

# matrix



The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association

## THE STAR WARS ISSUE

Matrix gets in line for the  
end of an epic saga

## IN CONVERSATION

Karen Traviss &

Liz Williams reveal all

## GOING UNDERGROUND

Jeff VanderMeer on the  
secret life of Ambergris

REVIEWS

NEWS

INTERVIEWS

No. 173  
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And Much More...

# matrix

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## Welcome

"I never try to anticipate what the world's going to think or even worry about whether they're going to like it or not. That's not my job, to make people like my movies.

"Obviously, fans would love to see a movie about Darth Vader running around killing people. I'm not telling that story, and I'm not interested in that. That's not what the movie is.

"It's not like the old Star Wars, this one's a little bit more emotional." - George Lucas on *Revenge of the Sith*.

I saw the Episode III trailer on the big screen for the first time last night, and I must say I'm excited. Here at the *Matrix* HQ we've been prepping this issue for some time, and - as you're about to see (and probably already guessed) - we've gone for a *Star Wars* theme in celebration and anticipation of the final instalment of the culture-changing, generation-inspiring set of movies.

Just check out the contents list above and you'll notice a lot of our regulars are fighting for *The Force*. But alongside all this *Star Wars* excitement, *Matrix* still delivers its great mix of news, articles and reviews from our regular troop of reporters and reviewers, plus we're chuffed to be joined by great authors Jeff VanderMeer, Liz Williams and Karen Traviss (see pages 3 and 12).

I'm only sad that we didn't have room for my carefully Photoshopped picture of Princess Leia with Andy from Little Britain replaying the classic scene - "I love you," ... "Yeah I know."

**Claire Weaver**

## DEADLINES

If you wish to contribute to future issues of *Matrix*, the deadlines are:

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The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association

## matrix

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# ON BUILDING A FANTASTICAL CITY

Guest Editorial by Jeff VanderMeer

channeling spirits after that initial inspiration. No, instead, I had to learn a lot about how to create a believable and yet imaginative setting.

Readers make assumptions about the real world that they do not make about fantastical worlds. A reader doesn't automatically buy into Ambergis in the same way that the same reader would believe a story set in my hometown of Tallahassee, Florida. Fantasy writers have to take greater care with their settings as a result, while not letting setting overwhelm the rest of the story.

Why do we read and love China Mieville's New Crobuzon novels? Why does the work of Mary Gentle or Michael Moorcock excite us? It's the quality of the imagination applied to setting and character. How you get there can be a long, hard slog because world building (which includes creating interesting characters) requires a tremendous amount of work and research. You can't just throw different elements together without

that that there are also many implausible juxtapositions in our real world—countries where people have cell phones but drive cars from the 1950s, for example.)

At the same time, the world has to be metaphorically and metaphysically interesting, which means you can't be too consistent. Everything can't be tidy and pat, and it should be in flux—it should be, in a way, alive. Above all else, to be interesting, a fantastical city should be a reflection of the writer's obsessions and subconscious impulses. (M. John Harrison's Viriconium stories are a good example of this trait—Viriconium is always shifting, always different.)

What's interesting is that readers of *City of Saints & Madmen* will often tell me "I love that part you made up about such-and-such," and I'll have to tell them I didn't make it up at all—it came from Byzantine or Venetian history. Others are sure that something I made up actually has a basis in historical fact. All this means

is that the real world is a very bizarre, strange place and that fantastical fiction is perhaps best suited to comment on this fact. Anyone who takes the time to create echoes of the real world in their fantasy worlds will eventually reach this realization.

I love fantasy because the world is a place of great beauty and horror, and fantasy is the only way I can fully express what I know about this contradiction. Fantasy, and world-building, then, is not escapism for me—or, I imagine, for other world creators. Instead, it's about realistic people. It's about the fact that this place we live in is full of unexpected marvels and things that are strange and alien even if we don't always realize it.

*City of Saints & Madmen*, the unauthorized guide to the city-state of Ambergis, is now available in handy pocket-sized paperback from Tor UK.

The author advised that under no circumstance should you visit [www.ambergis.org](http://www.ambergis.org)

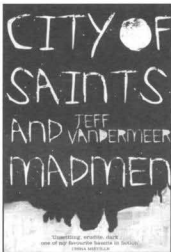
One night in 1993, I woke up with a vision in my head of a woman in a window and a missionary looking up at her from a crowded street. Every detail had a kind of superheated intensity to it. As if in a trance, I went to the computer and typed up about six pages about the characters and the city. The name of the city came to me just as I was about to type it for the first time: Ambergis. And, suddenly, as if the name was a key opening a locked door, I found an entire fantastical city in my head. The only problem was finding the time to get it all down on paper. So, over a period of nine years I wrote an entire book of stories about Ambergis, eventually published as *City of Saints & Madmen*. I also wrote the beginning of three novels, one of which has finally been completed and

"And, suddenly, as if the name was a key opening a locked door, I found an entire fantastical city in my head."

will be published as *Shriek: An Afternoon* next year.

Although Ambergis came to me in the equivalent of a vision or waking dream, and even though I had many details about the city in my head from that moment forward, writing about

making sure they work in combination. Otherwise, the reader will throw the book across the room. Readers will, rightly, revolt if you don't give them some sort of anchor, whether a consistent architectural description or consistency in types of



"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..."

## NEWSBITS

**Closer to God**

The Vatican is reportedly so incensed (geddit?) about the globe-spanning success of *The Da Vinci Code* that they have appointed an official debunker to take issue with its content in the popular press and thus gain it even more column inches than ever before. Authors everywhere are reportedly rushing to get themselves signed to this budding new PR agency.

**Motorcycle Emptiness**

British scientists recently unveiled the next generation hydrogen powered motorcycle only to discover on its test-drive that it was too quiet. In terms of oomph the hydro-bike can reach 50mph in under 12 seconds, without any polluting elements and still make no more noise than a rebooting laptop, causing the boffins to consider building in an electronic version of the vroom in order to avoid potential accidents caused by the bike's stealth tendencies.

**Mass Exodus**

A gamma radiation burst, the most powerful explosion in the universe, may have been responsible for the Ordovician mass extinction of 60% of the Earth's invertebrates over 450m years ago. Gamma ray bursts are thought to be caused by either two neutron stars colliding together or when giant stars collapse into black holes at the end of their lives. Reports of giant angry invertebrates wandering the Earth in search of huge pairs of prehistoric purple pants are entirely unsubstantiated.

**Hot Hot Heat**

Astronomers have detected radiation from planets orbiting distant stars for the first time. Planets are 10,000 times less bright than their parent stars, but while eyeballing them is out the question, the one thing they can't hide is their heat.

# CHINA MIÉVILLE IRON COUNCIL

With talk about the nominations list for this year's Hugo Awards already clogging up bulletin boards, live journals and good old-fashioned pub conversations everywhere in fandom, we still thought there was time to congratulate all the nominees and wish everyone the best of luck. While much has been made of the news that it's an all-British shortlist in the Best Novel category, *Matrix* is even more excited by the prospect that all the books themselves are of serious literary weight, so whoever the lucky winner is on the night the real winner will be the renewed credibility of the Hugo Awards, and its voting community, which is naturally very good news indeed.

**Best Novel**

**The Alchemist** by Iain M. Banks (Orbit)  
**Iron Council** by China Miéville (Del Rey; Macmillan)  
**Iron Sunrise** by Charles Stross (Ace)  
**Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell** by Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury)  
**River of Gods** by Ian McDonald (Simon & Schuster)

**Best Novella**

**The Concrete Jungle** by Charles Stross (The Atrocity Archives, Golden Gryphon Press)  
**Elector** by Charles Stross (Asimov's 09/04)  
**Sergeant Chip** by Bradley Denton (Fantasy & Science Fiction 09/04)  
**Time Ablaze** by Michael A.

# The Hugo Awards: Whoever wins... We win!

Burstein (Analog 06/04)  
**Winterfair Gifts** by Lois McMaster Bujold (Irresistible Forces NAL)

**Best Dramatic Presentation – Long Form**

**Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind** (Focus Features)  
 Story by Charlie Kaufman & Michael Gondry & Pierre Bismuth; Screenplay by Charlie Kaufman; Directed by Charlie Kaufman

**Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban** (Warner Brothers) Written by Steve Kloves; Based on the novel by J.K. Rowling; Directed by Alfonso Cuarón

**The Incredibles** (Walt Disney Pictures / Pixar Animation Studios) Written & Directed by Brad Bird

**Sky Captain and The World of Tomorrow** (Paramount Pictures) Written & Directed by

Kerry Conran  
**Spider-Man 2** (Sony Pictures Entertainment / Columbia Pictures) Screen Story by Alfred Gough & Miles Millar and Michael Chabon; Screenplay by Alvin Sargent; Based on the comic book by Stan Lee & Steve Ditko; Directed by Sam Raimi

**Best Dramatic Presentation – Short Form**

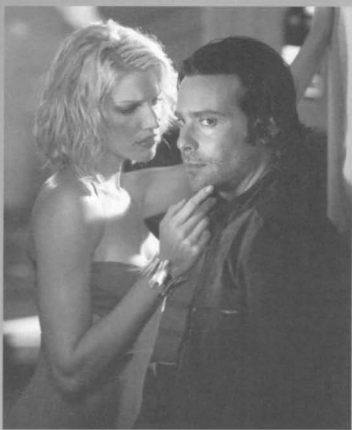
**Heroes Part 1 & 2 – Stargate SG-1** (MGM Television / The Sci Fi Channel)

**Not Fade Away – Angel** (20th Century Fox Television / Mutant Enemy)

**Pilot Episode – Lost** (Touchstone Television / Bad Robot)

**Smile Time – Angel** (20th Century Fox Television / Mutant Enemy)

**33 – Battlestar Galactica** (NBC Universal Television / The Sci Fi Channel)



"I'm Luke Skywalker. I'm here to rescue you."

## The Science Museum's Guide to the Galaxy

The Science Museum has unveiled an exhibition based on the new feature film version of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* that will open to the public from 28 May 2005.

The exhibition has been specially created by the Science Museum and the team behind the film to link with the forthcoming major motion picture. It will recreate the fantastic voyage of Arthur Dent, and along the way take a look at some of the science which shapes our lives, the universe and everything.

From Arthur Dent's kitchen to the far reaches of outer space, visitors will come face-to-face with characters such as the Vogons, Ford Prefect and Marvin. However the exhibition will not

only focus on Douglas Adams' intriguing and irreverent creations, but also provide a fun and engaging exploration of the science featured in his work.

The exhibition will also take visitors behind the scenes of the production to see how the hugely-ambitious film was created, including insight into the work undertaken by Henson Creature Workshop.

Robbie Stamp, executive producer of the film and the Science Museum exhibition said: 'An exhibition about *Hitchhiker's* at the Science Museum would have pleased Douglas enormously. He loved the company of scientists!'

The exhibition will run from 28 May 2005 to 27 November 2005.



## Broadswords on Broadway

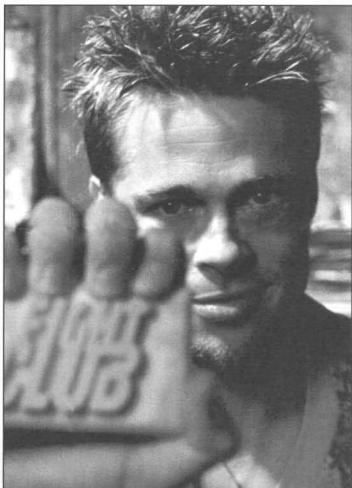
Following its spectacular box office success at the cinema, the media monster that is *The Lord of the Rings* looks set to take to the stage in a \$11.5m live-action musical version.

While the news has gone down in some quarters like a fart joke in an Elven council meeting, others have taken this as a deserved revenge on fans everywhere for the dominance the movie trilogy has held over recent cinema.

Mindful of the high levels of passion that anything

*LOTR* can invoke in its readership, the producers have promised to stay true to the original vision, eschewing the special effects of the movie trilogy in favour of a more theatrical and original take on Middle Earth.

The show is scheduled to open in March 2006 in Toronto and come to London six months later.



## Villain's Library

Bookseller Waterstones have come up with a list of books featuring their top twenty literary villains and anti-heroes. Running from Tyler Durden and Patrick Bateman to Dr Gonzo and Holden Caulfield, *Matrix* was surprised at exactly how many of its favourite books were featured.

1. *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov
2. *Perfume* by Patrick Suskind
3. *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
4. *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk
5. *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess
6. *Schindler's Ark* by Thomas Keneally
7. *A Sunday at the Pool* by Gil Courtemanche
8. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S Thompson
9. *Vernon God Little* by DBC Pierre
10. *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov
11. *The Dice Man* by Luke Rhinehart
12. *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
13. *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
14. *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis
15. *The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald
16. *The Collector* by John Fowles
17. *The Catcher in the Rye* by JD Salinger
18. *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt
19. *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac
20. *The Outsider* by Albert Camus



"Why mesa always da one?"

# ALL CHANGE PLEASE

Tom Hunter reports on the recent BSFA and SFF annual general meeting and the changes to the organisation's people of power

The official AGM of the British Science Fiction Association took place at Conway Hall in Holborn, London on Saturday April 16th.

The event was held in partnership with the Science Fiction Foundation, a successful pairing that enable both organisations to get through their own essential business agendas while also providing attendees with a number of interesting panels and guest speakers.

The featured authors included BSFA award winning writer Ian MacDonald (*River of Gods*) and Karen Traviss (who also appears later in this issue) who talked about her take on the craft of writing based on her experiences of being a professional journalist: a most refreshingly practical approach to written word that entirely denied the benefit of waiting for a whimsical muse and instead suggested the twin tactics of market research and the five-year plan.

However it was the year in review speech by BSFA chair Elizabeth Billinger that really made people sit up and pay attention...

