

The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association £2.25

Matrix

Issue 150

Jul/Aug 2001



Douglas Adams 1952 – 2001

Bloomsbury sf course Clarke Award event

Matrix

Issue 150 • Jul/Aug 2001

The bi-monthly news magazine of the
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Association**

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Editorial

Idly checking the headlines on Ceefax first thing on the morning of Saturday, the 12th of May it was a genuinely unpleasant surprise to discover that Douglas Adams had died. Judging by the palpable sense of shock expressed in comments left on BBC Online's tribute page, many other fans obviously felt the same way. I still have fond memories of *Hitch Hiker's*, huddling by the radio to listen to, and tape for later repeated enjoyment, the original radio series. Then, of course, reading the books, watching the TV series, etc..

Not content with creating one of the most original radio series of the 1970s (and arguably of all time), Adams had a vast range of other interests, particularly ecology and the environment and the application of new media technologies. People that enthusiastic *and* possessed of the ability to effortlessly communicate it to the public come along all too rarely. He will be sorely missed.

And, finally, an announcement...

Wanted: new editor for *Matrix*

Due to recent relocation and starting a new job I've decided to step down as general editor of *Matrix* after ten issues at the helm. Therefore we'll be looking for someone to take over the production of the

magazine from issue 152 (Nov./Dec. 2001) onwards.

The job involves organising and copy-editing submissions from contributing editors, designing and producing the magazine and liaising with our printers.

As I discovered, experience is not essential, just plenty of enthusiasm. It's fun, honest. Go on, you'll like it!

If you'd like to volunteer, please contact BSFA Publications Manager, Kathy Taylor, e-mail: kathyandian@cablenet.co.uk, as soon as possible.



After 30 years Novacon finally has a Quality Hotel!

NOVACON 31

**9th-11th November 2001 at the Quality Hotel,
Bentley, Walsall, (Junction 10 of the M6).**

Guest of Honour: Gwyneth Jones

NOVACON 31: a Quality Hotel, a Quality GoH, but a Bargain Price!

**Attending membership costs £35 until 27th October or £40 on the door.
Supporting membership costs £15.00 throughout. Cheques/Postal Orders
should be made payable to "NOVACON 31" and sent to:
Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.**

Further information from <http://www.novacon.org.uk>

News

Books, people and events making the headlines

...and Thanks for All the Fish

Pan is piecing together Douglas Adams's unfinished works, resurrected from fragments on the late author's PC, for publication this autumn. These include the third Dirk Gently novel *The Salmon of Doubt* and Adams's screenplay for *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Gary Wilkinson's DA obit is on page 12 (ed.)

China Miéville wins Arthur C.

Clarke Award

China Miéville has won the Arthur C. Clarke Award for *Perdido Street Station*, his second novel. The Award was presented by Pat Cadigan in a packed ceremony at the Science Museum, London, on the evening of Saturday, May 19th.

Accepting the Award, a specially-engraved bookend and a cheque for £2001, China expressed his pride both in winning, and in the science fiction genre in general, calling it, "The only truly radical literature", and commenting, "To be on a shortlist with Octavia Butler is an honour in itself."

For the first time in the Award's history, all six authors on the shortlist for the award were able to attend the Science Museum for the ceremony. The shortlisted novels were *Parable of the Talents* by Octavia E. Butler, *Ash: A Secret History* by Mary Gentle, *Cosmonaut Keep* by Ken MacLeod, *Revelation Space* by Alastair Reynolds and *Salt* by Adam Roberts. Award administrator Paul Kincaid revealed during his speech that the quality of the shortlist made this year's decision very difficult, and the winner emerged only after one of the longest and most closely argued judging meetings in the history of the Award.

Sir Arthur C. Clarke himself spoke on video, finishing his message by announcing that since the Prize for 2001 was £2001, the Prize for 2002 would rise to £2002.

Taking place on a Saturday, also for the first time, the Award was preceded by a succession of events at the Science Museum, including readings by all of the shortlisted writers, and panel discussions featuring Jonathan Carroll, M. John Harrison, Colin Greenland and others. These events were an overwhelming success, attracting a far larger and more loyal audience that had been expected, and now look set to become an annual feature.

It was a busy May and June for China as he was briefly arrested at a protest about the closure of a local nursery school and then (as reported last issue) stood in the General Election as Socialist Alliance candidate for the seat of Regent's Park and Kensington, coming a creditable fourth, ahead of the UK Independence Party candidate.

Le Guin writing workshop in surreal setting

August sees Ursula Le Guin and poet Judith Barrington teach a 'High Desert' Writing Workshop at Malheur Field Station, a non-profit geological station in Oregon.

"We'll learn a little about the original inhabitants of the area and their myth and legends, and we'll work on writing stories to be read," said Le Guin. "Using our response to the desert and its creatures to create and share myths and tall tales of our own."

The workshop takes place between August 13-17th and costs \$625. Details can be found online at: <http://www.english.pdx.edu/cew/highdesertwriting.html>

Five-star judging line-up for second James White Award

The judges for the second James White Award for new writers have been announced. They are Dublin-based writer Michael Carroll, Ian McDonald, Kim Newman, David Pringle, and Mike Resnick. Closing date for submission of original science fiction stories (2000 to

4000 words) is 23rd August. Full details can be obtained from: <http://www.jameswhiteaward.com> or the Award Organisers at The James White Awards, c/o 211 Blackhorse Avenue, Dublin 7, Ireland. Requests for information should be accompanied by a stamped, self addressed envelope or 2IRCs. The Award was established after the death of James White in 1999, best known for his Sector General stories, and last year's winner received a cash prize of £200 and publication in *Interzone*.

Bram Stoker Awards Winners

The 2000 Bram Stoker Awards for Superior Achievement were presented on May 26th, at the Horror Writer's Association banquet in Seattle, Washington.

Novel

The Traveling Vampire Show, Richard Laymon (Cemetery Dance; Headline)

First novel

The Licking Valley Coon Hunters Club, Brian A. Hopkins (Yard Dog Press)

Long fiction

The Man on the Ceiling, Steve Rasnic Tem & Melanie Tem (American Fantasy Press)

Short fiction

"Gone", Jack Ketchum (October Dreams)

Fiction collection

Magic Terror: Seven Tales, Peter Straub (Random House)

Anthology

The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror: Thirteenth Annual Collection, Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling, eds. (St. Martin's)

Nonfiction

On Writing, Stephen King (Scribner)

Illustrated narrative

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Alan Moore (American's Best Comics)

Screenplay

Shadow of the Vampire, Steven Katz
(Lions Gate Films)

Work for younger readers

The Power of Un, Nancy Etchemendy
(Cricket Press)

Poetry collection

A Student of Hell, Tom Piccirilli (Skull
Job Productions)

Other media

Chiaroscuro, Patricia Lee Macomber,
Steve Eller & Sandra Kasturi (Brett A.
Savory; [http://gothic.net/chiaroscuro/
chizine/](http://gothic.net/chiaroscuro/chizine/))

Specialty press award

Subterranean Press, William K. Schafer

Lifetime achievement award

Nigel Kneale

Sidewise Awards

The judges for the Sidewise Awards for Alternate History announced the finalists for the 2000 awards. The awards—named for Murray Leinster's 1934 short story "Sidewise in Time"—were conceived in 1995 to honour the best alternative history stories of the year. The awards will be presented at the 59th World Science Fiction Convention, or Millennium Philcon, Aug. 30th-Sept. 3rd in Philadelphia. The complete list of finalists this year is particularly rich in British authors:

Long Form

Inca: The Scarlet Fringe by Suzanne
Allès Blom

Ash: A Secret History by Mary Gentle
Nantucket Trilogy by S.M. Stirling

Short Form

"HMS Habakkuk" by Eugene Byrne
"Seventy-Two Letters" by Ted Chiang
"A Very British History" by Paul J.
McAuley

"The Other Side of Midnight: Anno
Dracula 1981" by Kim Newman
"Xochiquetzal" by Carla Cristina Pereira

Sturgeon Awards

Finalists for the annual Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Awards, named for the SF author, have been announced. The Sturgeon Award honours the best SF short fiction of the year. Four inductees into the Science Fiction and Fantasy

Hall of Fame were also announced. They are: Alfred Bester, Fritz Leiber, Jack Vance and Ursula K. Le Guin.

Sturgeon Award winners, Hall of Fame inductees and winners of the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for best novel of the year will be honoured on July 6th at the University of Kansas. The list of finalists is as follows:

"Antibodies" by Charles Stross
"The Birthday of the World" by Ursula
K. Le Guin
"Heart of Glass" by William Barton
"The Juniper Tree" by John Kessel
"Milo and Sylvie" by Eliot Fintushel
"On the Orion Line" by Stephen Baxter
"Radiant Green Star" by Lucius Shepard
"Reef" by Paul J. McAuley
"Savior" by Nancy Kress
"Seventy-Two Letters" by Ted Chiang
"Sheena 5" by Stephen Baxter
"Tendéleo's Story" by Ian McDonald

Analogue/Asimov's Awards

Winners of the *Analogue* AnLab Awards and the *Asimov's* Readers' Awards have been announced. The awards will be presented at a breakfast celebration held during the 2001 Millennium Philcon, the World Science Fiction Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, August 30th - September 3rd.

