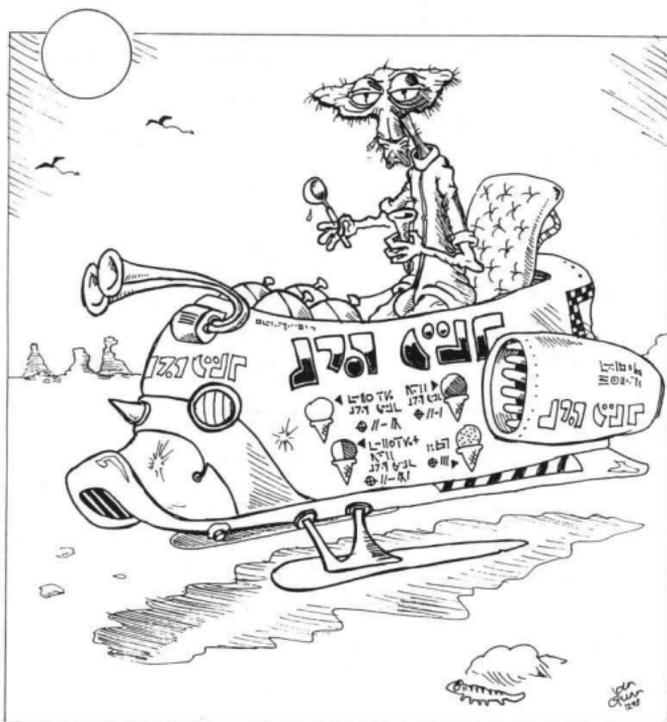


Matrix

The Newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association

104

£1.25



February–March 1993

Information & Contacts

BSFA Membership

Now costs £15 (EC). Please enquire for overseas rates.

New Members

Jo Raine, 29 Thornville Rd, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS26 8EW

Membership Renewals

Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Rd, Reading RG6 1PL

USA Memberships

Cy Chauvin, 14248 Wilfred Street, Detroit, MI 48213, USA

Matrix

Jenny & Steve Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP (tel: 0532 791264)

Media

Ian Mundell, 21 Radford House, 1 Pembridge Gardens, Notting Hill Gate, London W2 4EE

Competitions

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

Information

Phil Nichols, 17 Allsops Close, Rowley Regis, Warley, West Midlands B65 8JAB

Vector

Editor: Cattie Cary, 224 Southway, Park Barn, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6DN

Focus

Carol Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU5 2JAB or Julie Venner, 42 Walgrave Street, Newland Avenue, Hull HU5 2LT

BSFA Officials

Treasurer

Elizabeth Billinger, 82 Kelvin Road, New Cublington, Leamington Spa CV32 7TQ

Coordinator

Kevin McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF (tel: 05395 62883)

Orbiters

Carol Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU5 2JAB

BSFA Awards

Nicholas Mahoney, 276 Lonsdale Avenue, Intake, Doncaster DN2 6HJ

Foreign Liaison

Bridget Wilkinson, 17 Mimosa, 29 Avenue Road, London N15

In & Out

Change of Address

Sales, Ian; 120 Terry Rd; Coventry CV1 2BA.
Traish, Barry G; Flat D1.2; St Mark's Flats; St Mark's Rd; Leeds LS2 9EL. Blakey, Ronald; 46A Regent St; Greenock PA16 4NP;
Scotland. Steel, Jim; 16 Oakfield Ave, Hillhead; Glasgow G12 8JE. Kinnear, Malcolm H; 72/9 Craighouse Gdns; Morningside; Edinburgh EH10 5UN.
Doherty, Eugene M G; 110 North Parade; Ormeau Rd; Belfast BT7 2GJN. Ireland.
Wignall, Brendan J; Capilano; Denstone College; Denstone; Uttometer; Staffs. ST14 5HL. Cox, Andy J; 5 Martins Lane; Witcham; nr Ely; Cambs. CB6 2LB. Swift, Jennifer.
Sivagnanam, Nesa. Butler, Andrew M. Vermaas, Richard.

New and Rejoined Members

Haines, Nick D A; 285 Mill Rd; Cambridge CB1 3DF. Harris, Jeff; G P O Box 288; Marden 5070; Australia. Mullan, Caroline; 'Asylum'; 9 Graham Rd; Wealdstone; Harrow HA3 5RP.
Lyshol, Heidi; Sandakvern. 81; 0483 Oslo; Norway. Caughey, Carolyn.

Departed Members

Highton, Imelda M. Grunwell, Paul M. Browne, Roisin. Blakeborough, Peter. Calvert, John. Brock, Christina. Cook, Alistair S P. Allan, Neil. Evans, Richard C. Bass, Daryl G. Helsinki Univ. SF Club (HYSFK). Crane, Ms Ven V. Glover, Wendy A. Dublin Univ SF Society. Edwards, J.M. Dean, Michael J. Blissett, Michael K. Ciantar, Daniel. Stacey, Margaret A. Hill, Roy M.

Artwork

Ian Gunn, PO Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130 Australia.

Deadline March 10th 1993

British Science Fiction Association Ltd.
Company No. 921500.

Registered Address: 60 Bournemouth Rd, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ.

Registered in England. Limited by Guarantee.

Printed by: PDC Copyprint, 11 Jeffries Passage, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4AP.

Copyright © BSFA 1993 Individual copyrights are the property of the authors and editors.

ISSN: 0307 3335.

Determinants

The paperback bestsellers list has just been published in the trade journal, *The Bookseller* and makes grim reading.

There are several reasons to scramble through first: sales are divided into home and export, avoiding the possibility of foreign editions being more easily accessible and the actual figures are given regardless of the month of publication, so it may give one paperback an advantage to be published in February rather than October.

The paperbacks are arbitrarily divided by genre: thriller, romance, humour, fantasy, science fiction - with the more general novel, stories and saga definitions when the statisticians' imagination failed them.

Finally, the important column - quite understandably for a readership designed to be booksellers and sympathizers, is the eProduct (shorthand, but this particular code is easy enough to unravel). This does lead to a few anomalies where Delia Smith's *Complete Cookery Course* (BBC) selling at £9.99 raises £1,111,467 and is placed in position 76 whereas the *Super Horoscopes 1993*, retailing at a modest £3.99, produced only £463,814 for Arrow, but rose to position 73.

Having made all those concessions to ratify the figures, the eye instantly leaps to mentions of Science Fiction in the genre list. The eye looks, and looks again. There's not precisely many mentions. There is one mention, and it's down in position 58: Alan Dean Foster's *Alien 3* (Warner). Widening the definition to include Fantasy, Terry Pratchett leaps into prominence at position 29 with *Witches Abroad* (Corgi): published in November, 224,321 total copies sold) and David Eddings occupies position 44 with *Sapphire Rose* (Grafton, September, total sales 168,658) closely followed by Clive Barker one place down with *Imajica* bringing in 163,599 total sales for Fontana. Widening the definition into horror, the position seems more hopeful. Stephen King takes 9th place with *Needful Things*, selling 513,188 copies for New English Library.

It's likely that the figures will be more positive for 1993, with the paperback publication of Geoff Ryman's *Wis...* and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars*. That is the theory at any rate: publishers are fighting hard for sales with massive promotions designed to catch the eye of all casual window shoppers, author tours are regular commitments and there are ambitious plans for new lines of graphic novels (more details in the news column). But the position for Science Fiction promoters looks more bleak. The top five bestsellers are: Jilly Cooper's *Polo* (801,850 copies sold for Corgi), Jeffrey Archer's *As the Crow Flies* (757,851 copies sold for Coronet), Wilbur Smith's *Elephant*

Song (755,170 copies sold for Pan), Frederick Forsyth's *The Deceit* (710,966 copies sold for Corgi) and Barbara T Bradford's *Remember* (596,940 copies sold for Grafton). To speculate whether the reader who buys a Jilly Cooper would also buy a Geoff Ryman or whether a Wilbur Smith reader would also appreciate Kim Stanley Robinson could be as fascinating as it is futile. To investigate the possibility of attracting new readers will probably mean going right back to grass

roots, another bleak area where the level of childhood literacy is diminishing in ratio to the number of times the National Curriculum is altered in response to the number of despairing ministerial directive

Not even the teachers can foretell whether a tv-driven generation can be led into literacy for pleasure through film novelisations. Besides which, the children may well

confirm that audio-visual media are far more important to them than books. A recent survey showed that four from every ten readers had a bias against reading books, on the grounds that it was "too slow"; and an even more worrying survey suggested that a sizeable minority would not give up tv, even for a million pounds. Given that a million pounds is perhaps not as great an enticement as it could be, this news has worrying implications.

News

From: Brian W Aldiss, Simon Bissone, Geoff Crookes, David Garnett, J B Brandt, Steve Grover, Laurie Mann, Steve Jeffery, James White, Deborah Weiss, David V Barrett, Gwyneth Jones, Ian Mundell, Peter Tennant, Terry Pratchett, Scott H Mueller and your editors.

Arthur C Clarke Award Shortlist

The shortlist for the seventh Arthur C Clarke Award for the best Science Fiction novel published in the UK in 1992, in alphabetical order is:

Ian McDonald *Hearts, Hands and Voices* (Gollancz)
 Marge Piercy *Body of Glass* (Michael Joseph)
 Kim Stanley Robinson *Red Mars* (HarperCollins)
 Richard Paul Russo *Destroying Angel* (Headline)
 Michael Swanwick *Stations of the Tide* (Legend)
 Sue Thomas *Correspondence* (The Women's Press)
 Lisa Tuttle *Lost Futures* (Grafton)
 Connie Willis *Doomsday Book* (New English Library).

The judges also gave an honourable mention to the following titles which, after much discussion, were considered not to be eligible for the award:

Karen Joy Fowler *Sarah's Canary* (Sceptre)
 M John Harrison *The Course of the Heart* (Gollancz).

The judges, who selected the shortlist from nearly seventy titles submitted by publishers are Mark Plummer and Maureen Speller for the Science Fiction Foundation, Catie Cary and Kev McVeigh for the British Science Fiction Association and Dr Maurice Goldsmith and Dr Jeff Kipling for the International Science Fiction Policy Foundation.

The judges will meet again to choose the winning title on March 25. The Arthur C Clarke Award, consisting of an engraved bookend and a cheque for £1,000, will be presented by Fred Clarke, Arthur C Clarke's brother at 7.30pm on Thursday March 25 in the Soho Room at the Groucho Club, 45 Dean Street, London W1 (doors open at 6pm). You are warmly invited to attend the presentation.

Previous winners of this prestigious award (with the year of award, not of publication) are:

1992 *Synners* by Pat Cadigan (HarperCollins)
 1991 *Take Back Plenty* by Colin Greenland (Unwin Hyman)
 1990 *The Child Garden* by Geoff Ryman (Unwin Hyman)
 1989 *Unquenchable Fire* by Rachel Pollack (Century)
 1988 *The Sea, The Summer* by George Turner (Faber & Faber)
 1987 *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (Jonathan Cape).

For further information about the Arthur C Clarke Award or the shortlisted titles, please contact the Administrator, David V Barrett 23 Oakfield Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2UD, tel/fax 081 688 6081.

The Shock of the New

Ben Bova, whose new novel *Mars* came from New English Library in January, will address the Edinburgh International Science Festival in April on *The Science in Science Fiction*. (There may also be an event at Forbidden Planet in London the week leading up to Easter). He describes some of his feelings writing *Mars*:

"It's about the first people to land and begin exploring it. The protagonist is an American geologist who is part Navaho. For years I've been going out to New Mexico and Arizona, and it struck me long before I started the novel, that particularly the area of the big Navaho reservation looks an awful lot like parts of Mars. So we have a character who's getting almost mystical reverberations. Mars looks so much like his ancestral home, he begins to see bits and pieces of evidence that there's not only life but used to be intelligent life on Mars.

"I've spent two years on this novel. Usually I'll spend years on a subject preparing to write, and then the writing will take nine or ten months, but this *Mars* novel is very big and, I think, very deep. [The *Mars* mission] is an international program with big participation by the European community and Japan, as well as the United States and the Soviet Union. It's done for political reasons, so it's pretty much a flag-and-footprint mission. They're only at Mars for about seven weeks, so the scientists are unhappy about that. Their only hope is that this will not be the last mission to Mars.

"[At the moment], there is no compelling reason pushing us [to return to the Moon]. Space enthusiasts and Science Fiction people can talk about all the resources out there, but there's no push from the political system or the economic system. Private enterprise isn't going to go into space unless the government pays the way, and the government doesn't have a compelling political reason for going anywhere. NASA is sort of a grey bureaucracy that has its own agenda and wants to build this space station, but there's no push in the White House or in congress that says "We need this space station to help me get re-elected".

Arthur C Clarke gives critical acclaim for *Mars* by writing "Until our next Robots go there, *Mars* will be the definitive novel about our fascinating little neighbour".

Tasmin Archer, however, complains about the lack of exploitation of the potential of the Apollo moon landings in her number one song *Sleeping Satellite*. Admittedly, Tasmin had written the "hook" line concerning the moonlit sky before 1989, twentieth anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landings, for which she was far too young to have seen at the time. She feels that very few people listen to or understand the lyrics, but concentrate on the music instead, besides, she adds, "You can't all of a sudden blast people with information. I think you have to ease them into it, and ease them into it in a nice way".

New Worlds 3 edited by David Garnett, will come from Gollancz in June/July, though hopefully advance copies will be available at Mexican at Scarborough in May. The line up is a trifle uncertain due to

last minute shuffling, but is likely to include work by Michael Moorcock, John Clute, Brian W Aldiss, Paul Di Filippo, Paul J McAuley, Graham Joyce, Jack Deighton, Simon Ings and Charles Stross.

Terry Pratchett is working on *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents*, which is ostensibly as a children's book. Plans for *Diggers/Wings* are still being negotiated: Cosgrove Hall still want to do this - and are still trying to finance it. *Truckers* won Best Animated Feature award at the Chicago International Children's Film Festival. Cosgrove Hall are very optimistic that this is going to help not only with sequel plans but also with more international sales. His Australian tour will be something like this:

April 2-16: Perth area, at Suncon and generally hanging out.

April 17-20: Transworld have said that since he'll be passing through, he ought to do a signing in Alice Springs.

April 21-25: PR stuff around Sydney. Transworld want him to do talks and signings rather than media stuff.

Terry adds that, concerning the *Guards!* play "For good or ill - and comments seem to be running about 2:1 in its favour right now - I don't have anything to do with it. The BBC bought it, they can get it right or get it wrong, but I suspect that with me riding herd on it it'd be better. Never rub another man's rhubarb, as the Joker said. Making a radio series out of a cult book is probably a lot harder than doing it the other way round. I agree, though, that there's a *HHGTTG* feel; I think that's because this has established itself in the BBC's collective mind as the 'right' way to do this genre stuff..." His position on plays is that anyone who asks gets "a more or less automatic and absolutely non-exclusive permission". Stephen Briggs (23 Elms Drive, Old Marston, Oxford OX3 0NN) has adapted several Pratchett books and has let other people have his scripts. One has recently headed off to Australia, another to Bristol, UK. "Really" says Terry, "it's up to people to try it themselves, or sort things out with him. (I don't think money has to change hands, but he likes to be paid for copying and postage) or adapt his stuff, or whatever".

Brian W Aldiss has a novel, *Remembrance Day* coming out in March, almost a companion to *Forgotten Life* and *Life in the West* with common characters which unfolds in Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, England, Scotland and the States. The characters all drift together towards the finality of a IRA bomb episode in a small hotel in Great Yarmouth. HarperCollins will publish a new selection of his stories, *A Tupolev Too Far*, which he describes as "full of fun of a murky kind" in July. His current project is a black political comedy, *Burnell's Travels*, set in the near future, in Germany, the Caucasus and Turkmenistan.

James White has just finished the ninth *Sector General* book, despite playing pass the flu germ with his wife over Christmas. In this book, the principal character is the hospital's newly-appointed chief dietician, who has to cater for the food requirements of sixty different species, some of whom like to do strange things to their meals including chasing them round the plate - it's not as serious nor as philosophical a story as *The Genotoxic Healer*. He has a character and plot outline for a tenth *Sector General* book, which he hopes will be a big one to finally wrap up the series. Before getting down to that, however, he plans to do another non-*Sector General* book.

Karen Joy Fowler prefers reading short fiction to full length novels. "I love the concentration of effect, the flashy impact" she says.

Isaac Asimov's complete short stories are being published by HarperCollins. Volume 1 will be published on 1 March 1993. In his introduction he wrote "There'll be more volumes, but begin by reading this one. You will make an old man very happy". The complete line up of this volume is: "The Dead Past", "Franchise", "Gimmicks Three", "Kid Stuff", "The Watery Place", "Living Space", "The Message", "Satisfaction

Guaranteed", "Hell-fire", "The Last Trump", "The Fun They Had", "Jokester", "The Immortal Bard", "Someday", "Dreaming is a Private Thing", "Profession", "The Feeling of Power", "The Dying Night", "Tm in Marsport Without Hilda", "The Gentle Vultures", "All the Troubles of the World", "Spell My Name With An S", "The Last Question", "The Ugly Little Boy", "Nightfall", "Green Patches", "Hostess", "Breeds There a Man...?", "C-Chute", "In A Good Cause", "What if-", "Sally", "Flies", "Nobody Here but-", "It's such a Beautiful Day", "Strikebreaker", "Insert Knob A in Hole B", "The Up-to-Date Sorcerer", "Unto the Fourth Generation", "What is This Thing Called Love?", "The Machine That Won the War", "My Son the Physicist", "Eyes Do More Than See", "Segregationist" with a few diversions like "I Just Make Them Up, See!", "Rejection Slips", "The Foundations of SF Success" and "The Author's Ordeal". which begins:

"Plots, helter-skelter, teem within your brain;
Plots, S.F. plots, devised with joy and gladness;
Plots crowd your skull and stubbornly remain,
Until you're driven into hopeless madness".