Elizabeth opened her speech by thanking everyone involved in the running of the BSFA for continuing to do their jobs (for no money and often lots of hassle) and praised the glittering list of guests that have graced the monthly BSFA meetings in London over the past few months. This last is no idle backslapping as they really have been top quality and run the breadth of possibilities within genre and beyond: to anyone able to make it along to these meetings who hasn't yet checked them out they really are recommended diary dates.

It's also been a year of change in the BSFA staffing with several well-known names stepping down from their roles. Perhaps the biggest news is the



retirement of Andrew Butler from the position of *Vector* Features Editor, a position he has fulfilled for a staggering 60 issues. The new editorship will be jointly coordinated by Niall Harrison and Geneva Melzack who will be taking on the role starting in the New Year and joining Paul Billinger on the mag, who remains as Reviews Editor.

Other changes include Kathy Taylor retiring from the role of Production Manager and Estelle Roberts stepping down as Membership Secretary. The former role is undergoing a temporary hiatus while the BSFA restructures its staff roles, while Dave Roberts is temporarily filling the Membership role alongside Estelle until the end of the year.

Other news following on from the last BSFA committee meeting includes a future change of direction for *Focus* magazine as well as a new *Best of*

*British* campaign designed to tie in with WorldCon then go on to become an annual event and plenty of BSFA activity at *Interaction* this year. More news on these will be detailed in the forthcoming issues of *Matrix*.

Finally came the announcement that both Elizabeth and Paul Billinger are standing down from the role of joint BSFA chair this year after what British fandom would probably refer to as a fantastic innings. Pat McMurray has been announced as the new chair and will officially take on the role following this year's WorldCon.

All in all there's plenty of changes underway in the BSFA right now, and as *Matrix* has been lucky enough to sit in on the relevant meetings we're glad to confirm that BSFA is going to not only continue but that plans are afoot to build on its existing role within UK fandom and the genre world.

As such we will be reporting

regularly on news as it develops within these pages, with this page being dedicated to BSFA news for the foreseeable future. Anyone with thoughts, ideas or queries should send them to editors at the usual address.

## Subscription Rate Change:

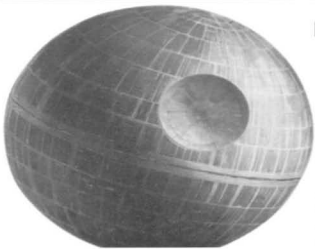
The BSFA's membership costs have undergone their first price rise in five years in order to meet increases in costs and ensure the ongoing development of the BSFA. All BSFA staff positions remain unpaid and voluntary.

Membership rates are now:  
UK £26 (£18 unwaged)  
Europe £31  
Elsewhere £31 (£37 airmail)

Life Memberships continue to be priced at 10 times the yearly rate. Joint or family subs will be at a rate of +£2. Discounts for standing orders on Memberships are being discontinued.



"The Jedi are extinct. Their fire has gone out of the universe."



RODERICK GLADWISH'S WORLD OF

**STAR  
WARS**

# SCIENCE

Science and science fiction feed off each other incessantly. I heard a rumour once that the reason why early US astronauts wore silver pressure suits was that the technicians had spray-painted them to match what was expected from fiction. It wasn't required for thermal control, the often stated reason, because that was provided by water pipes woven through the suit. Today the latest Episode III Wookiee suits use the same technology to prevent overheated thespians.

Although we can't use hyperspace to go faster than light we can copy Count Dooku (Christopher Lee) and use a solar-sail craft. A technology demonstrator, Cosmos-1, is due to be launched on 30th April. This type of propulsion has the

potential to reach about a tenth the speed of light. Impressive for us, but useless if you wish to evade hyperspace using pursuers.

Beam weapons have been around on Earth since 1982 when the Royal Navy dazzled enemy pilots with lasers. Recently they stopped due to a crisis of conscience over whether deliberately crippling rather than killing people was morally right; however, other countries continue to develop and market them. Lasers for blowing things up have come along more slowly. Sparta Incorporated's 'Zeus', a truck-mounted laser, has been blowing up unexploded bombs in Afghanistan. Northrop Grumman demonstrated a prototype high power chemical laser that can shoot down artillery shells and rockets,

which are a hundred times more difficult to hit than an X-Wing. Being rather large (building-sized) they are working out how to make it mobile. Suggestion: a very very big truck. Not blaster material though.

A defensive shield of sorts is in development by UK scientists. It can't stop bullets or shells but can protect against the biggest threat to lightly armoured vehicles – the rocket propelled grenade. These focus the warhead's blast onto a copper disc creating a lethal penetrator. It has been discovered that by charging the armour plates with thousands of amps of current the copper jets are vaporised and the blast debris neutralised.

Unsupersaturated robots have been around for ages and currently, according to

disposal unit with machine guns and rockets and are deploying them in Afghanistan and Iraq.

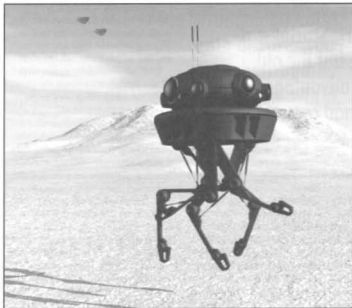
All these are remotely controlled or dumber than insects. Artificial intelligence is missing and here Star Wars can help because the writers have spotted that science needs to aim for robots that are camper than a Boy Scout jamboree. Pattern recognition, the key to intelligence, should be guided toward knowing when blue won't go with avocado. This explains why two droids were shot out in an escape pod. Forget secret plans. Five minutes on a starship with some chrome dome telling you your hair looks like ear-muffs would annoy even the most patient princess.

We also lack technology to transmit sound through a vacuum. It's everywhere in the Star Wars universe and is probably a by-product from hyperspace travel.

Then there's the lightsaber. It cuts (except Obi-Wan's habit in Episode IV), catches blaster bolts and it makes that buzzing noise. More importantly, it makes anyone, no matter how wooden look cool. When Samuel L. Jackson took up one the air was in danger of freezing around him. This technology is far beyond us, which is probably a good thing because in terms of health and safety they're a menace.

Most of this tech is for war which makes me glad it's in a galaxy far away. I'd hate to live on a world full of extremist politics and weapons capable of destroying worlds.

Roderick Gladwish



**"Science needs to aim for robots that are camper than a Boy Scout jamboree."**

androidworld.com, twelve domestic robots are for sale; ranging from vacuum cleaners such as the 'Roomba' from iRobot to the 'Care-O-Bot II' from IPA Stuttgart, which helps the elderly.

Battledroids are on the way too. The US military have adapted their Telon bomb

**"Obi-Wan Kenobi? Obi-Wan...  
Now, that's a name I haven't heard in a long time."**



# BACK FROM THE DEAD

Stephen Baxter ponders the indestructible nature of the TV franchise...

So we are enjoying yet more examples (see my column in *Matrix 224* on *Timeslip*) of modern revivals of much-loved franchises of my 1960s childhood – and, perhaps, the death throes of another. In the year of the return to BBC TV of *Doctor Who*, February saw the launch of Gerry Anderson's *New Captain Scarlet*, a CGI reworking of his classic 1967 puppet show. And this year too we learned of the cancellation of *Enterprise*, for better or worse leaving us with no new *Star Trek* in prospect for the first time in two decades.

In this year of new *Scarlet* and *Who*, it's interesting to note that their universes have actually collided in the past. In the pages of the marvellous 1960s British comic *TV Century 21* (see *Vector 224*) a rather good Daleks strip ran over the first hundred issues or so, concluding with the Dalek Emperor menacingly discovering the coordinates of Earth. Other tentative crossovers include a *Doctor Who* strip in the post-TV21 *Countdown* comic, the use of Anderson-production props in *Who* – and one *Who* companion, Ace, actually wore a Fanderson badge on-screen.

And as it happens, these fictional worlds collided again very recently. In a *Who* tie-in novel called *The Indestructible Man* by Simon Messingham (BBC Books, 2004), rather thrillingly, the TARDIS materialises on a decrepit Cloudbase.

We're in the Anderson universe some thirty years after the events of the TV show – but the names of the Anderson elements have been changed; Cloudbase is called 'Skyhome', it is the headquarters of 'PRISM' (not Spectrum), and so on. You can guess who the Indestructible Man is ... Perhaps the various Anderson-show rights holders weren't happy with this rather bleak representation of their

creations. Or maybe it was all just too complicated.

We won the *Mysterion* war, but the *Mysterion* warriors are despised by a public outraged to learn about their secret war. Spectrum was driven underground. *Scarlet* was given sanctuary by an embittered 'Buck Sharon' (aka Jeff Tracy – Sharon and Tracy, geddit!) whose Thunderbirds ('Lightning')

by the Pertwee Doctor and UNIT are here precursors to the *Mysterion* attack.

Perhaps this crossover makes sense. Both the Doctor and *Scarlet* are unkillable; if you hurt them *Scarlet* recovers, the Doctor regenerates (until he runs out of lives anyhow). Thus in Messingham's book, as the Doctor recovers from a shot to the head, it seems quite logical

his body regard as 'optimally' undamaged? It would be embarrassing if he were 'repaired' all the way back to a foetus!

The book has had mixed reviews. My impression is that Anderson fans like it more than *Whovians*, perhaps because *Scarlet* and his universe are the centre of gravity, not the Doctor. It's not a great book but it does deliver some fine fan-pleasing moments, such as when the Doctor finds Thunderbird 2 rotting in the Amazonian jungle, thirty years after its last flight: 'The head, wings and tail were raised up on four spindly, telescopic legs, discoloured, rusted and wreathed in luxurious jungle vines' (p204).

(Of course this wasn't the Doctor's only cross-franchise excursion. Lance Parkin's *The Infinity Doctors* (1998) features a dark-matter star virus called 'Baxterium', and a copy of my novel *The Time Ships* in an end-of-time library ... And just to close the causal loop, *Time Ships* itself grew out of a *Who* drabble (called 'Paradox', in *Dubble Who*, 1993).)

So much for nostalgia. Do these venerable franchises still work after forty years? At time of writing the new *Who* has yet to air. But what of the new *Scarlet*?

Well, it's beautifully made, with all the attention to detail on the CGI images that used to be lavished on Derek Meddings's models. It seems to me an intelligent reimagining of the old franchise, and given the technical constraints – you only ever see a handful of people on screen, for instance – some of the episodes have been grittily effective.

But then I'm a nostalgic old fart. Is it connecting with the target audience? It is being networked on ITV1, but is buried in their chaotic Saturday morning kid's show – and especially in this context the show seems cold. *Scarlet*



**"I'm a nostalgic old fart. *Scarlet* was always a dark concept, but the old puppet shows had the advantage that it looked as if your toys had come to life."**

technology was coopted for the war. This continuation of the *Scarlet* story is incidentally quite different from that depicted in the old 'canonical' Anderson continuities. In *TV 21* issues 234–238 cosmic rays immobilised the computers on Mars and the *Mysterions* were driven off. But Messingham's continuity also incorporates elements of *Who* – the alien incursions battled

that Spectrum suspect him to be a *Mysterion* agent.

And *Scarlet*, thirty years on, hasn't aged a day. I've always been intrigued by the wider consequences of *Scarlet*'s indestructibility. He could surely never age, for his body would take signs of ageing as damage and would recover. Indeed, would he actually grow more youthful? What age would



**"We seem to be made to suffer. It's our lot in life."**

Stephen Baxter



was always a dark concept, but the old puppet shows had the advantage for young children that it looked as if your toys had come to life. The new CGI characters seem stiff and emotionless – and old too. Perhaps it doesn't help that everyone we meet is either a military officer or a Mysterionised zombie or both. Sadly it's hard to imagine this is going to twang the heartstrings of a new generation, but at least the new show is authentic Anderson, offering an antidote to the sugary disappointment that was the *Thunderbirds* movie last year.

And what about *Trek*? After forty years how could the franchise be revived? I don't think another ship-captain-adventure show is going to work; the audience has moved on. But *Trek* has a huge backlog of well-known story material and good will to draw on.

I've been taken by *Smallville*,

**"How would it be to be a Vulcan stranded on Earth, or to discover you are a half-human, half-Vulcan hybrid, like Spock?"**

intelligent reworking of the *Superman* mythos for a new (post-*Buffy*) generation. In a similar way, though with a rather smaller budget, in Kim Newman's remarkable novella *Time and Relative* (Telos, 2001) we see the *Who* universe through the eyes of the first Doctor's teenage granddaughter on Earth in 1963.

So it could be with *Trek*. For instance: What is going on in the present day? How would it be to be a Vulcan stranded on Earth, or to discover you are a half-human, half-Vulcan hybrid, like Spock? This would be a character story of a difficult growing up, of alien-ness not properly understood both internal and external – and of an Earth adrift in a universe dominated by covert powers. I'm well aware that such ideas have been tried out before, but then there was a *Superboy* before *Smallville* did it properly.

But this may be grasping at straws. I grew up with *Star Trek*, and I've always followed its various incarnations. I'll miss it if it's finally gone! But earlier this year I was asked to contribute to an anthology of essays on *Trek*, and after forty years I could think of nothing more to say. Perhaps enough is enough. And there are always more dusty old 1960s franchises to be dug up...

Sunstorm

A Time Odyssey Book Two

ARTHUR C.  
CLARKE  
AND  
STEPHEN  
BAXTER

**S**Stephen Baxter is the author of the novels *Flux*, *Anti-Ice*, *Timelike Infinity*, *Ring*, and the *Manifold* trilogy of books. He has also collaborated with Sir Arthur C. Clarke on the novels *The Light of Other Days* and *Time's Eye*.

