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25 YEARS OF 2000AD

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Asimov AIDS confusion

Medics shrouded Asimov's HIV in secrecy

The recently published biography *It's a Good Life* reveals that AIDS due to HIV contracted during blood transfusion contributed to the death of Isaac Asimov, aged 72. The biography is a condensation of his three volume autobiography, plus additional material from his notes and diaries, compiled by his wife, Dr Janet Jeppson. Reports, such as an article appearing in the April issue of the SF news magazine *Locus*, have indicated that she was responsible for persuading him to keep his HIV status secret. Since this is a far cry from what actually happened, Jeppson is keen to set the record straight. She says, "Isaac got

HIV during bypass surgery in 1983. A few years after that I urged his doctors to test him because he had various symptoms. Eventually they did, but not until late in 1989, when he was due for heart valve surgery, which was then cancelled. He lived only eighteen months years after learning that he had HIV, and during that time he was sick, too sick to argue with the doctors when they insisted (over my objections) that we keep it a secret."

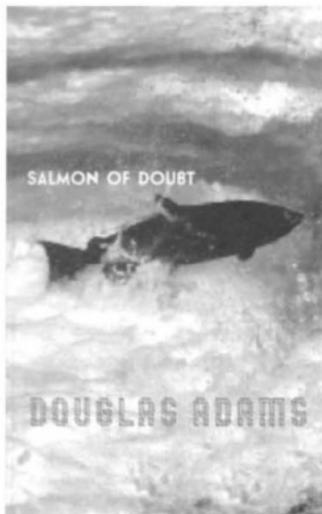
It's a Good Life was published in April to mark the 10th anniversary of Isaac Asimov's death.

Rival Adams' biographies

Coming in the Autumn of 2003 from Headline is the authorised biography of Douglas Adams, the late creator of *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* which will be written by his long-time friend, editor and collaborator Nick Webb. Webb has known Adams since 1978 when he bought the first adaptation of his radio series to be published as a Pan paperback original. "Since then we've kept in touch," Webb commented recently. "We enjoyed a good rapport and I saw him three or four times a year. He had a great interest in science, which is an enthusiasm of mine, though of course I was outgunned by his enormous brain. He was formidably bright, sometimes quixotic. We got on, and I liked him a lot."

Headline's sister, but independent, company Hodder & Stoughton will be bringing out their own biography, *Hitchhiker: A Biography of Douglas Adams*, by M.J. 'Simo' Simpson, long time fan and editor of Z29's (The official *Hitchhiker* fan club) fanzine, for publication next March to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Adams' debut.

And Macmillan are releasing a volume of 'lost works', including the unfinished *Salmon of Doubt* (see this issue's *Coming to a Shelf Near You*.)



Leaping off the shelves soon

Bridge-building mag powered by Engine

A new sf magazine *3SF*, edited by Liz Holliday and published by Big Engine Press will be launched this October aiming to fill the gap between literary sf and media based sci-fi. As explained in their press release: "There are readers who know that short stories are the ideas powerhouse of science fiction, and there are those that think the genre stops and starts at the tv or cinema screen. [3SF] closes the gap... the core of 3SF will be the best original science fiction and fantasy, whether it's from established big names, up-and-comers, or totally new voices. At the same time we will have a sharp and enticing blend of features, headed by a book reviews column from Gwyneth Jones. US coverage by Rich Horton, incisive media reviews and quirky coverage by

Alex Stewart, and revealing interviews by Liz Holliday. For the writers among our readers there will be Writers on Writing, an interview column from Christy Hardin Smith, and each issue will have a little something for those already actively involved in fandom. Finally, we'll wrap it all in a stylish design that will make 3SF the must-have magazine for the discerning reader." More details will be posted at their website: www.3sfmag.co.uk or contact Publisher: Big Engine PO Box 185 Abingdon Oxon OX14 1GR UK; Phone: 01235 204011F: 01235 204012; Email: info@3sfmag.co.uk; Editor: Liz Holliday 31 Shottsford Wessex Gardens London W2 5LG UK; Phone: 020 7229 9298; Email liz@3sfmag.co.uk

10K record for Potter book

A first edition copy of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* has sold at auction in London for ten thousand pounds to a private collector, a new record for the work. First editions of the book are rare and therefore demand a high price. The first *Harry Potter* books was rejected by a number of children's publishers before Bloomsbury agreed to take a chance on it with a limited first print run. The previous record price for a *Philosopher's Stone* first edition was £6,000 which was paid at auction in November 2000. However this is nothing compared to the \$50,000 that rare book dealers are reportedly now asking for first edition copies of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

As *Matrix* goes to press it's been reported that an original manuscript of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* failed to make its reserve price at an auction at Christies in New York. The manuscript was re-discovered in America, twenty years ago, after having been locked in a bank vault for almost a century prior to that. The nearly six hundred pages of manuscript reveal that Stoker planned a different ending – a graphic description of the destruction of Castle Dracula in a volcanic eruption – and bearing Stoker's original hand-written title *The Un-dead*, was expected to go for no less than £1.4 million.

The latest news on the fifth *Harry Potter* novel is that it will not be coming out until the autumn after a planned July release – so that's a year late then, but nobody wants to rush J.K. And it's all just a rumour that she is blocked, of course. Apparently Bloomsbury is now almost totally reliant on sales of *Harry Potter* for its business performance, although the huge influx of cash from the series has allowed them to invest heavily in a much wider book range, and they are now said to have a year and a half of new release titles lined up.

EDITORIAL

ZARJAZZ!

If sf is the gutter then comics must be the sewer – kid's stuff.

However in my sf education, between *Star Wars* and 'grown-up' novels one publication filled the gap: *2000AD*. And it's something that I come back to again and again. Now a national institution of course, if hardly respected, *2000AD* still wears its punk clothes with pride and where most comics burn out after a couple of years leaving nothing behind it seems fitting to celebrate one that has reached its silver jubilee.