David Wingrove explains why he used the Science Fiction genre as frame for his epic saga, *Chung Kuo*: "I've always loved the colour, the excitement and breath-taking imaginative leaps Science Fiction is uniquely capable of, and at this level, *Chung Kuo* is epic, in the same way that *Dune* is epic, and has - I hope - the same dynamic, the same exotic coloration as films like *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall* or *Videodrome*". *Beneath the Tree of Heaven*, the fifth in the saga, will come in 1993 (rumour says that *Chung Kuo* gets to Mars), followed by *Days of Bitter Strength* in 1994, *White Moon*, *Red Dragon* in 1995 and *The Marriage of the Living Dark* in 1996, all from the New English Library.

Gwyneth Jones recently completed a new fantasy, a kind of *Divine Endurance* spin-off (to be published by Headline). Meanwhile, the Aleutians sequel for Gollancz (to be called *North Wind*) is getting to revision treatment and, Gwyneth Jones adds optimistically "a few more drafts should do it".

Raymond Feist has just finished remodelling his California house where he will live surrounded by horses, cats and near-perfect weather. *The King's Buccaneer*, his ninth novel, published by HarperCollins in December, reflects his childhood delight with pirate works like *Treasure Island* and *Captain Blood* and Prince Nicholas' rite of passage to manhood sets the scene for the next cycle of novels, *The Second Riftware Saga*, currently in progress (at least, the first one is).

Mindstar Rising is a Pan original by Peter F Hamilton, the new Rutland author, whose work has been seen in *Interzone* and *Fear*. It's the 21st century. Foul play is suspected as the conglomerate Event Horizons starts to suffer losses in output in one of their orbiting factories. So they call in Greg Mandel, a psi boosted investigator. The plot rapidly spirals into a sophisticated thriller.

The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction is due to be published by Orbit in April, price £40.

James P Hogan describes the genesis of *The Multiplex Man*. "Suppose that one morning nobody recognised you, and the person you thought you were turned out to be dead. Many good stories come from someone being put in an unusual situation, trying to figure out what's going on. Well, it seemed to me, you couldn't get much more unusual than this. And figuring it out, Richard Jarro discovers that a lot more is going on than he's bargained for".

Storm Constantine's latest book, *Sign for the Sacred* was published by Headline in February. The ecclesiarch of the Church of Ixmarity is determined to destroy the prophet Resenence Jeopardy. But first he must find the elusive heretic. His trail is followed by Lucien (who danced with Jeopardy once), Cleo (who loved his son), Delilah (orphaned) and Trajan (source of her terror).

Guy Gavriel Kay explained recently why he prefers to write fantasy rather than historical novels. "Because I remain as exhilarated as I have always been by the challenge and the opportunities of world-building, and the narrative suspense that emerges from the fact that the reader can't possibly know what happens next in an invented history."

Sheri Tepper has written several crime, horror and fantasy novels under various pseudonyms, besides Science Fiction, of which the latest is *Sideshow*, coming in April from HarperCollins. She takes on free will and the reality of God, using Elsewhere, at the far end of an attenuated galaxy arm, one thousand years ago, as a backdrop.

The Gripping Hand, Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's sequel to *The Mote in God's Eye* was scheduled for March. Eighteen years is not a record breaking time to wait for a sequel, but readers may have to wait a bit longer since publication has been put back for a short but unspecified time. It's also been renamed to its original working title, *The Moat around Murcheson's Eye*. The Empire is threatened once more, Bury and Renner must once more save it, but they must change history, not repeat it.

Terry Brooks is coming to Britain to promote *The Elf Queen of Shannara* (Legend) this May. Other author visits are **Joe Haldeman** who is attending Helicon in Jersey over Easter and probably **F. Paul Wilson** who should be coming to Britain in July.

Garry Kilworth's anthology *In the Country of Tattooed Men* was published by Grafton in February. The stories range chronologically in publication from 1985 ("Spiral Sands") to "Memories of the Flying Ball Bike Shop" published in *Isaac Asimov's Magazine* 1992 and the sources range from that publication to *Other Edens*, *Interzone*, *BBR* and *Dark Fantasies* among others. Although he now lives in Essex, he remembers growing up in a service family, travelling throughout the world and especially fishing for catfish and getting lost in the Hadhraumaut desert in Aden.

Melanie Rawn acknowledges her luck in getting an agent immediately she turned to creative writing (though having worked as an editor in the publications department of the California Institute of Technology may have helped here) and getting her first book accepted by the first publisher she tried. She tries to make her books self-contained, as she hates cliff-hangers, but found, especially with *Stronghold* that she had a bigger plot than space to put it in. She adds that "I'm one of those people who does not really outline. I sort of know where I'm going to end up, but I really don't have any idea how I'm going to get there". *Stronghold* comes out in April from Pan, together with the next in the trilogy, *The Dragon Token*.

David Langford survived speaking on Science Fiction at the Science Museum in London over Christmas, just, but made several mental notes to have a large drink if faced by an audience of six year olds again.

David Eddings starts a new trilogy, *The Tamuli with Domes of Fire*, a 470 page blockbuster published by Grafton in February. Now that Sir Sparhawk managed to marry Queen Ehlana, he was rather looking forward to a bit of peace, but the Tamuli nation want help and besides Queen Ehlana manages to rescue her long lost child from slavery. So it's back to war he goes, very entertaining, especially as the publishers point out that he is one of the few authors who transcend the fantasy boundary and appeal (as the sales indicate) to the mainstream reader.

Anne McCaffrey and **S M Stirling** co-wrote *The Ship who Fought*, using the universe of *The Ship Who Sang*. SSS-900, or Simeon for short, is brilliant and bored, a shellperson controlling a space station who replays computer simulations from the past. It all stops being a game when ruthless invaders appear and the choice becomes fight or die. He fights.

Stephen Gallagher adapted *Chimera* for Zenith and it was screened on British tv last year. There are five more similar commissions to come and amongst his current screen projects is a feature film version of his novel *Rain*, which will be his directing debut, and a screenplay of *The Valley of Lights*. All his other written work has been optioned for film and tv rights.

Lucius Shepard used *The Golden* as a prequel to a much longer work which will be radically different, about contemporary life, probably in Borneo. His current writing includes lots of short stories, including a Science Fiction one about stock car racing, and others consciously using material from his childhood in Daytona Beach, Florida. He doesn't want to stay with one particular genre, saying that "There's no point in doing the same damn thing over and over again. If I'd written a book like *The Forever War*, I think people would be more after me to do that over and over again, because it was such a popular book and such a wonderfully executed genre work".

Kim Stanley Robinson's *Green Mars*, the novel, will not contain "Green Mars", the novella, but will still have the same characters and be chronologically correct (coming from HarperCollins in September).

Orson Scott Card mentioned plans to film *Ender's Game* at a recent signing in North Carolina. The sticking point was that the producer wanted to make Ender a sixteen year old. But what, said Card, about *E.T.* or *Home Alone*? When told that they were special films, Card simply said that in that case he would want a special producer before signing away rights to his creation. There will be at least one more Ender book, but not until 1994 or 1995.

Harm's Way, Colin Greenland's latest, will come from HarperCollins in May and is described as being hilarious. It's about Sophie Valentine, daughter of a nightwatchman in New Haven. He is full of stories of exotica like the gryphons of Betelgeuse V or the angels of Mars, she is intensely curious about her mysterious mother and the ring she inherited, a ring worn only by members of the Pilots' Guild.

M John Harrison will be attending bookshop events to publicise *The Course of the Heart* coming from Flamingo in August.

Sorrow's Light is the new Freda Warrington novel from Pan coming in May together with a paperback edition of her vampire novel, *A Taste of Blood Wine*. *Sorrow's Light* is a fast-paced fantasy love story. Iolithe, peasant bride to be to a prince travels through the Unseen Land, pursued by the forces of the Unseen. What the prince does remains to be seen. Freda Warrington's fascination with vampires may have come from her first job, in the medical illustrations department of Leicester Royal Infirmary, but she partly blames her mother who allowed her to watch Hammer horror movies at the age of nine. There will be a sequel at some stage: in the meantime, she would like to see the book filmed and says: "It would have to be made by somebody who wanted to stick closely to the book and not Americanised. It would be awful if they cast someone like Arnold Schwarzenegger as the vampire". Personally, she would prefer Daniel Day-Lewis to play Karl.

Agrippa, William Gibson's "one-time-read" poem on a disk, attracted serious press attention when the launch party was interrupted by an emergency call from Ontario, which subsequently turned out to have been from a (possibly Belgian) hacker. Although supposedly originally conceived as a metaphor for the greed of contemporary art collectors, *Agrippa* represents fragments of memory. But just as something is frozen as memory, so it is distorted. The code has inevitably been cracked: the basic impression is that if you like Japanese poetry, you will like it, but several parodies have already appeared.

The genuine article contains etchings by Dennis Ashbaugh and the copyright is held by Kevin Begos Publishing, 1411 York Ave, New York, NY. It starts with the narrator opening a Kodak album of "time-burned/black construction paper". The end is more enigmatic, perhaps, the narrator walks through a typhoon wet Chiyoda-ku

"umbrella everted in the storm's Pacific breath", watching the red lanterns being battered and "laughing/in the mechanism".

Nancy Kress deplores the lack of real children in current Science Fiction, adding "Most children in Science Fiction are like furniture with diapers. You can leave them there, you can move them around, you can ignore them, and that's not true of real children. They're messy! They're intrusive. They're there.... To ignore the fact that people have children is like ignoring the fact that people don't fly. Part of it is that writers are much higher in the average population in not having children.... I started writing when I was pregnant with my second child, and for me a writing career and my sons have grown up simultaneously. Maybe that's why they're so tangled up in my mind. There's never enough time for your kids, or for your writing, or to earn a living. The truth is there's just never enough time. Which is why I wrote 'Beggars in Spain'! If you didn't have to sleep, you would get a third more life and you would have all this extra time. Of course since the children weren't sleeping either, it doesn't solve all your problems..."

The Broken God starts a new trilogy from David Zindell in June (HarperCollins again). Three thousand years ago, there was the Unreal City, City of Pain, in the extraordinary world of Neverness, which was founded near thickspace on the planet Icefall. *New Scientist* described Zindell's book as interstellar mathematics in poetic prose that is a joy to read".

Iain Banks has a new book *Against a Dark Background* pending from Orbit in May, and is also on an author tour to publicise it.

Julian May used her interest in mythology and time travel to create the *Saga of the Exiles* series, though her first novelette, *Dune Roller* was published back in 1951. *Intervention*, in 1987, set the scene for her new series, the *Galactic Milieu Trilogy*, of which *Jack the Bodiless* is the first. It's 2051. Humanity is led by the Remillard family, but someone, or something, known as *The Fury* has other ideas. As the Remillard family start diminishing, it is up to Rogi and his nephew Marc to start detecting, even after it is obvious that most of the suspects as Remillards too. *Jack the Bodiless* may be a bit difficult to avoid: national and specialist press advertising is planned, together with a high impact campaign including a poster and window display space, plus simultaneous publication on March 12 with *The Saga of the Exiles* and *Intervention*.

Bruce Sterling is on a publicity tour to promote his latest book, *The Hacker Crackdown*, about Operation Sundevil, into which Steve Jackson found himself inadvertently entangled. However, Bruce Sterling has retained the electronic rights himself, and says it will be available free on the Net. He is also giving up his journalism to write SF full time - his next book will concern tornados in the 21st century.

Jack Womack is currently working on the film script for a Russian cyberpunk movie. His fourth novel, *Ethesis* came out from HarperCollins in February and is described as being "a savage novel of apocalypse, redemption and rock'n'roll", though William Gibson puts it a bit more succinctly: "one jarring potent kick in the head". Womack himself describes his hobbies as smoking, women, women, smoking and women. But, he adds, "I might give up the smoking".

JG Ballard will be the centre of a major publicity campaign with the reissue of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, with a preface by William S Burroughs by Flamingo in June. This is a special edition, with extensive new annotations by the author which clarify and illuminate what is describe as "an exhilarating, prophetic masterpiece". *The Drought*, *The Day of Creation*, and *The Crystal World* will be reissued simultaneously too.

SM Stirling is writing a 4th *Draka* book. It is rumoured to have a politically left wing attitude, and be very anti-Nazi, but that will only

be confirmed (or denied, according to the political stance of the reader) on publication.

Anne McCaffrey, has decided not to attend any foreign conventions certainly for the next year and cites her bad reaction to jetlag which puts her behind with her work. She wishes to retain good relationships with her publishers.

Paul Park parallels events in South Africa with his new novel, *Celestis*, coming from HarperCollins in June, which concerns a distant planet, discovered and exploited by the Americans and of a man and the alien with whom he falls in love. He actually falls in love with her exterior, but when both are captured by alien guerrillas who withhold her drugs, he sees her gradually change to her own shape: and he has to come to terms with this.

William Gibson has another near future SF book coming out this summer, *Virtual White* is the tentative title. It is not related to the *Neuromancer* trilogy.

Nicola Griffith will have a very short publicity tour this Spring to promote *Ammonite*, which came from Grafton in February. Her protagonist, Marguerite Angelica Taishan, comes to the planet Jeep to solve a biological problem, but there is much more than that to the novel. Nicola Griffith is Yorkshire born and had various jobs, including teaching women's self defence and acting as singer/song writer for a band before moving to Atlanta. Here she talks about writing *Ammonite*:

"Are women human? That question forms the subtext of more speculative fiction novels - Fantasy, Science Fiction, Horror, Utopia and Dystopia - than I can count. I intended *Ammonite* as a body blow to those who feel the question has any relevance in today's world.

"I am tired of token women being strong in a man's world by taking on male attributes: strutting around in black leather, spike heels and wraparound shades, killing people: or riding a horse, swearing a lot, carrying a big sword, and killing people: or piloting a ship through hyperspace, drinking whatever pours, slapping boys on the back, and killing people. I am equally tired of women-only worlds where all the characters are wise, kind, beautifully stern seven-foot tall vegetarian amazons who would never dream of killing anyone. I am tired of reading about aliens who are really women, or women who are really aliens.

"Women are not aliens. Take away men and we do not automatically lose our fire and intelligence and sex drive. We do not turn into a homogenous Thought Police culture where meat-eating is banned and men are burned in effigy every full moon. Women are not inherently passive or dominant, maternal or vicious. We are all different. We are people.

"A women-only world, it seems to me, would shine with the entire spectrum of human behaviour: there would be capitalists and collectivists, hermits and clan members, sailors and cooks, idealists and tyrants: they would be generous and mean, smart and stupid, strong and weak: they would approach life bravely, fearfully and thoughtlessly. Some might still engage in fights, wars and territorial squabbles; individuals and cultures would still display insanity and greed and indifference. And they would change and grow, just like anyone else. Because women are anyone else. We are more than half of humanity. We are not imitation people, or chameleons taking on protective male coloration, longing for the day when men go away and we can return to being our true, insect-like, static, vacuous selves. We are here, now. We are just like you.

"But *Ammonite* is much more than an attempt to redress the balance. It's a novel. One about people - how they look at the world and how the world makes them change; one that attempts to look at biology and wonder *What if...?* one that shows readers different ways to be; one that takes them to other places, where the air and the temperature and the

myths are not the same. If, a week after reading *Ammonite*, you pause over lunch, fork halfway to your mouth, and remember the scene of Jeep's night air, or on your way to work daydream about the endless snow of Tehuantepec, or wonder for a moment as you climb into bed whether or not a virus could enhance our senses - then I've done my job".

Joan D Vinge turned to full time writing after being a marine salvage archaeologist.

Geoff Ryman has a nationwide tour planned to promote the paperback publication of *Was...* in May by Flamingo and there will also be large space advertising in the national press and listings magazines, together with other publicity like a rotating display piece, poster and dumptin with custom header.

William Shatner has another Tek book coming out in May from Pan, which may belie rumours of another *Star Trek* film with him in command. Interestingly, *TekWar* sold a mere 1000 hardbacks, with 25000 C formats. Anyway, *TekLab* will be in A format (224 pages), simultaneously with the first British publication of *Tek Vengeance* in C format.

Anne Rice is writing a sequel to *The Witching*.

Modern Classics: Flamingo are publishing a series of key works by major twentieth century authors, with a major Aldous Huxley promotion in January 1994 to mark the centenary of his birth. The Science Fiction contributions (using the definition widely) appear to be William S Burroughs's *The Naked Lunch*, endorsed by JG Ballard who claims that Burroughs is the lineal successor to James Joyce; and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, first published in 1953.

Christies are holding an auction sale of Decorative Artwork at Christie's South Kensington Ltd, 85 Old Brompton Road, London on March 19. They were prompted to venture into this new area, after the spectacular results from the sales of a small collection of book cover artwork in July and October. For this auction, they hope to include original artwork for pulp books including Science Fiction, boys and girls annuals, adventure and romance novels, 1920-80 and already have a collection of 1950's Sexton Blake covers.

Lionel Fanthorpe appeared in the press, not as author this time, but as tutor to the over-ambitious James Harries who left school to run an antiques business and co-run a florists at age twelve and a bit. When the businesses failed, however, Lionel Fanthorpe was able to assist the police in their enquiries concerning his pupil.