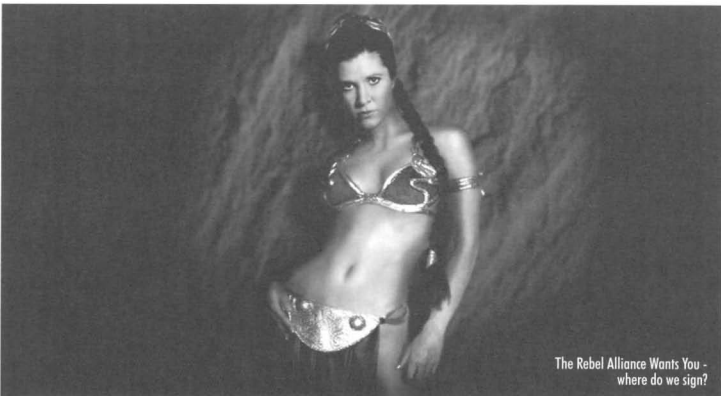
He was born in Liverpool, England, in 1957, and holds a degree in Mathematics from Cambridge University and one in engineering from Southampton University. His novels have won several awards, including the Philip K. Dick Award, the John W. Campbell Memorial Award, the British Science Fiction Association Award, and the Japanese Seiun Award. Several of his works have also been nominated for the Arthur C. Clarke Award, as well as the Hugo and Locus awards. He has also written over 100 short stories.

Stephen Baxter is the vice president of the BSFA. His next novel is *A Time Odyssey: Sunstorm Book 2* with Sir Arthur C. Clarke.

You can find Stephen at <http://www.cix.co.uk/~sjbradshaw/baxterium/baxterium.html>



**"That malfunctioning little twerp, this is all his fault."**



The Rebel Alliance Wants You - where do we sign?

## STAR WARS GENERATION

Tom Hunter on a fandom far, far away...

**T**he force will be with you, always,' says Obi-Wan and the whole cinema silently mouths it with him....

Any true fan knows that good old Ben is simply playing the mentor-figure role to the best of his ability, even coming back in ghostly voiceover with a few well-timed Jedi homilies to aid a certain young farm boy in times of personal and familial crisis; and this despite his now being more powerful than we could possibly imagine and probably having a galaxy-spanning list of housekeeping chores to get on with.

However the cynical and dark-sided have often taken this quote out of context, interpreting it as an early warning sign of the *Star Wars* marketing mission statement and a key piece of evidence pointing towards George Lucas's own empire-building ambitions. It's also worth remembering that when *Star Wars* was first released it was perceived within the industry

as a small-scale independent film with limited appeal and the assumption that its profits would be similarly sized.

For those who really want to look there is undoubtedly much to critique in *Star Wars*. Even the movie's loyal fans have occasionally found the saga turning on them like a cornered womp rat, teeth bared, eyes glowing Sith red and muttering darkly about Jar Jar Binks and those 'bloody ewoks.' A word that is never mentioned in the actual film, but that has still managed to work its way into the global consciousness, usually combined with a suitably negative prefix.

Reviewing the original's release for *Time Out* back in 1977, J.G. Ballard called it the 'first totally unserious sf film' and cites a quote from 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox's advance publicity machine describing the modern motion picture as 'the most magnificent toy ever invented for grown men to play with and express their

fantasies.'

Still, that was 1977, and for a whole generation *Star Wars* wasn't just a trip to a galaxy far, far away, it was also the first crucial moment of discovering science fiction as a whole.

Lacking the grown-up resources of Hollywood didn't have to mean loosening out on the creative spaces of this shared playground world. For those with hyperspace-jumping imaginations and toy-sized budgets, school sandpits became Tatooine dunes and Sarlaac pits, while those big polystyrene packing sheets that came with your new TV were easily transformed into the icy battlefields of Hoth.

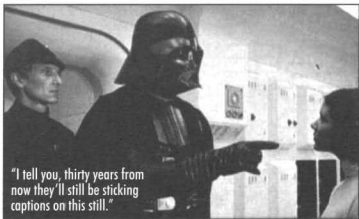
The release of the prequels presents sf fandom with the unprecedented opportunity to observe the stages of its own formation and renewal. What component or combination of themes is it that draws us to the genre? If there is a threshold moment, that oft mentioned

sense-of-wonder, we're in a unique position of being able to witness it happen to a new generation and the imminent conclusion of Lucas' vision will, if nothing else, offer us the chance to meet them.

When you're young there's probably little difference in running around the local park pretending to be an X-Wing or a Pod-Racer, but what about identifying with the characters themselves? The choice between Han, Luke and Leia was difficult enough, but at least they were all obviously heroes. With the prequels charting Anakin's fall towards the dark side, the choice of hero role model becomes less clear-cut. Is it possible to pretend to be the young Anakin in a playground recreation of Jedi Vs Battle Droids without acknowledging his future fate as part of the game? These themes may not appear sophisticated to older audiences looking for a childhood fantasy fix, but to younger viewers the new trilogy



"I don't care what universe you're from, that's got to hurt."



"I tell you, thirty years from now they'll still be sticking captions on this still."

Boba Fett: toughest kid in the galactic playground



has plenty of new ideas to connect with.

While there are other notable differences between the two trilogies (special effects being only the most obvious) it is the unparalleled number of connections that really make this worth watching as a genre event. Thanks to a host of its most memorable characters being aliens or droids it's been possible for many of the original actors to reprise their roles in the prequels and develop a level of continuity across the project that, while being entirely common place in those endless fantasy literature sequences, has never been seen on the big screen before. Even human actors have been able to appear, with Ian McDermid now finding himself old enough in real life to play Palpatine as a younger man; and it's this level of connection as much as any advancement in the onscreen effects or playing out of origin stories that marks the new trilogy as a vital part of the genre

cannon.

This is no remake like *Solaris* or re-imagining like *Planet of the Apes*, but a true continuation of a single original story across four decades, and this is itself a unique achievement in modern storytelling, whatever its other artistic merits. And while some may say that its popularity is powered as much by market forces and a giant publicity machine, it's worth remembering that there have been other media behemoths, sequel sequences and press junkets that have failed to engage with the public imagination.

Like no other sf film before or since, *Star Wars* has held up a shining, lightsabre-shaped torch in the centre of our popular culture and kept it there as a beacon for future sf fans to navigate by.



"These aren't the droids we're looking for."

# WARNING: CONTAINS LANGUAGE

Karen Traviss and Liz Williams in conversation about characters, themes and Star Wars...

**LW:** When I start a novel, I tend to begin with an image or a series of impressions – for instance, *The Poison Master* began with an image of a huge plant-decked city and a young woman walking along a causeway. I also start with an idea ('what if the Elizabethans made it into space?'). Do you work along similar lines, or do you have a completely different starting point?

**KT:** I'm reactive to current affairs. I see scenarios rather than scenes, and if they make me flaming mad or I find them hilariously funny, I'm off and running. There's always that journo mindset working: "Yeah, okay, but what if...?" With the *City of Pearl* series, I asked

myself what would happen if we encountered aliens on their home turf and then behaved as if we were still top of the food chain. Well, simple: we'd get our arses kicked good and proper. Then I select characters with the psychological profile of people who'd get involved in that kind of situation, and build from there. Where do you head once you have your initial image – characters or plot detail?

**LW:** It's usually a bit of both – I have a couple of central characters, generally, and a few scanty ideas for plot. I don't think my plots are a strong point, though usually they hang together – more or less. With *Nine Layers of Sky* I really wanted to write something about the

current political situation in Central Asia, combined with Russian mythology. So a plot had to be constructed around that: I wasn't initially sure whether the bad guys (the *rusalki*) were actual aliens, or from another dimension, for instance.

Do you find that some characters attain prominence as you write, or do they behave themselves? Mine are a mixture of both – sometimes someone will insist that 'their' story gets told at the expense of someone else's....

**KT:** Basically, I'm writing political/military thrillers set in space, so the plot is key – but a plot is who your characters are, and how they interact and make choices, nothing more. I always

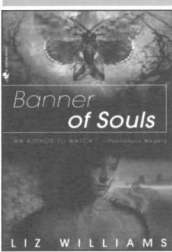
laugh when I hear someone's book described as plot-driven, not character-driven: what the hell does that mean? Probably that the characters are poorly executed. Ninety per cent of my effort goes into creating and maintaining characters. It's like running a computer model – put the characters in a situation and they work through the sequences themselves, and they all get their turn. I don't have plot problems because if the characters are realistic and consistent, they do the work for me. I'm convinced all plot problems stem from not knowing characters or settings well enough: if you're in the character's head, standing where they're standing, then it's hard to go wrong. When the shit hits the fan – and that shit has been thrown by another character, of course – then I know just how Shan or Eddie or Aras or whoever is going to react. I did exactly the same thing for my *Star Wars* work: the characters had the steering wheel.

I know you're big on characterisation, but I've always been curious as to why you only do standalones. If I engage with a character in fiction, then I want lots more of it, and judging by readers' habits it's a very common reaction. Why haven't you done sequels or series?

**LW:** I agree that plot and character are strongly connected, and I think it's an excellent point, but with my stuff, I sometimes find that the character faces a number of choices and I don't know how they're going to respond, because I don't always know myself how I'm going to respond in a particular situation, whether rightly or wrongly. This is particularly true of characters who self-sabotage – they could go either way. Shee horning characters' behaviour in order to fit the plot is not on, however, and it doesn't work (you can usually tell when people do this, because you get



"Context is crucial – 'But WHY does all my research have a military application?' 'Shut up and fill out this funding form.'"



"Why, you stuck-up, half-witted, scruffy-looking nerf-herder."



idiot plots - I last came across this with a detective story, where the heroine simply behaved so idiotically that I lost all faith in her).

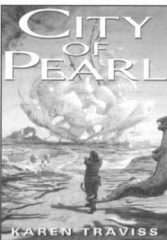
I write standalones just because I get ideas and settings that I want to explore, which aren't consistent with one another. Sometimes there's an overlap - the ideologies of empires, for instance, come into play in both *Empire of Bones* and *Nine Layers*, but more often, there isn't. *The Poison Master* just isn't compatible with anything else. It's not so much that I get bored with characters - I'd love to do more with Ilya and Elena, for instance, but I feel that I've explored the themes of that novel enough for the moment.

There will be something of a sequel, however, in that the next novel from Macmillan, *Darkland*, is set partly in the same world as *Ghost Sister*, because I had ideas to which I wanted to return (hopefully, not like a dog to vomit). I sometimes think that with series, the characters are placed above the central ideas and I don't really want to

do that. There may be a sequel to *Darkland*, but if there is, the focus will shift partly from the nature of human and animal consciousness, onto gender relations.

What do you think are your own preoccupying themes and ideas? Religion would seem to feature largely and *City of Pearl* features a sophisticated take on that. Why did you choose that set of ideas in particular?

**KT:** Religion isn't actually a theme. The colony is a Christian one because a commercial colony wouldn't have been financially viable so the motivation to settle had to be a radically different one. It's a very interesting device by which to examine different moralities, and the parallels with scientific viewpoints are meant to be uncomfortable, because science seldom questions where some of its own norms come from. One of the characters says that science's anthropocentric view of the world (which it has, whether it admits it or not) owes everything to religious thought



"Lines define us. But the bugger is that not only aren't they clear, they don't even exist. That's a scary concept for readers to come to terms with."

and nothing to hard science.

**LW:** Certainly science (and scientists) can be remarkably disingenuous about the fundamental tenets of their discipline, especially when you start to question why research is following particular paths. There's a tendency to treat it as a series of linear inexorabilities, divorced from any kind of social context. As we know, that context is rather crucial ("But WHY does all my research have a military application?" "Shut up and fill out this funding form.")

**KT:** If you're looking for themes, all my stuff is about lines: where we draw the line between what we will and will not do, between us and them, human and animal, male and female, whatever. Nice people will do disgraceful things if the object is the other side of an arbitrary line. Lines define us. But the bugger is that not only aren't they clear, they don't even exist. That's a scary concept for readers to come to terms with. And there's no better place to examine that than in SF: I can

think the unthinkable.

**LW:** Well, one always comes up against what to me is the central issue of philosophy (and what was supposed to be the central issue of *Ghost Sister*) - the conflict between relativism and absolutism. Either you have an absolute, which underpins everything including morality (and which some of the more headline scientists as well as religious fundamentalists would love to have), or you're forced to admit that no absolute is possible, in which case it's all up for grabs. If one is really in a situation where one's enemy, for want of a better word, can't or won't understand that conflict, then you really do have problems. As we do in the world today.

**KT:** The biggest difference between the wess'har and the humans in my books is what each regards as absolutes of morality: both make sense in their own context, but the two don't mix...

Continued on page 30

"Who's scruffy looking?"



# ATTACK OF THE E-CLONES, REVENGE OF THE SITES

A little while ago I received an e-mail from Tom Hunter, one of *Matrix*'s illustrious editorial team, asking if I'd got any ideas for the forthcoming *Ironing Board* (ie this one). You know Tom. He's about seven feet six inches tall. You'll have seen him ducking under doorways at conventions, smiling. Whether that's because he's just a happy kinda guy or because he's chuffed at the fact that he's taller than everyone else, I'm not sure about. Indeed, as you may know the gel between the vertebrae in the human spin compresses when we're upright, so as the day progresses we get shorter. Tom is actually eight feet nine inches tall when he gets up in the morning. He had to buy a car with a sunroof so he could stick his head out of it when driving to work, sitting in the back seat. At Eastercon I had to stand on a step to have a conversation with him, and even then I got a crick in my neck. What's a crick? A whole 'nother story, that's what a crick is. (Actually it's a cross between a crack and a stick, so there you have it.)