So this is a special *2000AD* special edition of *Matrix*. Inside we have an interview with new editor, reviews of some contemporary comic-based films, tv and those disk things. Plus Glenda Grindle on a *2000AD* fanzine (and The Monkees, Prud help her!), Martin Sketchley on sf art, Stephen Baxter on the comics of his childhood, even Mark Greener on a 'comic' punk band and loads more.

And don't forget to write and enter our competitions so I can get rid of all the freebies that are coming in – I want my bedroom back!

'Till next time
Splundig Vur Thrigg!
Gary

Colour blind

Unfortunately it turns out that the universe is not turquoise as reported in last issue's *Matrix* but is in fact beige. Two Johns Hopkins University astronomers, Karl Glazebrook and Ivan Baldry, had announced back in January they had averaged out the spectra of 200,000 galaxies and come up with a pale green – the colour of the universe. However the two scientists have now realised that their conclusion was wrong – colour engineers who checked their data have discovered a flaw.

"It is embarrassing," Glazebrook now says. "But this is science. We're not like politicians. If we make mistakes, we admit them. That's how science works."

The effect of the error was that the computer picked a non-standard white from its electronic palette and mixed it with the other colours to come up with the turquoise. When the error was corrected and replaced with a standard white index then... "It looks like beige," Glazebrook explained. "I don't know what else to call it. I would welcome suggestions."

Originally, Baldry called the colour: 'cosmic spectrum green.' But so far the pair have offered no new name for the beige hue. However the underlying data and processing was correct all the time. The problem came when the scientific data was converted into a hue that the eye can see. Expressing the colour for popular viewing was not even part of the original scientific experiment but something they did 'as a lark' as a footnote for their paper – they certainly did not expect the subsequent media interest.

Titan reloads

Tank Girl

Graphic novel publisher Titan are reissuing cult classic *Tank Girl*. The strip, originally featured in *Deadline*, was created by UK comics mavericks Alan Martin and Jamie Hewlett, the latter now best known for creating the look of virtual pop group *Gorillaz*. *Tank Girl* was subsequently reprinted by Dark Horse Comics in the US, but the collected editions have been out of print for almost a decade.

The character last gained major attention with the sub-standard film version of the strip back in 1995 starring Lori Petty and featuring I-C-T as the leader of a gang of mutant kangaroos.

The new collection features coloured *Tank Girl* strips, a new introduction and the character's origin story by Alan Martin, and previously unseen material from Jamie Hewlett.

Martin commented on the release: "I've heard it said that the comic book enjoys a renaissance about once every ten years: from *Superman* in the forties to *The Archie* to *Spiderman* to *MAD* magazine to *Robert Crumb* and the *Freak Brothers* to *Judge Dredd* and on to *Tank Girl* and the graphic novel in the eighties-nineties. A decade has passed, so what now? ... Bigger me, it's *Tank Girl* again!"



FLICKER

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

Rings' Oscar disappointment

Although thirteen times nominated, *The Fellowship of the Ring* failed to win an Oscar in any of the major categories, it did win for Make-up, Musical Score, Visual Effects and Cinematography. *Shrek* won the first Best Animated Feature award but the *Harry Potter* movie came away with nothing.

It has been recently been confirmed that there will be a double release for the *Fellowship* DVD – an initial theatrical release, to be followed by an extended cut featuring thirty minutes of unseen footage.

Meanwhile, over at the Razzies, that celebrates the worst of Hollywood, *Planet of the Apes* swooped up Worst Remake or Sequel, Worst Supporting Actor for Charlton Heston and Worst Supporting Actress for Estella Warren.

Perhaps a better judge of true artistic worth than the Oscars are the Independent Spirit Awards, last year choosing for Best Feature, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* over *Gladiator*. This year 'backwards' noir *Memento* won Best Feature, Best Director (Christopher Nolan) and Best Screenplay (Nolan again) whilst comic book adaptation *Ghost World* was awarded best first screenplay and best supporting actor for Steve Buscemi

Lucas' Ballz up

George Lucas has just been clobbered with a \$140 million libel suit following his attempt to suppress the film *Starballz*, which is apparently an anime 'explicit sex parody of outer space

adventure movies'. The director's claim that this misused *Star Wars* intellectual property was thrown out of court by a federal judge in January. The countersuit arises from a Lucas spokeswoman's remark implying that *Starballz* is directed to children', outraging its production company, Media Market Group.

Lucas had initially contended that the public might assume that the film was officially sanctioned by Lucasfilm but Judge Claudia Wilken chucked out the case saying "the *Star Wars* films are so famous it is unlikely that consumers would believe that *Starballz* is associated with *Star Wars* or Lucasfilms".

The film apparently has 'Storm Troopers' with penis-shaped guns, a blonde Leia look-alike who is constantly losing her clothes and a black-haired Luke Skywalker who doesn't wield a light sabre but uses another 'weapon' – but it's probably much better than the *Phantom Menace*.

More Moore

Following on from the comic adaptation *From Hell* a film version of the *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, another comic series written by Alan Moore, has been fast-tracked. Filming is set to begin in June with a budget of \$50m in locations in Prague, Morocco and Iceland, directed by Blade's Stephen Norrington with a script by another comic writer, James Robinson, whose work includes *Stargate*. Set in 1890, *Extraordinary Gentlemen* features the team of Mina Harker from *Dracula*, Captain Nemo, Dr Henry Jekyll, the *Invisible Man* and *King Solomon's Mines*'

Alan Quatermain, who will most likely be played by Sean Connery, battling Fu Manchu and Professor Moriarty. Production design will be based on Kevin O'Neill's original illustrations from the comic.