Rex Greenwood, the town crier turned Dracula impersonator at Whitby, was shocked to the core by scenes from Francis Ford Coppola's new film, *Dracula*, saying that it had more in common with modern shockers such as *Nightmare on Elm Street* than with Bram Stoker's classic. "It's not on" he said "It is just not Dracula. It's a psycho film".

Obituaries

Keith Laumer died on January 22 in Florida. He had been ill for several years, and had had several strokes, the last of which killed him. He may be remembered for the Retief series where star travelling troubleshooter cum diplomat, Jaime Retief mediated between residents of many worlds and his superiors in the Terran Diplomatic Corps. These books were often amusing and obviously based on his experiences in the US foreign service.

With books like *A Plague of Demons*, the Laumer hero evolved. With no family ties, the Superman type goes on a voyage of self discovery and often manages to overcome both his problems and his world, albeit

more as a throne maker than by actually taking the throne. They were daydream books, occasionally superficial, mostly escapist.

I'll remember him for the time paradoxes of *Dinosaur Beach*, the parallel world universes of the Imperium and the paranoia of *A Plague of Demons*. They might certainly be books of daydreams: but they will stay on my bookshelves.

Roger Weddall died at 4.30pm on 3 December 1992 of pneumonia, a complication of the morphone drip he'd been taking as part of his cancer treatment. He was 36.

I never knew him very well: now I never will. All that remains are fragments, shards of memory. I know that the SF he thought people ought to read had Brian Aldiss' *Hothouse*, the Strugatsky's *Roadside Picnic* and Stanislaw Lem's *The Cyberiad* in the top three. He was a prankster: loved to tell stories which were fascinating and became more and more silly, until people finally realised they were being had. He had a cat, called Typo. He liked to eat at Gopals, a Hare Krishna vegetarian restaurant in Melbourne, where he would sometimes choose semolina pudding and jasmine tea.

His last fanish project was the DUFF trip to the States to represent Australian fandom and meet many of the people he'd been corresponding with. It was to have been a six month trip, but was cut short for his chemotherapy. And that's about all I know of him. I'm going to miss his gentle and constructive writing a lot.

André the Giant, best known to SF/fantasy fans as the actor who played Fezzik in *The Princess Bride*, died on January 30th.

Magazines

Maelstrom 6 (December 1992-May 1993, A5, £1.50 or £5 for 6 issues from Sol Publications, 58 Malvern, Coleman Street, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5AD)

Publishes Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery. Fiction by Edward M Rumble, Joel Lane, Edmund Harwood, Tony Burrell, Marcus Alexander, Richard Barlow, Victoria Hurst, Conrad Williams and Roberta Poule. Poetry by Andrew Darlington and Malcolm E Wright. Artwork by Tony Burrell, Edward M Rumble, Lawrence Calvert, Marcus Alexander and Graeme Southdown.

Back Brain Recluse 21 (A4, 84pp, £3.50 or £11 for 4 issues from Chris Reed, PO Box 625, Sheffield S1 3GY, cheques payable to BBR)

Fiction by Carol T Noble, Gabriel de Arida, Eva Hauser, R V Branham, Tim Nickels, Roger Thomas and Conrad Williams. Artwork by Rick Rawling, Smallpiece Whitmore, Jana Kupkova, Dreyfus, Anne Stephens, Rob Kirbyson, Dave Mooring and Jason Hurst. Opinion by Maureen Speller and David Memmott. Reviews, magazine listings and letter column.

Cyberspace Vanguard: This should have been an interesting magazine: the contents of issue 1 include Patrick Stewart on Broadway, J Michael Straczynski on *Babylon 5*, news. Write to PO Box 25704, Garfield Heights, OH 44125, USA, for information.

"I wish I'd a knob on my TV to turn up the intelligence."

"There's one called brightness,"

"It doesn't work..."

Graphic Novels

Eclipse Graphic Novels were launched in January by HarperCollins in a joint venture with Eclipse Books with the aim of combining the work of major contemporary novelists with sophisticated art and design.

HarperCollins have observed the invasion of visual media on the market once supplied by books (this is also discussed in the letter column), but instead of throwing their hands up in horror, they have decided to fight it by combining words and pictures into the graphic novel.

Visual literacy is the aim or, as the press release says, "visual literacy is something to brag about, no longer the shamefaced confession of a grownup with a taste for comics. Visual literacy? A self-explanatory term, you may suspect, designed to bestow a gloss of respectability on the enterprise. But this is not the case. Pictures assault the non-analytical part of the brain - a landscape of readymade images colliding daily with the average person's visual cortex - where they associate freely with each other. Most people are far more literate, visually, than they know. Graphic novels are the vital link between the video and the written word: between the two halves of your brain".

The first five graphic novels of the series celebrate the popular background of the form traditionally associated with Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror and the superhero is thrown in on the Science Fiction side as well.

Two graphic novels were published in January: Clive Barker's *The Yattering and Jack* illustrated by John Bolton with the story adapted by Steve Niles. It is a darkly hilarious and weirdly perceptive tale of hellspawn (the Yattering) versus the common man (Jack Polo, a pickle salesman), writer and artist together bring to life *The Lord of the Flies* in suburbia - and what happens next is entirely surprising. Also included in an adaptation of Clive Barker's *How Spoilers Bleed*, illustrated by Hector Gomez, story adapted by Fred Burke. This relates the gory revenge visited on white destroyers of the Brazilian jungle by the dying indigenous people of the Amazon basin. It is a punishment that fits the crime, incredibly unpleasant. There is also Anne McCaffrey's *Dragonflight*, illustrated by Cynthia Martin, Lela Dowling and Fred Von Tobel with the story adapted by Brynne Stephens. *Dragonflight* launched the bestselling series, *The Dragonriders of Pern*.

February brings a Dean Koontz graphic adaptation: the story of laboratory rats, smart rats, bioengineered and hostile, for some reason, to humans. Evil and terror is spread round throughout the book and beyond. His book is adapted by Edward Gorman and illustrated by Anthony Bilau. The other February graphic novel is Neil Gaiman's *The Golden Age*, story of the age of gods among men, the age of truth in which everything is what it seems, and nothing is as it was imagined. Gaiman gives new life to the superhero genre in this compelling work.

March brings Clive Barker's *Revelations*, adapted by Steve Niles and illustrated by Lionel Talaro. A thirty year old murder haunts the motel room where it all happened and before the clouds reveal a full moon, it must all happen again. Also included is an adaptation of his *Babel's Children* illustrated by Hector Gomez and adapted by Steve Niles.

The series is set to continue with Doris Lessing's *Playing the Game* in April, Clive Barker's *Dread* in May, Barker's *The Life of Death* in July and Carroll's *Uh-Oh City* and May's *Sky Trillium* in December.

Terry Pratchett is considering letting *Mort* become a Big Comic (he prefers this term to "graphic novel") but says there are no plans for any others although Corgi are publishing their first ever graphic novel, *The Colour of Magic* and are planning on bringing out *The Light Fantastic*, especially since Innovation have just brought out the last issue of it as a comic in the States.

But Bryan Talbot sounds a warning note of pessimism. Having spend two years adapting *One Bad Rat*, it appears that although it will be published by Dark Horse in the States in four volumes, it will not appear in Britain at all and the future of graphic novels may not be as rosy as one would like it to be. *One Bad Rat* has definite Beatrix Potter parallels and it is set half in London and half in the States. And unconfirmed but normally reliable sources suggest that Gollancz will drop their graphic novel venture as soon as possible, with Ian McDonald's *KlingKlangKlutch* being the last Gollancz graphic.

Paperbacks Pending

Seeing as there is only one Terry Pratchett and, fortunately, only one Josh Kirby (though apparently *The Colour of Magic* is to be reprinted without a Josh Kirby cover), publishers are casting far and wide to get a look alike. Mandarin had a go with Christopher Moore's *Practical Demon-keeping*, which did have the authentic Kirby cover. It was a "fun horror/fantasy romp with a contemporary American setting and a wonderful demon with an insatiable appetite for humans". Good tongue in the cheek stuff and Disney have brought film rights. And Corgi tried with Michael Martin's *A Year Near Proxima Centauri*. Still Arrow have found it with Andrew Harman, whose *The Sorcerer's Appendix* is coming from Arrow. In fact, Arrow are so sure they have a winner that they've signed a three book deal with him. The real Terry Pratchett has *The Carpet People* coming out in April and there will be another juvenile later and probably a couple more adult new titles (*Small Gods* in May). Turning to a new subject, but still Science Fiction whatever the author concerned may say, P D James' *The Children of Men* is also coming out in April, from Faber (C format only: the A format will follow in 1994). Grant Naylor has some *Red Dwarf* scripts, *Primal Soup* coming from Penguin too.

The major book coming in May is Robert Harris' *Fatherland* from Arrow, unpleasant but compulsive reading. June is a time for holidays, unless you want to read *Consciousness Explained* from Daniel Dennett and Penguin which they claim is an important new science title. But in July, there is James Herbert's *Portent* from NEL and David Eddings' *Domes of Fire* from Grafton. Warner have lost Terry Brooks, but they think they've got a more than adequate replacement with Robert Jordan. His *The Shadow Rising* comes in August: major fantasy, they say.

September may be a difficult month for catching the paperbacks missed in hardback. It starts with Douglas Adams' *Mostly Harmless* from Pan, right back on form. Stephen Hawkins' *A Brief History of Time* comes from Bantam in B format on the 23rd and Terry Pratchett's *Only You Can Save Mankind* from Corgi, but don't expect any Discworld/Truckers, of course everyone will know now that it is a computer games based fantasy exclusively for children (of all ages). In October, Anne Rice has *The Tale of the Body Thief* from Penguin, fourth volume in the Vampire Chronicles and then November kicks off with the last (of the year) Terry Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies* (Corgi) which will contrast well with Stephen Donaldson's *A Dark and Hungry God* coming from HarperCollins. *The Positronic Man*, an Asimov/Silverberg collaboration comes from Pan and there is yet another McCaffrey, *The Crystal Line*, coming from Corgi.

In December, Raymond E Feist's *The King's Buccaneer* comes from HarperCollins (will be C format in June) together with Arthur C Clarke and Gentry Lee's *Garden of Rama* from Orbit (which was C in October). Molly Cochran and Warren Murphy's *The Forever King*, the much-praised Arthurian fantasy is coming from Millenium, but basically the message seems to be that if you don't like Terry Pratchett (or if you don't like fantasy) stick to hardbacks.

I've been wrestling with reality for most of my life

I'm pleased to say I've won

Science in the Press

News coverage of science over winter started with news about SS433, the 14th magnitude star in the constellation of Aquila, revealing that it is probably a neutron star and not a black hole as previously suggested, due to the evidence of spectroscopic observations at optical wave lengths. Planetary news continued with a new theory that it is the gaseous outer planets which provided the conditions for intelligent life to evolve on Earth. If, as Professor Wetherill at the Carnegie Institute in Washington suggests, Jupiter and Saturn acted as 'cosmic bouncers', the very many comets flying about would have been deflected by their huge gravitational fields. Thanks to these planets, comets will hit the Earth only approximately once every hundred million years, instead of every hundred thousand years as the odds would normally suggest.

Virtual Reality was naturally a prime subject for discussion, though one interesting point came from Jaron Lanier, whose company VPL is a frontrunner in VR technology. He is critical of the passivity of the TV generation which has started to believe that it can't affect anything in the world. He says that VR will make people active participants not only in technology, but also in the world in general.

The science of *Star Trek* was examined in the magazine *Chemistry & Industry*. Current chemistry is not much help to the problems of dilithium crystals, though lithium and iron-sulphur compound batteries could be suitable for non-polluting silent power. Still, there were still problems in the 24th century: in the episode 'The Naked Now', virus mutation rears its ugly head. Although physician Janice Wallace may confidently say that 'We know the problem; we know the progress of the affliction. Therefore, once we find the proper line of research, it is only logical that we find a solution', it seems that the viruses play to other, and possibly more ruthless, rules.

Ira Platon's new book *They All Laughed*, just published from HarperCollins, gives a look at scientific discoveries and how seemingly the most wacky ideas have become some of the most important inventions in history, including TV, the camera and a 17th century FAX system.

Pratchett Plays

The Flying Theatre Company are touring with a three man version of *Mort*. The tour is half-way through, but further provisional dates are: March 3 North Cornwall Arts Trust; 4 St. Austell Arts Centre; 6 Cornwall Arts Trust; 13 Bristol Redgrave Theatre.

They say they'll take it wherever they're invited if they can fit it in (I think they work on a box office split basis). A problem they hit is that 'real' Arts Centres and small theatres, which tend to be controlled by what one can only refer to as 'arts graduates', often don't want to know because it's not a meaningful play by some cacky Frenchman. Anyway, the head honchette is: Simon Uncle, 22 Devonshire Road, Liverpool L8 3TY (tel: 051 707 2229).

Psychology of Fans

A recent television programme for children investigated the fannish phenomenon, showing the extremes of teenagers screaming for the Beatles and more solitary people in authentic Dr Who or *Star Trek* costume (including, in a bizarre slice of memory, Darth Vader at a Dr Who convention). The various fandoms, including Science Fiction, have taken on academic respectability with the publication of such books as:

Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture by Henry Jenkins, Assistant Professor of Literature at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (Routledge, New York, 1992 \$14.95).

Also recommended is the book *FutureSpeak: A Fan's Guide to the Language of Science Fiction* by Roberta Rogow (Paragon House \$24.95, 1991). She has several entries for filk, including the lyrics to *Hope Eyrice*.

Empire Dreams

Kev McVeigh

I sometimes wonder why I do this. When I write these pieces for *Matrix* and am attacked for them, by people who don't like my ideas, which are the product of continual discussion with BSFA members and others, yet won't put forward real ideas of their own.

Take *Focus* for instance, which had limped along for years, and was going nowhere much. So we decided, because finances were looking precarious, that *Focus* should be rested until someone comes up with a solid proposal for its future. I got a few letters, as did *Matrix*, but nothing beyond a statement that they wished *Focus* to continue. Until Carol Ann Green and Julie Venner rang me, talked about it and produced a detailed proposal. Even then I was wary, we talked a lot about this, and although our finances are far better than we feared, there is no room for complacency. So *Focus's* return date is still only provisional, but it will happen eventually because Carol Ann and Julie have positive things to say. They didn't just send whinging letters, like some I received, but presented ideas. I have every hope that the revived *Focus* will be something worth reviving.

Elsewhere, you will have noted the vastly improved mailing service. This still has some teething troubles, but we are working on these. Unfortunately, sometimes these things won't work themselves out quickly. We have to locate companies initially, request quotes, discuss these quotes, and then place our order, which all takes time. We are quite lucky with the Mailing House, but other projects are moving more slowly. Again this was a case where a few people complained about the mailings, but one person, Roy Gray, rang a company he knew and acquired details. From there it was relatively easy. Take heed.

There are also times when I feel better about this as well. When I have discussions about links with the SF Foundation and I realise the BSFA can do practical things as well as the theorising of reviews and letter columns. When I get a letter saying I don't know what I can do but I'd like to help. And even, contrarily, when I get these complaints because people care enough to write still. I just wish some of you would read more carefully and think more thoroughly first. Please.

Information Service

Phil Nichols

House moving (and Christmas) out of the way, and your Information Officer is back with you. Many thanks to Auntie Clare for holding the fort in my absence. If you have any questions relating to SF, please send them to me! Phil Nichols, 17 Allsops Close, Rowley Regis, Warley, West Midlands B65 8JAB. An SAE will get you a personal reply.

This issue, it's back to the SF mini-guides, with this piece about:

Michael Crichton

Harvard-educated doctor of medicine Michael Crichton is one of the few people to make a success of being both a novelist and a film director. Since the late sixties, he has achieved a string of successes (and a few failures) in both spheres of activity. If Steven Spielberg's next film, an adaptation of Crichton's *Jurassic Park*, is a success, you can expect a spate of book re-issues and a rush to acquire the film rights to Crichton's few remaining unfilmed best sellers.

Crichton has argued against being classed as a Science Fiction writer, although most of his work would fit that label. That said, he shows little interest or awareness of the conventions of the genre. His first successful novel, *The Andromeda Strain*, sought to present itself as a

scientific-journalistic account of a biological crisis, with an extensive bibliography. This has become something of a Crichton trademark, and the reader is always left wondering to what extent the plausible events described have a basis in reality. *The Andromeda Strain* seemed ideal material for an action movie, and was successfully put on screen by director Robert Wise.

Crichton's novels are sometimes unfairly dismissed as film outlines, but what is often overlooked is that his strength as a novelist is grounded in his ability to make the impossible seem plausible. I wouldn't argue that he matches H G Wells in literary skill, but *The Andromeda Strain*, *Sphere*, (alien artifacts found beneath the sea), *Jurassic Park* (dinosaurs are reborn when DNA is successfully extracted from preserved-in-amber insects which have fed on dinosaur blood), and *Congo* (complicated jungle goings-on involving a signing gorilla) all succeed admirably in inducing that much sought after willing suspension of disbelief. The irony is that film as a medium doesn't seem quite able to convey this. A film has to show you to convince you, and yet however good the special effects, you're always aware that they are special effects.