Incidentally, how was your Eastercon? I didn't have a great time to be honest. I spent an enjoyable couple of hours in "a snug" (a cross between a snog and a bug) in the company of our Tom and Claire, Dr Mark Roberts (who rather alarmingly threatened to do a swan dive into a pint of Guinness at one point) and a few others whom I won't embarrass by mentioning here. But by about five on Saturday I was kind of disappointed with the fact that there were few other mates present, and the overall lack of activity. I was supposed to spend most of Saturday and Sunday at the con but found myself wandering around wondering what I was doing. I faced the choice of watching *Dr Who* at the con, a cold night in an unfamiliar hotel bed and a queue for breakfast, or coming home and watching *Dr Who* with the kids and spending the night next my lovely wife's hot arse. Well, when you look at

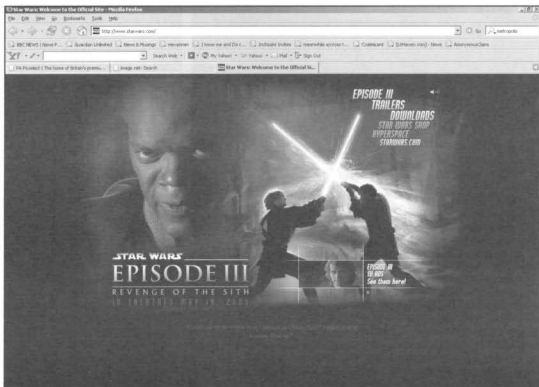
it like that it's no contest really...

Anyway, I digress, as Ronnie Corbett would say. The upshot of Tom's e-mail was that the forthcoming issue (ie this one) was to have something of a theme – *Star Wars*. Could I tie the ironing in with this theme? he asked. Did I want to put as spin on it? Was I in any way interested?

Well, to be honest I wasn't

e-mail with another gentle reminder (he's just so mellow and diplomatic that Tom – it must be the lack of oxygen or something) asking about this *Star Wars* piece. So, as the kids have gone out and there's not a hot arse in sight to distract me, I decided I'd better do it now. Before I forget. So here I sit with a sausage sandwich and a cup of coffee and Jimi Hendrix on

important things. (Hang on it's got to the good guitar bit in *All I Want is You* by U2...) Back to the internet. I reckon a lot of people are the same as me. Visit a few sites every day. Or possibly every few minutes if you've got broadband. The sites I mainly go to are: the extreme tracking page for my website to see if anyone's visited; usually the answer is no. (Just by Radiohead



sure. But, hey, I'm a sucker for a challenge. So I thought about it for a while – well a few minutes actually – then forgot about it again. When I saw Tom at Eastercon he gently reminded me of it again, and threatened to let Dr Roberts (didn't he used to be the singer with The Blow Monkeys...?) throw me into the pint of Guinness, which was by this time empty, if I didn't come up with said ironing soon. So I promised I would, came home to my wife's hot arse and promptly forgot about it. Well, it's understandable, isn't it?

my iPod (Voodoo Chile, from the "guitar" playlist – superb), wrestling with the ironing.

You might think that the above paints me in something of a bad light. That my failure to deliver a piece of quality writing for *Matrix* readers about *Star Wars* material on the internet to deadline is utterly unprofessional, and that I should hang my head in shame. Well, I did for a few minutes. But to be perfectly honest with you I'm completely disenchanted with the internet. It's crap, really. Complete and utter rubbish. A waste of time. A

– top banana! Then there's the JeepClub website (I've got a 4-litre Cherokee, pal. Yeah. Hi-output. It's not compensating for anything. Honest. If you don't believe me ask my wife.) Anyway, I even visit the JeepClub site less often than I used to. Sometimes I go to eBay. Maybe I want to buy a piece of junk from somebody. Maybe I want to sell somebody a piece of junk. At the end of the day it's mostly junk, though. Then of course there's Google, Barclays Bank, the BBC News website, The Alien Online... But in truth



"We're keepers of the peace, not soldiers."



a waste of time. Has that forum been updated in the five minutes since I last looked? No. Has anyone visited my website? No. Have I had any new e-mails in the last few minutes. YES! One from Brittany Nguyen offering to sell me VV1agara and another telling me Why Residual Income Is Smart Money. Well thank goodness – that's something I'd always wanted to know!

like I have, that's how, and DO NOT connect it to the internet. Ever. I now download my e-mails to the desktop computer, visit my few websites a couple of times a day, and do most of my work on my laptop somewhere else in the house, where the internet can't get me. (My laptop, in case you're interested in such matters, is an IBM T22. It's as tough as old boots as it's made

**"How does an irritated middle-aged man cope with the pressures of all this... I'm struggling to find a more suitable word than 'crap'... on the internet? Buy a laptop and DO NOT connect it to the internet. Ever."**



Strange Brew by Cream. Cool. Anyway, you're getting the picture by now aren't you. What's all this got to do with Star Wars? I'm getting to that. Patience, Felicity. (STOP PRESS: another e-mail has arrived as I type: hang on, it's to someone called Barry Quirk. Someone is offering him a career opportunity. Lucky fellow. I must forward this to him urgently. Whoever he is.) How does an irritated middle-aged man cope with the pressures of all this... I'm struggling to find a more suitable word than "crap"... on the internet? All this

from granite.) How did I decide which laptop to buy? Um... well I looked for reviews and opinions on the internet, and from what everyone said...ah...

Having apparently just shot myself in the foot somewhat, rather like that bloke out of ZZ Top, I guess I'd better just do some ironing. (Bohemian Like You – Dandy Warhols – yeah!) Star Wars. Tom wants he does. (See, that's supposed to be how Yoda would say it.) One idea I proposed to Big Tall Tom from my disadvantage point on the step at Eastercon was a top ten

what turned up. The idea behind this being that it'll all be crap or completely irrelevant or links to hotases.com or something, thereby giving support to my disenchantment with the internet. So here goes. (Hang on my guitar playlist's finished...let's shuffle...Harbour by Moby). Back to the Star Wars google top ten countdown. Imagine that music Fluff Freeman used to play when doing the charts and it'll set the tone nicely.

DER DER DERRR DE DE DERR, DERR DERR DERR. At number ten, pop pickers, is *toysrus.com*. The Star Wars Collectors Archive created by Gus Lopez. "Launched in 1994 [this] was the first Star Wars collecting site on the internet. It was created with the goal of bridging the geographical gaps between collectors in a way that is fun, educational and easily accessible. What you will find here is the sum total of many collectors' experiences, made possible by the contributions of individuals and presented with dedication to the integrity and continued growth of the hobby. So sit back, grab your mouse, and take a tour through some of the finest Star Wars collections in the world." I don't think so somehow. At number nine, not 'alf, it's *jedimaster.net*. "This is the Original Star Wars Kid. He was just goofing off (!) at school, and now he finds his private performance downloaded by over 15 million internet users across the world as he plays with his golf club light sabre." So what. I've got a son of my own who does that. I used to do it myself. Get a life. Bubbling under at number eight, all right, is *lucasarts.com*, which is a very purple website that really just wants you to buy stuff. DIDDLE DIDDLE DIDDLE DEDE DEDE.

(As the next few sites seem to be selling stuff, and I'm getting bored of all this nonsense as well as running out of space I'm going to leap to the top three.) DER DER DER DE DE DER, DER DER DER. At number

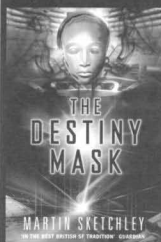
three this week, pop pickers, is *theforce.net*, all right. "News and rumors concerning the Star Wars movies, books, comics, toys, and games. Fan art, fan fiction, and links." DE DE. At number two is the catchily titled *indh.com/title/t0076759/*, which really isn't worth mentioning, trust me, and at number one DE DE, all right, DE DE, it's *starwars.com*! DE DE DE DE, DEDE DEDE, DE DE! The official Star Wars website, with trailers, downloads (everything's downloaded from the internet, isn't it?) a shop and even hyperspace!

What does this prove? I'm not sure. But I've shuffled my songs and have got How Soon is Now by The Smiths. I am the son and the heir of nothing in particular...

Nuff said, methinks.

Martin Sketchley

If you have any specifically web-related news that might be of interest to *Matrix* readers or ideas for future articles and can be bothered to share them, please e-mail me. Be sure to include the relevant URLs. Otherwise it's a waste of everyone's time.



Martin Sketchley's latest novel, *The Destiny Mask*, is out now in hardback from Simon & Schuster. [www.martinsketcheley.co.uk](http://www.martinsketcheley.co.uk)



**"Brave, but foolish, my old Jedi friend. You are impossibly outnumbered."**

# LET ME SHOW YOU THE CITY

Andy Sawyer on German cinema's countess of kitsch

Foundation  
Number Fourteen:  
Metropolis by Thea Von Harbou

In his introduction to the 1963 Ace edition of Thea von Harbou's novel, Forrest J Ackerman, self-styled "Science Fiction's no. 1 fan," gushes over "Metropolis, My Home Town... the most exciting, fabulous city on the face of the earth." He calls the novel a work of genius, "as thesauric as Shiel, as kaleidoscopic as Merritt... as bone-spore as Bradbury... as poetic as Poe, as macabre as Machen." Holger Bachmann, co-editor of a major book of essays on *Metropolis* in 2000, calls von Harbou "the countess of kitsch of German cinema" and talks of her "mixture of sentimentality, reactionary tendencies, 'inner' piety and trivial, populist sensationalism." Who is right?

As often with these debates, the answer is not clear-cut. Von Harbou (b. 1888) had been a professional writer since 1915, specializing in screenplays and novels. Formerly married to Rudolf Klein-Rogge (who played the inventor Rotwang in *Metropolis*), she married Lang in 1922, and collaborated with him on a number of screenplays. The film itself appeared in January 1927. As most fans of the film know, *Metropolis* was the most expensive picture ever made to that date, and proved to be a box-office flop, despite drastic cuts for the American market. Critical reaction too was mixed: H. G. Wells, perhaps seeing echoes of his own work in it, especially loathed it, calling it "the silliest film" and "stale old stuff" in 1927 and still sniping at it ten years later in the preparation for his own *Things to Come*. Nevertheless, Lang and von Harbou continued as a successful creative team until 1933 when (according to Lang's own account) he was invited to make films for the Nazis. Lang left that same day. Von Harbou (who by that time was separated from him, although they still worked together) stayed. She was to write scripts for directors who

were Nazi sympathizers.

Until the recent release of the digitally-enhanced version by the Munich Film Museum, von Harbou's novel was one of the major publicly-accessible sources for the missing parts of the film. In it, we hear, for instance, about the rivalry between John Fredersen and Rotwang for Hel, who died giving birth to Fredersen's son, Freder. We understand, too, why Fredersen orders Rotwang to give his robot the appearance of the

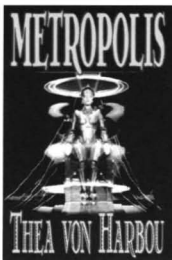
all his members were fastened to the soundless evenness of the engine which bore them forwards. No, not to the single engine which was the heart of the motor-car in which he sat - to all these hundreds and thousands of engines which were driving in an endlessly gliding, double stream of gleaming illuminated automobiles, on through the streets of the city in its nocturnal fever."

And: "[she [Metropolis: the Mother-city] wanted living

theme, and at worst a suggestion of a proto-fascist strand. With Lang himself later disowning this ending, and with his ex-wife's later collaboration with Hitler's regime, as well as a whole range of sentimental leader-worship in the novel, it's tempting to blame everything on Thea von Harbou. Certainly, her book is an odd read for modern tastes: its train of hallucinatory imagery, dislocated sentences, and Gothic medievalism make charges of trivial "piety" and populism easy to make.

And yet... I have no idea how the novel reads in the German: I can only compare the translations of the Ace books edition with the extracts in Michael Minden and Holger Bachmann's *Fritz Lang's Metropolis*. But overblown and ideologically unsound though it may be, it does not read like a bad novel to me. It reads like one which perfectly expresses in verbal terms the dynamic collision of forces in 1920s

Machine Age Germany that Fritz Lang was expressing in cinematic light, shadow and movement, and the baroque architecture of his sets. One of the worst effects of Hitler's fascism on culture is this: virtually *anyone* before his rise to power can be accused of proto-fascism as we see implications bubbling from a miasmic soup of images. The film's ending (which does not, incidentally, appear in the novel) certainly seems to be an ideological betrayal. But then, Forrest J Ackermann, in calling *Metropolis* "My Home Town," gives his address in the towers rather than the abyss inhabited by the toilers at the machine-face. Ackermann, however, in pointing to Shiel, Merritt, Bradbury, and Machen, emphasises von Harbou's weird and visionary tendencies. We do not have to agree with what our visionaries *make* of their visions: but in criticising them we should never ignore their aesthetic power.



saintly Maria. As well as being a vision of the future, the novel is a psychodrama in which several conflicts intertwine, with Maria, both Virgin and Mother-figure, pacific Madonna and lascivious rabble-rouser, at their heart.

While Freder's oedipal conflicts are to the fore, the novel hints at his father's own passions. At the beginning, he claims to have put both suffering and sin behind him; at the end, he is broken by the apparent loss of his son, claiming to his own mother that he is the "someone to come" who will direct the masses.

Von Harbou certainly writes with hothouse fervour: "Georgi trembled from head to foot. And yet it was not really trembling which seized his resistless body. It was as though

"Hallucinatory imagery, dislocated sentences, and Gothic medievalism make charges of trivial 'piety' and populism easy to make."

men for food." Or: "She [the false Maria, leading the workers' revolt] sang with her blood-red mouth of deadly sin!" We are also told about the infamous House of Yoshiwara and its sinister boss "September". Through the drug Maohee, the collective hallucinations of September's clients are made visible and audible to all as one among them becomes "the embodied conception of the intoxication of them all": a concept which anticipates Philip K Dick's use of drug-induced reality changes. When all this is pulled together with the celebrated ending, where Freder, mediator between "hand" and "brain", pulls his father and the workers' foreman together to shake and make up with nothing actually resolved, we certainly have an ideological problem. Many critics of the film have seen this conclusion as at best a glossing-over of its class-warfare

"Everything that has transpired has done so according to my design."