Also, after a long and troubled production history, an adaptation of Moore's masterpiece *Watchmen* is edging closer to reality with a script by *X-Men* writer David Hayter and to be directed by director Darren Pi Aronofsky. Moore has previously described the work as unfilmable with its multi-layered plot and dense characterisation. Also the comic's ending now echoes the attack on the World Trade Center. However Hayter recently commented, "When 11th September occurred, I thought that might be it for the project... but ultimately, all that does is reinforce the truth behind the story. I believe in doing it right or not at all... but I think I've found a way to do it. In the graphic novel, everything you see is interconnected on many different levels. Like the book, people should be able to watch the film six or seven times and still get something different each time."

Bad Rat rights acquired

The film rights for *The Tale of One Bad Rat*, the multi-award winning graphic novel by Bryan Talbot, have been acquired by Fat Dragon Productions a film production company headed by popular comic book artist Tom Lyle and his artist/writer wife Susan Paris Lyle. The graphic novel, written and illustrated by Talbot, tells of a girl fleeing to the Lake District to escape an abusive childhood with fantasy elements that tie in with the work of

Awards News

2002 Italia Awards

The 2002 Italia Awards for best SF published in Italy were presented on March 9th at ITALCON 28/Deepcon 3 in Fiumicino. Winners were chosen by a jury of fans and members of World SF Italia, and delivered by Ernesto Vegetti, chairman of World SF Italia at the end of the annual Banquet.

Best Novel *Il Castello Di Eymerich* by Valerio Evangelisti (Mondadori).

Best International Novel *Milardi Di Tappeti Di Capelli* by Andreas Eschbach (Fanucci) Original Title: *Die Haarteppichknüpfer*.

Best Artist Maurizio Manzieri.

Best Editor Giuseppe Lippi.

Best Translator Vittorio Curtoni.

Best Short Story 'La Discesa Interrotta Dal Rosa E Dal Blue', by Enrica Zunic' (Delos).

Best Essay 'Da '2001' Al '2001' by G.F.Pizzo, R.Chiviani And M.Tetro (Gremese).

Best Short Essay 'Fantascienza E Politica: Il Binomio Negato' by Vittorio Catani (Delos).

Best Book Collection *Urania* (Mondadori).

Best Magazine *Delos Science Fiction* (Soldo).

Best Show 'Ginevra Report' by Mariano Equizzi.

Best Graphic Novel *I Custodi Del Maser* by Massimiliano Frezzato.

The Following Awards Were Assigned In The Fan Categories:

Best Fanzine Intercom.

Best Short Story 'I Battitori Del Crepuscolo' by Domenico Gallo (Intercom).

Best Short Essay 'Personaggi Della Fantascienza Italiana', By A. Jarok And L. Kremono (Avatara).

2001 Aurealis Awards

The 2001 Aurealis Awards were presented at a ceremony on 22 March 2002 at RMIT, South Carlton.

Science Fiction

Best Novel *The Dark Imbalance* by Sean Williams & Shane Dix (HarperCollins Voyager).

Best Short Story 'The Weatherboard Spaceship' by Adam Browne (Aurealis #27/28 / Chimaera Publications)

Fantasy

Best Novel *The Wounded Hawk* by Sara Douglass (HarperCollins Voyager).

Best Short Story 'The Woman of Endor' by Sue Isle (Orb #2 / Orb Speculative Fiction)

Horror

Best Novel *Angel of Ruin* by Kim Wilkins (HarperCollins).

Best Short Story 'Sleight of Hand' by Simon Haynes (Potato Monkey)

Young Adult

Best Novel *The Other Face of Janus* by Louise Katz (Angus & Robertson).

Best Short Story *Dreamwalker* - Isobelle Carmody (illus. by Steven Wollman) (Lothian Books)

Children's (8-12 years)

Best Long Fiction *Candle Iron* by Sally Odgers (Angus & Robertson / HarperCollins).

Best Short Fiction 'Cale on Callisto' by Jackie French (Koala Books)

2001 Sapphire Award Winners

Best Science Fiction Romance Novel

First Place - *Finders Keepers*, by Linnea Sinclair, Second Place - *Alien Taste*, by Wen Spencer, Third Place - *The Star King*, by Susan Grant.

Best Science Fiction Romance Short Fiction.

First Place - "Kinsman", by Susan Krinard (Out of This World); Second Place - "Raven Wings on the Snow", Pauline Alama (Sword and Sorceress 18); Third Place - "Interlude in Death", by JD Robb (Out of This World)

2002 PEN/Faulkner Award

Karen Joy Fowler's novel *Sister Noon* is a finalist for the 2002 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, which carries a \$15,000 prize, the largest for fiction in the US. Other nominees include Jonathan Franzen and Ann Patchett.

Philip K. Dick Award

The winner of this year's Philip K. Dick Award is Richard Paul Russo for his novel *Ship of Fools*, published in the US by Ace. The Philip K. Dick Award is given annually for the distinguished original science fiction paperback published for the first time during the previous year in the US. Russo previously won the award in 1990 for *Subterranean Gallery*. This year a special citation went to Ken Wharton's *Divine Intervention*, also published by Ace.

News: Janet Barron and Gary Wilkinson

Beatrix Potter.

Lyie, working closely with Talbot, is writing the screenplay adaptation, and Fat Dragon is planning for a 2003 production date. Richard O'Brien (best know as Riff Raff in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and presenter of *The Crystal Maze*) has already been cast secondary character Sir Noel Todd.

No future for Futurama?

It looks like the end of the animated sequel to *The Simpsons*, as Fox has decided to not order any more for a while and production company Rough Draft has started firing its animators. The series started in 1999 but has never proved as popular as its predecessor, only gaining half its figures. Exec. Producer David X Cohen urged fans to write to Fox. "It's not good news," he commented. "It does not bode well once you are in that fabled hiatus, you do not come out of it. What it boils down to in the end is that people making the decisions are not our greatest fans, but we are so proud of the show."