Crichton's weaknesses as a writer are perhaps related to his filmmaker's need for a linear, action-based narrative. *Jurassic Park* really ought to be better as a movie than it is as a book, the second half of which consists of an interminable sequence of (sometimes literal) cliffhangers. His latest novel, *Rising Sun*, describes the events of a couple of days in the life of a Californian policeman involved in the 'web of intrigue' surrounding a murder in a Japanese skyscraper. Again, the plotting is all in a straight line, with barely a pause for breath, and barely a moment of the hero's life going by without being described in detail. This, too, has been dismissed as an over-extended script outline - and indeed it could make a good 'buddy movie'. But what is usually missed by the dismissive critics (admittedly in this case, it largely hasn't been missed by the critics) is the underlying idea being explored beneath the plot. In this case, the novel is a warning - sometimes hysterical, but as always with Crichton you wonder how much is real and how much is fiction - against Japanese takeover of American business. No doubt this material could feature in a film, but it's difficult to imagine it, especially if Crichton were to film it himself. His movies are usually fast paced - see *The (First) Great Train Robbery*, *Westworld*, *Runaway*. Do you ever see Crichton waste good screen time on intellectual or technical ideas when a rollicking bit of action is called for?

As you may have guessed, I have a great liking for Michael Crichton's work. Some of his novels are weak - and perhaps owe more to Jules Verne or H Rider Haggard in their creaking Victorian plotting (see *Congo*), than they owe to old HG. His films sometimes disappoint, too, but rarely bore the viewer. At worst, he is a workaday director, and the writer of bestselling page-turners. But at best, he'll take you on a fantastic rollercoaster ride - and you'll never be quite sure of the point where reality gives way to fantasy.

Terry Bull writes: I've read your listing of Canadian SF writers, Clare, and I find I must be going as blind as Mexican Pete's pal Dick. Being an aged 46, I can't quite see the names of A E Van Vogt and Edna Mayne Hull who used to be quite well known in the old days. I know they lived in L.A. but I'm sure their origins were in the old dominions.

Intrepid explorer, M J "Simo" Simpson went to spy out the SF elements of a Radio, Television and Film Studies course, reporting below.

Within a few weeks of the course commencing, battle lines were drawn up. Some of the students favour heavy European art movies (four hours of some Spanish peasant complaining that his crops have failed) while some of us are unashamedly populist and maintain that the best film of last year was *Wayne's World*. They say that a film is no good if it has a straightforward narrative. We maintain that not only should it have a narrative, but all truly great films also include killer androids. It's Jean-Luc Godard versus *Terminator 2*!

The course is almost entirely theoretical, which means two things. Firstly, what little we are taught of the mechanics of cinema is extremely unscientific and often plain wrong. Secondly, an awful lot of pretentious b***s is talked about the films we watch.

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari is an interesting movie by anybody's standards, particularly with regard to its bizarre distorted sets. But the influence of German expressionism on the fledgling horror genre via directors such as Wiene, Murnau and Lang was largely glossed over in favour of the European art movement which led up to *Caligari*. This is typical of the dichotomy between what I (and others) want and what we get. Most of the tutors are not film fans. They're not interested in actors, special effects, screenplays and such like; they just want to pontificate to themselves with unsubstantiated (and unsubstantiable) theories. Still, they included clips of *Nosferatu* and *M* in the expressionist seminars, so it's not all bad.

When the technology strand of the course reached the various wide-screen processes, we actually got to watch the trailer for the *Star Wars* trilogy! Yeah! However, snatching at clips like this, which are seen as relevant to the course for some other reason and are only incidentally SF, is a bit sad and depressing.

One of the course strands is scriptwriting, which we have spent this term studying in terms of adaptations between media. So of course we have been concentrating on that most adapted of stories, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. But although it's fun and we spend one seminar comparing the opening episodes of the radio and TV series, we are not studying it for any Science Fiction motifs or ideas.

Finally, in the last week of term, we were shown *Blade Runner*. Not the director's cut, but you can't have everything. This was their token bit of populism, an admitted Christmas treat. The relevance was that we were all given photocopies of various reviews of, and articles on, the film, which we then had to compare to show the difference between criticism and theory.

So, although there are SF elements to the course, they are so far proving to be entirely incidental. What happens in the next eight terms remains to be seen. You will be posted on future events.

Fire and Hemlock

Hot Waffles is a title of appropriate cruelty, for just as the waffles diminish into moist crumbs after a good chew, so Phill Probert's comments on work (negative) and family (positive) sink into a confused silence. Like so many people, he's not exactly in love with his job, so uses an elegant self-mockery to help him survive the daily petty humiliations. But then, the reverse in every way, comes *The Transylvanian Green Party Candidate*, a fanzine published by his wife, Eunice Pearson. It's a slight publication, but whereas Phill is introspective, Eunice is, perhaps, more determined and definitely more cheerful. Phil talks about avoiding a re-possession order and retaining his personal integrity by declining to work for a soft porn company; Eunice talks of why she wants to put out a fanzine, the sort of books she reads, a few thoughts on comics. After the view of life in a trap portrayed in negative shades of grey by Phil, it is reassuring that Eunice can remain positive, even though the sun is shining and she's stuck inside with a chicken-pox covered young daughter. She feels driven to write, but finds it difficult: "I'm not one to whom words come easily. Before anything goes down on paper, lots of coffee has been drunk, too many adverts have been stared at on TV, too much shuffling papers, gazing into space, re-arranging of lists goes on. It's like extracting teeth".

It's fascinating to see a word picture build up of someone who is normally portrayed quite differently. Steve Green, for example, co-edits *Critical Wave*, the news magazine, with Martin Tudor, and can normally be perceived as a rather gingery free-lance journalist, specialising in comics and horror, perhaps a little portly. Steve also produces his own fanzine, *Gajjin* in which he discusses the Nova

fanzine awards and pads out the rest with articles ranging from a vignette of life in Brazil to a "what we did next" account of the Glastonbury Festival. But the Steve Green found in *Ormolu*, a fanzine published by his wife Ann, is gentle, caring enough to rescue a stray dog who had just been run over, carefully putting on the TV so that his unexpected houseguest could watch an episode of *Blackadder Goes Forth*. Like Eunice, Ann is interested in readers' reactions, and what Eunice provides a conversation hook by complaining of the current dullness of comics, Ann challenges the hypocrisy of people considering themselves tolerant: "We're not going to change our discriminating society by pussy-footing around with the dictionary. By all means avoid deliberately insulting a person because they're different from you, but let that be a reflection of changing attitudes rather than the fear of dropping a clanger. It's only when we as individuals acknowledge our own inherent racism by fighting the urge to clutch our bags close to when a black jogger runs past. Or our own sexism by ditching the Essex girl type of 'joke'".

Perhaps it is unfair to reinforce an opinion of one person by reading a fanzine produced by their partner. It certainly doesn't apply in the case of Australians Ian Gunn and his wife Karen Pender-Gunn. Ian is by turns lyrical and whimsical. He insists that responses to his own fanzine, *Stan Gunn* should be 23 words long, though frankly I can think of several more appropriate numbers, 42 for example. His cartoons are witty without being hurtful: his prose both thought-provoking and -well, judge for yourself. In a mixture of educational, pragmatic and bizarre advice on Condom Etiquette, he writes in all seriousness (?) that: "Brand names not recommended for the inexperienced, elderly, infirm or easily startled include the Stud Thruster 500, the 'Little Genghis Plunger', Throckmorton's Patent Luminous Edible Rib-Tickler, the Black and Decker Orbital Cordless Power Pump and any of the 'Bang-A-Wang' Explosive Surprise range".

Karen draws on Ian's art and writing for her fanzine, but she seems to use them as an extension of her college courses. *Pink 12* concerns love, lust and romance and is a patchwork of strip cartoons and quotations with the odd article. There's a section on famous men who were full or part time virgins and it seems that Havelock Ellis never masturbated because he feared contracting VD from wet dreams. Another of her fanzines, *The Stegosaurus Thymus* examines dinosaurs from various angles and must be gentle satire. There's no alternative when the reader innocently opens the fanzine and sees a dinosaur problem page.

All that can be deduced from the Gunn fanzines is that they work together and enjoy producing them. That may be the key to producing a good fanzine, the enthusiasm which Eunice and Ann also show. They liked creating a fanzine. The Science Fiction content is minimal, mostly non-existent, but that does not result in angst-ridden guilt. Ann likes Ramsey Campbell, Eunice likes J G Ballard, Karen likes William Gibson - their Science Fiction credentials are quite valid: and unnecessary.

That's by no means the end of the story, though. Over in the States, Dick Smith and Leah Zeldes Smith are duplicating *Stet*, Dick and Nicki Lynch are creating *Mimosa* and both Arnie Katz and Joyce Worley Katz are pubbing their ishes. And how can a piece describing partners in fanzines omit Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna? Quite easily, because the underlying theme is considering how one partner is reflected in the other's fanzine, and *FTT* is so obviously a joint production. There is obviously a part two of this article waiting to happen, real soon now, honest.

Hot Waffles comes from Phillip Owen Probert and *The Transylvanian Green Party Candidate* comes from Eunice Pearson, both at 20 Birch Terrace, Birtley, Co. Durham DH3 1JL.
Gaijin comes from Steve Green and *Ormolu* from Ann Green at 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull B92 7LQ, West Midlands.

Stan Gunn comes from Ian Gunn and *Pink 12* and *The Stegosaurus Thymus* come from Karen Pender-Gunn at PO Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia.

The Play's the Thing

Frankenstein

M J Simo Simpson

(Leicester Haymarket Studio 11/12/92-16/01/93: adapted and directed by Julia Bardsley)

Mary Shelley's classic novel (often hailed as the first SF story) has been adapted for the stage before, indeed it was frequently presented in Victorian times. However, since the classic James Whale/Boris Karloff film of 1931, it has been seen as more of a cinematic concept than a theatrical one (although that movie was itself adapted from Peggy Webling's 1930 London production).

Today, stage productions of *Frankenstein* are few and far between (Rocky Horror excepted!) so it was a pleasant surprise to find one, particularly one which was so faithful to the novel.

Since most people's perception of *Frankenstein* is the series of Universal movies from the 1930s (or, more likely, a bastardisation of those stories and their offspring from Hammer, etc.), a prologue was employed to set the context of the novel/play. In a wax museum, a father and son find dummies of Victor Frankenstein, Mary Shelley and the Monster, read the explanatory labels, and thus prevent the audience from complaining that the Creature doesn't look like Herman Munster.

After a rather pretentious scene in which Mary Shelley literally gives birth to the novel, the play settled down to the Shelley text. Robert Walton, the Arctic explorer who narrates the start and finish of the novel, is writing letters to his sister. Frankenstein (Rory Edwards) literally cuts his way through the backcloth and takes up the narration.

A lot of the story was, by necessity, narrated. *Frankenstein* is a largely narrative novel, particularly during the self-imposed seclusion of Victor's experiments and the Monster's self-discovery. By way of variation, the narration was shared between the relevant character and the ever-present Mary Shelley (Natasha Pope), sometimes consecutively, sometimes synchronous, sometimes slightly out of synch. It worked surprisingly well.

The sets, in the first act, were limited to a white backcloth (for the Arctic wastes/Swiss mountains) and a marvellously executed nineteenth century scientific laboratory, full of strangely shaped bottles and human skulls. In this set we are introduced to the Monster (Paul Hamilton), superbly dressed in leg braces and other surgical appliances. Designing the Monster's appearance is always a problem, but Aldona Cunningham here created a Creature which combined horror, pathos and believability in just the right proportions.

The novel consists of three concentric narratives. Walton's framing *Frankenstein's*, which in turn frames the Monster's. It was this middle story which commenced Act Two, as the Creature described his development from basic principles such as 'fire burns' through simple speech and writing, basic maths, algebra, science, art, music, philosophy... Paul Hamilton, initially naked (looking not unlike an early frontispiece to the novel, and bereft of his leg irons, etc. for ease of movement) gave a superb display of mime here, matching his own tape-recorded narration. Using only a few props and the eight movable glass screens which formed the set for the second act, he showed how the Creature's development mirrored humanity's, and to a certain extent, *Frankenstein's*.

Though the set was minimalist and many of the props symbolic, the play never sank into the pretentious airy rubbish that characterises much of modern theatre. The period costumes were excellent and the moments of horror, as when the Creature systematically murders all the people that his creator loves, were sinister and scary without becoming laughable. Eventually the backcloth was replaced as we returned once more to the Arctic and Walton's encounter with Frankenstein, leading to the final *deus ex machina*. The performances from the five strong cast were excellent throughout, and the design and direction gave the whole play the chillingly Gothic atmosphere that such a story demands. A very commendable production.

No one expects...

...the Spammish Repetition

Running a Bulletin Board

Jim Trash

I always promised myself I'd never run a BBS.

It always seemed to me unthinkable that I would tie up a machine 24 hours a day AND purchase an extra phone line for the sake of allowing other people to play with my microcomputer.

I logged onto BBS as a user for something like 4 years and felt no urge to put my machine online as a host until 'The Owl Service' in Leeds came online. Malcolm (sysop of the Owl) had a lot of good ideas although very little technical knowledge at the time of how to turn these ideas into reality (or even virtual reality). He invited me to co-sysop and we formed the perfect partnership with Malcolm as artist and myself as technician. I carried out most of the maintenance of the BBS but much of the major work had to be carried out at the console due to memory problems plus the programs that wouldn't re-direct output down the comms port.

This grew increasingly frustrating and eventually I decided to set up my own system where I wouldn't have to wait for my partner before I waded in with tools and gay abandon. The project started as a limited hours bulletin board and grew into the Chaos system which now runs 24 hours a day on its own phone line.

Why should I commit so much in resource to a BBS? Probably for many of the same reasons people publish fanzines. Effectively what I produce is an ever changing online fanzine. My letters section is the message areas. My log on screen is the editorial. My files are my articles. My games are my competitions etc., etc.

I feel I have something of interest to communicate and the BBS is a most effective tool to assist me in this communication. It's also an intriguing way to reach out to people with similar interests. I set up a system which reflects my personality and interests. It cannot fail to attract people with similar interests who will enjoy prowling around amidst the Chaos.

Basically it's a lot of fun.

Running a BBS efficiently and keeping it going is a hell of a lot of work but is most rewarding particularly at those times when people log on and say how much they enjoyed your creation.

A writer may submit one piece of work to a dozen market outlets and receive no feedback other than rejections slips. I may not get paid for my work but I can guarantee people will read it by placing it on the BBS.

Most rewarding.

(Jim's bulletin board "Chaos" can be reached at 0532-529675 and supports the usual range of modem speeds.)



WriteBack

If you have anything you want to say following on from the topics here or on SF generally, this is the place to send it. Please write to Jenny and Steve Glover, 16 Aviairy Place, Leeds LS12 2NP, by the deadline:

10 March 1993

Humankind is a word too

Carol-Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU5 2JB

I was interested in the letters last time around touching on the sex and language issue. Norman Beswick seemed the voice of reason, as he so ably points out, mankind does preclude women - someone says man to me, I think male, someone says woman, I think female, someone says person, I think human. How anyone can believe that mankind encompasses men and women, I don't know. Given that kind of logic, womankind would be the better word, as it incorporates man and woman, personally, though, I prefer humankind.

Hervé Hauck says he is only being half serious but .. does he really believe that feminist = good as far as writing goes? If this is the case, then how come the majority of SF is still written and published by men? And as to why there is no men's press, pretty obvious to me, the majority of publishers are run by men and publish men, thus the Women's Press tries to balance things a little. A reading of Joanna Russ' excellent book *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, will give anyone an insight into how women's writing has over the centuries been brutally suppressed, even up to today. Damn, forget, not allowed to mention Joanna Russ. Actually, I don't remember seeing an awful lot about Joanna Russ in the pages of the BSFA, as to Ursula Le Guin, like Dick, Heinlein and Clarke, she is one of the SF authors most frequently quoted; yet I don't see anyone complaining that there is always something in the BSFA publications about Dick, Heinlein or Clarke.

On to another voice of sanity with Steve Palmer's letter. However, I would love to know where he and John Madracki get the idea that there are any women only Orbiter groups, as the coordinator, I would be aware of them if there were! I now reproduce statistics that I've just put in the Orbiter newsletter on the breakdown of the groups by gender: in ten groups, the male:female ratio is 3:2 in four groups, 4:1 in one group, 3:1 in two groups, 2:2 in another and 2:3 in the last two. The Novelists group has one man to four women. So, as you can see, no all female groups, no all male groups either, a couple come close, but all groups are assigned as people ask to be put into a group. I don't deliberately put people into groups according to gender.

So if there are all female Orbiter groups out there, could they get in contact with the Orbiter coordinator please.

Non-sexist language is only the beginning of it, women don't yet have equality, and still have a long way to go. The use of words like humankind (such a small thing to cause such a big controversy) can help to break down the barriers.

Orbiters

Interested in writing? Ever thought about joining a postal writers workshop? Orbiters consist of five members circulating manuscripts amongst themselves, adding comments to the other manuscripts and receiving comments on their ones. Each person should hold on to the parcel no more than two weeks and it should go round the group in no more than 2-3 months.

As well as all-purpose groups, there is also a novelist's group, for those writers interested in circulating purely novel work, and in the process of being set up, a group for people interested in circulating non-fiction.

If you are interested in any of these groups, please contact: Carol Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU15 2JB.

(More or less on the same subject, Mike White rather assertively condemned Ken Lake for willfully misunderstanding his point of view in the last issue. Was it deliberate? Perhaps.)