## MIND THE GUSH

Roderick Gladwish on the latest magazines and online offerings

The *Infinite Matrix* is a semi-pro SF internet magazine that publishes pieces as and when they are ready. Content varies from articles, comments, reviews and fiction. There are bits by David Langford in 'The Runcible Anible', a weekly blog by Howard Waldrop and random reviews from John Clute and others.

The editor/publisher is twice Hugo nominated Eileen Gunn. This is not a one-woman-band, as many webzines appear to be, she has a significant support team. She does work hard though because much of the artwork is by Ms Gunn too. Some is surreal and some modernist.

It holds a three year archive of tales and I was sorely tempted by title alone with 'The Death Trap of Dr Nefario' by Ben Rosenbaum but it wasn't a recent tale. Either it's going to be long or very bad, I'm going back to read it at some stage.

Eileen Gunn pays her contributors and professionalism tells in the content.

In 'Reborn Again' when your body is no long up to spec. You can be loaded into the body of a donor, who doesn't want to live. In this case the donor is still resident due to the religious convictions of the process operator. Suicide was the plan for the donor, who finds something to live for, whilst the new owner gains from joining the New York Jewish community. It was supposed to be an examination of loss and community or it could have been satire. I'm not sure it worked.

'I, Robot' was the longest piece twisting the Asimov robot concept. The US plus Allies are losing a war against Eurasia. A cop, whose ex-wife defected, is more concerned with his wayward teenage daughter than pursuit of the illegal Eurasian technology that is destabilising his society. A society with a sinister edge despite helpful

robots and the three laws. On the other side the machines are more like the Culture's benevolent AIs.

Funded by donations, it's good enough to make me feel guilty I read it for free.

Samdotpublishing provides a great range of magazines, both print and web based, plus a few hybrids. *The Martian Wave* is a webzine quarterly dedicated to exploration and colonisation of space. When focusing on such a narrow element of the genre the stories have to be different from each other and original because the usual variety in most magazines is missing. Sadly it disappointed.

'Battling Io' by Richard Tomblinson had men being real men and ex-space marines being real ex-space marines. I inwardly groaned when the whiskey came out.

'Gravity Io' by Bennie Grezlike was little better. A plague threatens a colony on Europa, the ship carrying it is

hit by a micrometeorite with the crew dead and it's left to Mom, Dad and son Val to save the day. It did have 'black hole calibration' which made me think of Star Trek with its 'polarising phase inverters' and 'recalibrate the plasma thingy' and I realised Wesley Crusher syndrome (also known as 'Will Robinson syndrome by proxy') is still out there.

Old chestnuts on Mars came from Richard S. Levine. 'My Brother's Keeper' covered the dilemma: what happens if one of a series of clones commits the murder and the Law can't tell which? His answer is to punish every single one of them.

*Star Wars* magazine is a bimonthly pro-magazine available on newsstands everywhere. If you're into the minutiae, like pictures of your favourite characters or need guidance on how to dust your collectables it's in here. What's missing is balance. Everything is

fantastic. Mr Lucas is a genius, all the special effects are the best, every product is a must-have and every con is a crime to miss. As in those 'Making of' interviews with the actors who praise their co-stars, even the ones that need to be prodded with sticks to move on cue, there are no faults.

It's worth comparing it with *Dr Who Magazine* (Matrix 164) where product reviews will criticise when necessary and there is a knowing humour present. Children and adults know the Doctor isn't real; however, at least in *Star Wars* magazine there were reminders that this is all make-believe.

This issue looked at designing the Wookiee homeworld, linking it to interviews with Peter Mayhew (Mr original Wookiee) and Axel Dench (Mr new Wookiee).

A nice yet scary touch was the Q&A section. Here fans could ask any question and get an answer. Most were typical fan stuff, a healthy minor obsession to flex the imagination, but when questions start 'In *The Empire Strikes Back*, minute 33, seconds 55-57...' I start to feel uncomfortable.

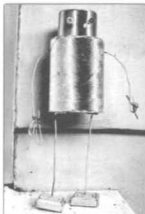
There was also fiction. Describing a minor event after Episode II which had a female Jedi and a handsome roguish smuggler investigating hidden technology. She used the Force a lot and fancied the smuggler a bit, but chose to follow the way of the Jedi.

*Star Wars* Magazine is perfectly targeted. Anyone can read it and enthuse over the whole *Star Wars* universe, but if you have an allergic reaction to extreme gushing stay well away.

The Infinite Matrix: [www.infinitematrix.net](http://www.infinitematrix.net)

The Martian Wave: [www.samdotpublishing.com/mw/cover.htm](http://www.samdotpublishing.com/mw/cover.htm)

Star Wars Magazine: Nearest newsagents or [www.titanmagazines.com/uk](http://www.titanmagazines.com/uk)



"It's not my fault."

# mediations

Like Star Wars and being in the Labour Party have, I've discovered over the past few weeks, developed quite a lot in common.

Amongst one group of my friends and acquaintances the General Election has loomed over everything like an endless Star Destroyer pursuing a hapless transport. For another group (there really isn't much overlap) the arrival of *Episode III* has dominated conversations like a leaked memo on the Iraq war.

In both cases, my continued loyalty to a once popular franchise has earned me hoots of derision and lectures on everyone's list of pet peeves.

Some people hate the cheesy dialogue (from Lucas or the spin doctors), others complain about the dodgy love story (Anakin and Padme or Gordon and Tony). Most people think all the stuff about trade and taxes is boring (er, that'll be both).

At this point, depending on my mood, I will tend to offer some sort of justification, generally in the form of "Yes, but..." – all that stuff about trade and taxes is either: (a.) Lucas drawing interesting parallels between the corruption of his Republic and the modern American state; or (b.) the sort of thing you need to do if you are going to be the only genuinely redistributive government in the history of British politics.

Of course, I've lost them now and their eyes glaze over until something occurs to them, and a wicked grin spreads across their face. They've got me. I know what's coming.

"But what about Jar Jar Binks/Tony Blair?"

And suddenly they're gloating and pointing fingers.

I say nothing. Loyalty, after all, has its limits.

Martin McGrath

# Flicker



If you are one of those misguided folk who believed (or even hoped) that the forthcoming *Star Wars* prequel *Revenge of the Sith* marked some sort of finale for the *Star Wars* universe, prepare to think again. Indeed, even though *Star Wars* may have reached the end of its road as a cinematic franchise (though some fans still hope for the once mooted but apparently unlikely third trilogy), the next few years could see events in a galaxy far, far away dominating your small screen.

Speaking at *Star Wars*: Celebration III, a Lucasfilm-run convention to mark the launch of *Episode III*, George Lucas confirmed that work on a number of *Star Wars* projects for television was underway.

In a question and answer

session, Lucas said that animated series, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (see page 28) would return, this time in a series of thirty-minute episodes. Details are unclear, but it appears that rather than continuing with the predominantly hand-drawn, two-dimensional animation of the first two seasons, future instalments will be computer generated and three-dimensional.

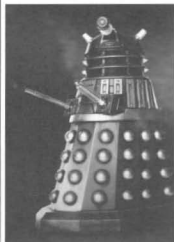
Also in the works, although "about two years out" according to Lucas, is a live action series set between the end of *Revenge of the Sith* and the beginning of the original *Star Wars*, *A New Hope*. This series will feature peripheral characters from the prequels and original trilogy, Lucas said.

This is not the first time Lucas has transferred one of his franchises to the small screen.

He was intimately involved with the creation of the Indiana Jones spin-off *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*, which ran for thirty episodes between 1992 and 1993. There are said to be plans for 100 episodes of the as yet unnamed *Star Wars* series. Lucas will produce the series, but is unlikely to write or direct individual episodes.

Unusually for US television, production will not begin on the series until all the scripts are written for the first season, as was the case with the Indiana Jones series, and it may not air until shooting on the whole season has been completed. This would significantly reduce any television studio's ability to interfere with the content of the show on the basis of viewer responses.

## Excuse for a Dalek pic



We could pretend that this is a news story about the new *Dr Who* – maybe tell you what a big hit it has been (take that Ant & Dec) or the insane decision by Christopher Eccleston to quit after just one season – please, God, let Rose stay!

Or, we could get all excited about the Christmas special, the already commissioned second season, or the rumours we've heard about who might be writing future episodes.

We could do all this, but really this is just an excuse to run a picture of a new Dalek. Nice.

## LOOKING DODGY

Proof that the superhero movies are finished, *Sky High* is a Disney comedy about a school for superheroes – starring Kurt Russell (flee I tell you, flee)... As if the first one wasn't a big enough disaster, Fox have given the go ahead for a sequel to *Alien vs Predator*, they think the first one was "a big success" (How?)... Superman's costume, nasty...



"This bounty hunter is my kind of scum: fearless and inventive."

# WALK DOWN THE RIGHT BACK ALLEY...

Martin McGrath

Whichever way you looked at it – and mostly I do my looking upwards, from the gutter – the streets of *Sin City* are mean. Really mean. They're the kind of mean that makes junkyard dogs nervous. They're the kind of mean that involves dramatic slashes through slatted blinds and light catching a killer's glasses just so. They're the kind of mean where a cop with one more day until retirement just can't resist trying to finish off that one last case.

People say crime is a problem in *Sin City*, but buddy, you're more likely to get flattened by a cliché than shot in the head. And, in the end, almost *everyone* gets shot in the head in *Sin City*.

This is the kind of place where old, scarred men with gravelly voices narrate their own stories. Where a chest full of bullets is a minor inconvenience. Where racial stereotypes are rigidly enforced. And narrators talk in short sentences. Like Chandler. Kinda. But without the beauty.

Of course the broads have the worst of it here in *Sin City*. First there are the terrible clothing shortages. Sometimes even smart ladies, ones with good jobs, are forced to walk around for days with nothing on. It's tough. And if you're a hooker? Forget about it! Luckily for us guys, there isn't one chick in the whole damn city aged over thirty. No one wants to have to stare at anything that might be sagging, right? Yeah.

And then there's the shitty career opportunities. There are only two jobs for dames in *Sin City* – a whore or a victim. And believe me, buddy, they're both fucked. But at least the whores get to carry round unfeasibly large calibre weapons. The victims? What can I say, big guy? Sometimes you just got to ritually humiliate someone if you want to justify twenty minutes of ultra-violence. And if it just so happens that it's always a broad that gets humiliated, well that's just the way things are on the very mean streets of *Sin City*.



**"Sometimes even smart ladies are forced to walk around for days with nothing on."**

Hey, but even a place like this has to have something going for it. *Sin City* has Marv (Rourke), Hartigan (Willis) and Dwight (Owen), and any town with those guys in it can't be all bad, am I right? Damn straight.

Marv, well he's the star and everyone loves the big dumb lug. Okay, maybe not everyone, but a psychopath sometimes has to torture a lotta stuffs if he's going to get revenge. Let's just say that everyone that survives his rampages loves Marv. Someone killed Goldie, and Marv loved Goldie, so lots of people are going to die and Marv isn't going to stop until he gets his

revenge on the killer (Wood) and the man who is protecting him.

Hartigan's a cop, but one of the honest ones – if you can believe that. He's got one day left on the job, a heart condition, and the senator's son is torturing and killing little girls and no one but Hartigan wants to stop him. But there are no medals for good guys in *Sin City*. All Hartigan gets is framed and a prison sentence. But you and I both know that when he finally gets out, there's going to be hell to pay.

And then there's Dwight, who might be *Sin City*'s last knight in shining armour, if he wasn't a wanted killer with a new face. Dwight can't stand to see a woman hurt, so when a rogue cop threatens his girlfriend and the safety of the prostitute militia that runs Old Town, Dwight just can't stay out of the fight. The mob ain't gonna know what hit 'em.

And there you have it, three tough tales of everyday life in the meanest city in the world. Now some people are gonna tell you

this is cheap pastiche, and others are gonna say it's an homage. I say, you pays your money and takes your choice.

But let me tell you about *Sin City*. She might be mean, and she might have some ugly spots but you ain't ever seen a city looked better than this. The Miller stuff – the sexism, the crummy warmed-over dialogue and predictable, bloody revenge stories – that stuff I could do without. But the Rodriguez stuff – the razor sharp action sequences, the fantastically physical performances from a magnificent cast, the technical perfection – that's the stuff that makes visiting *Sin City* worthwhile.

Still, I wouldn't want to live there.

**Director:** Frank Miller, Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino  
**Screenwriter:** Frank Miller  
**Cinematography:** Robert Rodriguez  
**Starring:** Bruce Willis, Mickey Rourke, Jessica Alba, Clive Owen, Nick Stahl, Rutger Hauer, Elijah Wood, Rosario Dawson, Benicio del Toro, Jaime King, Devon Aoki, Brittany Murphy, Michael Clarke Duncan



**"I'm just a simple man, trying to make my way in the universe."**

# HELL AND DAMNATION

Martin McGrath keeps his soul but laments the loss of two hours of his life

Keanu Reeves can be an entertaining actor. In *Speed* and the original *Matrix* his likeable, slightly bumbling on screen persona is ingratiating and winning. He has a good way with pithy one-liners, can play a reasonably convincing action hero, and he's a handsome chap. Plenty of movie careers have been built on far less.

But the minute he's asked to portray the slightest sign of emotion, the whole thing falls apart. For all his many talents, Keanu Reeves cannot do emotion. And, if he's bad at emotion, he's even worse at long expository speeches where he's asked to carry the weight of the whole movie.

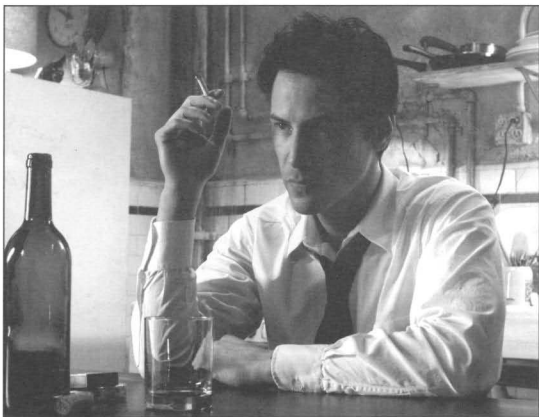
Emotion and intelligence are just not in his range. You know it, I'm pretty sure he knows it, and surely the executives at Warner Bros must know it.