Après apocalypse

Babylon 5 writer, J Michael Straczynski's latest television project is *Jeremiah*, a post-apocalyptic story about two drifters in a world where civilisation has been decimated by an adult-killing pestilence, a pandemic that killed everyone over the age of puberty. Originally a long-running French comic strip, the plot involves Jeremiah's search for the mysterious Valhalla Sector that his father has told him will be the key to the future. Jeremiah will be played by teen heartthrob Luke Perry

best know for *Beverly Hills 90210* while *The Cosby Show*'s Malcolm-Jamal Warner is playing his friend Kurdy. The comic had been previously championed by Scott Mitchell - who brought *Men in Black* to the big screen.

The show will be launched in May with a two hour pilot kicking off a twenty episode series. Straczynski has another show, *Polaris*, in development for the Sci-Fi channel.

Alien resurrected

Ridley Scott, the director of the first in the *Alien* film series is said to mulling over directing the fifth film after meeting with Fox and Sigourney Weaver, who starred as Ellen Ripley in the series. He wants to make a prequel: "We should go back to where the alien creatures were first found and explain how they were created. No one has ever explained why. I always figured that a battleship carrying bio-mechanical organisms that could be weapons was sent into space with some space jockey who didn't last long."

Also the long proposed merging of two of film franchises, *Aliens vs Predator*, is edging closer to fruition. Latest rumours point to a script by *The Negotiator*'s James DeMonaco and Kevin Fox where a millionaire creates an ideal hunting environment populated by Aliens in order to attract Predators to steal their technology and use it to prolong his life. *Resident Evil* director Paul Anderson has expressed an interest.

T-seX

Film geek website Ain't It Cool News have announced that Norwegian model Kristanna

Loken will be playing the main villain in the forthcoming *Terminator 3*. You can see a picture on their site. Arnie is back as both a good and bad Terminator (or the same one who is reprogrammed good and bad). He recently commented on his new opposition T-X: "She can disappear, she can mould into someone else, and sometimes she's just energy."

Apparently they have actually started filming directed by Jonathan U-571 Mostow on a \$170m budget with Schwarzenegger pocketing \$30m. It looks like that Arnie could be the only link with the early films. Cameron is not involved at all - not even producing and there is now doubt about the proposed cameo from Linda Hamilton in flashback.

The new film, set ten years after *T2*, is subtitled *Rise of the Machines* and tells the next chapter in the war between the humans and SkyNet.

Retro Ray tribute

Mummy Returns director Stephen Sommers is bringing out a Ray Harryhausen tribute, *Argonauts* based on a script by Spawn writer Alan McElroy.

The film is set on the eve of WWII where a group of treasure hunters have discovered the Argo the legendary ship of Jason that has the mythical fleece in the hold. They are transported back to the world of Greek mythology and forced into combat with a Cyclops and a Minotaur.

And instead of CGI the filmmakers are going to be using old-fashioned stop-motion techniques that Harryhausen once used. Surely not.

"ONE DAY MEN WILL SAY I GAVE BIRTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY."

Gary Wilkinson *puts the knife into From Hell*

Well it was never going to be as good as the book. Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's story of Jack the Ripper, *From Hell*, was something of a high water mark for graphic novels; adult, intricate and truly disturbing. In the film adaptation, the directors, the Hughes brothers, wanted to recreate the Victorian 'ghetto' after their contemporary urban ghetto movies such as *Menace II Society* and *Dead Presidents*. They were hoping for a breakthrough to move them into the mainstream, but it wasn't to be...

The film starts well, with a strong visual sense. Excluding a few brief daylight scenes the film takes place in night alleys lit only by sparse hissing and flickering gas lamps or dark claustrophobic interiors; under hellish red skies or via green-tinged opium-fuelled dream sequences. In fact the whole work has gloomy oppressive nature mainly helped by cinematographer Peter Deming who also worked on *Mulholland Drive*. There is one extraordinary shot that begins with the London skyline, pans down past towers and steam trains, slips below ground level and on down into a Masonic lodge housed in an underground vault. In another, the Ripper simply vanishes into thin air as he leaves the scene of a crime and later, when the Ripper's identity is revealed, his eyes darken to black holes.

Johnny Depp stars as Sherlock Holmes, sorry Inspector Aberline, a rather weird East End copper who spends his leisure hours befuddled, either by 'chasing the dragon' in an opium den or soaking in a hot bath sipping a laudanum and absinth cocktail. His drug-fuelled dreams give him psychic visions that aid his investigations (and the scriptwriter). Which is a long way from how the character was depicted in the novel. Depp's accent is a nightmare – not quite Dick van Dyke, but not far off.

Better on the accent front is Depp's romantic interest Heather Graham, playing prostitute Mary Kelly. Unfortunately Graham is far too clean and well made-up to come over as a realistic nineteenth century whore. And you never see her plying her trade. Plenty of her mates, played by British actresses, are shown 'on the job' in all its grisly reality. But not Heather – perhaps she gives her clients aromatherapy or feng-shui consultancy? The rest of the prostitutes are much more realistic – hard, dirty, desperate, some alcoholic, some bisexual – showing callousness and care in turn to both their clients and each other (all aspects shown by Kelly in the novel) and evoke more sympathy because of it, kind of *Band of Gold* with extra soot.

Unlike the hesitant complicated relationship between Aberline and Kelly that Moore depicts, the film goes for a fairly standard Hollywood romance of disparate thrown together and is in the end soulless, passionless and unrealistic.