Joseph Nicholas, 5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH

"Is it really too much to expect our Great Lake to actually read properly any letters he might find critical to his point of view rather than descending into invective?" asks Mike White in *Matrix* 103. The answer is: probably not. Mike (and many others) may be interested in the following quotation, from a letter by Ken Lake in Leah Zeldes Smith's and Dick Smith's fanzine *Stet* 6:

"I guess I should have admitted that one of the several strands that goes into my method of locking is a desire to get up the noses of as many people as possible, simply to get them to react to me as I have reacted to the zine. There's far too much damn supine hypocrisy and good manners and couch-potato refusal to react to anything these days; I want fandom to zing with fury!"

From which it would appear that Ken Lake has no interest in responding properly - that is, constructively - to those who disagree with him, or even to those who don't; all he wants out of fandom is a punch-up. This being so, it seems to me that there's clearly little point in anyone publishing any more of his letters.

(It is a trifle difficult to do so, admittedly, since Ken is not now seeing these magazines until he lands up in Hong Kong, where a positive mountain of mail will await him.)

For those interested in his current progress, he is at present at Bali and writes: "Wonderful music and dance in open air in ancient setting. Genuine thatched bamboo and stone Balinese bungalow (western bathroom!) in tropical garden only two minutes from art galleries, shops, restaurants, stalls in "cultural centre" UBUD, fabulous country walks at 6am before temp. rises to 31 degrees centigrade. Marvellous people, super healthy food (try gado-gado and rojak sometime). Sound of birds, smell of incense, girl laying offering on my verandah. Heaven!"

The BSFA progress

Peter Tennant, 9 Henry Cross Close, Shipdham, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 7LQ

Many thanks for *Matrix* 103, another excellent issue with lots of news and information, though Kev McVeigh's "Empire Dreams" piece was the one that made me sit up and pay attention.

Kev's comments about the fannish side of *Matrix* slightly disturbed me. As I see it, the BSFA is not a literary society, but a club for people interested in Science Fiction. Literature should be a major concern (and certain it is where my interests lie), but not the be all and end all. Fandom is a part of Science Fiction and deserves consideration. As Maureen Speller recently pointed out, fans form the bulk of the BSFA's activists. To freeze them out would be ungracious and ultimately damaging to the Association. I've no wish to get involved in fandom, but I do read the convention reports and fanzine reviews. It's interesting to know what's going on and what opportunities there are. I remember Maureen Speller as editor continually bemoaning lack of material, whereas nowadays *Matrix* seems to be bursting at the seams.

I was one of the people who saw no purpose to *Focus* in its previous form, but I welcome its return as a fictionzine, something I've long felt

the BSFA needed. I'm glad that there will be no 'workshopping' of material, a practice that should be restricted to writer's group where everyone has the opportunity to give as good as they get and in private too. Kev is right to insist that the BSFA should not be a dumping ground for inferior fiction, but in the absence of any payment for stories, it's unrealistic of anyone to expect *Focus* to rival magazines like *Interzone* or *Far Point*. It seems unlikely that *Focus* will publish fiction of the first rank, unless it's of a nature that won't appeal to the professional markets. Whatever, I look forward to seeing the new *Focus* and many thanks to Carol and Julie for taking the editorial reins in hand.

Pam Baddeley

I feel a certain sympathy with the views of "Dead Wood"; apart from the odd letter I'm not active in fandoms of any kind these days. Like Leigh Barlow, I just don't have the time and I would agree with David Smith that those who read Science Fiction and are keen enough to join an association are in a minority. There are people where I work who read nothing but Science Fiction and we even discuss it informally in a book 'club' where we recommend books to each other, but that's as far as they want to go. I'm actually miles behind with reading Science Fiction these days, especially since I read a lot more other stuff than I used to.

I know last issue had an update on *Focus*, but I think my remarks are still valid. I bought back issues of *Focus* earlier this year and found them far more lively, interesting and relevant than the more recent ones. It seemed to lose direction. I'm glad to hear it's coming back even if so sporadically. As for the separating out of market reports, maybe updates could appear in the magazine unless the plan is to update the booklet itself fairly frequently.

As for the John Madracki debate: 'Ms' isn't pretentious; it's just the female equivalent of the male title 'Mr'. As for the objection to humankind, as Steve Palmer has now pointed out, there's a perfectly acceptable alternative: *humanity*. I was surprised to see such vitriol: I certainly haven't noticed a feminist bias in the BSFA, I'd alone radical feminism. Either the individuals have been living in a vault since 1870 or they have a very low threshold of tolerance. English is a living language constantly adjusting to the needs of the people who use it.

(As a footnote to this, Philip Muldowney adds: "It seems that, with the membership table, Kev McVeigh's piece and the accounts, that it must be whither BSFA time again. I must admit that I find it difficult to get worked up by it. A lot of the faults seemed to have centred on the magazines, and these do seem to be working tolerably well. There does seem to be a gaping hole, though, of not getting any feedback from the vast majority of the membership who do not make their views known, but just slide away at renewal time. Maybe some project to garner their views, might help. Is the decline of 12% or so attributable entirely to the recession?" I'm inclined to think that perhaps there has been enough navel gazing for the time being: it's time for more positive action, voting for the BSFA award, for example, considering usays of attracting new members, even coming to the Annual General Meeting which is currently scheduled for a slot during Mexican which will be held at Scarborough in May. However, there was a sizeable contribution to the media debate, which starts with the bulk of Philip Muldowney's letter now.)

Philip Muldowney, Golden Harvest, Tamerton Foliot Road, Looseleigh Cross, Plymouth PL6 4ES

The papers just before Christmas had a scattering of articles commenting on the sell through of videos as opposed to books. There are a lot of first edition hardback books that are only selling 400 to 600 copies, while just a very ordinary video can expect a sell through in the tens of thousands. The blockbuster, and porn as sex education, in the hundreds of thousands. The video market is moving beyond the hire stage to a direct confrontation with books. Okay, the death of the novel has been rumoured for generations, but has the ever expanding technology blown the first harbingers of extinction. How many teenagers do you know who read a lot? Or would read a book, as

opposed to watching several videos?? One does not have to be illiterate, to be not very literate.

So in the film/video/tv field, what does SF have to offer? A huge amount of brilliantly produced escapism that in the end says very little of true import. In a poll of eminent film critics by *Sight and Sound* recent, 2001: *A Space Odyssey* came up there amongst the top ten films ever produced. What other SF films would get into the top hundred or even thousand best films of all time. Nominations???? Damn few, I suspect.

One of the more depressing things of late has been the reaction to the repeat on TV of *Thunderbird* and its various clones. An instant fandom has grown up, like the mass flowering of an arid desert after a storm. Seemingly coming complete with its own myths and fan clubs. Suddenly, Dinky toys that are not even twenty years old, sell for several hundred pounds and people appear on TV boasting of their collections. instant nostalgia indeed.

What of the other SF orientated series that has strong fan followings: *Dr Who*, *Blake's Seven*, *The Prisoner* and of course the grandest of them all, *Star Trek*? Aged actors, desperately straining their stomachs in, make a good living from appearing at conventions as the characters they have not played for twenty years [Why is it I'm suddenly thinking of a certain engineer?]. Why is it, that most of the fandoms are based on children's SF programmes? Indeed, is it not ironic in the extreme that the original SF fandom is outnumbered many times by fan clubs based SF soap operas? The old Sturgeon law of 90% of everything being crap applies even more firmly to film and TV SF. Although perhaps this time it should be 99.9%.

Anybody in agreement with me that books are too expensive in this country? One has only to buy a few American published books from the speciality book stores, to realise that the dollar price points apply almost exactly to their pound equivalent. Hence the £3.99, £4.99 and £5.99 points correspond almost exactly to their American equivalents. Yet even after the famed Black Wednesday, the pound is still about £1.50 or £1.60 to the dollar. It is a generally acknowledged fact that book prices in this country are about 25% to 30% dearer than in the States. Why? There is not even Value Added Tax on books in this country. I suspect a large amount of the blame lies in the Net Book Agreement which still allows the publishers to enforce recommended prices, more than a generation after the practice was outlawed in every other industry. Perhaps it is another version of the car pricing syndrome in the common market. Even after years of campaigning, and of supposedly free cross border trading, our cars are still among the most expensive in Europe. Or perhaps we are just mugs.

One further thought. Most of the British publishing houses are not owned by American publishers. It is rumoured, that the agreement on which areas of the world American and British publishers can publish is about to end. Given a free-for-all, in world publishing, and the above American ownership of British publishing, what chance for our lot?

(Gosh, that's strayed a bit from the media discussion. The paperback bestseller figures have just been published for 1992 and are discussed in the editorial. Maybe the next letter will bring the discussion back on track).

John Madracki, 17 Goldrill Ave, Bolton BL2 5NJ

I would go so far as to contend that there has been no major Science Fiction film since Kubrick's 2001 a quarter of a century ago.

But, perhaps, I should first define what I mean by a Science Fiction film. It is simply one wherein the 'speculative' theme is predominant, and the premise is strong enough to bear the weight of the entire film without the need for some form of genre crossover or stultifying firework display to prop it up.

Ever since Lucas opened up a lucrative market with *Star Wars*, we have been swamped with fix-laden fantasies, computerised cops'n'robbers and rocket-riding cowboys'n'injuns.

I know that Special Effects can often be an integral part of realising a Science Fiction story - and they don't come much more impressive than in *Terminator 2*. But where would that film be without them? SFX should be the icing on the cake, not the main ingredient - otherwise it is only the senses that are stimulated while the intellect is relegated to snooze mode.

Admittedly, the classic SF films such as *War of the Worlds*, *This Island Earth*, *The Time Machine* and *Village of the Damned* et al, are not above criticism. They may not be entirely faithful to the original text but they capture the 'spirit' magnificently, and are genuine Science Fiction.

I also own that there have been a few minor classics within the last twenty five years. *Saturn 3*, *A Boy and his Dog*, *Soylent Green*, and even *Alien* (all of which were slated by the critics upon their release) immediately spring to mind, and there are no doubt others I could list, but these have been so few and far between that they really stand as the exceptions that prove the rule.

The sad fact is that, having had its heyday in the '50s and '60s, the Science Fiction film is now virtually defunct - and the most we can now expect are a host of variable Sci-Fi movies.

Nor is this essentially a value judgement. There have been several (well, a few) sci-fi extravaganzas that have not only been entertaining but even worthwhile. *Blade Runner*, for instance, is a thoroughly enjoyable film; but it never rises above being anything other than a well-crafted futuristic thriller - and will probably be remembered more for its influence on TV commercials for banks than as a cinematic translation of P K Dick's original story. Another good film, *Outland*, is only really *High Noon* in Outer Space, and the much-praised *Starman* is merely another Chase Movie.

But, at the other end of the scale, we have also had to tolerate the puerile machismo of *Predator* and the infantile humour of *Short Circuit*.

Unfortunately, this sorry state of affairs is only a reflection of the industry in general, and all cinema is equally affected. Having found their most profitable audience among that section of the public who expect excessive violence, prurient sex and bad language as a matter of course, the studios are more than happy to keep them readily supplied.

This is a situation that will no doubt go on for an awfully long time to come.

Noticeboard

Focus

We are hoping to publish both fiction and non-fiction in Focus this time around, first issue should be out in June.

So, if you would like to contribute to the BSFA's own writers' magazine, we are looking for articles on all aspects of writing, fiction up to 5,000 words, and for our forum, brief pieces (600-800 words) on characters: how they are created, how far they 'take over' the story, how we perceive our characters.

We are also looking for good quality art work, full A4, half page and fillers. Interim deadline March 31 1993.

Please send any contributions to: Carol Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU5 2JAB or Julie Venner, 42 Walgrave Street, Newland Avenue, Hull HU5 2LT.

Music

Bored with spineless New Age music? Can't get along with computer controlled Rave stuff? Uncontrollable fits of yawning when Metal bands come on? Me, too. So listen to:

Fusions (rock/psychedelic)

3001 (electronic/spacey)

Mock the Moocher (rock/electronic/green)

Water Birth Music (electronic/ambient/ difficult)

All by ad-hoc, occasional band MOOCH. Tapes three quid each, or a quid-fifty if you send your own blank tapes; each title needs one C60. All music is instrumental, and all tapes come with their own colour inserts. Postage free.

From: Steve Palmer, 31 Edward Street, Luton, Beds. LU2 0NF.

Books for Sale:

143 paperbacks from various SF/F authors going very cheap, most are 1st UK/USA editions now out of print. SAE for current list.

Books Wanted: *TimeQuest: Book 1 Rashamyn Dark* and *Timequest Book 2: Hydrabyss Red* book by William Tedford. Plus a copy of *The Price of the Phoenix* by Sondra Marshak and Myrna Culbreath.

Videos Wanted: I am looking for second hand copies of various *Star Trek* videos.

Contact address for any of the above: Chris Bailey, 52 Druids Walk, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 7PF.

Frankenstein

I am researching a major project on depictions and developments of the Frankenstein mythos, concentrating mostly on the films, but also covering literature, comics, TV, drama, etc. Any help which BSFA members can offer would be appreciated: can anybody recommend (or lend me) any books which deal wholly or partially with Dr F? Articles/reviews from film and horror magazines would also be useful (I will pay photocopying costs). If you have any of the more obscure Frankenstein movies on video, can I borrow them? I particularly need foreign films such as *Dracula, Prisoner of Frankenstein* (shown on Central this Summer). M J Simpson, 29 Crane Street, Cobridge, Stoke on Trent, Staffs. ST1 5EF.

For Sale: Friends of Foundation currently hold a large number of duplicate magazines: US and UK editions, 1950s-1990s, single copies and complete year runs. Condition varies, but prices are generally low. Send SAE for lists to Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey, CRO 6JE or phone 081 656 0137 (evenings/weekends) for more details.



The Periodic Table Wheels within spirals within the circles of your mind Sally-Ann Melia

At Helicon on Jersey, at the European Science Fiction Convention at Easter, there will be a writer's circle. Please consider this your own personal invitation to attend. This includes European writers, it is only right at a European Convention to hope to have a cross-section of different writings. Also I'm looking for an assistant to help run the workshop, please read on...

Writers will meet early in the Convention for the opening session called Instant Writing. All writers must bring one headline or photograph from a newspaper to this first meeting. Manuscripts will be collected, photocopied for redistribution and study for the reading sessions in the subsequent days. Writers wishing to participate in the Writer's Circle are asked to bring a sample of their writing. This may be an extract from a novel, short story, poetry or a play, Science Fiction or Fantasy. These will be photocopied and redistributed for positive discussion and possible improvements, praise and market suggestions early on Sunday morning.

Since Jersey is so close to the continent, Helicon anticipates that a large number of French and European SF fans and writers will be participating in Helicon. The Writer's Circle will be happy to welcome any French or European writers and their work. French speakers will be on hand to assist French writers and hopefully a sufficient number of non-English writers will attend to give the Circle a true European flavour. I would welcome one or more assistants to assist in running the workshop, particularly sought after would be those with a smattering of European Languages, but don't be put off if all you know is "La Plume de ma Tante" and a smattering of sign language.

Manuscript preparation: Helicon will bear the expense of making multiple copies of the first two pages of any manuscript. I would suggest to writers that you prepare your texts in single spacing. If you want to bring additional pages, please make five or six copies at your own expense. For further information about the Writer's Circle at Helicon, please write to me, Sally-Ann Melia, at 11 Spinney Drive, Cheswick Green, Solihull B90 4HB.

Contour Mapping

Micoon (March 6-7, University Union, Exeter, details from Nick-the-Hat, 24 Buddle Lane, St Thomas, Exeter EX4 1JH)

Colin Greenland is Guest of Honour.

Picoon (March 13, Imperial College Union, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London SW7, membership £5 on door only)

Colin Greenland is Guest of Honour.

Mexicon V (May 28-31, St Nicholas Hotel, Scarborough, contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley B66 4SH, attending membership £20)

Special Guests are now Norman Spinrad, Ian McDonald and Ken Campbell, who will perform *Pigsurt*.

Luunicon (Unicon 14) (July 31-August 1, Leeds University Union, Leeds, contact Leeds University SF&F Society, PO Box 157, Leeds LS1, attending membership £12, less for students)

Guests of Honour Roger Zelazny, Michael Scott Rohan, Colin Greenland.

Lightspeed '93 (September 17-19, Hilton Hotel, Leeds, contact Tel: 0709 367321). First British *Star Trek: The Next Generation* convention.

Fincon (August 7-8, Old Student House, Helsinki, membership free, details from Helsinki University SF Club, Helsinki, Finland)

Guests of Honour Terry Pratchett and Bryan Talbot.

Still wavering? Ari Veintie gives some inducement. "Finland is the country between Sweden and the late USSR. 75 years of indepeny, rather large in European standards, but small in population. The land of Koskenkorva, paper and Nokia-Mobira mobile telephones. Whatever. SF as in Suomi Finland. Never mind, now you know".

"We're not seriously trying to lure you all to this expensive northern country" continues Ari "where you aren't allowed to go to a restaurant barefooted. Just letting you know what's happening in case you've been planning to come somewhere nearby (like Stockholm the following weekend, perhaps).

Armadacon (November 13-14, Astor Hotel, Plymouth, attending membership £20, details from Marion Prichard, 4 Genealege Avenue, Mannadmead, Plymouth, Devon PL3 5HL)

Guests of Honour subject as always to commitment, Danny John-Jules, Martin Bower, a model maker for movies and SF/F authors Adrian Cole and Mike Jeffries.

1994

Wincon III (July 29-31, King Alfred's College, Winchester, contact 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants PO10 7TS, attending membership £17 until April, when it goes up)

Wincons have specialised in interesting guests of honour: this time they have Algis Budrys and James Hogan booked.