So what, in the name of all that is good, just and decent in the world, possessed anyone to even consider casting Keanu Reeves in *Constantine*, a film that requires him to play a man tortured by the knowledge that what ever he does, who ever he saves, he is going to hell. Why, in the name of sweet baby Jesus, would anyone ask him to play the keeper of ancient knowledges capable of keeping the demons of hell at bay.

You have to imagine that somewhere on the Warner Bros lot there is someone making decisions who: (a) has never seen a Keanu Reeves movie; (b) never bothered to read the script for this film; and (c) is a flippin' idiot.

It isn't that the film takes liberties with the comic book source material – some of that works particularly well, like the casting of Gabriel (the suitably ethereal Swinton) as a woman – its that they've taken leave of their senses and liberties with some basic laws of the universe in casting Reeves in a role that requires such weight. It is, without any shadow of a doubt, one of the most extraordinary pieces of miscasting I've ever seen.

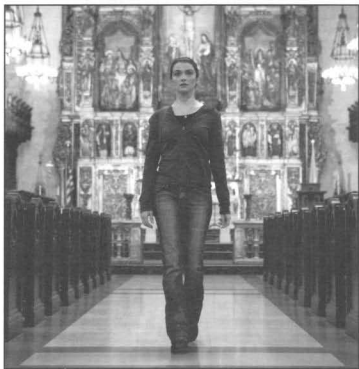
The result is that the entire heart of *Constantine* is missing. Any chance there might have



been for this stodgily written and flatly directed movie flew out the window with the money they paid Reeves. No amount of Rachel Weisz in wet shirts (that happens once or twice more that appears strictly necessary) or fine supporting roles from Stormare (Satan) and Vince (Father Hennessy) can bring it back from the dead.

The plot, demons walk the earth, and arch-demon slayer, John Constantine, is all that stands between mankind and hell-on-earth, is predictable enough. The effects are impressive – certainly the budget seems to be all on the screen. But the dialogue is leaden and the story stumbles rather than roars to a climax.

Warner Bros have at least three more DC Comics movies in production – *Batman Begins* is imminent, shooting of *Superman* is underway and *The Watchmen* is in pre-production. You have to hope they're going to be significantly better than this.



"At last we will reveal ourselves to the Jedi. At last we will have revenge."

## SEVEN DAYS

Samantha Corvin begrudges the Ring



Girl meets boy. Girl and Boy go to secluded log cabin. Girl and boy watch a mysterious video tape. Seven days later, girl and boy die.

Cue the sequel: woman knows about tape. Woman takes her son (who is trying just too damn hard to be Haley Joel Osmond) to a quiet, sleepy little town (where they don't have VCRs?). But the malicious ghost responsible for the tape gets to them anyway – and so the franchise continues...

*Ring 2* is the sequel to the Hollywood remake (*Ring*) of a Japanese horror movie (*Ringu*), which in turn is an adaptation of Koji Suzuki's novel of the same name. Confused? Let me put it another way – man writes book. Book gets made

into movie. Movie gets remade by Hollywood (which, truth be told, ain't half bad). Hollywood makes a sequel... You know the rest.

On their own, each sequence is great. If you just watch the Hollywood version, you know what you're dealing with: one horror movie and one formulaic, derivative horror-movie-sequel. If you only watch the Japanese versions, you get pretty much the same tale (with the added bonus of *Ring 0*, the prequel to *Ringu*). And if you read the books – *Ring*, *Spinal* and *Loop*, again, it's the same story – just about.

The difference really shows in the delivery. The book has a slow, building sense of fear. *Ringu* effectively transfers this onto the screen with a few extras thrown



"Man writes book. Book gets made into movie. Movie gets remade by Hollywood. Hollywood makes a sequel... You know the rest."



in for good measure – plus, being Japanese, the differences in culture are enough to give it a real edge for a Western audience. And then you have the Hollywood version – expensive, flash, CGI'd to the eyeballs and playing up to the obligatory made-you-jump style of US cinema.

The emphasis each movie takes from the original novel varies enough so that, by the end of the sequels, *Ring 2* (Japanese) and *Ring 2* (American) are totally different sequels telling completely separate stories about the same subject.

Although it follows the standard sequel formula, the producers/writers/directors/etc of *Ring 2* have obviously been doing their homework.

*Dark Water* is another Suzuki adaptation, and hmmm, what a surprise, the Hollywood *Ring 2* shares a very, very familiar ending.

But you can see all of this coming, of course – it's what one expects from the Hollywood machine. It contains all the trademarks of a straight sequel. So why did I go and see it? And why, despite all I've said, do I really like it?

Maybe it's because I'm a fan of the *Ring* enterprise. Maybe I've got in too far, seen too much. Maybe I've glimpsed a hint of reality behind the myths.

Or, maybe, I realise that nothing I say matters. You shouldn't let reviews tell you what to do – go see for yourself and make up your own mind.

Samantha Corvin



"There's always a bigger fish."

# MOVING AND MAGICAL

Abandon logic and treat your inner two-year-old, says Martin McGrath

If you want a brief idea of how mesmerizingly beautiful the animation is in *Howl's Moving Castle*, then let me tell you that a version in Japanese (with subtitles) kept a hyperactive two-year-old rapt and silent for an hour with only the occasional "ooh" and "wow!"

Not even *Winnie the Pooh* can manage that.

Waste". Sophie ends up cursed and trapped in an old-woman's body. Seeking a cure only Howl can provide, but prevented from asking him for it, she comes to share Howl's life in the eponymous castle with Calcifer, the slightly evil fire spirit, the boy Mark and a turnip-headed scarecrow. Meanwhile, outside the castle the world is collapsing

into the chaos of war and the manipulative Madam Suliman appears to be trying to control all the magic in the world.

That *Howl's Moving Castle* doesn't quite reach the heights of Miyazaki's finest films doesn't mean that it is a bad film but there are weaknesses. Logical plots are not always the director's greatest strength, but even by

Miyazaki's standards, this one can be tough to follow and the ending is unsatisfactory.

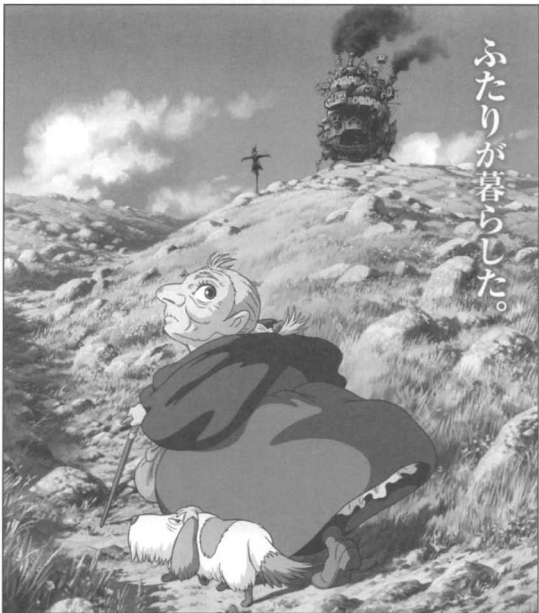
However, that doesn't stop this being a film worth seeing. If the plot becomes too much, just sit back, allow the gorgeous images and memorable soundtrack to wash over you, let your inner two-year-old stretch her legs, and just say "Wow!"

**"Logical plots are not always the director's greatest strength, but even by Miyazaki's standards, this one can be tough to follow."**

The richness of the world, the superbly detailed and finely nuanced character drawing and the vast imaginative world that unfolds as the film progresses are absolutely captivating. To say that, visually, this film is every bit as impressive as the very best of director Miyazaki's previous efforts – *Spirited Away*, *Princess Mononoke* and *Nausicaä* – represents about as high a level of praise as this reviewer can offer.

And *Howl's Moving Castle* incorporates many of Miyazaki's longstanding thematic concerns – pacifism, environmentalism, the conflict between the way young people and old people see the world, the magic just below the surface of the 'real' world.

*Howl's Moving Castle* is the story of Sophie, a young girl who becomes caught up in a struggle between the wizard Howl and the "Witch of the



**"I'm a Toydarian, mind tricks don't work on me. Only money."**

## WIRED OR TIRED?

Lack of ambition makes watching  
*Robots* a scrapheap challenge

The problem with a film like *Robots* is being able to judge it on its own merits. It is a perfectly serviceable, technically respectable and reasonably funny kids movie in its own right and, for so long as one can keep the word Pixar from popping into one's mind, it is by no means a disappointment.

A sharp story with solid voice

acting and some better than average jokes make *Robots* (from the same people responsible for the equally serviceable *Ice Age*) a good film that has enough going on to keep the children entertained and won't leave adults too bored. Especially if the occasional fart joke is your kind of thing. If nothing else, it is a real pleasure to hear Mel Brooks

deliver a funny line again.

That said, eventually the word Pixar will pop into your head and you won't be able to help feeling just a little let down. Though perfectly likeable, *Robots* doesn't have that extra dimension, either in the story, design or characterisation that lifts it off the screen and puts it in your heart. Too many of the big money set pieces are too obviously contrived – there's at least one frantic dash across the city too many – and though the tale of small town boy making it big in the city has lots going for it, the thing never really catches fire. Not even the finale, in which the trampled citizenry rise up and overthrow the evil global capitalists (honest!), really got the blood flowing.

What *Robots* really lacks is ambition. There is no attempt to rise above the here and now. Everything, from the pop soundtrack to the Britney Spears joke (funny though it was), will be almost entirely incomprehensible to an audience a decade from now. As such, *Robots* like too many other films in the current CGI animation

glut (*Shrek Tales*, *Shrek 2* and the like) has no aspirations beyond immediate profit. Criticising Hollywood for chasing a quick buck might well be the ultimate exercise in futility, but compared to the best of animation: classic Disney, Pixar, Miyazaki and even Nick Park's *Wallace and Gromit* – productions that aspire to a certain artistic quality – then the shortcomings of this sort of thing become jarringly evident.

Not a bad film, just not an extraordinary one, *Robots* seems unlikely to live long in the memory but won't offend too many as it zips past.

Martin  
McGrath

Director: Chris Wedel and Carlos Saldanha  
Scriptwriter: Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel  
Starring: Ewan McGregor, Robin Williams, Mel Brooks, Halle Berry, Jim Broadbent, Amanda Bynes, Drew Carey, Jennifer Coolidge, Paul Giamatti, Greg Kinnear, Stanley Tucci, Dianne Wiest  
91 mins.



"You're Bantha poodool!"

# SLAP UP CHOPSOCKY

Leave your laws of physics at the door



**K**ung Fu Hustle is another in K. wright/director/star Chow's long line of very funny martial arts movies (*Shaolin Soccer*, *The King of Comedy*). I've thoroughly enjoyed a lot of his previous films and *Shaolin Soccer* won me over completely. Chow has a manic disregard for everything, from the laws of physics to the petty dictators who seem to crop up in his films so regularly.

Chow's character, Sing, is a fairly typical of his screen persona. He's a down-at-heel loser amongst down-at-heel losers who can't stay out of trouble. Sing wanders into Pig Sty Alley, one of Shanghai's least salubrious districts, pretending to be the leader of the infamous "Axe Gang" and proceeds, fairly ineptly, to attempt to terrorise the inhabitants.

Pig Sty Alley turns out full

of the cream of 1970s kung fu movie veterans. Wah Yuen, who got on the wrong side of Bruce Lee at least twice (*Fist of Fury* and *Game of Death*) is superb as the landlord and Leung Sui Lung – once one of Hong Kong's biggest stars – is both terrifying and hilarious as The Beast.

The plot is, truth be told a bit of a shambles – with the focus on characters, and the audiences sympathy, shifting several times too often before the conclusion – but the broad comedy and wildly over-the-top, super-powered fight scenes compensate for the sometimes hard to care for characters.

Oddly, it is *Kung Fu Hustle*'s strongest moment that ends up being the film's greatest weakness.

The introduction of the Axe Gang, in an extraordinary

and wonderfully atmospheric opening ten minutes – culminating in a marvellously malicious musical number – is by far the film's strongest sequence. "There's no way they can keep this up for an hour and a half," I found myself thinking. And sadly I was right.

It isn't that the rest of the film is bad, it is just that the opening sequence is one of the most imaginative and stylistically striking things I've seen on the screen in a very long time. Sadly nothing else in *Kung Fu Hustle* manages to be quite that original.

*Kung Fu Hustle* is entertaining, if slight, but the opening sequence is worth the price of admission alone. Released 10 June, or available on import DVD now.

Martin McGrath



Writer/director: Stephen Chow  
Cinematography: Hang-Sang Poon  
Starring: Stephen Chow, Wah Yuen, Qiu Yuen, Kwok Kuen Chan, Siu Lung Leung, Dong Zhi Hua, Chiu Chi Ling  
95 mins



"As you know, our blockade is perfectly legal and we'd be happy to receive the ambassadors."

## GO WEST

Cowboys. Aliens. Blue suitcases and bowling balls. Strange things are happening.

Les 'man with no name' and 'Lmore 'man with a stupid name', terminally out of work actor John Person (Jon Favreau) is offered a chance to clear his many debts by his strange neighbour (Bud Cort – the one you probably don't recognise from 'The Life Aquatic' poster).

Hired to deliver a mysterious blue suitcase, seemingly from the makers of the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction* Person heads out to an oddball desert town, famed for its UFO sightings, to hand the case over to a man known only as 'Cowboy'. Whilst waiting for his rendezvous, Person familiarises himself with the bizarre locals. Here the film falls into very familiar territory where adjectives such as strange, mysterious, oddball and bizarre act as character and story. However, in between a few overtly offbeat plot points are some terrific performances from an eclectic cast all largely working against type.