Along with the two Americans, there is the usual selection from the great and the good of British acting. Looking thoroughly bored, as he quotes Shakespeare (that's it, as far as it goes for characterisation) is Robbie Coltrane as Depp's deputy. You can also see him counting off the days until he is back to *Harry Potter*. Ian Holm puts in a good performance as usual, but Ian Richardson turns Depp's boss, Sir Charles Warren, into a caricature.

The Hughes brothers turn around the original plot so that the identity of the Ripper is not revealed until late into the

movie. They set up some obvious candidates – various vicious low-life pimps and straight-laced high Victorians. Knowing the identity in advance I cannot judge how successful they have been with their misdirection but remember thinking 'get on with it!' as they were laying out their red herrings.

The violence for the most part is hinted at rather than directly seen. The camera glances over a gutted corpse or we see a blade flashing in dark shadows. The wounds are described, instead of shown, as Depp investigates and your own mind fills in the rest. We do see actual blood-letting towards the end and the minimising of it before makes it truly shocking (well for a little while).

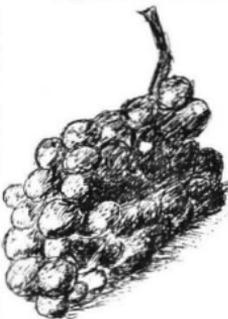
But, cor-blimey governor! – they're 'aving a laugh ain't they? Considering that they use the 'birth' quote twice, unlike the novel, it is never explained why Jack was supposed to have given birth to the twentieth century. Also the film never adequately explains the letter that the quote 'From Hell' comes from – we never see it properly or get to read it completely. Depp and colleagues never say whether they believe it is authentic or not; it's just remarked upon in passing then on with the story. Certainly nothing that this was the only authentic letter among a blizzard of fakes sent to the police and newspapers inspired by the massive news coverage the case got at the time. That the sobriquet 'Jack the Ripper' was from a letter probably faked by journalists. That this was influence on the birth of our fame-fuelled tabloid culture. That the old order was instrumental in bringing itself down. That the blood and horror of the ripper murders would be reflected in the horror of the coming wars. That Hitler was conceived at around that time! Just the quote and no explanation. It's a complete cop out. The idea that murders tie into the 'magic structure' of London is also largely jettisoned except for a few shots of Hawkmoor's churches.

It is ironic that one of the few things surrounding the case that the Moore does not comment on – the idea that the Ripper was riding around in a horse-drawn carriage, wearing a cape and top hat, and lugging around a doctor's bag or box of medical instruments, was also a tabloid invention at the time (they had to depict the mystery somehow in cartoons) – has carried on into cinema unchanged or unchallenged.

The film does touch on class conflict, the oppression of women, conspiracy of those in power but the novel has so much more. It's obvious that the directors are out of their depth with the complexity of the material they had to cope with. Perhaps any director(s) would be.

But it's almost an obscenity what they have done to the ending – one last clever image of Victoria aside. Like the ripper did to his

victims the Hughes brothers have taken a knife to Moore's masterpiece. They try for a dark and gloomy tragedy but fall way short. Not so much *Se7en* as *Three and a Half*.



A FLYING SAUCER FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

Andrew M. Butler analyses *K-Pax*

K-PAX was a novel which came out a few years ago with a shiny cover, and now has been filmed by the versatile British director Iain Softley, previously responsible for the Beatles/Stuart Sutcliffe biopic, *Backbeat* (1993), the cyberpunk-lite *Hackers* (1995) and the noir-ish Henry James adaptation *The Wings of the Dove* (1997), which brought out elements which could explain how Henry James could influence Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*. Now Softley turns his hand to sf, although it's sf of the subtlest kind, such that it may not be science fiction at all...

Prot (Kevin Spacey) is an alien come to Earth on a beam of light, and is having one final look round before going home. He arrives in New York but, contrary to the late Douglas Adams's advice to alien visitors, finds himself arrested and hospitalised, and then cross-examined by Dr Mark Powell (Jeff Bridges) who clearly questions his sanity. There follows a cat and mouse game as Powell tries to discover Prot's true (human) identity and Prot reveals details about his home star system that only someone with a powerful telescope and planetarium software would know. Is he alien or is he barking? The rate at which Prot begins to cure Powell's other chronic patients suggests the former, a

panic attack at a family party the latter.

Prot's curing of people seems to echo the heart-warming fare of *Awakenings* (1990), *Patch Adams* (1998) and so forth, and one wonders if Robin Williams hadn't been considered for the part at some point. Too Mork from Ork, perhaps, and the pairing of him with Jeff Bridges would have been too *Fisher King* (1991), especially with the scene in Grand Central Station. Whereas Gilliam's film seduces us into entering Parry's world (personal trauma notwithstanding), *K-PAX* is much more sceptical and sides with the Jeff Bridges character. Kevin Spacey could sleepwalk his way through this role, which is closer in tone to the otherworldliness of John Doe in *Seven* (1995). His alien is creepy, not histrionic.

In the end the wonder is that an sf film can still be made that plays it straight and keeps you guessing throughout. A film can be built on characterisation rather than spectacle, and resolutions don't have to be neat – although that in itself leaves a sense of emptiness rather than satisfaction. Perhaps that's preferable to feeling patronised, as happens with so much blockbuster material.

GOGGLEBOX

BACK ON THE FARM

Andrew M Butler checks out Superman's origins in *Smallville*

A few years ago we had *The New Adventures of Superman*, which gave the world Dean Cain as the Man of Steel and Teri Hatcher as Lois Lane; for a while at least it acknowledged that the women's movement had happened, and Lois Lane didn't need to be rescued every episode, just every other episode. Now in *Smallville* we have even newer adventures, and a portrait of the superhero as a young man. Alas, it didn't follow the Howard Waldrop short story and have Kal-El crash in the 1930s Germany, grow up and wear a brown shirt, but is set more or less firmly in the present day and is clearly aiming for the *Dawson's Creek* demographic. More on this in a paragraph or five.