Analogue AnLab Awards

Novella: "A Roll of the Dice",
Catherine Asaro (*Analogue* Jul/Aug 2000)
Novelette: "Stones of Significance",
David Brin (*Analogue* Jan 2000)
Short story: "Sheena 5", Stephen Baxter
(*Analogue* May 2000)
Fact article: "Slowboat to the Stars!",
Ben Bova (*Analogue* Feb 2000)
Cover art: Frank Kelly Freas (*Analogue*
Oct 2000)

Asimov's Readers' Awards

Novella: "Oracle", Greg Egan (*Asimov's*
Jul 2000)
Novelette: "On the Orion Line", Stephen
Baxter (*Asimov's* Oct/Nov 2000)
Short story: "The Elephants on
Neptune", Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* May
2000)
Poem: "Ten Things You Can't Do Inside
a Space Helmet", G.O. Clark (*Asimov's*
Jan 2000)
Cover artist: Bob Eggleton
Interior artist: Darryl Elliott

Media News

Gary Wilkinson rounds up the latest on film & television

British Buffy

Joss Whedon has been in talks with the BBC to jointly produce six episodes of a British spin-off of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The show will star English-born actor Anthony Head, who plays Buffy's Watcher and part-time librarian Giles in the original. Whedon told the *L.A. Times* that the show would be a "more grown-up, quiet show about a cool, grown-up, non-teenage man quietly solving ghost stories" and will have significant differences to Buffy, being "very different in tone, slower, more like series already on TV (here). But not too British." Whedon is currently hammering out story lines and a draft script with his US writing staff. Episode one of the new series will be shot in LA before the production shifts across to England.

On a roll

Thirty years after the original, the remake of *Rollerball* is soon to hit our screens. Directed by *Die Hard's* John McTiernan, the brutal action of the original will be augmented by state of the art special effects. Chris Klien, LL Cool J, Jean Reno and the *X-Men's* Rebecca Romijn-Stamos will be dashing round on inline skates instead of the old-fashion quads of the first film. Other changes are that the film is set only four years into the future so the sport is not a global phenomenon and there is no Jonathan E; he's been rather boringly renamed Cross. Original director Norman Jewison was on set during shooting, keeping an eye on things.

Jekyll and Hyde and Craven

Horror maestro Wes Craven famous for *Scream*, *Nightmare on Elm Street* and a lot of rubbish is planning another version of Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic classic *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Craig Rosenberg, the writer of *Jurassic Park 3* is adapting the novel. Hopefully

it will be a bit better than *Mary Reilly*. Craven is also planning a gothic horror version of *Alice in Wonderland* called *Dark Wonderland*, where an older Alice returns to a Wonderland gone mad (and previously it was sane?).

The spoof is out there

Tim Allen, who did such a good job with *Galaxy Quest* is to star in and produce *Star Child*, an sf spoof announced as *Starman* meets *The X-Files*. Allen plays a socially inept CIA agent who helps a stranded alien return home.

Wire-fu prequel

After the Oscar wins for surprise hit *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the film's producers now want to build on its success. Luckily the film was based on one of a series of pulp Chinese thrillers called the -- deep breath -- *Crane Crane Precious Sword Crouching Iron Pentology*. The current option is book two in the series, a prequel to *Crouching Tiger*. The producers are trying to get as many of the original's stars, although the success of the first film now means they can command considerably higher salaries.

Re-ring

DreamWorks have bought the rights to the Japanese cult horror *Ring* trilogy of films. The series revolves around a mysterious video -- anyone who watches it ends up dead.

The lizards are back.

Whilst announcing the DVD release of *V*, writer/director Ken Johnson hinted that he was trying to get together another mini-series of the programme. The alien lizards, who disguised as the humans invaded Earth, hit our screens back in the eighties for two mini-series followed by a not-too-good series. I wonder if David Icke was watching?

Cameron in space

In the wake of the first space tourist, it seems that anyone can now go into space -- well anyone with a spare \$20 million to spend on a holiday that is. One of those planning a jaunt is the director James Cameron of *Terminator* fame, but only if increased safety and training protocols are put in place by both the Russian space agency and

NASA. He is planning to film once he get up there -- "People would love to see what it is like to get up in the morning, put on your socks and go to work in weightlessness" -- to hopefully renew public interest in NASA and the International Space Station. According to the Russians, in order to complete his training, the earliest he could fly on one of their rockets would be the end of 2002.

Banks back to the big screen

Rumours abound that *Espedair Street*, based on a certain Scottish writer's book about a fictitious rock group, will be filming later this year, with David Thewlis starring as rock-god Weird and possibly Angelina Jolie as his fellow band member Christine. It still looks like the music will be co-written by Banks himself along with Gary Lloyd -- who previously bought us the *The Bridge* musical adaptation. Let's just hope it is better than *Complicity*.

Yoinks, Scoob!

We finally have cast and crew details (and the publicity pictures are everywhere) for the *Scooby-Doo* movie. The director is Raja Gosnell who has brought us such classics as *Big Momma's House* and *Home Alone 3*. Friddie Prinze Jr will be playing Fred; Linda Cardellini, a much too attractive Velma; Mathew Lillard (from *Scream*), Shaggy and *Buffy* herself -- Sarah Michelle Gellar -- as Daphne. No chance, not even for a Scooby-snack, of seeing Scoob himself; they are currently keeping the eponymous dog, played by a CGI effect, under wraps.

Meow!

Batman villainess Catwoman, long the star of her own comic, is to finally get her own movie starring Ashley Judd as the 'feline foe'. Not set in Gotham City but in the neighbouring village of 'Bristol', where the former pet-groomer Patience Price will do battle with the man who murdered her mother. No director has been mentioned but it will be produced by Denise Di Novi who brought us *Batman Returns*. As long as she keeps Schumacher away from it.

Sequel Spawned

Hey, nowadays you don't even need to be any good in the first place to get a

sequel. Thus the disaster that was *Spawn*, based on the comic book anti-hero of the same name, is to have a follow-up. Columbia have recruited the comic series' creator Todd McFarlane who "envisioned it as a very different movie" and wants to make it blacker. Todd, just make it better -- but that's not too difficult, eh?

Not all back in Black

The special effects are being added to *Men in Black 2* whilst the actors prepare to man the picket lines (and the script-writers go back to work). The decision to make a follow up had been announced almost before the original had finished showing but the disaster of epic proportions that was *Wild Wild West* has kept director Sonnenfeld away from the big screen. The producers have been keeping a tight lid on the budget this time around -- though it is reported to be a still vast \$175 million. Somebody who will not be returning is Linda Fiorentino, who seems to be doing a Sean Young and making herself impossible to work with. Kevin Smith, who directed her in *Dogma*, has said publicly that he will not work with the actress again under any circumstances. She is being sued by Art Ocho films for endangering a production by allegedly faking illness and not turning up for rehearsals. Also she has just walked out of starring role in a new CBS drama and now faces possible legal action for that as well.

Monster mash

What do you get if you mix *Evil Dead* with *Weird Science*? The in-development *How to Make a Monster*. Three ex-cons turned hackers are hired to write a new computer game called 'Evilution'. To beat the deadline and get the million-dollar fee they add real demonic stuff to the game, which unfortunately causes some nasty beasties to burst out of the computer into reality.

Prawn cocktail

Well, we have had *Fight Club* with robots (*Automata* -- See *Matrix* 148) now its *Rocky* with a giant shrimp! The British comedy *Crust*, written and directed by Mark Locke, features Mr C, a seven-foot tall mutated mantis shrimp, promoted in the ring by a publican played by Kevin McNally.

“Surprise Me!”

Gary Wilkinson stares at the screen to watch *Antitrust*

Towards the end of *Antitrust*, in a scene at a party, a guest who just happens to be a film director remarks something along the lines that there is no artistry in Hollywood anymore, only business...

Ryan Phillippe plays genius computer programmer Milo Hoffman. At the beginning of the film he is working in a garage with a group of friends to perfect an open-source software project. They are planning to give away their creation free to the world, only making money from support. However Hoffman gets a job offer from software mogul Gary Winston, played by Tim Robbins, who runs the giant software corporation NURV -- "Never Underestimate Radical Vision". NURV is being investigated by the Justice department and produce their market-dominating code via a giant 'campus' just outside a city in the north-west of America. So, not Microsoft then. Winston himself lives in a lakeside fantasy house with art displayed on huge wall-mounted computer screens that change their image depending on who is in the room -- "Doesn't Bill Gates have these?" Hoffman asks. "Bill who?" Winston jokes back. Actually Robbins does a pretty good satirical impression of Gates, with his specs and bad hair, and matches his reported personality -- enthusiastic, Pringle-munching nerd one minute, inspiring leader the next ("Surprise me!"), but suddenly exploding into a petulant ranting demigod when he doesn't get his way -- although, at times, Robbin's performance does verge on pantomime villainy.