The very watchable Favreau ensures John Person is as amiable and likeable as ever. A recurring gag about Person's inability to choose his favorite headshot also reflects the character's lack of self-knowledge. But still managing to retain a strong sense of character, Favreau ensures the film is always his story as he plays straight man to the other characters. While the film is never crass enough to pepper the script with postmodern references to the likes of *U-Turn* or *Red Rock West*, you get the very strong impression that Person has definitely seen these films, is aware he's now in one and, whilst never mugging, is merely playing along.

However, while this helps Favreau's performance, it does render some of the relationships a tad unconvincing, in particular his dalliance with friendly barmaid's daughter – and possible alien abductee – Ruthee (Rachael Leigh Cook). Ruthee is charmingly portrayed but

it always seems as if Person is just humouring her. The only time Person seems moderately concerned is when sporadically confronted by FBI Agent Banks (Kelsey Grammer). As far from Frasier as we are ever likely to see him, Grammer's performances are a delight that only highlight how little he is actually in the film and, as one of the most distinctive characters, how different this film could

have been.

While the film seems to know its place in the grander scheme of Hollywood movies, it is very tightly crafted. Every plot point is neatly set up so whenever you meet a character or there is a revelation, however small, you are hooked. That is until it reaches the ending. While one of those endings that are clearly open to interpretation, it is not obvious whether writer-

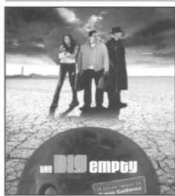
director Steve Anderson would be able to fully explain what happens himself.

However, it is clear this tale of lost souls and abductees was always intended to be an oddity. Never quite achieving the family friendly David Lynch or Coen Brothers tone it aims for, the cast and pace ensure that it is always a likeable oddity, if not out of this world.

John Hunter



"While never crass enough to pepper the script with postmodern references to the likes of *U-Turn* or *Red Rock West*, you get the very strong impression that Person has definitely seen these films and is aware he's now in one."



"There is no civility, only politics."

# JOLLY GREEN GIANT

Martin McGrath saves the green planet

*Save the Green Planet* is semaphatically not what I was expecting from a Korean science fiction film. Nor, to judge by the terrible box-office it managed in Korea, was it what anyone there was expecting from a Korean science fiction film.

Gone is the rampaging gunplay and anime inspired chaos. Forget glossy visuals and advanced, post-human cities. Nobody here is cyber-enhanced and no one climbs into a giant mechanoid and starts levelling buildings.

Instead this pitcher than pitch black comedy sees an industrialist, Kang (Baen Yun-shik) kidnapped by the deranged Lee Byeong-gu (Shin Ha-gyun) and his girlfriend Sun-i (Hwang Jung-min). Byeong-gu believes that Kan is an alien from Andromeda, part of a plot to take over the Earth that somehow involves his mother, who has been in a coma in hospital for years. Byeong-gu needs Kang's alien genetic code to cure his mother and is determined to extract it through some eye-wateringly brutal torture sequences.

The film is complex. Byeong-gu is presented as troubled and sympathetic, but he's also a mass murderer who has been killing innocent people who he believed were aliens. Sun-i is strange, perhaps mentally deficient, and scared. While Kang, the apparent innocent, trapped in the middle of all this is hardly sympathetic. Alien or not, his chemical company is responsible for the twist ending.

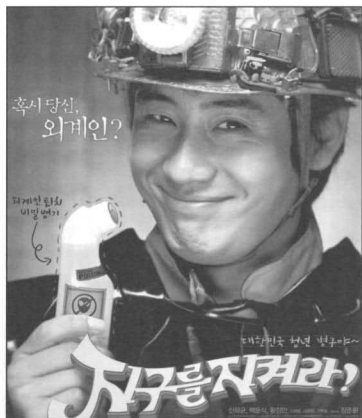
For me, the film really came to light when the disgraced old cop, Inspector Choo (Lee Jae-Yong) - think Columbo reduced to chopping the heads off fish - is enlisted by the ambitious and naïve Inspector Kim (Lee Ju-Hyeon) to help him find Kang. Lee Jae-Yong's performance is outstanding, and this portion of the story is the most confidently handled and best paced.

Depending on your

perspective, the ending will either be a terrible let down or a fantastic twist, and I think how much any particular viewer gets out of the film will rely on their attitude to the final twist. *Save the Green Planet* has flaws, at two hours long, it could quite comfortably have been cut by half an hour to make something altogether punchier and more affective.

First time director Jun-Hwan Jeong tries to pack too much in, but his obvious enthusiasm, some fine performances and, perhaps, the fact that this is precisely the sort of sf film no one expected to come from Korea, were enough to win me over. By no means perfect, but a pleasant surprise, *Save the Green Planet* is available now on DVD.

Writer/director: Jeong Jun-Hwan  
Cinematography: Hong Kyung-Pyo  
Starring: Shin Ha-gyun, Baen Yun-shik, Hwang Jung-min, Lee Jae-Yong, Lee Ju-Hyeon  
118 mins



"Will someone get this big walking carpet out of my way."

## CLONING AROUND

Animated Jedi? Cool!

George Lucas said that one of the major differences between the original trilogy and the prequels is the nature of the Jedi. In the original films they were almost extinct, their power weakened and their glory reduced to a memory. In the new films they were supposed to be at the heights of their powers, capable of extraordinary feats, almost arrogant in their use of the force.

The movies have delivered some of that promise. Yoda casts aside his walking stick in *Episode II* and whirls like a dervish, Darth Maul's duel with Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan in *Episode I* was fluid and stylish in a way that none of the old light-sabre battles ever managed.

But, if you really want to see Jedi taking names and kicking arse, then *The Clone Wars* is the place to be. Gasp as Mace Windu destroys a droid army without his light-sabre! Marvel as Yoda smashes space ships together with the furrow of his brow and a flick of his wrist! Tremble as Anakin pummels powerful Sith assassins. *The Clone Wars* has it all, and more.

If what you disliked about the prequels was the suspect dialogue, relax, *The Clone Wars* is for you. There are no speeches about trade or treaties, no dodgy declarations of love and no unnecessarily wordy exposition.

*The Clone Wars* is all about adrenaline. Season one (now on DVD) was broadcast as twenty three-minute episodes and the relentless pacing is almost too much in one sitting. Season two (showing on the Cartoon Network) had five fifteen-minute episodes and has more time for characterisation amongst the droid-bashing, Sith-fighting, planet-levelling action.

Everything about these animated episodes reeks of quality. The voice actors do a remarkable job of mimicking the original actors, only Anthony Daniels C3PO is authentic



**"If you really want to see Jedi taking names and kicking arse, then *The Clone Wars* is the place to be."**

though you have to listen closely to be able to tell. The score manages to capture the spirit of John Williams's original without resorting to simple theft. The stylised animation and design of everything from droids to space craft perfectly evokes the feeling of the *Star Wars* universe without simply repeating what we've seen before.

In many ways *The Clone Wars* (especially the second season) is a more satisfying popcorn experience than any of the *Star*



*Wars* films. With some fabulous villains to hiss at – including the splendid Jedi-hunting robot, General Greivous – and stunning setpiece battles on land, in the sea and in space, *The Clone Wars* never lets the viewer's attention wander. And yet it also conveys some of the darkness, regret and even sadness of what

is to come. Anakin is trying so hard to be a Jedi and do the right thing that, knowing his ultimate fate, you can't help feeling sorry for him. And the final cliffhanger (leading directly into the start of *Episode III*) certainly gets the mouth watering for the final prequel.

Martin McGrath

**"You can't stop change any more than you can stop the suns from setting."**



# A VERY GOOD YEAR

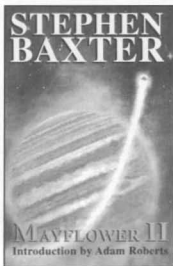
Latest news from the BSFA Awards

Congratulations to Ian McDonald, Stephen Baxter, and Stephan Martinière for winning the 2004 BSFA awards. Many thanks to John Jarrold for hosting the awards ceremony, Elizabeth Billinger for designing the awards, and Mark Plummer for helping me to count the ballots.

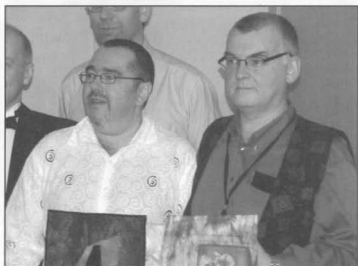
All the counts went down to the last round, but there were no nailbiting recounts this year – and in all cases the nominee with the highest number of first-place votes went on to claim an overall majority.

In writing about the history of the awards for the Eastercon souvenir book, I uncovered a personal connection. The first award was for the best novel of 1969, and was thus awarded in 1970; because of an early hiccup when no award was made, we've just presented the thirty-fifth awards. Although this makes the BSFA awards a little older than me, I quite like the serendipity that the awards and the administrator are of the same vintage. (It's similar to the Novacon series of conventions, which started in 1971; the SF Foundation's Bridget Bradshaw commented that every year Novacon helpfully provide her with her badge with details of her name, her registration number, and her age. That works for me too – although increasingly I suspect that room numbers would be more use than registration!).

The award categories have varied a lot over the years – on one occasion no awards were presented at all – and even where the categories have remained broadly the same they've often been described differently by different administrators. Awards have been presented for the best novels, short stories, collections, media production, artwork, artists, and non-fiction works of their respective years, although for most of the other 34 years



in which awards have been presented the categories have included some variant of the three awards we had for 2004: novel, short fiction and art. Three special awards have also been presented by the BSFA, for (non-



fiction) work for which there wasn't a category existing at the time.

Top honours so far go to Jim Burns, who won eleven artist and artwork awards between 1984 and 1999; this achievement

is followed by five winners who've not only collected four BSFA awards apiece but have each done so for work across several categories: Brian Aldiss (novels, collection, special award); Stephen Baxter (novel, short



"I was not elected to watch my people suffer and die while you discuss this invasion in a committee."

## Claire Briailey

fiction and non-fiction), who joined this group with his 2004 award; Robert P Holdstock (novels and short stories, one with Garry Kilworth); Christopher Priest (novels – the first in 1974 and the most recent in 2002 – and short story); and Keith Roberts (novel, short stories, artist), and two writers who've each won three: Douglas Adams (for various versions of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) and Bob Shaw (novels and short story).

Four of the authors whose 2004 novels were shortlisted had previously won a BSFA award for Best Novel; but this didn't include Ian McDonald, although he had previously won the short fiction award. By way of contrast, only two of the authors shortlisted in the short fiction category had previously won a BSFA award of any sort, including Stephen Baxter who added to his previous three BSFA awards as noted above. None of the shortlisted artists had won a BSFA award before, so this was Stephan Martinière's first time.

You may notice a few changes to this column in future. The first is that we won't be taking up an increasing amount of space throughout the year with lists of works nominated. The nominations for the short fiction and artwork awards will still appear somewhere helpful in *Matrix*; the idea is for them to function additionally as a kind of 'recommended reading' list from BSFA members in these two categories, where there's a lot to choose from but where nominations have traditionally been a bit lower than for the novel category. And up-to-date lists in all three categories will continue to be included on the awards section of the BSFA website ([www.bsfa.co.uk](http://www.bsfa.co.uk)) and can be obtained from me by anyone who doesn't have easy Internet access.

The second change is that I hope to use the space reclaimed

here to feature a selection of opinions about what BSFA members value in science fiction and fantasy, to encourage you all to think about your own general preferences and your specific nominations for the 2005 awards.

Finally, as a prelude to that, I'm aiming to make an announcement in the next issue about a new approach to the

what follows is clear.

Nominations are now open for the BSFA awards 2005. Members of the BSFA may nominate as many eligible works as you like in each of these categories (although if you nominate any work more than once in the same category, it will only be counted once!). You can submit nominations at any time but I

I may ask you for brief clarification in this respect. More detailed eligibility criteria are as follows:

**The Best Novel award** is open to any novel-length work of science fiction or fantasy which is published in the UK for the first time in 2005. (Serialized novels are eligible, provided that the publication date of the concluding part is in 2005.) If a novel has been previously published elsewhere, but it hasn't been published in the UK until 2005, it is eligible.

**The Best Short Fiction award** is open to any shorter work of science fiction or fantasy, up to and including novellas, first published in 2005 (in a magazine, in a book, or online). This includes books and magazines published outside the UK.

**The Best Artwork award** is open to any single science fictional or fantastic image that first appeared in 2005. Again, provided the artwork hasn't been published before 2005 it doesn't matter where it appears.

Works published by the BSFA itself (whether in book form, on the website, or in one of the magazines) are not eligible for the awards. Works by BSFA members (including Council and committee members) which have been published elsewhere are eligible, subject to the conditions above. There is nothing in these rules to prevent you from nominating or voting for works by yourself in any eligible category, if you are moved to do so.

The shortlists for these three awards will be comprised from the five works in each category that receive the most individual nominations by the deadline. The awards will be presented at the 2006 British national science fiction convention (Eastercon), Concession, which will be held in Glasgow on 14–17 April; as usual, anyone with an attending membership for the Eastercon as well as members of the BSFA will be eligible to vote for the awards.



BSFA award for non-fiction, which we suspended for last year.

Thanks to the people who've written to me about eligibility, deadlines, award categories and so on. I have considered your views and discussed them with other BSFA

members by Saturday 21 January 2006 for them to be taken into account; please quote your BSFA membership number when nominating.