Animé overview 1992

Harry Payne

It's been roughly a year since Island World released *Akira* to triumphal acclaim, and enough public interest to make them decide to release more animé under the confusingly-named "Manga Video" label. This is a reasonable time to take stock, look back at what's been provided for us, and take a guess at what's going to happen in the future. Let's start with a quick overview of the releases to date:

Akira: undoubtedly THE animé to have in your video collection. *A tour de force* of SF, mysticism, and a cynical look at the human condition, centring around a gang of young disaffected bikers in the nightmarish Neo-Tokyo of post World War III. Cel animation has never been used to better effect in anything else released in the Western Hemisphere. Issued in two versions; the ordinary dubbed release and the subtitled, letterboxed "collector's edition", which despite the higher price tag outsold the ordinary release by at least 2:1. Certificate 15, rating A+ for the ordinary version, A++ for the "collector's edition".

Fist of the North Star: very violent, 90-minute condensation of an awful lot of 30-minute TV episodes, which make as much sense as taking the entire run of *Star Trek* and turning that into a film. Fortunately, the U.S. company responsible for this made no pretence about holding on to a plot, and the resulting barrage of martial arts in which several protagonists meet bloody deaths serves as an excellent example of the type of video to watch after ten points of lager and a curry. Certificate 18, rating C-.

Dominion: Tank Police (parts 1 and 2): an exceptionally funny story of the desperate attempts by a group of psychotic coppers to prevent the crime rate in their city rising from one crime every twenty seconds to one every nineteen seconds, and the misadventures of a group of criminals trying to steal urine samples from a hospital which only treats healthy patients. When the two groups meet, serious collateral damage ensues. The story is somewhat muted by the poor voice acting (see below) and some totally appalling techno-bop muzak instead of the original soundtrack which, whilst not exactly a great piece of work, gave a much better feel to the proceedings. Certificate 15, rating B+.

Dominion: Tank Police (parts 3 and 4): the same characters clash when the criminals try to steal a painting of the bog boss from an art house. Better in every respect from the first two parts: the plot is thought-provoking, the voice actors have got to grips with the characters, and most of the original soundtrack is retained. Of the adaptations from Shirov Masamune's manga, this is certainly the closest in intent, dealing with how humanity pollutes its own living space, and what may eventually happen to us. Certificate 15, rating A.

Project A-Ko: a tale of schoolgirl passion, giant robots, and alien invasion. A classic of the genre, which mercilessly parodies nearly everything which came out before it (those of you who have seen *Fist (qv)* will undoubtedly recognise the hero's little sister!). Has, the excellent subtitles on the U.S. release are again replaced by some fairly lacklustre dubbing, but the original music soundtrack remains, as does the "original screen format", ie black bars at the top and bottom of the picture. Certificate 15, rating A+.

Venus Wars: bog-standard B-movie in which a team of bike racers reluctantly take up arms in an attempt to repel invaders from their country. The setting is a terraformed Venus but absolutely no attempt is made to exploit this as a plot device, it might just as well have been a post-WWIII Earth. Only the women are exploited, sharing possibly two brain-cells between the lot. Certificate PG, and for the life of me I will NEVER understand the BBFC; there's enough swearwords to make Bernard Manning happy and the sequence at the beginning where one of the female characters is subjected to a strip-search, which is more like a strip-tease, nearly had me putting the tape back in its box. Rating C, on reflection: it's not too bad, just mediocre.

Odin: Good ideas such as light-sail powered ships and robot civilisations totally wasted by an utter lack of plot. Boys crew ship, boys find girl who tells them about distant civilisation, boys mutiny and boldly go etc. etc. So bad it's not even a cult film. Certificate PG, rating D, verging on D-.

Urotsuki Doji (aka *Legend of the Overfiend*): An everyday tale of demons, humans and beast-men in search of the 'Overfiend', predicted to unite the planes of existence and usher in a new age of peace and harmony. If you believe that, I have these shares in a bridge in Brooklyn going cheap... Cut by 20 minutes from the Japanese release in the U.S., and a further 2 minutes shaved from it by the BBFC, this still weighs in at over 100 minutes of sexism, sadism, ultra-violence and pornography. It is not a film for the squeamish, and has no redeeming features on the moral side, except possibly to prove there are still people who regard evil as an active force and not just social maladjustment. Amazingly, it has a halfway decent plot, which is better served without scene after scene of sex/death getting in the way; the same difference between Clive Barker's book *Cabal* and the resulting film *Nightbreed*, I suppose. Certificate 18, rating C+.

Two points for consideration arise out of the above. First, apart from the "collector's edition" of *Akira*, all the above releases have been dubbed. Now, I have nothing against good dubbing, it makes films more accessible to a general audience, not all of whom can read fast, and makes the market wider. Unfortunately, the dubbing on the Manga Video label is not good; it is simplistic, losing the nuances of the original scripts in cases like *A-ko*, and is competently performed at best. The worse cases have been compared to the products of Streamline Pictures, a U.S. company renowned for its often appalling dubs.

Streamline have, over the years, produced some good dubs; *Akira* is a case in point. Island World, however, have a long way to go up the learning curve. "Market research", which so accurately predicted a Labour victory at the last General Election, may have "proved" people prefer dubbing to subtitling, but I wager those questioned were not asked if they preferred a good, clear set of subtitles or a poorly executed and translated dub, or shown examples thereof.

Second, the anime is all of a type: despite promises that they were considering releasing films such as *Tombstone for Fireflies* and the Miyazaki Hayao classics such as *Totoro* and *Kiki's Delivery Service*, so far all we have had are action films carefully targeted at the 2000 AD/Games Workshop market: 12-19 year old males. Again, I like good action films, with or without a veneer of SF; however, a steady diet of them can become boring very quickly. Given that anime covers practically every walk of life you can imagine, inside and out of the SF/Fantasy genres, this is rather short-sighted. Moreover, they're not even the best of the genre: where are the *Dirty Pair*? Where are *Outlanders*, *Black Magic M-66*, *Gunbuster*? More ominously, the second-rate stuff has for the most part been released in the latter part of 1992. Is this all we are going to get in future?

However, from a total of eight releases we have four good ones, two average, and two clunkers. That's four more good anime releases than we've had from any label on the last five years at least, and the two average ones certainly hold their own against anything comparable in the live action field. I'd recommend that *Akira*, *A-ko* and both parts of *Dominion* be added to the shelf of any fan with media tendencies, and consideration should be given to *Overfiend* if you have an interest in splatter (as opposed to horror) films.

Despite my misgivings, Island World took a brave step at a time when companies cannot afford to make too many mistakes. A 50% hit rate is not to be scorned, and if they achieve the same success in the next twelve months, I'll be just as pleased. It won't stop me criticising and demanding more "good" anime; I don't prefer second-class material in any field, but just as I personally dislike most mainstream comics or SF/Fantasy pulp novels, I acknowledge that without the market generated by their existence, the black and white independent comics I rave over, the book which grabs me by the gut and ignites my sense of wonder, would not exist. The same goes for this new(ish) sub-brand of media fandom: it's early days, and it hasn't been an instant success, but given patience on part of the fans and the distributors, it can succeed. Here's to success in 1993. Island World, Banzai!

Monopolies and Murders

Ian Mundell

SF in the *Manga! Manga!* anime festival at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, October-November 1992

There are two ways of looking at Island World's position as sole distributor of anime as anime in the UK. Either the company is alone in realising the potential of this material or it is ignoring the rich variety of anime by only releasing SF. This view was aired by Jim McLennan *Face* journalist and editor of *Trash City*, during the ICA's recent *Manga! Manga! Manga!* anime festival. "Island World have been driving the genre into a ghetto, since all its releases have been Science Fiction" he said. "Although, they are the only people who have any inkling of what is going on in anime".

No-one leapt to the company's defence, which was surprising given its involvement with the festival. Most of the programme consisted of its present or future catalogue and it retained copyright over the festival book. To top it all, two Island World minions were filming the debate for posterity.

After the fact, Island World points out that the ready market was in SF, through the people already reading manga in translation and

phenomenal success of *Akira* (1987 Katsuhiro Otomo, reviewed in *Matrix* 93), so this was the safest way into unknown territory. And while nothing is signed and sealed, it says future releases will include some of the marginal and non-SF that appeared in the festival, such as Hayao Miyazaki's magical fantasies like *Laputa - The Castle in the Sky* (1986), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989) and *Totoro* (1988) and Takahata Isao's post-WWII tale *Tombstone for Fireflies* (1988).

However, one of Island World's most recent releases (available from November) represents a trip to the extreme before this promised diversification. The violence and sexual explicitness of *Urotsukidōji: Legend of the Overfiend* (Hideki Takayama, 1989) earned it only two midnight screenings during the festival and ensured that both were packed out. The film postulated three parallel worlds: human, demons and one of demonic humans. Legend says that every three thousand years a super being - the Chojin - will appear in the human world to unite the three domains into a utopia - or at least that is what mad-demon Amanu Jaku thinks the legend means. He wants to find the Chojin and bring on the Golden Age, but there are other interests at stake, not least that of the youth he decides is the chosen one.

Overfiend is a lot rougher than most anime, drawn in crude, broad strokes that add a sense of conviction to its viciously imaginative demology. Early in the film the sense that there are unseen worlds lying close at hand is effectively sustained, and the visual volume of the increasingly extreme demon interventions is cleverly set against Amanu's growing unease and failing confidence. Only towards the end does the scale of the apocalypse finally get the better of the director, and he lets the story peter out. There might be an explanation for this in the history of the film: originally Takayama made a six-part series that was released straight to video in Japan; *Overfiend* was edited down from the first three, while another film - *Legend of the Demon Womb* - was made from the remainder. The video version of *Overfiend* has been cut by about two minutes, in accordance with the great British tradition of disposing of sex rather than violence. This is no great loss, since most of the sex is gratuitous, unimaginative and juvenile.

The public perception of SF is something aficionadocs come to hate, but which they have to live with. And although there was nothing pejorative about SF in Jim McLennan's comment, the ghettoisation he sees taking place will undoubtedly damage anime in the UK. It is something that the SF community should resist, even though it would appear to serve its interests by pumping more and better SF into the market. Reports from the front line - the anime conventions - suggest that the number of grunts in the audience cheering the ultraviolence and rapine, playing air guitar and generally jerking off is on the rise. Both anime and SF can do without this.

Other SF Anime from the Festival

Odin (1985 Yoshinobu Nishizaki), is a dire adolescent space opera that should never have reached video, let alone inclusion in the festival. It opens with a cohort of space cadets (in both senses of the phrase) running through their first real starship to the sound of the air guitar - for about two and a half minutes. A week is a long time in politics (and police custody) - two and a half minutes is an eternity in animation. The director consistently ignores animation's potential as a way of exercising the imagination, preferring tedious imitations of live action set pieces. The cadets answer a distress call from a disabled ship on the fringes of the solar system, pick up a girl who turns out to be the inheritor of a long-dead stellar civilisation and discover that Ragnarok is to be enacted by a megalomaniac supercomputer dedicated to eliminating all life forms. *Odin* is the moron child of generations of inbreeding - it drools, it slurs its words, it wears an anorak.

Lensman (1984 Yoshiaki Kawajiri and Katzuyuki Hirokawa) taps into the universe created by space opera guru E E 'Doc' Smith with a version of *Galactic Patrol* (first serialised 1937-38). A Lensman, a sort of intergalactic agent, crash lands on the farm belonging to Kim Kinnison's father. Kim is with him when he dies, and he hands over data crucial to the Galactic Patrol's battle with the aliens of Boskone. As

both sides scramble for the lost information, Kim is thrown into an interplanetary rite of passage that strips him of his agrarian innocence and plugs him into mysticism of the Lens. The narrative canes along from planet to planet, introducing characters from nowhere and whisking them off when done, using both cel and computer animation to great effect, showing the universe rather than telling stories about it. The plot similarity to *Star Wars* (1977) is down to common source material and *Lensman* is not above taking a dig at the earlier film. For instance, a cute robot is casually wasted once it seems securely essential to the plot.

In *Venus Wars* (1989 Yushikazu Yasuhiko) a civil war breaks out between the Balkan-like colonies of a terraformed Venus. A group of motor-vehicle riding youths get caught up in the conflict, first in response to being hassled by the occupying army, then as part of the organised resistance. The film is an elegantly animated celebration of youth, technology and a young culture on a new world. Throughout there are hints of greater political sophistication, of some sort of comment about the business of colonialism, the lack of clear right and wrong in insurgency, but nothing really develops. Eventually inspiration drops away when the kids join the resistance - the establishment by another name.

All of the above films - except for *Lensman* - are available on Island World's Manga label, price £12.99

Animé Scene

Geoff Cowie

Autumn/Winter releases: *Bubblegum Crisis* (#1 53 minutes; #2 29 minutes #3 27 minutes. AniméEigo. Eng. subtitled, all £14.95. PAL, cert. PG from specialist retailers).

Bubblegum Crisis is, judging by the number of column feet devoted to it in fan publications, one of the most popular animé series. It is set in a violent future Japan, where Tokyo is dominated by a powerful industrial corporation, GENOM, which builds 'Boomers', industrial androids and robots. Genom's not always legal activities are opposed by the police, and by a group of all-female vigilantes, the Knight Sabers, well equipped with powered hard suits and other hi-tech devices. This prominence given to powerful female characters is quite usual in animé.

One strength of this series is the pains taken to depict the Knight Sabers as real women with real daytime jobs: one, Priss, is a singer, another, Nene, a policewoman, another an aerobics teacher. The spectacular backgrounds, particularly in #1 are another. I'm less keen on the battle scenes, where credibility is strained by motorcycles transforming into robots, and androids transforming into indestructible blue battle robots twice the size. The climax of #1 redeems itself somewhat by excesses of quite Dali-esque proportions.

There's a lot of belting rock music in this series, some performed by Oomori Kinuko, the voice artist for Priss. #1 has a live action rock video appended, repeating the featured track 'Hurricane' and allowing us to see what Oomori Kinuko looks like.

#1 is probably the best value for money (better value than one or two of the IWC releases; #2 being much shorter and rather anti-climatic by comparison). These tapes should be identical to the previous AniméEigo NTSC releases and are clearly aimed at the British (or possibly European) market. If you're hooked on this stuff, there are eight 'Crisis' episodes, three 'Crash' episodes, and three episodes of the associated 'A D Police' plus various music videos, trailers, CD's and other merchandise.

February/March release: *The Sensualist* (Yuke Abe) Western Connection

Preview: This is an animated version of the novel *Koshoko Ichidai Otoko* (*The Life of an Amorous Man*) by the seventeenth century Edo period novelist Saikaku Ihara. The stylised design of the colour animation art draws heavily on the woodblock prints of the period. The film is said to be both erotic and visually striking; like more than one animé film it will be seen to best advantage on the big screen. The monochrome stills I've seen are beautiful, if you love Japanese art, you'll probably like this. Sorry not much practical information: Western Connection could have been a little more helpful.

March release: *3x3 Eyes #1* Island World Communications Manga Video, 60 mins, PAL. English dialogue (date and details unconfirmed)

Preview: This is a fairly faithful, if rather condensed adaptation of the first eighteen chapters of the *3x3 Eyes* (aka *Sazan Eyes*) manga. Yakumo's father has been absent in Tibet for several years, looking for the fabled 3 eyes race. Yakumo knocks over with his scooter a strange girl who, when he takes her to the transvestite bar where he works, turns out to have been looking for him with a letter from his father. Yakumo is almost killed by Pai's pet monster bird Takuhi, and to save his life she makes him into a 'Wu', an indestructible being. Yakumo and Pai's lives are not inextricably bound together. The first episode (five chapters) continues with a trip to Hong Kong in search of a three-faced statue which hopefully will turn Pai into a human. The likeable character and exciting storyline make this one of the better pieces of recent animé, although the animation isn't anything special. The Japanese version is in four half hour episodes.

This should be one of IWC's better releases, but it seems they are releasing it in two halves; rather a ripoff as a whole set is shorter than many movies.

Urotsuki Doji (cert 18) is reported to be doing quite well in the shops: thanks to prominent positioning and favoured inclusion in the retailer's Christmas brochures, it sold 10,000 in the first two weeks and reportedly got into the Video Top Ten. If you like explicit horror, it's well worth a look. The line artwork is particularly fine, with figures and faces drawn with greater realism than is customary in animé. The monsters are amazing, and look far more convincing than anything you've ever seen in live action horror. The action is fast and nasty, and the dubbed dialogue has been peppered with four letter words. The human characters are sufficiently interesting to attract our sympathy. The heroine, a university student, suffers much humiliation at the hands of the more demonic characters. Interest flags in the latter part of the movie where the human characters feature less, and the ending of the story is very weak. As I said before, if you don't like this sort of material, you don't have to watch it.

Urotsuki Doji has evoked mixed responses, even among animé fans. Some, like *Time Out* think it's "the kind of Japanese import we can do without". The release, though very successful for IWC is in one sense regrettable as *Urotsuki Doji* is not typical of most animé. Japanese culture is NOT the same as ours, and this movie lifts the lid on a Japanese sub-culture of violent and sexual material that very few Westerners are equipped to understand. Hence we unavoidably judge this alien art through Western eyes and are shocked. *Urotsuki Doji* is a valid work of art; when it's as safe for young girls to walk alone at night in Britain as it is in Japan, we'll be entitled to castigate its Japanese creators. And not before.