Winston wants Hoffman to

complete his project Synapse that will allow 'instant' communication between any device anywhere around the world, and thus allow Winston a further stranglehold on the software market. Hoffman, orphaned, obviously sees Winston as a father figure and is convinced to join NURV when Winston explains the "beneficial transfer of money" -- using his vast wealth to fund his charities for the arts and education.

Of course not everything is right in NURV. How does Winston keep producing all those disks of useful programming and why are all those open-source programmers dying? Well it's not too difficult to guess why. Yes, I'm afraid this definitely is business not artistry.

Antitrust wants to be a tight conspiracy thriller set in the cutting-edge world of the coming communications revolution but doesn't quite make it. *Hackers* and *Sneakers*, though less realistic than *Antitrust* were much more fun. We do see actual code on the screen and plenty of buzz-words in the script -- trouble is this is too technical for the non-geeks watching and a geek like me can see the plot is as riddled with holes as Swiss cheese.

We have three pretty young faces with Phillippe as Hoffman, Claire Forlani as his girlfriend and Rachel Leigh Cook as a NURV co-worker and rival love interest. They, however, show almost no acting ability whatsoever and remain forever bland. Minor characters vanish from the story half-way through -- lost between re-writes, most likely. There is some wacky plot invention -- I particularly liked

the 'death by sesame-seed allergy' story-line; which sees a character frantically scratching his forearm with a fork dipped in black-bean sauce to test whether a Chinese meal has been poisoned. But the rest of it is just too predictable. And the sledge-hammer direction doesn't help. At the point where Hoffman gets the piece of information that proves that NURV is a bit nasty, not only do we get the usual zoom to extreme close-up and accompanying crashing synth chords, we then got off into a ridiculously over the top montage sequence explaining it all for the hard of thinking who might not of 'gotten it.' Who's that tramp doing a totally unnecessarily walk-on? Yes take a bow, Peter Howitt; it's the director doing a Hitchcockian cameo. In some ways I feel sorry for him; he has been in the press recently, moaning about not being able to find backing in Britain after directing the quirky *Sliding Doors*, and never forget he was stuck playing Joey Boswell in *Bread* at the beginning of his career.

It's a pity really; films like this are important. *Antitrust* makes valid points about where the world is heading and the increasing dominance of corporations in our lives is not easy to be dismissed. With the end of the cold war, the forthcoming battle of the current century looks like shaping up to be between the people and the power of corporations, with their rulers acting like *Bond* villains, and the shadowy unelected organisations backing them like the World Bank, WTO and the IMF. But guys, next time, please -- try and surprise me.

"Who ya gonna call?"

Colin Odell & Mitch le Blanc review *Evolution*

Wayne is a waiter at a country club but has aspirations to be a fireman. Sadly though his future career prospects are sharply curtailed by the arrival of a meteor which simultaneously wrecks his car and his ability to perform at the next day's fireman exam. These minor personal problems pale into insignificance when it is discovered the meteor contains organisms of extraterrestrial nature, organisms that have the ability to evolve as a frightening rate turning millions of years into mere hours.

The first scientists on the scene are Harry Block, a volleyball coach and part-time professor, and Ira Kane, the disgraced ex-Pentagon scientist forced to teach chemistry at the local college. Naturally the government ascertain the importance of the situation and put an end to Harry and Ira's dreams of a Nobel prize, blocking off the meteor crash site for their own hi-tech tests. Before long it becomes apparent that the super evolution of these alien organisms threatens not only the state of Arizona but the United States and the whole world, for as the alien cultures climb the Darwinian ladder from flatworms to primates it is clear that the human race

faces possible extinction. Even the initial hurdle of being unable to breathe oxygen is quickly overcome as tens of millions of years zip by in an instant.

Who can possibly save the human race? Can the army contain the problem? Will Ira find true love? Will Harry's volleyball team ever make it to the major league? The whole make-up of the future of the world was decided in petri dish and sealed by man's inability to realise the danger in time...

Ivan Reitman returns to the comedy world of *Ghostbusters* that made him a force to be reckoned with by introducing us to another team of scientific misfits facing insurmountable odds with a bizarre array of home-made gadgets. Instead of facing the supernatural, this time the threat is of extraterrestrial origin, brought to Earth via a meteorite. Also unlike *Ghostbusters* the team take the majority of the running time to get together leaving Duchovny and Jones to hold most of the movie. Unfortunately the pair lack the manic intensity of, say, Bill Murray and at best invoke mild smiles rather than out and out belly laughs, the template used here is that of the ostensibly similar *Men In Black*. Throughout the film the

comedy is too little and too lame, its origin as a serious science-fiction horror film is all too clear, the addition of a variety of arse gags may well place it in the current trend towards gross comedy but does little to inspire audience enthusiasm. Where the film does succeed is in its prime concept and in the execution of the major monsters on show; rather like the pantheon of beasts that litter the *Ghostbusters* films these range from the mildly scary to the strangely doe-eyed, and do at least provide a fair modicum of jumps and some diverting set pieces. Ultimately though the tired sexism and clichéd ending (despite featuring a most bizarre use of product placement) take its toll and the end result is nothing more than 90 minutes of diversion. File under "must try harder".

Evolution (2001)

Directed by:

Ivan Reitman

Starring:

David Duchovny (Ira Kane)
Julianne Moore (Allison)
Orlando Jones (Harry Block)
Sean William Scott (Wayne)

"Ogres are not like cakes!"

Mitch le Blanc & Colin Odell on Dreamworks' new animation, *Shrek*

He's mean, he's green and his breath's obscene, but deep down Shrek ain't such a bad ogre. Sure he has to scare off the revolting peasants once in a while to maintain his modest swampy residence in tiptop condition, but that's all part of the tradition. However, the land is in upheaval as diminutive dictator Lord Farquaad has an aversion to fairytail creatures, brutally evicting them. This results in hundreds of scared beasts invading Shrek's precious swampland - the only solution to his woe being to help Lord Farquaad become king by marrying him off to the fair Princess Fiona. Unfortunately the princess is currently enjoying the hospitality of a particularly possessive and fiery dragon, locked in a high tower surrounded by molten lava and the skeletons of previous (failed) rescuers. However, Shrek is not unaided in his quest for he has a magical companion to help (and more often hinder) his efforts - an ass that can talk, indeed an ass that rarely shuts up. Surely such a perfectly matched duo can save the princess and regain Shrek's muddy abode? Well the odds are stacked against him and, even if they were to succeed is Farquaad really the right partner for the feisty princess?

Dreamworks' second CGI feature has already (allegedly) provoked ire in the bowels of the Mouse House with its frankly irreverent approach to many of the fairytail creatures upon which the studio has built its wholesome reputation - characters that remain outside of copyright. Such sacred (cash) cows as Snow White ("She lives with seven guys,

but that don't mean she's easy... just kiss her dead frozen lips and find out what a live wire she really is"), Pinocchio (his nose providing a handy limbo bar), Robin Hood (a camp French Errol Flynn character who robs from the rich and gives to the poor, minus commission and expenses), the Gingerbread Man (turned informant after being dunked in milk and having his legs amputated) or even the crows from Dumbo ("Bet you ain't ever seen a donkey-fly") are caricatured, as are the trappings of the Disney fairy tale; the mirror on the wall forced into work by persuasive smashing of a smaller looking glass or the book of fairy tales voiced over only to be used as toilet roll.

This is fun but could get tiresome were it not that *Shrek* hones its story down to a close pairing, with only a few characters fleshed out more fully. In this respect *Shrek* is a far more mature film than the company's previous outing *Antz* in that the CG is there to provide the story's aesthetic and direction, showing off the quality of the design and the rendering rather than going for the more obviously showy techniques that can blight the limit-free world of the CG 'camera'. To this end all bar a handful of shots could be created by "real" camerawork, including some lovely changes in film-speed a la Peckinpah, and the crowd scenes are few and far between - you are not overwhelmed by shots of thousands of things moving around just because they can. Instead *Shrek* plays on the details - the motion of dust particles in the light, subtle distance fogging and a restrained rather than overtly Day-

Glo colour palette. In many respects the lessons from Pixar are coming through - whatever can be done today will look dated tomorrow so go for good design and a screenplay which will give the film staying power. The soundtrack, however, gives the game away somewhat and will probably age the film more quickly than the charming animation.

For all its bodily emissions gags and abusive stance towards accepted classics, *Shrek* is nonetheless a very sweet film with a touching slice of romance and a wholesome sense of morality in between the (Dahl style) gross bits (Shrek uses his own earwax to make candles and eats eyeballs on cocktail sticks - yuck!). Myers and Murphy eventually make a good double act after a shaky start and the dialogue is suitably double entendre laden ("No-one likes to kiss asses" laments Murphy) while Princess Fiona can certainly take care of herself in a wire-work inspired martial arts sequence. Ultimately, as Murphy comments, it "ain't nothing but a bunch of dots" but it provides plenty of humour and action. It may not be in the same league as Pixar's work but Dreamworks are certainly heading in the right direction, with the right attitude.