Both science fiction and fantasy works are eligible for the awards; if for any reason I am uncertain that a nominated work



## Continued from page 13

...*City of Pearl* and *Crossing the Line* don't paint a flattering picture of humanity, and I can tell you that *The World Before* isn't straight from the Homo Sapiens Fan Club either. But what else would you expect from someone who's done the jobs I have? Even *Hard Contact* was pretty bloody grim. I like to think I introduced a whole generation of Star Wars fans to how piss-poor defence procurement can be, and what that costs in terms of lives. Okay, it's downbeat, but that's life.

**LW:** Indeed. But as writers we're obviously not in the business of flattery – we're here partly to highlight the ways in which things can and do go so disastrously wrong. It's a Cassandra profession, especially working in SF. I think that's why a lot of writers (and readers) turn to fantasy: the badness is externalised and glamorous (velvet coated vampires are a lot more glam than pen pushing accountants who sign off on dodgy defence deals, but who do we really have to deal with?).

**KT:** Well, this is where the ambiguity of characters comes in handy. In *City of Pearl* et al, you can't tell the heroes from the villains: the heroes are pretty dodgy, and not in a loveable rogue sense either, and the apparent villains are dedicated patriots. No easy answers, all grey areas. And the reader gets to identify with them easily, and then finds themselves thinking, "Oh, would I do that in that situation? Jeez..."

**LW:** And you know you'll have no argument from me on that. I hope I haven't written any clearly cut good or evil characters – it's not a distinction I'm comfortable with unless it's explored.

**KT:** I was warned by someone (who obviously didn't know the US very well) that America wouldn't take that kind of political fiction. But they did, and they didn't ask for changes either.

What about your stuff? What is it about your books that works for American readers?

**LW:** I'm not sure that it does, frankly. I was told recently that my stuff would sell better if it was military, and if it portrayed

US-type civilisations in a more positive light, which I'm afraid I just won't do. I've never had any interference from Bantam on the political stuff, and in my case that's fairly left of centre. How do you find that your background influences what you write, and your own politics? Neither of us write stuff that bashes home a message (like the Star Trek homily at the end of every episode). At least, I hope not!

**KT:** We can't completely ditch our backgrounds, and fiction would be the poorer if we did: factually, I plunder my experiences in defence and politics. But my own politics stay at home. I really hate polemic in novels. What I do bring to my books from my own background is a kind of neutrality born of being a journalist and then working for politicians. I just present all the sides of the argument and let someone else make up their own mind when they read it. Look, I've been mistaken both for a Marxist and a liberal...how neutral do you want? I'm a ranting right-winger in real life. For me one of the best bits of writing is to make yourself think like a character who you might find utterly repellent in real life but make them credible.

But I'll admit that my gut loathing of middle-class Literature (with a capital L) has definitely shaped what and how I write. It's a class thing. I come from the arse-end of Portsmouth, and I'd rather write entertainment about working men and women in plain language. (No bloody princes. I'm even iffy about Jedi.) So I'm never going to be accused of being literary, thank God. But you're regarded as literary: how do you feel about that?

**LW:** We're in agreement on polemic as there is nothing more tedious – fortunately (or unfortunately) it tends to end up as the province of wind-eyed young men in berets who have written an Important Novel! And I feel a bit knackered for all that. I'd rather not beat my poor reader over the head with my views. And to be honest, these days, I'm not even sure what my views are. Too much time spent in the decadent capitalist west, too much time spent in the pinko commie east...

I enjoy some middle class

literature, but Aga Sagas and the like drive me up the wall. I'm from a lower middle class background, but as you know, my late partner was also from the arse-end of Portsmouth and had some harsh things to say about people who could only write about their affairs in Hampshire...

I don't think I've ever featured an aristocrat in any of mine – with the possible exception of a dodgy count in *Poison Master*, but he was a bit player. I'd love to do a fantasy about a young boy who grows up as a peasant and then discovers that he really is...a peasant.

I'm not so sure that you're not literary, actually. You write provocative fiction that makes people think – does that make one literary? I don't know...In my own case, I'm certainly more of a prose stylist than a story teller, though I'd prefer to be regarded as both. I think I'm too literary for some critics, and not literary enough for others. It's all in the eye of the beholder...

So if you're iffy about Jedi, how do you see them? And how do you see SW itself? Space opera, fantasy, SF...? Because to me, it has some high fantasy elements.

**KT:** I'm just looking for a razor-blade or a good strong beam at the moment. Oh, the shame of being literary. No, I'm a storyteller. See, I don't think it's a case of literary stuff making you think and entertainment keeping your jaw nice and slack. I doubt if many readers of this august organ visit the various Star Wars fan boards, but if they do they'd see readers, some of them very young indeed, getting into heavy debates about militarism, free choice and all the cerebral stuff the litnsobs think is their own preserve.

*Star Wars* is definitely more fantasy than SF. Mr Lucas (bless you, Guv'nor) has said he was aiming for a mythic, heroic feel. It's fantasy in space, basically, which is why it's so enormously popular – there's something for everyone in it, including very grubby politics and good guys turning bad. I don't do mythic very well so I try to SF-ise it. I still shudder at the lack of time dilation with FTL travel, but my minder at Lucas used to give me a gentle kick and say, "This isn't hard SF, Karen..." Well, I still keep the science kosher in *Hard Contact*. We'll see how

long I hold out on the next series. (Han's pension age now, you know. It broke my heart.) Would you ever consider doing media tie-ins? Nice money, lots of laughs...

**LW:** I think there are a lot of purported dichotomies that aren't – style vs content, literary vs entertainment...Why can't one do both? With some people on the more entertainment side of things, I don't think they can be bothered to construct sentences properly, whereas I don't think a lot of the lit people can be bothered with anything as, you know, vulgar as an actual story and a cogent plot.

Han Solo has a bus pass? How'd that happen? Oh yeah, nature of time and all that...

I would certainly consider doing media tie-ins if anyone asked me. I used to write Star Trek fanfic and I think I wrote it well. It would have to be something that I watched regularly, otherwise I don't think I'd have the necessary enthusiasm. But sure, why not? And so, what is next for you?

**KT:** Three more *Star Wars* novels, probably more wew'har wars, possibly a couple of new universes...the next few weeks will decide. All for the USA, of course. *City of Pearl* and *Crossing the Line* are both out in Australia next month (April) and *The World Before* comes out in the USA later this year. I'm planning a mid-life crisis in October so I've got time to decide if I'm going to express it by getting a Harley or going blonde. I dunno, maybe both. How about you?

**LW:** *Darkland* will be coming out with Macmillan next year and a noir fantasy detective novel – *The Snake Agent* – will be out with Night Shade Press this year. Also on the front and back burners are a contemporary fantasy trilogy, a YA trilogy, 2 more SF novels and possibly a travel writing project. I just turned 40 so that's a good excuse for joining you in a midlife crisis. I am not planning to go blonde but a Harley might be fun. Or perhaps I'll get a toy boy. Or go and live in a hedge.

**KT:** I'm delighted to see someone's had the sense to buy *The Snake Agent* at last. Hey, I hadn't thought about hedges...



"If only you knew the power of the Dark Side."

# RAGE against... Readers!

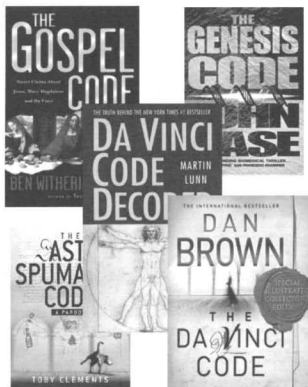
Colin Brush rages against those who moan, whine and whinge about what's in the bookstores...

I'm sick of hearing it. Even more sick of reading it. But there it is on countless message boards, on many writers' blogs, and overheard at every gathering of committed readers. I'm talking about those who get hot under the collar about the state of publishing: why, they ask, do publishers and booksellers offload unimaginative dreck when wonderful and original books and writers go unrecognized? The complaint: we – the readers and writers – deserve better than this!

Of course, they know why: publishers, they say, are simply too scared to try anything new. With no imagination and memory only for the last big tome to cast its shadow over the bestseller lists, publishers instantly commission more like it (see the Dan Brown clones springing up faster than conspiracy theories). The tried and tested keeps readers and publishers in a state of anodyne happiness – prose Prozac.

The complainers are right – but not for the reasons that they think. Yes, publishers churn out reams of carbon copies of the *LAST BIG THING*. Book shelves groan under the weight of books cloned from Tolkien. But this is not because publishers have no imagination, or no yearning to discover the daring or original – they are readers, too, and on the whole very well-read ones. They are eager to bring to the world new, original voices. However, factors mitigate against the appearance of the innovative – against the shock of the new.

Firstly, publishers and agents can only bring us what they



receive – i.e. what writers are writing. With many more writers than publishing opportunities, publishers and agents do the job of weeding out those who can't write, the failed experiments, the strictly niche and anything else they haven't fallen in love with (yes, editors *do* fall in love with books). Unfortunately, they are left with a lot of manuscripts that, well, resemble a lot of other manuscripts. This is because authors also have an eye for what's selling – some make their living off their writing and sales do make reputations – so they tend to write what will get published.

While there is no such thing as a sure thing, there are ways to help a book sell. Sequels and producing more of the same keeps the movie industry ticking over and publishing is no different. Readers lap up second helpings. They might not want

the same story but they yearn for the same enjoyment high. This is sometimes confused by publishers who strictly copy what previously worked, thinking it is a safer bet than what is equally good, but wholly new.

But trying something new involves risk. Risk makes people nervous, particularly anyone whose job is tied to that risk. If taking chances could mean losing your job, you'll take steps to minimize the risk. You might take a chance on only a couple of books a year while the rest of your list consists of three-book deals by authors with known appeal. Your dependents will not thank you later for betting on long odds, and losing.

While some refuse to recognize it, publishing is a business. Authors, agents, editors, marketers, the sales force, publicists, proof readers and share

holders have clubbed together to make money. A publishing house is not there to bring great works to the masses but to sell what they print and thereby make money. Failing in that task means everyone involved will be either out of work, or out of print.

One strategy involved in avoiding risk to companies and authors is to build a brand. Brands establish a bond of trust with customers: trust that readers will enjoy each book, that disappointment will be minimized. In a world where our most successful restaurant is McDonald's, that means more of the same. As customers we want to know what we're buying – as readers we want to minimize our risks.

Lastly, publishers study sales figures. They know what you the reader are buying and their warehouses are stacked with returns that tell them what you don't want.

So the proper answer to the question of why we are sold so much off-the-peg, bland, repetitive, unadventurous literature (in amongst the good stuff – and there are still plenty of good books, if you look for them) is because that is what most of us are buying. Market economics dictates that we get the books we *want* and not necessarily the books we *need*. In the end, we get the books we deserve.

Colin Brush

## RAGE against the...

Angry? Don't keep it in, let us know. Let rip with your own "Rage against" whatever you loathe in sf in 650 words and send it to: [matrix\\_editors@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:matrix_editors@yahoo.co.uk)

## Matrix Contributors

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"Do... or do not. There is no try."

# USE YOUR FORCE... WIN PRIZES WITH MATRIX. IT AIN'T LIKE DUSTING CROPS, BOY!

Star Wars dada da Star Wars,  
dada da Star Wars dada  
da da...

Ok, so that's not exactly the way that the soundtrack might go, but it's the way that it sounds in our heads round here at the *Matrix* mansions.

For those who don't believe us when we say that this is the way it goes, you now have the opportunity to prove us wrong, providing of course you can solve our simple Jedi mind-trick.

By now the observant will have noticed our series of *Star Wars* quotes running along the bottom of the pages of this mag, and the extra observant will have noticed that at least two (ok, actually two) differ from their



fellows in one crucial way. Anyone with the moxie to spot this subtle difference and tell us the names of the two implicated characters should send their names right now to the contact details below and secure themselves a better than average chance of winning a copy of John Williams' latest epic soundtrack score to *Revenge of the Sith*.

Star Wars dada da Star Wars, dada da Star Wars dada da da...

Transmit name, address and the correct answers no later than August 30th to:  
[matrix\\_editors@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:matrix_editors@yahoo.co.uk)  
or Matrix Editors, 46 Saltwell Street, London, E14 0DZ

## Win *Jocasta* by Aldiss

Limited edition (signed and numbered) hardcover from The Rose Press.

Brian Aldiss' new novel, *Jocasta*, (available now from The Rose Press – [www.therosepress.co.uk](http://www.therosepress.co.uk)) retells the story of Oedipus from the perspective of its eponymous "heroine". This beautifully produced hardcover book is one of a limited edition of just 750, individually numbered and signed by the author.

The crossword below contains the titles of eight works by Brian Aldiss, each one clued simply by the date of their publication. To win, complete the crossword and email the titles, with your name and postal address, to: [matrix.competition@ntlworld.com](mailto:matrix.competition@ntlworld.com) by 22 July, 2005.



### Across

- 5 See 8 (6)  
8 and 5 1982 (10)  
10 Flash (5)  
12 Inventor, got in a twist? (5)  
13 see 1 down (7)  
14 Tuneful performance (7)  
15 1964 (9)  
17 Made larger (5,2)  
20 1965 (13)  
22 Protected (7)  
25 Mexican dish (9)  
27 1958 (7)  
29, 31 and 33 1981 (7)  
30 see 29 (5)  
31 Deserve (5)  
32 Pain in the 18 down, a riding accident? (6,4)  
33 see 29 (6)

### Down

- 1 1962 (16)

- 2 A job, putting something where it belongs (9)  
3 — Brande, author of *Becoming a Writer* (7)  
4 The point when things stop being funny? (4,3)  
6 1987 (5)  
7 Spotted (7)  
9 1972 (16)  
10 Radiation, made Hulk green (5)  
11 Difficulties (8)  
16 Part (4)  
18 A posh bottom (8)  
19 Where bread bakes (4)  
21 Emission, may be ghostly or like 10 (9)  
23 Where films are shown (7)  
24 Depository (5)  
25 Type of bet (4-3)  
26 Companion, colleague (7)  
28 This planet (5)