Any recent identity series like *Superman* has to deal with three problems: how they coped before, oh no not again and why nobody notices anything. Metropolis, for example, seems to be threatened with total destruction on a twice weekly basis, and yet wasn't destroyed before Clark Kent started working at the *Daily Planet*. Sunnydale's hellmouth must be of relatively recent vintage or else the entire population would be vampires. *Smallville* steps round this problem by locating the narrative in the small town rather than the city (although I always presumed Metropolis was rather further away from Kansas) and by having the meteorite fragments which accompanied Kal-El (Tom Welling) being the source of the problem. Presumably these took a dozen or so years before coming to full power, although junior journalist Chloe Sullivan (Allison Mack) has a wall of the weird.

The source of the problems raises another credibility problem: how the same radiation can have so different effects – walking through walls, sucking heat out of people,

making them act out their desires, giving them the shakes... It's too much maccuffin of the week. If there is quite so much kryptonite about, it's a wonder that young Clark doesn't live in an oxygenated bubble half of his life. Despite a variety of geologists working in the area, no one has yet organised a co-ordinated search to remove this health hazard. On the other hand Jonathan Kent (John Schneider, from *Dukes of Hazard*) and Lionel Luthor (John Glover) seem to have barely aged a day in twelve years.

Smallville gets around the oh not again of Lex Luthor being the villain every week by having young baldie (Michael Rosenbaum) as a nice guy, albeit ambivalently nice, and by having had him emboldened by being in a field when meteors struck. He has a Murky Past in Metropolis about which He Is Not Proud, which will no doubt reveal itself in small doses, and he's been exiled to *Smallville* by his hated father. Luthor has noticed something about Clark, but hasn't quite worked it out. Having made Clark's acquaintance by driving his sportscar into him, he's understandably puzzled as to how Clark is so strong when he needs to be and has a private detective keeping an eye on him (presumably the worst such in the world as nothing more than blurry photographs have been shown thus far). Lex isn't telling Clark everything, but then Clark is keeping his own secrets. At some point baldy will become a bad egg.

The tension and interest of the series thus lies not in working out how long it'll take Clark to realise that it's the kryptonite factor again but in being aware of the adult *Superman/Luthor* relationship, and the ironies of these two

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"A COMPLETELY NEW RECORDING MEDIUM"

Gary Wilkinson *rewinds* *The Stone Tape*

A group of scientists working for Ryan Electrics have taken over Taskerlands, a half-derelict rambling gothic mansion, to set up a group researching into pioneering electronics to 'beat the Japs'. The project suffers a set back when co-ordinator Brock (Michael Bryant) discovers a large mouldy room, intended for computer equipment, has not been made ready due to workmen's refusal to enter it. The house has a history of supernatural activities including attempted exorcisms and a sinister letter to Father Christmas is found: 'what I want for Christmas is please go away' plus an offering of tins of Spam left by a superstitious World War II GI. Sensitive computer programmer Jill (Jane Asher) sees the ghost of a terrified nineteenth century servant girl and Brock decides to research this new opportunity, treating the ghost as a 'set of data'. Is the ghost simply a recording left in the very stones of the room? Their investigations seem to 'wipe' the original ghost but that has exposed a much older, more primitive, evil spirit beneath?

This 'ghost story for Christmas' was commissioned back in 1972 by the BBC, repeated once the next year and has never been seen again but a few screenings at festivals, conventions and the like. Given the nature of the subject it is fitting to see it finally resurrected in the relatively new recording of DVD by the British Film Institute. After not being seen for so long it has built up quite a reputation as, well, a 'stone cold' classic. Is this justified? Yes, completely. This is a classic, not only of its genre but of television as a whole.

The Stone Tape was written by Nigel Kneale, probably best known for his *Quatermass* series and expands on similar themes established in the earlier series, especially *Quatermass and the Pit*, where a supposed supernatural event is exposed as rational under the light of scientific examination. However that does not necessarily mean an end to the horror... Also unlike, say, *The X-Files* even if you do not have a full explanation you can still have full closure.

As well as Asher and Bryant there is a real quality cast including Iain Cuthbertson and Michael Bates. As a 'hero', Bryant is far from heroic. He is having an affair with Asher

behind his wife's back and it is obvious he has been totally ruthless in climbing the slippery pole to his position within Ryan Electrics. The contrast of the main character's self-obsession and banal 'evils' against the much more malevolent forces at work in the house gives the a program a real edge, an obvious analogy is the uncaring 'Company' biting off more than it can chew when it comes up against the super-efficient hyper-vicious Alien in the eponymous film and especially subsequent comic series.

Although some of the acting in *The Stone Tape* is well, to put it charitably, a bit 'intense' at times, remember televisions were a lot smaller and fuzziest back then and performers where encouraged to 'act out of the box'.

And along with all the dark creepyness and suspense, Kneale gives us some humour with Bryan having to cope with company politics that might lead to him sharing his precious resources with a loony washing machine 'pioneer' with his plans for a computerised machine that senses what's in the load and takes account of non-fast dies as it programs itself – wasn't that on *Tomorrow's Work* the other week? However perhaps we should just draw a vale over the 'Ah so!' buck teeth/slant eye 'Jap' jokes – the only thing that ages the program (even the fashions have come around again).

Being wholly shot on video including the few exteriors, unusual for the time, gives a seamlessness compared to the usual film/video jumps on other contemporary recordings (the picture quality is superb). There is a cloying claustrophobic atmosphere throughout helped by uncomplicated effects and brilliant music and sound effects courtesy of Desmond Briscow and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. Also on the DVD is an informative and entertaining commentary where Kim Newman interviews Nigel Kneale.