Shrek (2001)

Directed by: Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jensen

Starring the voices of: Mike Myers (Shrek), Eddie Murphy (Donkey), Cameron Diaz (Princess Fiona), John Lithgow (Lord Farquaad)

Thought-crime

Gary S. Dalkin on Northern Stage Ensemble's adaptation of Orwell's *1984*

The moment I saw the 1984 film version of *1984* had been given a 15 certificate I knew something was seriously wrong. In 1984 any film which did justice to the sheer impact of Orwell's novel would have had trouble getting an 18 certificate. It should have been so horrendous as to be almost unwatchable, and to leave one shocked and reeling for a week. But the film betrayed Orwell's relentlessly powerful vision in the name of palatable entertainment. It was soft centred and wet, the fine performances by an excellent cast let down by a director with no vision and no guts. Designer dictatorship lite. They even had a pop band, The Eurythmics, to provide much of the music. Which says it all.

So it was, if not with delight, then a sort of exhilaration, that I read in my local paper that a new stage version of *1984* was opening at Poole Arts Centre; perverse though it may be to revive the second most iconic science fictional year in the middle of the first. This was a production by the Northern Stage Ensemble which had been winning rave reviews and causing a not inconsiderable number of audience members to walk out due to its 'relentless violence' and 'shock tactics', and making a smaller number of people actually pass out.

Yes!!!

At last, this is how *1984* should be. It is not intended to be entertaining or comforting. Someone getting the shit kicked out of them, electrocuted or threatened with the thing they fear

most in the world is not a pretty sight. Perhaps it had finally been done right?

Northern Stage Ensemble have previously adapted *Animal Farm* and *A Clockwork Orange*, so clearly Alan Lyddiard and Mark Murphy have a thing about dystopian mind-control. Though what they'll do after *We*, *Brave New World* and *This Perfect Day* is anyone's guess. Their *1984* is a multimedia production, part theatre, part film. It even has a main title on screen.

The screen is actually four screens. When all joined together they form a large roughly CinemaScope ratio screen, which can be split into two more conventionally television shaped screens. These in turn can disgorge smaller screens from their centres, which can act as video-screens and television monitors, such as those in Winston's and O'Brien's flats. The screens can also be rotated 180 degrees to form the shop and room above the shop where Winston meets his lover, Julia. An ingeniously flexible design.

The images projected on the screens range from surveillance footage of Winston and Julia, to street scenes, subtle and unrevealing nude scenes between the lovers (the actors remain clothed on stage, though they remove their Party uniforms) to vividly scarlet scenes of beatings in the Ministry of Love. The film, which was shot in Newcastle, where the theatre company is based, and in Moscow is generally effective, whether presented on its own, or as a backdrop to the actors, showing close-ups of the

action on stage live. The passing of a love note, the words written in a diary.

Craig Conway gives a strong physical performance as Winston. On the torture table he convulses as if a heavy current really is passing through his body. Not once but many times. It must be physically punishing. He is convincingly anguished and human too. Cait Davis brings both determination and sufficient feminine charm and sex appeal to Julia to make one accept that a man might risk everything to be with her. Mark Conway lacks the subtle shadings necessary to bring O'Brien fully to life in the interrogation sequences, his performance being too much on one level throughout, rattling off information and demanding answers, machine-like. His assistance torturer, in a none to subtle piece of symbolism, wears a placid mask through-out, and perhaps deliberately, though unfortunately calls to mind *Star Trek's* Data. The effect is disconcertingly humorous, which is surely not the intention.

As for the violence, yes, it's very, very bloody, and several of the beatings are quite extended. Though discretion is used. As much is left to the imagination as is shown. We don't see the boot going in, or the repeated blows to the body. The blood-lust in the faces of the torturers, the splattered blood, the screams and the oppressive music by John Alder are sufficient. Sufficient to cause several walk-outs, though one has to ask what anyone who bought a ticket expected from a

modern 'cutting edge' production of such a brutal novel?

A lot has been left out, and much is only referred to once. There sometimes is little context. The endless war is never explained, barely even mentioned. We see Winston at work but once, barely gaining an appreciation of the sheer scale of the work being done to constantly rewrite the past. Goldstein is dismissed too quickly. The explanations are often simply missing, only alluded to, the point missing. I would love to know what someone who had never read the book makes of this, because it seems in creating this adaptation Lyddiard assumed the entire audience would be intimately familiar with the novel. Probably a fair assumption, but we still need to be told the story. Key scenes are simply gone. The reason Winston fears rats so much. The parade of the enemy prisoners and the hangings. Winston admires the song of the prole woman in the garden, but we are not told that the Party machine (literally) writes the prole's songs, thus undermining even this moment of 'beauty'. Much of the political background, much of Orwell's carefully detailed world building, and hence much of the force of his argument, has been left on the cutting room floor. The play runs approximately two hours plus intermission. Another half hour would have helped enormously. Three hours and it might have been perfect.

Shooting much of the film in Moscow seems too obvious. Yes, Stalin's Soviet Union was part of Orwell's 'inspiration', but it is essential that he set the book in London. The idea is that it can and will happen anywhere and everywhere. It will spread. Choosing Moscow reinforces the idea that *1984* is a fable past its

sell-by date about the horrors of Soviet Russia. At least this dynamic production, by its very existence, dismisses the nonsense that Orwell was about prophecy. Only those who have swallowed the double-think, and thus ironically proven Orwell right, could argue the book has been made irrelevant by history. *1984* is about the present. The present in 1948 when it was published. The present now. The present so long as politicians seek power for power's sake.

We live in a world of endless surveillance, with monitors and cameras everywhere. We can turn them off, but many never do, absorbing mainstream media propaganda, overt and subliminal, at every moment. Soon there will be three power-blocks. Latin American countries are unilaterally adopting the US dollar. China will dominate the Pacific Rim in the new century. The EU will be one unaccountable federal superstate. Nothing is more certain than that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts more. What do you do when there is nowhere left to go to dissent? When there is no where left to go Big Brother can really take the gloves off.

Is there another message here? Apart from John Alder's functional score, excerpts from Stravinsky's revolutionary and pagan *Rite of Spring*, premiered to riotous effect just before the tumult of the Great War and the Russian Revolution are used for the Ministry of Love and its brutality. While Bach's *Saint Matthew's Passion* symbolises Winston's humanity, his spirit, his love. Are we being told that there is a spiritual dimension which no torture can destroy? If there is a Christian message here it is deliberately ambiguous.

The sense that truth is subjective

(both in the book and play clearly portrayed as a lie), the ultimate enemy which must be renounced, anticipates today's official moral relativism, in which the ultimate thought-crime is to believe in absolute objective truth, that not all philosophies, faiths and ideas are equally valid and 'true'. When the very concept of absolute, objective truth is completely discredited, then anything can be 'true'. 2+2 can equal 5. The desire to conform can outweigh what we know to be true. And then whatever Big Brother says is true. The lie will have won. The architects of moral relativism are simply today's Small Brother.

It is a production to see, to argue about, to think about. And one to be revised, for rave reviews in the broadsheets only underline a paucity of critical thought. This is a production which has the violence right, the performances just about right, but some of the incidental details wrong, and which needs to add more of the complex political ideas and scenarios which drive the book and underpin and necessitate Winston and Julia's emotional and intellectual revolution.

Commit thought-crime today. Switch off your television and don't believe what you read.

Seen at Poole Arts Centre - 17th May 2001

Winston - Craig Conway
Julia - Cait Davis
O'Brien - Mark Calvert

Adapted by Alan Lyddiard
Directed by Alan Lyddiard and Mark Murphy
Design - Neil Murphy
Music - John Alder
Sound Design - Martin Hodgson
Lighting Design - Jon Linstrum

www.nineteeneightyfour.co.uk/

Douglas Adams 1952 - 2001

Douglas Noel Adams, author of the landmark science fiction comedy, *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, died on the 11th of May in Santa Barbara, California at the cruelly early age of 49 following a sudden heart attack. He was born in 1952 in Cambridge -- he would later joke that he was DNA in Cambridge nine months before Crick and Watson discovered it. Adams did not speak until the age of four, but his first prose appeared in *Dan Dare* at the age of 13. He reckoned that his teachers at Brentwood School in Essex could never work out "... whether I was terribly clever or terribly stupid. I always had to understand everything fully before I was prepared to say I knew anything."

However, Adams was clever enough to return to Cambridge to read English at St John's College and to join *Footlights*. He had loved comedy from an early age -- and would hide under the bedcovers listening "enraptured" to comedy on an old radio. But *Monty Python* was something completely different. "The thing about *Python* that hit me like a thunderbolt was that comedy was a medium in which

extremely intelligent people could express things that simply couldn't be expressed any other way. From where I was sitting in my boarding school in deepest Essex it was a thrilling beacon of light." He quickly recognised that performing with *Footlights* was not for him and concentrated instead on writing *Python*-influenced sketches.