I hope that the public don't replace the fallacious notion that animé is solely for kids with the equally fallacious notion that it's all like *Urotsuki Doji*. In fact, typical animé is aimed at a Japanese family audience, and in particular young adults in the senior high school age group. Japanese standards are rather more liberal than ours, so that an animé tape is liable to hold a few surprises! And in contrast to Western

drama with its mechanical suspense plotting, it's usually impossible to guess what's going to appear next on the screen in an animé show.

Akira has sold 30,000 copies in the UK, at £12 or £21 each. Island World has released a list of sixty animé titles which they have either licensed or hope to license for 1993/4. Meanwhile, more distributors seem to be entering the UK market, and the trickle of USA released dubbed and subtitled animé has within the past few months become a flood.

USA licenced animé releases for November 1992 (all NTSC)

Kimagure Orange Road "I want to return to that day" (movie sub. VHS)
Urusei Yatsura #5-8 (sub. VHS)
The Supergal (50 minutes sub. VHS/LD)
Bubblegum Crisis #6 (eps. 1, 2, 60 mins, dub. VHS)
3x3 Eyes VI (ep. 1, dub. VHS)
Fight Izzee-One VI (eps. 1, 2, 60 mins, dub. VHS)
Guyver V2 (sub. VHS)
Macross II "Lovers Again" V2 (eps. 3, 4)
Nadia V6 (dub. VHS)
Orguss V2 (sub. VHS)
Robotech collection (4 eps, dub. VHS)
Dirty Pair "Affair on Nolandia" (movie dub. VHS)

This list is as long as the November release list for Japan. Note that many of these titles are ongoing serial releases.

Supergal and *Macross II* are hot from Japan: the rest are almost without exception well known and popular within animé fandom. The USA November release alone represents nearly twenty hours of animé.

September 1992 bestsellers in the USA were *Macross II VI*, *Fist of the North Star*, *Guyver VI*, *Castle of Caligostro*, *Orguss VI*, *Wanna-Bees*, *Kimagure Orange Road V3*, *Nadia V5*, *Dracula* (animé), *Frankenstein* (animé).

Latest news is that *Urusei Yatsura* (196 TV episodes, 6 movies, lots of OVA's) and *Dirty Pair* (lots of TV episodes, several movies and OVA's) have been signed by US distributors. Both are wildly popular with animé fans. The launch of *Macross* (aka *Robotech*, see above) II has also provoked an orgy of merchandising.

I suppose I'd better hastily explain to those who have read reviews of *Urotsuki Doji* or seen it, that *Dirty Pair* is a comedy SF series in which the main characters Ket and Yuri, aka the *Lovely Angels* (after their spaceship) aka *The Dirty Pair*, act as interstellar secret agents. Basically, they go about wearing bikinis and carrying large guns and getting into lots of trouble. There is often quite a high SF content with convincing looking spaceships and ground locations. This series is wildly popular with male Caucasian fans and even has its own fan club and fanzine... can't think why... personally I've never liked these violent bimboettes much and can never remember which is which. On the other hand, their movies are entertaining and well-made, and contain as treats for the more sophisticated viewer some of the most imaginative animation sequences you'll see anywhere. And why are they called the *Dirty Pair*? The explanation is quite innocent: it's because they accidentally wreck everything at the conclusion of each story!

Please note that with some effort you can buy the above US tapes and watch them at home: you will need to rent or buy a VCR with NTSC playback.

Had this been an actual emergency,

we would have fled in terror,

and you would have been informed

Manga

Many animé fans are also interested in the associated manga (Japanese comics). These sell by the million in Japan and have attracted interest among American and British comics fans. The following are available, in English, from major comics shops. All are serials.

Akira: A bit different from the animé. Masterfully drawn: the Japanese volume looks more exciting than the animé as one flicks through. Serial version features the girl revolutionary Kay much more than the movie did. Interesting.

Applesed (Masamune Shirow): Forget your preconceptions about comics, the SF content, narration, characterisation and art in *Applesed* are all on a par with *Interzone*. Two survivors of a future war try to come to terms with life in a seemingly ideal city.

Ranma 1/2 (Rumiko Takahashi): Young martial artist has a problem when doused with water he turns into a girl. Set in today's Japan. True-to-life characterisation and very funny.

Caravan Kidd (Johji Manabe): Set in a world of war-torn states, this features Wataru, an itinerant scavenger, Babo, his money-crazed partner and Mian Toris, swordsperson. In the first volume, war breaks out, the partners save Toris' life and she makes them her servants by means of a pair of collars. Expect some rather rude bits from the creator of *Outlanders*. Action packed comedy with attractive characters.

Nauticaa of the Valley of the Wind part III (Hayao Miyazaki): Continuation of the much loved manga series. For the uninitiated, this is a Science Fantasy with strong ecological and environmental concerns. There are battle scenes with steampunk-style aircraft and ground forces, amazing giant insects and an appealing warrior-heroine. Much more complex than the 'U' cert. animé and with a more adult heroine. Well worth a look.

Orion (Masamune Shirow): A new manga from the creator of *Applesed*. Black Magic M66 and Dominion. *Orion* combines spaceships and magic in a world run on a mixture of sorcery and pseudo-science. A sorcerer tries to raise a nine-headed Naga to get rid of the Galactic Empire's bad karma, but it all starts to go wrong. The main character is ship's navigator and magician's daughter Seska. The artwork is excellent, it's funny and exciting and there is so much pseudo-scientific explanation that one has to read it a second time to figure out what's going on.

Sanctuary: Not a fantasy: it's set in the near future and is about young politicians and gangsters aiming for power in Japan. Fairly serious in tone, but I didn't warm to it. Worth a look.

Silent Mobius: Not to be confused with the French artist. Psychic police battle demonic entities in a *Blade Runner* styled future Tokyo. Features, typically, a team of six women. The characters are quite appealing. Worth a look.

Urusei Yatsura (Rumiko Takahashi): Unlucky Ataru Moroboshi (this name means Accident in Japanese) is a skirt-chaser; in the first episode he gets mixed up with a sexy alien girl, LUM. The title translates approximately as 'annoying people from outer space'. Lots of scantily clad alien princesses and UFOs, but very perceptive of human foibles. Contemporary Japanese setting. Clever and utterly hilarious, better than the TV episodes for my money.

2001 Nights (Hoshino): For once, real hard SF in a manga. Beautifully drawn and often quite moving tales of near-star colonisation. A homage to Clarke and the movies, but with original stories. Get it.

Animé UK magazine (£3.50) if not available in shops, write to 70 Mortimer St, London W1N 7DF.

Animé Kyo UK (club) c/o Carlo Bernhardt, 4 St Peter's St, Syston, LE7 6HJ, Leicestershire.

Put your trust in the underground

Ian Mundell

(A review of *Flaming Ears* (1991, Angela Hans Scheirl, Dietmar Schiepe, Ursula Purrer) and *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer* (1991 Shinya Tsukamoto))

So, recent SF cinema is all kids' stuff. The audience is restive, shuffles its popcorn, it wants something... more. Something serious... adult... raw? SF such? Perhaps not. But if you want brain food, you're going to have get up and go look for it.

Mainstream SF films - labelled infantile in recent issues of *Matrix* - will always play to the market and its lower denominators. The quality SF comes from independent film-makers or directors who have won a measure of artistic control within the system, but it has become increasingly hard for this sort of 'product' to get on general release. So today, if you want sophisticated SF, you are going to have to put your trust in the underground. This also means that you are going to have to work for your pleasures: once you find somewhere that shows the films, you may be faced with non-linear plots, obscure dialogue and acting, and creaky special effects. Occasionally you will have to indulge directors who aim for something just out of sight... and miss. Take two films that opened in London this November: *Flaming Ears* and *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer*.

Flaming Ears (the real title, in German, is something altogether different) follows the tangled relationship of three women in the burnt out metropolis Asche. The year is 2700, and society is in the terminal stages of decay... people wring the last drops of sensation from tired vices. Volley performs in a sexual cabaret to support her drug habit, but gets her only real kick from arson. One of her lovers, a giant of a woman called Nun, prowls the city at night in bright red rubber suit, listlessly searching for food. One night Volley burns down a printing press used by comix artist Spy - a romantic, and possibly the city's last vital soul. Spy sets out to get revenge, but is fatally wounded before she reaches the club where Volley performs. Comatosé, and finally a corpse, Spy becomes the object of Nun's search for spiritual nourishment, and a wedge driven between she and Volley.

Set against a background of sex and nude sensation common in underground SF (*Liquid Sky* (1982) and *Cafe Flesh* (19812) frinstance), the film charts Spy's transcendence of a future in which her human passion all but makes her an alien. However, anyone more at home in the high street Odeon is going to have to come to terms with the grainy texture and jerky movements of the Super 8 format, a metropolis made of ill-lit Meccano, and a dialogue of obscure, flowery epithets ("We burn our hands fighting to touch the sun". "A melancholic bird is gliding over the sea of cruelty.") It isn't easy, but it is worth the effort.

Tetsuo II is a good example of why we should trust the underground, since it shows what can spring from its more excessive corners. *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989, reviewed in *Matrix* 95) was a relentless hymn to mutation, cut up and swamped in pixelation and bulging prosthetics. It only played because of the Institute of Contemporary Arts and its interest in Japanese film. The national papers hated it, but some specialists and a large slab of the public made it a cult success. Now comes the sequel, or rather a melt-down and recasting of the raw material.

Yatsu has recruited an army of athletes and body builders that he hopes to turn into supermen by dosing them with a preparation of his own cells - he has the ability to convert his body into a gun. But first he needs a guinea pig to test the process on. He picks Taniguchi, a timid salary man, zaps him with the cells and begins a campaign of terror calculated to release his psychic energies. Sure enough, Taniguchi develops zen metal powers, but things get out of control - Yatsu realises that the mutations are not down to his cells but are coming from within. There is a deeper link between the two cyberguns, but while Yatsu is motivated by power lust, Taniguchi identifies with the beauty of destruction. It soon becomes clear who is the stronger.

Tetsuo II is far more accessible than its predecessor, with a clearer plot and slicker production, although the prosthetic effects remain crude and 'unreal' by mainstream standards. More than anything it is a cyberpunk film, contrasting the glass and steel of the city and the designer minimalism of the Japanese lifestyle with the grimy industrialism of Yatsu's world. If you needed further confirmation, the film comes with a glowing endorsement from William Gibson. In working out his obsession with mutation and destruction, director Shinya Tsukamoto (who also plays Yatsu) gives us a film that works both as SF narrative and a collection of visual dispatches from the psychic world. It is easily the best SF film to appear in the UK this year.

A video release of *Tetsuo II* is likely through anime specialists, Island World. *Flaming Ears* is unlikely to be seen outside the Scala, let alone London, although it may make it onto video as part of the New Queen Cinema (*Suon* (1992) and *Poison* (1992) for instance). Someone had better start programming these films, and others like them, into conventions, otherwise the majority of SF aficionados will remain under the erroneous impression that all they have to watch is the mainstream. They will miss these 'adult', serious SF films, and the films themselves may disappear from memory. Although trying forgetting *Tetsuo II* once you have seen it...

Skywatching

Mark Ogier

The blurring of distinctions between Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy is a subject that has fuelled many letters and articles in the pages of both *Matrix* and *Vector* over the years, and the argument over where one ends and another begins has really never been settled.

I would suggest, for example, that parapsychology is a science in its own right - maltreated and derided by proponents of mainstream science, but a science nonetheless. Based on this point of view, I regard *Flatliners*, a film that surfaced on Sky Movies recently, as Science Fiction - which if nothing else gives me a good excuse to review it.

The story concerns a group of medical students who set about trying to discover if there is anything in the stories of near death experiences, recounted by those who have been considered official dead for several minutes before miraculously being revived. They do this by what sounds like a convincing process of using drugs and defibrillation to stop each other's hearts for short periods of time that increase as each member of the group comes back with a report of their experience.

The scientific feasibility of achieving this may be questionable, but the film is not really about the mechanics of mucking about with life, but the more philosophical questions about what might lie 'beyond'.

Perhaps it is the fault of director Joel Schumaker, who imbues the whole thing with such a Gothic atmosphere that if Christopher Lee appears in full Dracula garb, he would not look out of place, or the scriptwriter, who fails to really grasp the nettle of the near death experience, but the film does not succeed. The star cast - Julia Roberts, Kiefer Sutherland and Kevin Bacon - do their best to convey a sense of wonder and mystery about the whole thing, but the upshot of all their mucking about with the beyond is that they have a bit of a flashback to their earlier life (life flashing before one's eyes?) and when they return from the dead they are haunted by what seemed to be physical manifestations of their past - Sutherland suffers the worst by being haunted by the vicious spectre of a child whom he bullied as a teenager.

There is hardly any reference to the real work that has been done on the near death experiences, by interviewing witnesses and compiling the information obtained, and none of the experiences of the students reflects the classic near death experience scenario of lights at the end of the tunnel, men in flowing robes, and encounters with benevolent beings of light. Still, it is the only film I know of to tackle the subject.

Perhaps it will be up to someone else to take the material one stage further.

The mysteries of death were also of major interest to another great figure in SF history, Dr Victor Frankenstein. Here, too, we have an example of a story that is on the fringes of both SF and Horror, although I suspect that I am not alone in regarding Mary Shelley's original as the first great work of SF.

Brian Aldiss clearly shares my enthusiasm for the story, because his homage to the book in his own *Frankenstein Unbound* shows a love of both the original story and a fascination with its genesis. Sadly, it was an affection that he seemed unable to pass on to film maker Roger Corman, whose effort at filming the novel resulted in the loss of one or two of the elements that made the book so enjoyable, and its transformation into a low budget monster movie.

From superficial changes, such as the hero's name (Joe Bodenland in the book to Joe Buchanan in the film) to major ones such as the cause of the timesteps that send Joe on his journey into the past (in the book they are the result of a nuclear war and Joe - a former presidential advisor - has done little to influence them; in the film he is the scientist who is directly responsible for abusing them), the changes appear unnecessary and, in the case of the latter, serve only to make the hero unsympathetic.

However, changes have to be made in order to make a film more dramatic and possibly more appealing to a mass audience. And, of course, film makers are often frightened of asking their audience to think too much. This attitude means that the aspect of the novel that saw the hero undergoing several further timesteps after he is transported to 19th century Switzerland, are absent. And when the film hero meets Mary Shelley we are led to believe that she has used the "real" events surrounding Frankenstein to fabricate her fiction - but in the book, Joe apparently meets her in an alternative reality, and realises that the fiction she is writing is somehow becoming reality elsewhere.

I found this aspect of the novel intriguing, but it is yet another victim of the film makers' simplification. To conclude my rant about alterations - in the film, Joe's car which travels back in time with him, boasts a smart Alec computer along the lines of Kitt in *Knightrider*, that produces a copy of Mary Shelley's book for her to see before she has finished writing it, while in the book Joe is frustrated that he cannot remember details of the book, and so predict Frankenstein's next move.

But comparisons aside, does the film work on its own merits? Well, it isn't bad. There are one or two third rate matte shots, and seeing the car driving along did remind me of the awful TV series *Logan's Run*, but John Hurt as the hero and Raul Julia as Frankenstein treat the subject matter seriously, which buoy the material up.

The monster is an interesting variation, and looks much more convincing than the one that surfaced in the ITV presentation of *Frankenstein - The Real Story* over Christmas.

But I just wish that the atmosphere of Aldiss' book had been better preserved. His language, and that spoken by his characters, had much in common with the original novel - and in certain places he went out of his way to use similar expressions and turns of phrase.

Perhaps the film could have done the same with some of the classic Frankenstein movies. Although I would not have wanted to see a re-creation of the films of the 1930s, it is a pity that Corman could not at least have nodded in their direction.

Fantasy is a crutch for people who can't handle soap operas

Fantasy isn't our crutch...it's arcane

Prime Cuts

A review of *Blade Runner - The Director's Cut* (1982/1992, Ridley Scott)

Does the arrival of *Blade Runner - The Director's Cut* mean that the original has to be retired - retired in the sense of the film? Do we have to track them down - the replicants, the false ones - and destroy them? How many copies on video, pre-recorded or frame-snatched from TV, are kicking around this country?

By now everyone knows that in *The Director's Cut* the operative word is 'cut'. The two main annoyances have been excised: Deckard (Harrison Ford) no longer talks over the action like some low-rent gumshoe, and the up-beat ending in which he and Rachel fly off into the sunset, secure in the knowledge that she is not about to die like all the other replicants, has gone. Both of these changes open up the ambiguities in the film so that Deckard's actions seem far less clear cut. It is astonishing how much time he spends just thinking, and without the voice telling us what is going on inside his mind the narrative is forced to hang there while his confusion accumulates. Where the voice has him hard-boiled and driven in his mission, the silence cuts him free. Most importantly, there is no assurance that Deckard is himself definitely human. All of his subsequent actions are seen differently in the light of this ambiguity: his seduction of Rachel (the mammal doing the android a fleshy favour in the original) is practically a rape in *The Director's Cut*, Deckard channelling his violent confusion into an inhuman human act. But when he and Rachel escape at the end of the film they are like two refugees fleeing a common enemy.

The question about retiring all the copies of the original isn't entirely facetious, since the effect of *The Director's Cut* has a lot to do with how we view the original. In itself, *The Director's Cut* doesn't seem like a better version of *Blade Runner*, rather it feels exactly like the original. No matter how irritating the voice over and the upbeat ending, they did not seriously screw up the memorable sections of the film nor the feeling it generated in the memory months or years after seeing it. *The Director's Cut* is how we remember *Blade Runner*.