Still profoundly disturbing nearly thirty years after it was first broadcast, it's a tragedy that there is nothing similar likely to appear today. The most frightening thing on TV nowadays is the news they are going to make a new series of *Footballers' Wives*...

Continued from page 7

being best friends. If this were Batman it would be *Killing Joke* but year zero. Clark keeps on being told blue isn't his colour or announcing that he doesn't want a job where he has to wear a suit and fly round the world. His crush on Lana Lang (Kristin Kreuk) suggests a developing fetish for people with the initials LL (Lois Lane... but then again, Lex and Lionel Luther. Enough with the alliteration already).

On the other hand it's another science fantasy version of *Dawson's Creek* which *Roswell* does a lot better. Like *Dawson's* (and *Roswell*), it's the bad boy who is the most interesting character, and the central character is rather flat. He seems to be always on the verge of tears, with a quivering lip and perpetually worried look. His slow discovery of his powers (he can't fly yet but he can run fast, lift things, be shot and has x-ray vision) acts as a metaphor for puberty, although the character is a little old for this (somewhere around sixteen) and the actor even more so. It

would put a new spin on Niven's 'Men of Steel, Women of Kleenex', but one wonders whether the Kents gave Clark a den in a barn the week he discovered masturbation. There's only so many times you can repair a ceiling. Clark is surrounded with a group of friends to rescue or to help investigate curiosities, although Pete Moss (Sam Jones III) seems destined for sidekick limbo, with little to do but pull in an African American demographic.

All in all it is Sunday teatime fodder, neither startlingly original nor irredeemably awful. The special effects are decent enough, although whether they can make us believe he can fly remains to be seen. Channel 4 also seem to be giving the series room to find an audience rather than moving it around the schedules too much – although one wonders whether the series suddenly acquiring a *Superman: The Early Years* subtitle was the same loss of nerve that saw *Lois and Clark* become *The New Adventures* in the UK. I'll keep watching, but I wouldn't bother to set the video.

“LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING!”

Gary Wilkinson thumbs through *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

I think we can forgo the plot outline for this one: a phenomenon, first on radio then theatre, books, records, cd, tv, video and err towel, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Galaxy* or *H2G2* for short is now at last out on DVD. The beeb have pushed the boat out for this one with a two-disc set neatly packaged in a foldout slipcase. The first has the six episodes of the series with extended footage that was never broadcast back in 1981 (though some appeared on the later video release) with the choice of either the original mono sound track or a digitally remastered stereo soundtrack. Unfortunately there is no commentary track – too late, sadly, for Adam's input. However along with standard subtitles there are very informative and entertaining screen production notes which detail everything from actors cvs via special effects, location details and filming dates to the 'recipe' for Hagra Biscuits.

The other disk has the hour-long *The Making of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, previously released in 1992, along with *Don't Panic* twenty minutes of extra footage that could not make it into the video. Along with this we have a whole slew of footage related to the show, including the original trailer and pre-show announcements. The show's producers are interviewed by Donny McLoud on *Pebble Mill at One* and there is a demonstration from *Tomorrow's World* of the 'special' effects use to create Zaphod Beeblebrox's second head. After seeing these two I have since modified my feelings on the declining quality of British television, some of it was pretty bad back then as well.

Completely new is Peter Jones' (the 'voice' of the book) witty introduction when the first episode was pre-screen to a selected audience at the National Film Feature. This was to

generate a laughter-track for the show, which we get to experience a snatch of in one of the documentaries – thank Zarquon they never used it! One particularly interesting

piece of footage is a reminder that the show is twenty years old. The studio technicians were working to rule – unions, remember them? The past truly was a different country. There had been negotiated a fifteen minute extension from 22:00 but at 22:15 prompt the lights were going out whether the final scene of the day was in the can or not. You watch the time code in fascination as it builds up to the cut-off point and the tension in the studio rises as

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lines are fluffed and queues missed.

It's all linked together via some pretty new graphics.

There's a couple of annoyances. There's no way enough of Adams – he only appears in the documentary series via 'archive' materiel – old even then. And the only insight into the original radio series is a piece on the recording of a couple of scenes that once appeared in a documentary on radio comedy for BBC Education. I suppose we'll have to wait for a combined super-duper all format's release... perhaps to combine with the now legendary film version, if it ever sees the light of day.

Although the television series was recently repeated and you might have it taped, the extra new footage alone makes the DVD release essential for fans of the program.

“THE MAN'S A LIVING LEGEND”

Gary Wilkinson hears *Judge Dredd* speak on *Wanted: Dredd or Alive*

Big Finish, who have previously brought out CD 'audio dramas' based on *Dr Who* and other sf programs have now launched a new series based on *2000AD* characters. After *Wanted: Dredd or Alive* they're planning to bring out one a month, *Dredd* stories first but they are also going to bring us Strontium Dog (who will voiced by long term sf and *2000AD* fan Simon Pegg star and co-writer of *Spaced*) and Rogue Trooper.

Dredd is up against The Frendz crime syndicate. Unfortunately he succumbs to sleep-psychois a new disease plaguing judges and he turns bad – we've got a 'Mad Judge' on the loose! Against this we have Cadets Baker and especially Steel (ex-Brit Cit), rookies on their final assessment to become fully-fledged judges. Steel gets *Dredd* as her assessor... There is some clever plotting going on here written by David Bishop, ex-*2000AD* editor. But can you take an essentially live medium and successfully bring out a sound-only version?

Dredd is (grave)-voiced by audio drama stalwart Toby Longworth, coming over as Dirty Harry-max. He's never gonna sound exactly how you imagine – but it's about a million times better than Stallone's cloddish: "I am da law!"

As usual he is the rock that all the Mega-city madness

swirls around – but there is always room for the odd darkly humours one-liner.