Once he left university he worked with Graham Chapman on a prospective television series but it never went beyond its pilot episode. He also tried hard to make it as one of the team writing for *Weekending* on Radio 4, then the main training ground for comedy sketch writers. But he was unable to write to order, or do topical material. Losing confidence as a writer (a problem that remained with him throughout his life) he survived by doing various odd jobs including hospital porter, chicken shed cleaner and bodyguard.

But then, in 1977, came *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. For nine months he wrote the radio series. The BBC paid him £1,000. He was so hard up that when it was transmitted in 1978 he accepted a job as a BBC

producer. Six months later, he quit that job to concentrate on the second series, the novel, the TV version and, a dream come true, script editor for *Doctor Who*.

The series was a success, its fame spread by word of mouth, bringing Pythonesque humour to a new generation, satirising not only science fiction but also the banalities of everyday life. It introduced the world to Zaphod Beeblebrox, Marvin the Paranoid Android and Everyman figure Arthur Dent and added catch-phrases such as the question of 'life, the universe and everything' and the ultimate answer: '42' to the language, something Adams was immensely proud of.

When the novel came out in 1979, Adams' life changed forever. "It was like being helicoptered to the top of Mount Everest or having an orgasm without the foreplay." The book and its sequels went on to sell over 14 million copies around the world; Adams became the first British author since Ian Fleming to have three books in both the *New York Times* and the *Publishers Week* bestseller list, and eventually

Hitch Hiker would come 24th in Waterstone's list of the 100 greatest books of the century.

Ironically, Adams utterly hated writing, suffering crippling writer's block and his lateness for deadlines was legendary: "I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by." His editor Sue Freestone had to set up her office in his kitchen to keep him working on the first novel. For the second series of the radio show he was virtually locked in an office next to the recording studio until he produced scripts for the waiting cast and crew.

Part of the reason to keep writing was financial, Adams having been defrauded by his accountant. In collaboration with John Lloyd, he wrote a spoof dictionary *The Meaning of Liff* (1984) and a sequel which provided new words for concepts that lacked them, such as 'Farnham' -- *that feeling at four in the afternoon that one has not done enough work*. He also produced two *Dirk Gently* novels about a 'holistic' detective (*Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* and *The Long Dark Teatime of the South*).

However, at end of the eighties his interest in comedy was waning, his finances were stable, and ironically, considering how he had satirised it before, he was

becoming more interested in technology and science, in particular ecology and evolution. In 1990 he and zoologist Mark Carwardine collaborated on the book *Last Chance To See...* an account of a world-wide search for endangered species. Adams had been the first person in Britain to buy an Apple Mac and he embraced the Internet. He set up a multi-media company, *The Digital Village*, calling himself its Chief Fantasist and also founded an ambitious dot.com company, *H2G2*, promising a real version of the 'Guide'.

Adams' other love was music. He collected left-handed guitars, at one point owning 30 of them. Appropriately enough, on the day he turned 42 he joined Pink Floyd on stage at Earl's Court.

In 1999 Adams moved to Santa Barbara to concentrate on the development of a movie version of *Hitch Hiker*, though there were problems with the project's essential Britishness. He compared the Hollywood process to "trying to grill a steak by having a succession of people come into the room and breathe on it".

Geoffrey Perkins, the BBC's head of comedy, called Adams "absolutely one of the most creative geniuses to ever work in radio comedy. He

probably wrote one of the greatest radio comedy series ever, certainly the most imaginative." He was not the first to produce science fiction comedy, but was the first to bring it into the mainstream. Adams wrote for everyone, his stuff was just funny -- whether you liked science fiction or not. As Stephen Fry noted on Adams' Internet tribute page: "He brought wit to science fiction. His ability to connect cosmic ideas with the banal commonplaces of everyday life was unique."

Gary Wilkinson

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Members' Noticeboard

Eric Brown is looking for a copy of the Japanese science fiction magazine titled *S-F Magazine*, no 499 (1998/1), containing a translation of the story "The Space-Time Pit" co-authored with Stephen Baxter.

He can be contacted by post at 32 Mytholmes Lane, Haworth, West Yorkshire, BD22 8EZ, or at Eric@mytholmes.freeserve.co.uk

Wanted to complete Cowper/Murry collection: reading copies of Colin (Middleton) Murry's *A Path to the Sea and Private View*.

Please contact Mike Cross, 41 Redland Drive, Kirk Ella, Hull, HU10 7UX; Tel: 01482 656866; Email: mike@mjckeh.demon.co.uk.

Clarke Award Day '2001 event'

The Science Museum—Saturday 19th May, er, 2001

The Arthur C Clarke Award made two breaks with tradition this year. The judges eventually proved to have chosen one of the books which no one could describe as 'the surprise winner'. And the ceremony was held on a Saturday, to tie in with an event at the Science Museum devised and organised by Pat Cadigan to focus on the Award and Clarke's own sf-nal year, 2001. The Science Museum is one of the sponsors of the Award, along with the BSFA and the SF Foundation, and thus supplies one of the judges; they have also hosted the presentation itself for the past half dozen years.

The success of the event has already been demonstrated by the Museum's decision to stage something similar next year; with luck their enthusiasm will extend to addressing the teething troubles experienced this time.

It might have been amusing, for instance, that an event held in the Science Museum had so many difficulties with technology. The first panel—unfortunately on technology in 2001 ('Where is my air-car, my jet-pack, my condo on the moon? Why aren't we on our way to Jupiter and when are we going?')—didn't benefit from anything so straightforward as a microphone, which proved to be something of a disadvantage in an area with poor acoustics and an audience squashed into seats on nearly all sides of the panel.

Another distraction, which continued through most of the next session of readings from three of the nominated books, came from the far too audible exhibits in the Live Science section next door. By this stage, luckily, a microphone had been procured. Ken MacLeod was reading from a manuscript. Octavia Butler's nominated novel (*Parable of the Talents*) is helpfully slim. But China Miéville must have been relieved he was using the lighter paperback edition of his 874-page *Perdido Street Station* as he juggled the book and the microphone. Happily, by the final reading (Alastair Reynolds and Adam Roberts—Mary Gentle couldn't make it until the evening) someone had provided the ultimately luxury of a microphone stand, with no further distractions apart from the increasing number of tannoy announcements in pursuit of missing persons and the incongruous sound of electronic goats bleating which drifted up from the ground floor.

In the meantime, the second panel (on 'The cultural impact of 2001', an ill-defined title which wasn't entirely illuminated in the nonetheless wide-ranging and interesting discussion) featured the ubiquitous Miéville, Tricia Sullivan, Roz Kaveney, Jonathan Carroll, M John Harrison, Jon Courtenay Grimwood and Octavia Butler as well as MC Dave Green. They sat in a long row. They still had just the one

microphone. They passed it back and forth. When the music stopped...

The open-plan and rather cramped location of the event was not ideal accommodation for the excellent turnout on the day, with more authors able to attend than were often seen at the old weekday evening award presentation, and an impressive number of regular attendees—all the more so given the apparent publicity blackout on the whole until a day or two beforehand. The Imperial College SF group, based just down the road from the museum, were at least partly responsible for the welcome presence of people even younger than China Miéville (who explained relatively patiently in response to one question that he couldn't look back to 1968 since he was born four years later). Publicity on the newsgroup REC.ARTS.SF.FANDOM also ensured that the audience included plenty of people other than the faithful old farts like us who were going to the presentation in the evening anyway. Now the Science Museum know what sort of numbers they're likely to get even on short notice, next year should be better. With any luck they'll also decide on a pricing policy for admission and ensure all their staff know about it...

Claire Brialey

Second

De Vere Hotel, Swindon—25-27th May 2001, reviewed by Claire Brialey

Second was the second Secon, a fact which was doomed to confuse the hotel staff as they put up signs in reception to direct people to the correct function space, transporting us instantly to the 1930s and the 'second science fiction convention'.

This was a small, friendly con run by a team who are now bidding to organise the 2002 Unicon in Cheltenham (against competition from Reading) and are threatening that if they run another convention in 2003 it will have to be called Triple Secon. That's an example of their jokes, now try their programme. Second aimed to be relaxing and fun but also thought-provoking; co-organiser Simon Bradshaw was unimpressed during the panel discussion of the trend towards small fun conventions to hear that some of the fans behind *Aliens Stole My Handbag* and *Year of the Wombat* weren't coming along because they thought Second would be worthy and serious rather than fun. And although 'fun' is a subjective term there was a notable lack of baths full of baked beans, enormous water pistols and men in leather mini-skirts at Second.

The programme was at least partly focused on the work and interests of guest of honour Paul McAuley, including a debate on the presentation of biology and biotechnology in science fiction, a lively discussion on whether there's more sensawunda to be found from *New Scientist* these days than from sf magazines, and a panel on the geopolitics of the new century. Paul McAuley also gave a guest talk on his positioning within the genre and was separately interviewed by Tanya Brown, who posed searching questions on his apparent obsession with lynching looters and other trends in his wide range of fiction.