The big effect comes when you go back to the original after seeing *The Director's Cut* and you find that the viewing experience is much much worse than you remember. Your empathy with this much loved cult classic of SF evaporates - as Philip K. Dick taught us in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, it is empathy that separates the mammals from the androids. The original is now a replicant, and we all go out and buy the video of *The Director's Cut*. D'you ever get the feeling you're being manipulated...?

Clubs

The listing this issue gives student Science Fiction and Fantasy societies which form the loose federation known as the NSSFA. But first, a note that the BSFA London meetings will, from March, be held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at The Conservatory (which used to be the Cafe Munchen).

NSSF Contacts

p.binfield@uk.ac.aberdeen (Peter Binfield)
jones@uk.ac.aberdeen.computing-science (Martin Jones)
ngo0@uk.ac.aberystwyth (Nick O'Brien)
rgw12@uk.cam.phx
gdr11@uk.ac.cambridge.phoenix
cusfs@uk.ac.cam.phx
apg044@uk.ac.coventry.cck
areid@uk.ac.glasgow.dcs (Alastair Reid)
jacksonn@uk.ac.glasgow.dcs
906205@uk.ac.glasgow.psy (Allan Rennie - NSSFA Secretary)
ede17@uk.ac.keele.seq1 (Paul Wilder)
krw1@uk.ac.ukc (Kent, Canterbury)
phy3n0df@uk.ac.leeds.novell.lucs-03 (Paul Cooper)
ph11n0aa@uk.ac.leeds.novell.east-01 (Barry Traish)
clements@uk.ac.ox.vax (Dave Clements)
u89dws@uk.ac.oxecs (Dan Smithers)

Allan Rennie is the Secretary of the NSSFA and can be contacted at: 1/L, 37 Roslea Drive, Dennistoun, Glasgow G31 2QR (tel: 041 556 2045).

Other Clubs

Preston will have an official Leo Baxendale Bash Street kids 40th anniversary party in October, including lots of signings and they are making a video about the Bash Street kids themselves.

Octarine

Club for SF Humour: 46 Arnsdale Road, Bestwood Estate, Nottingham NG5 5HE

ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha

Media club: Noel Collyer, 17 Guildford Street, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 3LA

Six of One

Prisoner Appreciation Society: PO Box 60, Harrogate HG1 2TP

Horizon

71 Cowdenbeath Path, Bemerton Street, London N1 OLE

Moons of Yavin

Star Wars club: 34 Hammerton Road, Bottesford, Scunthorpe, South Humberside DN17 2SB

Help wanted

I'm hugely involved in a Fantasy and SF Society in University College Galway, Ireland and am curious about other colleges and universities who have Fantasy/SF/Gaming societies. The help I need are ideas on how to convince them (a committee) that SF/Fantasy/Gaming is not a grand waste of time/something losers do/something that has nothing to offer the community at large/non-satanic. This is not to say that we haven't tried! We fundraise every Rag-Week for charity (Gaming Marathon and Killer, the very modified assassination game) and we attend conventions.

I think we need all the help we can get... otherwise there might be an attendance at one of those committee meetings with sharp objects &!!

Deirdre Thornton, FanSci, c/o Porters Desk, UCG, Galway, Ireland.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome US Senator John Connor...

Sally-Ann Melia

'I know you like Science Fiction, dear.' This simple sentence, when coming from my better half, always fills me with intrepidation, previous experience has led me to expect the worse. This Christmas, I ripped back the paper to discover: *Terminator 2 - Judgement Day. An Illustrated Screen Play.*

Somewhat dubious at the glossy presentation of 'The Book of the Film', which had all the appearances of some trashy movie merchandise, I waited until I was in a suitably mellow and forgiving mood before prying the pages open. The script is cleanly presented on white satin paper intercut with hundreds of photographs, from the film as well as unused film footage, pencil diagrams from the firm-design stage and

extracts from a storyboard that reads better than most comics. I discovered an uncut introduction, the second of Sarah Connor's dreams, film footage of how John Connor reprogrammes the Terminator (Schwarzenegger), an embarrassed footnote admitting that the film's best line 'I need a vacation' was improvised on set and, best of all, the original ending.

The film starts with daylight scenes in Los Angeles, children at play, traffic, all overwhelmed by images of a nuclear holocaust. Zoom in on human skulls piled high in the street, one skull is crushed underfoot by an 'endo-skeleton' Terminator, pan out to see Terminators and humans in desperate combat.

In the original screenplay, this initial battle was approximately three times the length of the final version and shows John Connor successfully leading an assault on the Skynet headquarters. He storms with his men to the very heart of the building, to the Time Displacement Chamber. The humans arrive there, equipped with the portable terminals and assorted technology to use the Time Machine. Kyle Reese, naked, is oiled-up ready for his trip into history. (Kyle Reese was Sarah Connor's saviour and lover in *Terminator 1*, you remember? Chunky, rugged handsome chap, yes, you know who I mean?)

Kyle Reese says: Did you know I'd be the one to volunteer?

John Connor replies: I've always known. Sarah told me.

The intention is that with these words, John Connor tells Kyle Reese that Kyle is John's father. I'm not sure this entirely ties in with the original script, eitherways it would have increased the pressure on Kyle Reese immeasurably... Imagine... Well, don't imagine, this dialogue, this scene never made it to filming (Cause: cost, what else?) let alone the final cut.

Moments after having dispatched Kyle Reese to the past, John Connor successfully leading an assault on the Skynet headquarters. He storms with his men to the very heart of the building, to the Time Displacement Chamber. The humans arrive there, equipped with the portable terminals and assorted technology to use the Time Machine. Kyle Reese, naked, is oiled-up ready for his trip into history. (Kyle Reese was Sarah Connor's saviour and lover in *Terminator 1*, you remember? Chunky, rugged handsome chap, yes, you know who I mean?)

In a second dream, in addition to the nuclear fireball dream, Sarah is visited by Kyle Reese, he is young as in the first film, she is older, he pleads with her to save John, to protect their son 'He is the target now'. This dream was filmed, photos of youngish Kyle and oldish Sarah in conversation are shown in the screenplay. James Cameron says he cut these scenes due to time considerations, also he felt that Sarah's main motivation was fear of Imminent Nuclear war. He regretted severing the link with *Terminator 1*. So do I.

So why should John Connor need to reprogramme the Terminator? The underlying concept here is that a Terminator cannot 'learn new stuff' unless it is switched to 'READ' mode. So the garage scene, the one after they have escaped from the mental hospital, shows Sarah Connor and John removing a cover plate and the Terminator's CPU plug (his brain!) Having removed the plug, the Terminator sits dead between Sarah and John, the CPU unit lies on the table-top, the conversation could be abbreviated as follows:

John asks: Can you see the pin switch?

Sarah doesn't reply but goes to smash the Terminator's CPU with a small hammer. John places his hand in the way just in time.

John: NO!!!

Sarah: These things are hard to kill. John believe me, I know. We may never have this opportunity again. (Understatement or what?)

John: Look, Mom, I got an idea...

And so it goes on. One thing I started to appreciate on reading the screen play was the wonders of 'post-production'. The previous scene was filmed as an integral part of the 'garage scene'. Images had to be carefully cut and dialogue re-jigged and re-worded to allow for the shorter version you saw in the cinema.

Now for the best bit: the alternative *Terminator 2* ending. In the original screenplay and in the filming, it was envisaged that from the steel mill where the T-1000 was destroyed, the film cut to July 11, 2029. In her gentle voice-over, Sarah Connor explains how judgement day never happens, how August 29th 1997 came and went, how Michael Jackson turned 40, people lived... Pan out to see Washington in 2029 and a small children's adventure garden. Zoom in on shrivelled lady sitting in the sunlight wrapped in a shawl, 64 year old Sarah Connor. An infant runs to her clamouring for attention, a tall slim man in his forties follows behind, respectively Sarah's grand-daughter and an aging John Connor without war scars, but with the same determined anguish in his eyes. John Connor has become a US senator, as Sarah Connor explains, to fight a different war using the weapons of commonsense. The infant skips, dances, John Connor smiles and Sarah says the line about the Terminator learning the value of human life.

THE END.

James Cameron explains this scene was cut because they were unhappy about the mock-up of 2029 Washington, he also says the sugar sweetness of this ending was too great a contrast after the cruelty of what had come before, also there was the small matter of a juvenile delinquent, associated with devastating terrorist attacks in his teenage years becoming a US Senator. For my part, I was glad to see this ending go, part cynic, part enthusiast, this ending with Sarah a contented old lady and John a successful Senator would have precluded any *Terminator 3*.

Well, of course, Sarah Connor has yet to die, preferably in battle. John Connor has yet to merge as a great military leader or gain that dreaded cheek and eye scar. Clearly they lied to Kyle Reese when they said the Time Displacement machine was destroyed after his passage, and even my three person department keep essential back-up disks in a second site, so don't tell me the destruction of the Cyberdyne Building ends the creation of a neural-net processor. Delay maybe, but even with Dyson dead, well no-one is irreplaceable and no other staff were killed. Just a thought: images of a rebellious eighteen-year old John Connor who turns his back on his military youth for a life of softer pleasures and alcohol come to mind, an attack, perhaps Sarah's death, rededication and all the rest.

Terminator 2 - Judgement Day, The Book of the Film, an Illustrated Screenplay (Production Notes, the original storyboards and scenes cut from the film) is published by The Applause Screenplay Series £10.95.

Stop Press

News which arrived at the last minute:

MOMI Exhibition: Melies: Father of Film Fantasy: From February 3 to June 12, the Museum of the Moving Image at London's South Bank Centre will show this special exhibition, including film extracts, photographs, documents and artefacts illustrating his career as a film maker, during which he created some of the first SF films and devised film illusions that have apparently never been reproduced. There will also be a reconstruction of his studio and the toy shop that he ran when financial failure forced him to give up film in 1913. The exhibition will be accompanied by ten themed programmes of Melies' work, running through March, April and May. Full details from the box office, National Film Theatre, South Bank, London SE1 8XT (Tel: 071 928 3232).

Fen Farm Writing courses: Several best selling writers are taking five day residential master classes. The accent is mostly on how to write

professionally and the special techniques of genre fiction. David Gemmell is running a course on Fantasy novels September 6-11. Details from Sally Worboyes, (10 Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1UZ) who says: 'It doesn't matter if someone hasn't written before, or if they're established. The tutors offer motivation and expertise and we provide good food and a few bottles of wine... It's surprising what happens - and everyone enjoys it'.

Peter Dickinson's *A Bone from a Dry Sea*, described as a terrific book based on the intriguing theory that *homo sapiens* developed from an ape that took to the seashore rather than the savannahs. It's being tipped for a place in the current Carnegie award shortlist (it also has a female protagonist, a strong fantastic plot and is an excellent read).

Megan Linholm's *Alien Earth* is coming from HarperCollins in April (£4.99): it's a traditional Science Fiction quest to re-populate a dying Earth from mankind's depleted gene pool. Fantasy leads from that publisher also in April are Gordon R Dickson's *The Dragon on the Border* (£5.99) where the Dragon Knight triumphantly returns to face yet another great challenge, the Hollow Men, which comes simultaneously with *The Dragon and the George* and *The Dragon Knight* together with *The Elvenbane* by André Norton and Mercedes Lackey - the illegitimate child of Lord Dyrhan has grown into the most powerful wizard ever born, namely The Elvenbane.

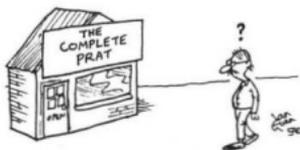
William Horwood is making a major lecture tour supported by extensive regional PR to publicise *Duncheon Rising*, Volume two of *The Book of Silence*, a new trilogy from the author of *The Duncheon Chronicles*.

Janny Wurts' new book *The Curse of the Mistwraith* (volume 1 of *The War of Light and Shadows*) from HarperCollins carries an endorsement from Stephen R Donaldson who says that 'It ought to be illegal for one writer to have so much talent'.

Richard Calder's *Dead Girls* has had its publication put back to September, possibly because of the controversial jacket artwork. A software plague is spreading throughout the human race, transmitted by men, active only in women, it transforms the victims into Dolls (or Dead Girls) who have the power of supercomputers, but no trace of human emotion.

David Eddings has a new novel, *The Losers*, which appears to be a thinly-disguised angel and devil variation, as Raphael Taylor, the gifted golden boy meets Damon Flood, the cynical smooth scoundrel and immediately starts his fall from grace. This is also coming from HarperCollins.

The second of Best of Young British Novelists promotion, due in May 1993 (ten years after the first series which included authors like Martin Amis and Kazuo Ishiguro) has just announced its twenty nominated novelists. The SF related authors include Iain Banks and Anne Blison and Adam Lively's forthcoming novel *Sing the Body Electric* which is described as as dystopic future. The first Best of Young... recommended Christopher Priest; the second echoes this in recommending Iain Banks, who is nearly forty and already well established.



Competition Corner

For the *Matrix 103* competition, there were joint winners, John Madracki and John Ricketts, who receive the books by Gwyneth Jones, John Brunner, David Wingrove, and the special "Chung Kuo" t-shirt.

The winner of the crossword was Terry Jeeves and wins an autographed book donated by David Langford.

Matrix competition 104: Initial Review

The idea for this came storming from *The Observer* colour supplement, to which all gratitude must be registered. Anyway, the idea is to write a criticism of up to three well known SF/F titles, so that the first letter of each word spells out the book's title. *Mori* is a possible example, but the "official" example is *Dune* (Dull Unreadable [Nearly] Epic).

As this will inevitably be a popular competition, the prizes are:

- Two novels in the *Sector General* series by James White, *Star Healer* and *Code Blue Emergency* together with *Federation World*, all signed and kindly donated by the author.

- A cased set of Bob Shaw's *Messages Found In An Oxygen Bottle* (signed by the author) with Terry Carr's *Between Two Worlds*. This extremely rare book has been kindly donated by Bob Shaw.

Crossword #4 Answers

Across: 8. Locomotive, 9. Styx, 10. Spells, 11. Bedimmed, 12. Epic, 14. Fanac, 16. Ruby, 17. Trantor, 18. Tribble, 21. Slan, 23. Oasis, 24. Orcs, 25. Mnemonic, 27. Fusion, 29. Oral, 30. Trillionth.

Down: 1. Soup, 2. Worldcon, 3. Gods, 4. Big Bang, 5. Read, 6. Isomer, 7. Hyperbolic, 13. Perelandra, 14. Frodo, 19. Bookshop, 20. Psychic, 22. Nimble, 26. Nets, 27. Filk, 28. Oath.

The prizes for a completed crossword are:

Two copies of Brian Stableford's *The Empire of Fear*, kindly signed and donated by the author.

All entries and comments to Roger Robinson,
75 Rosslyn Ave, Harold Wood, Essex RM3
ORG by March 20 at the absolute latest
(special extension to encourage foreigners to
take part in the competition)

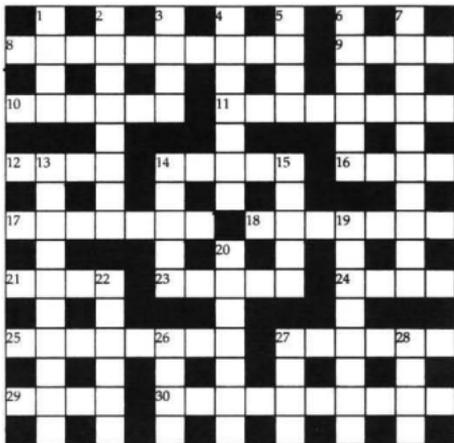
IF YOU CAN DRAW THIS
PLANET - YOU CAN
PROBABLY BUILD IT!



FAMOUS DEITIES SCHOOL OF
CREATION

BOX 098, OLYMPUS TOWERS, VALHALLA NORTH, 23567

Matrix "Everyfan" crossword no. 5



Across.

- Crazy reason for pulling train (10)
- Way you begin to cross hellish river (4)
- Relieves ship in orbit around Downbelow Station's planet (6)
- Partly robbed, immediately darkened (8)
- Every person is charmed at first by Lord of the Rings, for example (4)
- What we do is part of an acrostic! (5)
- Polish laboratory finally produces gemstone (4)
- Galactic capital managed capital of Terra, embedded in hill (7)
- Enterprising breeder twists belt around bone (7)
- Von Vogt's superman is stranded at centre of island (4)
- Duck — one of Odin's kinsmen is at waterhole! (5)
- Ogres, having one ring, curse Sauron at first (4)
- Aide-memoire for Nautilus' captain in manganese chip (8)
- Japanese bed replaces tritium with silicon for source of power (6)
- Test alloy of gold and aluminium (4)
- Pico or atto when tritium stream collides with charged particle of thorium (10)

Down.

- Broth thus raised? (4)
- Might Rod clown about in conspiracy, perhaps? (8)
- As for example chattels, losing nothing (4)
- Creation requires major prohibition on God's origin (3,4)
- Perused engineers' notice? (4)
- Alternative molecular structure some detected in infrared (6)
- Comet's path around sun is extravagantly exaggerated (10)
- Lewis's Venus makes reader plan to change (10)
- Ringbearer makes free (not half!) with LeGuin's anarchist (5)
- Asteroid found in sequence, we hear (5)
- What Pratchett's librarian says — "Quiet!" — dance around source of novels, maybe? (8)
- Tousled spy meets elegant medium (7)
- Lightfooted doctor falls into river (6)
- Communication systems hold alien between opposite poles (4)
- Loud kind of conventional singing (4)
- Pledge nothing at first from home (4)