collins.
13. Paul Hardwick.
14. Richard Vernon.

SIG



An exclusive shot from the forth-coming *Attack of the Clones*! A step towards realism for Lucas — the Death Star does have toilets! No, sorry ... it's another pic from the Heroes-for-Sale web-site proving, if nothing else, that their costumes have flies (or at least 'flaps') ...

Okay its too late now but there is always next year... here's a couple of potential Christmas present ideas from the Crow's Nest sf web site (www.computercrownsnest.com)



We've had robot dogs but now we have a highly realistic robo-moggy: NeCoRo the RoboCat. Initially five thousand will be retailing at \$1700 each. NeCoRo is nothing to do with the undead but apparently a pun on the Japanese word for cat. This refugee from *Blade Runner* can recognise its owner voice and its own name, plus wiggle its ears, blink and move its head and legs to express emotions from its unique personality which will develop, Tamagotchi-style, via how well it is looked after. Mummys, I'm frightened!

Toys for the Boys: Australian Mike O'Dwyer, who works in a hardware store (and has obviously watched the special edition of *Aliens* a few times) has invented a 'robot gun', building it in his garage, that fires at a rate of one million rounds per minute. This new lightweight 'solid state' gun-design stores thousands of bullets in multiple barrels, each shell sitting behind the other. It produces a 'death ray of lead' in a fraction of a second without jamming and before recoil can take effect. The Pentagon is looking to use it to replace landmines. Charming.