Lighter but still well-attended programme items included panels about the social side of fandom, what scares us now that *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* has made horror more human, and sf fashions, while Bridget Bradshaw out-dominated Anne Robinson in a fannish version of *The Weakest Link*. Particular highlights were Tony Keen's pseudo-serious and well-researched lecture on the classical influences in media sf, and Dave Langford's talk on the awful truth behind *The*

Leaky Establishment (recently re-issued by Big Engine; get your copy now).

The closing ceremony involved particular care by Simon Bradshaw in his choice of words, aiming to avoid a repetition of his tongue-twisting attempt to thank Secon's guest of honour, Stephen Baxter. This time he managed not to declare that he would specifically like to spank Paul McAuley—and in any case Stephen Baxter liked it so much that he came back this time as an attendee.

The convention had moved from Secon's location—the Hertfordpark Hotel in Stevenage—to Swindon; the De Vere Hotel proved to have the advantage in respect of decor, facilities and breakfast, but lagged somewhat in comparison to the previous venue by dint of the obnoxious fellow-guests (mostly uncontrolled child athletes), bar prices which struck even the Londoners as a bit steep, and the infernal temperatures in the bedrooms. But we were there for the convention, and that was everything it aimed to be: small, relaxed, literary, fannish, and fun.

BSFA Awards

Tanya Brown rounds up the latest news

It's good to see the two laurels of the British sf scene, the Arthur C. Clarke Award and the BSFA Awards, bestowed upon the two (wrist-achingly large) novels that raced neck-and-neck in the BSFA Reviewers' Poll (see *Vector* 216). *Ash*, by Mary Gentle, won the BSFA Award for best novel published in the UK last year, and the Arthur C. Clarke Award went to China Miéville for *Perdido Street Station*. Both awards had strong shortlists, with a surprising degree of concordance: no fewer than three books were shortlisted for both awards. The new Golden Age of British sf may well be more than just a rallying cry for sf publishers.

And what of next year's awards – the BSFA Awards for Best of 2001? Nominations for best novel of 2001 are already coming in – they're listed below. Nominations for artwork and short stories are rather thinner on the ground, but it's early days yet. Up-to-date news on the contenders can be found on the BSFA web page (www.bsfa.co.uk), and there'll be an update in each issue of *Matrix* between now and the deadline next January.

Stop press! There will be a new BSFA Award category, starting next year – an award for Writing about sf. Single articles (from *Interzone*, *Foundation*, *NYRSF* and so on) are eligible, as are anthologies of critical pieces (*Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* for example, though it's not eligible this year);

collections of work by a single critic (e.g. John Clute's *Look at the Evidence*) and book-length critical works, such as Brian Aldiss' *Trillion Year Spree* or *The Mechanics of Wonder* by Gary Westfahl. If you're not sure about eligibility, drop me a line and I'll make an executive decision.

You can nominate a piece of work for the award just by sending me an email (awards@amaranth.avnet.co.uk – please note change of address!) There's a handy link on the web page, too. Nominate early and often! Remember, the items with the most nominations are those that'll appear on the shortlist next spring: unlike the jury-based Clarke Award, the BSFA Awards are democratically bestowed. If you like something, nominate it – even if someone else has already done so.

The closing date for nominations is 31st January 2002. The rules of eligibility are as follows:

Best Novel:

First published in the UK in the calendar year 2001.

Best Short Fiction:

First appearance, regardless of country of origin, in the calendar year 2001. Stories in non-UK magazines, anthologies, and even on the web are eligible. Please let me know where the story appeared (anthology title and editor, magazine name and number, URL), as well as the

author and title.

Best Non-Fiction:

First appearance in the calendar year 2001. Please give author / editor, title, and magazine / journal details if applicable.

Best Artwork:

First appearance in the calendar year 2001. Where possible, please give the artist's name and the title of the work.

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

Nominations for Best Novel

Things Unborn – Eugene Byrne
Appleased – John Clute
The Nameless Day – Sara Douglass
Pashazade – Jon Courtenay Grimwood
The Secret of Life – Paul McAuley
Ares Express – Ian McDonald
Chasm City – Alastair Reynolds
Lust – Geoff Ryman

Nomination for Best Short Story

'Under the Saffron Tree' – Cherith Baldry (*Interzone* 166)

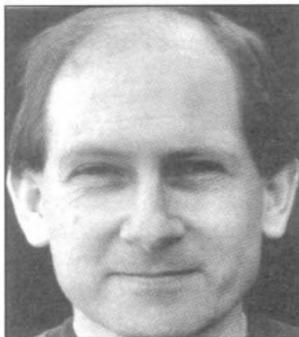
Nominations for Best Artwork

Cover of *Pashazade* by Jon Courtenay Grimwood
 'Roach Hotel' – Dominic Harman (cover of *Interzone* 166)



Resonances

Stephen Baxter's guest column



August sees the publication of the third novel of my *Manifold* series, *Origin* (HarperCollins Voyager). There will be a collection of related stories next year, but this brings to an end a project which has engaged me, on and off, for fourteen years (!).

The seeds of *Manifold* go all the way back to an unpublished story I drafted in 1987, just about the time I was starting to sell professionally. I was never happy with the story and put it aside. But it contained two elements I liked: an off-stage race of relatively low-tech aliens who used teleport links to beam themselves around the Galaxy; and a quixotic mission to a 'burster', a periodically exploding neutron star ('Burster' became my working title for the piece).

I returned to the story at a loose moment in 1995. I realised that the low-tech-aliens angle was a big idea that could be expanded to a new series, and that I had a number of other unfinished and unpublished tales which could

then be fit together to make a new and open-ended saga. So I began to sell a series of stories set in what I called the 'Saddle Point' universe to the American magazine *SF Age*. These tales were based on the old material and wholly new stuff. 'Burster' itself finished up (heavily rewritten) as a story called 'Fusion Summer'.

But after a couple of years of such story-spinning I began to ask myself new questions. How come nobody had advanced beyond lightspeed-restricted teleport gates – why no warp drive? What was keeping them low-tech? I realised that I was touching on the venerable Fermi Paradox: if the aliens exist, how come we don't see them? One possible answer is that it's a dangerous universe out there: maybe Something Heavy regularly slams us all back down to pond life, so nobody gets the chance to advance. That scenario, and the existing stories, would eventually become the second novel of the *Manifold* sequence, *Space*.

But I'd meanwhile become interested in other answers to the Fermi question. What if we are simply alone? The thought of mankind growing old alone in a dying universe is pretty desolating. I had prepared an outline for an end-of-time novel along those lines back in 1993; unhappy with its lack of context I put it aside. But now I saw that if I could link it with the *Space* material, using the same

characters in a Moorcockian multiverse, I could start to explore Fermi in an interesting way. And another ancient idea helped me get started: a Brannon Braga-type *Star Trek* outline I once scribbled down concerning a destiny-changing time paradox ... Thus I had the bare bones of the first *Manifold* novel, *Time*.

As for the last novel, I wanted to explore 'spooky solutions' to Fermi: what if They are out there, but hiding? Eventually I hit on something suitably paranoid, and yet which would tie together all three books, and *Origin* was born.

In the course of the books, as usually happens for me, spin-off ideas and sidebars became pieces in their own right; these included my stories 'People Came From Earth' and 'The Gravity Mine'.

So there it is: much reworking of ideas, a general deepening and broadening of thought, and probably a nightmare for bibliographers.

Creative writing isn't a particularly linear process. Over a lengthy career, I suspect writers are drawn back to certain key ideas and themes – obsessions if you like – which they work over and over. The whole thing is kind of bushy, with roots in older material and ideas, and an exfoliation of new stuff. *Manifold* is unusual in that I've been able to trace the whole process right back to where it started, with that dodgy story in 1987.

Books

Forthcoming books and publishing schedules, compiled by Janet Barron



Key

HB = hardback
TPB = trade paperback
PB = paperback

NOIP Now out in paperback

= Reissue

= nonfiction

*** Watch out for these

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

Tom Arden *Shadow Black*
(Big Engine, Jul, PB, £7.99)
Cross genre offering by fantasy author.

NOIP Iain M. Banks *Look to Windward*
(Orbit, Aug, PB, £7.99, 368pp)

NOIP James Barclay *Noonshade*
(Millennium, Jul, PB, £6.99, 512pp)

James Barclay *Nightchild*
(Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Jul, PB, £9.99, 484pp)

***Stephen Baxter *Origin:*

Manifold 3
(Voyager, Aug, HB/TPB, £16.99/£10.99, 496pp)

Carol Berg *Transformation*
(Orbit, Aug, PB, £6.99, 448pp)

NOIP Gregory Benford *Artifact*
(Orbit, Jul, PB, £6.99, 432pp)

NOIP Ben Bova *The Precipice*
(New English Library, Aug, PB, 448pp)

Octavia E. Butler *Parable of the Talents*
(The Women's Press, Aug, PB, £6.99, 368 pp)

Arthur C. Clarke *Songs of Distant Earth*
(Voyager, Aug, PB, £7.99, 240 pp)

Michael Cobley *Shadowkings*
(Earthlight, Jul, PB, £10.00, 480pp)

Jack Cohen, Ian Stewart *Whealers*
(Earthlight, Aug, PB, 400pp)

Allan Cole, Chris Bunch *Sten 5: Revenge of the Damned*
(Orbit, Jul, PB, £5.99, 368pp)

Allan Cole, Chris Bunch *Sten 6: the Return of the Emperor*
(Orbit, Aug, PB, £5.99, 384pp)

Charles De Lint *Forests of the Heart*
(Victor Gollancz Science

Fiction, Jul, HB/TPB, £16.99/£9.99, 672pp)

#Philip K. Dick *The Game-players of Titan*
(Voyager, Aug, PB, £7.99, 224 pp)

Philip K. Dick *Valis*
(Gollancz, Jul, PB, £6.99, 272pp)

NOIP David Eddings *The Redemption of Althalus*
(Voyager, Jul, PB, £7.99, 800pp)

NOIP Kate Elliott *Child of Flame*
(Orbit, Jul, PB, £7.99, 528pp)

#Jack Finney *Time and Again*
(Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Aug, PB, £6.99, 400pp)

James Follett *The Silent Vulcan*
(Severn House Publishers, Aug, HB, £18.99, 320pp)

#William Gibson *Neuromancer*
(Voyager, Aug, PB, £7.99, 320 pp)

Terry Goodkind *Debt of Bones*
(Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Aug, HB, £12.99, 128pp) Illustrated by Keith Parkinson.

NOIP Terry Goodkind *Faith of the Fallen*
(Millennium, Aug, PB, £6.99, 704pp)

Rob Grant *Colony*

- (Penguin, Jul, PB, £5.99, 304pp)
- Patrick Nielsen Hayden (ed.), *Starlight 3* (Saint Martin's Press, Aug, HB, £17.99)
Features new works from Colin Greenland, Stephen Baxter, Geoffrey A. Landis, Terry Bisson, Maureen F. McHugh, Jane Yolen, D. G. Compton, Susan Palwick, Brenda Clough, Suzanna Clarke, and Cory Doctorow.
- Tracey Hickman, Margaret Weis *Guardians of the Lost* (Voyager, Jul, PB, £10.99, 384pp)
- Kate Jacoby *The Rebel's Cage* (Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Aug, HB/TPB, £17.99/£10.99, 464pp)
- ***Gwyneth Jones *Bold as Love* (Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Aug, HB, £16.99, 288pp)
- J.V. Jones *A Fortress of Grey Ice* (Orbit, Aug, HB, £17.99, 720pp)
- #Guy Gavriel Kay *A Song for Arbonne* (Earthlight, Jul, PB, £7.99, 608pp)
- #Guy Gavriel Kay *The Lions of Al-Rassan* (Earthlight, Aug, PB, £6.99, 608pp)
- Paul Kearney *Ships from the West* (Gollancz, Aug, HB, £17.99, 464pp)
- Tim Kenyon *Ersatz Nation* (Big Engine, Aug, PB, £7.99)
Debut novel set in totalitarian parallel world.
- Katharine Kerr *The Fire Dragon* (Voyager, Aug, PB, £6.99, 400pp)
- Felicia Law *Farming the Sea* (Voyager, Aug, PB, £5.99/10.99, 464pp)
Illustrated by John Shipperbottom
- #Ursula K. Le Guin *The Lathe Of Heaven* (Millennium, Aug, PB, £6.99, 176pp)
- #Megan Lindholm *Wolf's Brother* (Voyager, Jul, PB, £5.99)
- James Lovegrove *Foreigners* (Millennium, Aug, PB, £6.99, 432pp)
- NOIP Ken Macleod *Cosmonaut Keep* (Orbit, Aug, PB, £6.99, 320pp)
- #George R. R. Martin (ed.) *Wild Cards* (Pocket Books, Aug, PB, £6.99, 320pp)
- NOIP Anne McCaffrey *The Skies of Pern* (Bantam, Aug, HB £10.99, 464pp)
- Jeff Noon *Jeff Noon Omnibus* (Pan, Jul, PB, £7.99, 704pp)
- Robert Reed *Marrow* (Orbit, Jul, PB, £6.99, 416pp)
- NOIP Adam Roberts *Salt* (Millennium, Jul, PB, £6.99, 256pp)
- NOIP Kim Stanley Robinson *Green Mars* (Voyager, Aug, PB, £7.99, 784pp)
- Jessica Rydill *Children of the Shaman* (Orbit, Aug, PB, £7.99, 384pp)
- Susan Shwartz *Second Chances* (Saint Martin's Press, Aug, HB, £18.99)
- #Robert Silverberg *The Stochastic Man* (Victor Gollancz Science Fiction, Jul, PB, £9.99, 227pp)
- Harry Turtledove *Great War: Breakthroughs* (New English Library, Jul, PB, £6.99, 640pp)
- Freda Warrington *Obsidian Tower* (Earthlight, Aug, PB, £5.99, 432pp)



PULPitations

Glenda Pringle offers up a magazine wish list

Wanted: Female SF fan (age: none of your business) seeks a magazine for lasting relationship (no one-issue stands, please). Must have GSOH yet serious science fact articles. Should be young and colourful yet mature and conservative in parts. Straightforward reviews showing a good knowledge of books and films would be appreciated, but they should not show too much erudishun (sic). Although I would like to meet a circle of new friends, I also want my circle of old favourites kept on the scene. Must have a lively correspondence page and short-shorts as well as occasional serials. Hard SF is acceptable but fantasy should only put in rare appearances. No 'WWW' time-masters please – I like the feel of paper. In return for the "genuine article" I can promise prompt and faithful subscription payments. (P.S. – should also have an open-minded attitude to imaginative trans-species sex.)

If the above looks like a list of seemingly irreconcilable demands, it's supposed to be. I'm sure most of us can come up with similar wish lists because no single magazine satisfies all of our requirements. Some of the major sf magazines supply some of them some of the time, but none of them supply all of them all of the

time (to paraphrase Theodore Roosevelt). But am I, and others like me, just being picky or have we got a valid point? I'm sure we don't all expect a made-to-measure magazine that caters to our every desire, but perhaps a potential new magazine publisher would find his/her time well-spent by listing to us punters and doing their research homework. Recent failures of glossy news-stand abominations seems to confirm a complete lack of knowledge on the part of big-buck publishers of what it is that fans want to spend their hard-earned money on. On the other hand, those who do seem to know a bit about what sf fans like to sample are doomed to destruction because of low circulation and a lack of funds (farewell **Noesis**).

Allow me a food analogy if you will as my current attempt to lose weight yet again is killing me. Like most people, I don't want to eat the same thing every night but that doesn't stop me from wanting my favourites on a regular basis. Nor does it stop me from eating something I don't particularly like just to keep (fairly) healthy. In other words, some

magazines (and authors) are like Ryvita, I may not like them very much but I feel I really ought to sample them every now and then for my own good. This doesn't, however, keep me from wanting to gorge on the good stuff.

A few cases in point. As I've mentioned in a previous column, I have a love/hate relationship with **Interzone**, but this doesn't stop me from subscribing and reading most if not all of it every month. I've also always been irritated by the fact that **Fantasy and Science Fiction** doesn't have letters pages like **Analog** but, again, that doesn't stop me from enjoying it as it is. I nearly choked when dear Gordon van Gelder announced that he was getting rid of the science fact articles in **F&SF**, but in the end I didn't even fire off an indignant letter in response (this has fortunately turned out to be not strictly true – perhaps because other readers *did* fire off indignant letters?).

I decided for the sake of sparking discussion within **Matrix's** own hallowed letters page to contemplate what a fictitious spotty-faced, 15 year-old male named Kevin

would see as improvements to the current big players in the SF magazine world. (I would like to thank my husband, Chris, at this point for his helpful input – especially as he no doubt used to exhibit similar characteristics to my fictional subject.) So, folks, read this wish list and muse upon your own. *Matrix* and I avidly await your variations on this theme.

KEVIN'S WISH LIST:

1. More military SF with more cool blasters and death rays and less girlie introspection on motives.
 2. More big-breasted women on the cover and fewer unicorns.
 3. More space adventure and less space romance (ugh!).
 4. More science fact articles and less pretty prose.
 5. More high-quality full-colour illustrations of imaginative trans-species sex acts and fewer unicorns (unicorns suck!).
 6. More bug-eyed monsters and fewer handsome heroes (although beautiful heroines taking part in imaginative trans-species sex acts is acceptable).
 7. More knockdown drag-out fights between TV reviewers and small press publishers and fewer lists of personal favourites from the previous issue in the letters column.
 8. More bad guys winning and less saving the universe for truth, justice and the American way.
 9. More cool gadgets I can build in my bedroom from Meccano and less philosophy.
 10. More unhappy endings and fewer heroes and heroines riding off into the 11 moonsets of Uranus (unless they are going to engage in imaginative trans-species sex).
 11. More alternative history from extraterrestrial contributors and less cliché.
 12. More film reviews that actually say whether the film is any good or not and less waffle.
 13. More stories by good new dudes and good old dudes and less crap.
- Etc., etc., etc.
- There, that's given you all something to think about. Now I can sit back and wait to hear from you. Meanwhile, I'll read the reviews/letters complaining about magazine reviewers who don't actually review magazines as I gorge on Ryvita.

Magazines for review, including small press, should be sent to Glenda Pringle, 22 Mead Way, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 2BJ; email: chris@kidlington66.freereserve.co.uk.

SF at the Edinburgh Festival

Charlotte Hooper, Press Manager of the Edinburgh Book Festival writes:

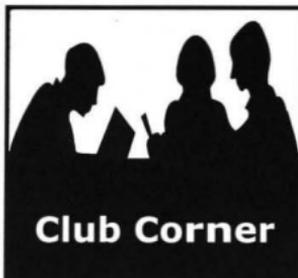
For the first time in (our) history we are presenting a major science fiction series, not just for fans of the genre, but for all lovers of exploratory, visionary literature. Some of the biggest names in British literature consider the ways in which science fiction influences our visions of the future

Brian Aldiss with Helen Lederer on Saturday 11th August at 10.00am
 Simon Clark on Saturday 11th August at 12 noon
 Stephen Baxter & Brian Aldiss on Saturday 11th August at 3.30pm
 John Clute & China Miéville on Saturday 11th August at 7.00pm
 Rob Grant on Sunday 12th August at 12 noon
 Iain M Banks & Ken MacLeod on Sunday 12th August at 3.30pm
 Doris Lessing & Brian Aldiss on Sunday 12th August at 5.00pm
 The Great Intergalactic Science Fiction Quiz on Sunday 12th August at 8.00pm
 Terry Pratchett on Tuesday 14th August at 5.00pm
 Ricardo Pinto on Saturday 18th August at 11.30am
 Alastair Reynolds & Paul McAuley on Saturday 18th August at 1.45pm

For further information see: www.edbookfest.co.uk

The Edinburgh International Book Festival 2001 is from 11th-27th August, Charlotte Square Gardens.

Box office: 0131 624 5050



Club Corner

Belfast Science Fiction Group

Alternate Thursdays, 8.30pm at the Monico Bars, Rosemary Street, Belfast. Contact Eugene Doherty 028 90208405
tinman@technologist.com
www.terracon3000.org.uk/sfgroup.htm

Birmingham: Brum SF Group

Second Friday of the month on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel, New St. Membership is £15/year. Contact Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarks Lane, Willenhall, W. Midlands WW13 1HX.
bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk

Cambridge SF Group

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

Cardiff SF Group

First Tuesday on the month 7.30pm in Wellington's Café Bar, 42 The Hayes, Cardiff.

Colchester SF/F/Horror Group

Third Saturday of the month at 12.30pm in The Playhouse pub, St John's Street.
Contact Des Lewis 01255 812119.

The Croydon SF Group

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

Glasgow SF/F Writers' Circle

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

Hull SF Group

Second and Fourth Tuesdays, 8.30 to 10.30pm at The New Clarence, Charles Street, Hull (from Jan 2000) Contact Ian and Julie on 01482 447953, or Dave and Estelle on 01482 444291, or see: www.mjckeh.demon.co.uk/hullsf.htm

Leeds Alternative Writers

Second Saturday at 2pm in central Leeds. For venues and details contact Ian on 0113 266 9259 or Sean 0113 293 6780.

London BSFA meetings

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

London Circle

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

Manchester: FONT

FONT meets on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at The Goose on Piccadilly from about 8.30 onwards. Contact Mike Don on 0161 226 2980.

North Oxford

Last Thursday of the month at The Plough, Wolvercote from 7.30pm.

Irregular and just starting, so contact Steve and Vikki on 01865 371734 or peverrel@aol.com for details.

Norwich Science Fiction Group

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

Peterborough SF Group

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

Portsmouth/South Hants SF Group

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

Reading SF Group

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

Sheffield

Anyone interested in setting up an informal pub meeting in the city? Or maybe there's an existing meeting that I'm not aware of. Either way, contact your humble editor at the address on page 2.

Southampton: Solent Green

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

Walsall SF Group

First Saturday of every month at 2pm in the Meeting Room of Walsall Central Library, Lichfield Street, Walsall.

http://members.nbci.com/walsall_sf/

The BloomsburyMagazine.com Reading Science Fiction course

A new introduction to the genre reviewed by Tanya Brown

Bloomsbury's new online course in *Reading Science Fiction* was created by Dr Mark Bould [who interviewed China Miéville in *Vector* 213]. It claims to be 'designed to suit people who want to expand their reading horizons but are too busy to have the commitment of an evening class'. Available both online (via www.bsfamagazine.com - there's a link from the BSFA web site, www.bsfa.co.uk) and as a downloadable PDF file, purchase includes access to an online 'discussion room' specific to this course. The course costs £20.

Works studied:

H. G. Wells – *The Island of Doctor Moreau*

Philip K. Dick – *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Ursula K. Le Guin – *The Left Hand of Darkness*

William Gibson – *Neuromancer*

Bould introduces the course by stating what he perceives to be sf's central theme: 'how we (as individuals, societies, cultures and a species) use the differences we discern in others to define ourselves'. Reading sf is an acquired skill, requiring attention to detail and an awareness of the body of ideas, themes and conventions that most – if not all – sf draws upon. A reader unfamiliar with the tropes of sf is likely to miss out on the resonances of a piece.

At first glance the four novels under discussion may seem a narrow, and perhaps unrepresentative, sample: however, Bould uses each novel as a starting point for a wide-ranging discussion of the sf context implied by that novel.

The course begins with an attempt to

define sf, and the subsidiary task of identifying the first sf text. The course discusses the historical origins of the first sf texts, as well as listing a number of contradictory definitions of the genre. Bould avoids easy answers, but encourages the reader to use different definitions to think about the sf that he or she enjoys: is *Star Wars* sf? Is *ER* sf?

Bould first sets each novel in its historical and literary context, and discusses the author's use of language and stylistic techniques. Next, the novel is placed within the overall history of sf, with discussion of the themes and conventions used or introduced by the author. Finally, a critical discussion analyses the novel's achievements and significance.

The Island of Doctor Moreau (1896) is analysed in terms of the scientific romance and the late Victorian adventure story (R. L. Stevenson, H. Rider Haggard) and of Wells' political views.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) is compared to the film *Blade Runner* (1982/1991), and to Dick's other work. Bould discusses the way in which Dick extrapolates the present, rather than speculating about the future – anticipatory rather than predictive – and contrasts this with the conventions of the pulp markets.

The Left Hand of Darkness (1969) introduces the themes of sex and gender in sf, and describes the New Wave of sf and the growing maturity of the genre. Feminist sf, and the increasing number of women writing sf, are also discussed.

Neuromancer (1984) is the starting point for an overview of the

cyberpunk movement. Gibson's cannibalisation of popular culture – 'a fictional world built from parts of other texts' – is analysed with reference to post-modernism, and critical responses to his oddly poetic style are examined.

The conclusion of the course revisits each novel and attempts to define the authors' influence on the genre. It reviews the current state of the SF genre: the role of the media tie-in, the increasing mainstream uptake of SF-nal ideas, and the question of whether literary sf is in crisis. Bould remarks: "We need art that is capable of being critical, of inspiring debate and change; and if, in ten or twenty years time the fiction that does this is no longer called sf or is not even particularly recognizable as sf, it will be a sad moment but it will also not really matter."

Bloomsbury's sf course is an excellent introduction to critical and academic readings of 'literary' science fiction. Though it focuses on just four novels, it provides an overview of the field by offering a detailed description of the context of each book. Bibliographies, web links and definitions of key terms all help to make the course user-friendly. The price seems a little inflated, given the number of introductory critical works available for less than £10: however, the convenience and novelty of the online format, and especially of the discussion group, may make it more accessible than a traditional text.

Offering cultural and sociological, as well as literary, arguments, the course is intellectually stimulating and should appeal to all but the most academic of readers.

JO's Timewasters Matrix Competition 150

Competition 150

This month I have some cryptic clues for you, each one representing an sf title. A list of authors follows; there's no more than one title by each author, but included are some red herrings.

1. HEORIONRSOLIT
2. NON.
3. DESE
4. THEM THEM
5. BY SEPTEMBER 30
6. COM / MODE
7. DONECS
8. 3010
9. OHIMAK
10. FLELYIGYORKHT
11. THALIENE
12. NOT 8PM
13. AZLONDONOV
14. W a L k

Aldiss, Pohl, Russ, Dick, Priest, Bear, Lem, Goulart, Fred Hoyle, Hogan, Brunner, Bova, McIntosh, Tucker, Knight, Blish, Octavia Butler.

Entries by September 10th to:

John Ollis, 49 Leighton Road, Corby, NN18 0SD

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New and used ('previously enjoyed') hardbacks and trade and mass market pbs, including a listing of the highly recommended Liverpool University Press series of SF publications (see *Vector* 204 onward for reviews of several of these).

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Credits issue 150

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