He's ably supported by the rest of the cast, especially Claire Buckfield (from sitcom *2.4 Children*) as Cadet Judge Steel who creates a real three-dimensional character.

There are also some choice comedy-cameos including an old favourite of mine, *Dredd*'s ex-informant, 'pinstripe freak' Max Normal, the man who puts the patois in patter.

There are the problems that affect all 'audio dramas' where during the action scenes the characters tend to describe what is happening; although this is something that has always gone on in the comics, for instance with *Dredd*'s voice-activated gun – "Heat-seeker!"

The 'Dum-dah' jingle that announces the regular bursts of 'Mega-City News' gets a bit grating at times - though the news bulletins themselves are so funny you don't really mind. And overall the music is excellent, bringing back memories of 'Mutants of Mega-City One' a *Dredd*-themed single brought out years ago by two-ex members of *Madness*

So, a fine start and hopefully one that will built on in the future. The next one features Judge Death voiced by Mark Gatiss from *The League of Gentlemen* – *yessssssss!!!*

SPIRIT OF '77

Mark Greener brings us the Misfits: punk gods of kitsch st risen from the dead

As progressive rock increasingly moved into the musical mainstream during the early '70s, the counter-culture temperament - which pervaded the pages of *New Worlds*, the wider New Wave movement and underground comix - was reborn in the anger of Punk. Moorcock, always an astute cultural observer, highlighted this evolution in his novella *Gold Diggers of 1977*, written in a couple of weeks to coincide with the release of the Sex Pistol's movie *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*.

The Pistol's antics catapulted Punk into the headlines. And during the late '70s and early '80s bands such as the Subhumans, Crass and Black Flag encapsulated a Punk ideal that was politically as well as musically subversive. Indeed, Punk helped politicise a substantial minority of people now in their '30s and '40s.

For a genre that most commentators predicted would burn out in a couple of years, Punk proved surprisingly resilient. Today, there's a thriving Punk underground (see www.punkoiuk.co.uk/), many original bands still tour and record, and several newer groups continue the tradition - such as, in the US, The Dropkick Murphies and Rancid as well as, on this side of the pond, The Distillers and Fletcher.

The Misfits are one of the original Punk bands that are, if anything, stronger today than ever. Musically, the Misfits embody a hybrid of rock 'n' roll and cheesy SF. In the late '70s and early '80s, the Misfits released several highly influential albums, strongly inspired by SF movies, that include 'classic' Punk tracks such as *Teenagers from Mars*, *Astro Zombies* and the brilliant *Die, Die My Darling*. Like most Punk of the time, the Misfits were raw, often poorly produced and blisteringly fast - one of my original Misfits CDs gets through twenty tracks in a few seconds over forty minutes.

The original Misfits disbanded in 1983. Original lead vocalist Glenn Danzig started another influential band Samhain, who also drew heavily on horror and SF imagery. In 1987, he changed the band's name to Danzig. And despite getting progressively closer to heavy metal, Danzig also worked with artists as diverse as Roy Orbison and Johnny Cash.

Then in 1995, founder member Jerry Only decided to reform the Misfits. The resulting CD - *American Psycho* - was an impressive second coming for a band that had been away from the mainstream for several years. Unlike many older punk bands, the Misfits weren't prepared to recycle and rehash old triumphs. *American Psycho* marked a brave move towards a new, more sophisticated Misfits sound.

But their 1999 follow up, *Famous Monsters* is set to become a classic: fully releasing the potential that *American Psycho* hinted at but didn't quite attain. Again, *Famous Monsters* draws heavily on kitsch horror and skiffy SF: *One*

Million Years BC, *Boxing Helena*, *Die Monster Die*, *Scream* and *Lost in Space* all inspired tracks on *Famous Monsters*. This isn't raw, untalented punk relying on three chords and barely audible lyrics. *Famous Monsters* is catchy, musically competent and laced with considerable humour. Even if you don't normally like punk, the Misfits are tuneful and easily cross over to other musical genres. You can even hear the words.

The Misfits' latest CD, *Cuts from the Crypt*, released late last year, again draws heavily on SF and horror imagery. The Misfits admit that it's a 'contractual obligation' record to release them from a deal. (Their next recording will be on their own label.) But it's none the worse for that - and several tracks should interest SF movie buffs.

For example, the Misfits recorded two songs - *Fiend Without a Face* and the title track - for George A Romero's movie *Bruiser*. (Romero is, of course, responsible for the *Living Dead* movies, *The Crazies*, *Martin* and so on.) A sound track for *Bruiser* never made it into the shops, which is a shame. *Fiend Without a Face*, in particular, is a catchy track that shows the new Misfits at their best. Incidentally, Romero directed the video of *Scream*, also included on the new CD. And it's a suitably tongue-in-cheek version of his *Living Dead* series.

Another highlight is the cracking version of the *Monster Mash*, originally released by Bobby 'Boris' Pickett and the Crypticker Five in the early 1960s, and later covered by Vincent Price. It's an inspired choice, taking the Misfits back to their 1950's musical roots.

Last, but not least, *Cuts from the Crypt* includes the *Mars Attacks* demos, re-recorded in somewhat different versions for *American Psycho*. Partly inspired by the notorious bubble-gum cards, banned in the early 1960s, (although they seem tame today), Only wrote the track when he heard that the Tim Burton film was in production. The demo session also includes *Dr Phibes Rises Again*, *The Haunting* and *The Hunger*. And although some were re-recorded for *American Psycho*, the original demos became highly sought after by collectors.

Recently, the Misfits toured with Robo and Dez Cadena from Black Flag (which also served as a spring board for slipstream favourite writer, poet and musician Henry Rollins). Cadena was in Black Flag before Rollins and, rumour has it, inspired Alex Cox's lead character in *Repo Man*. They cover *Rise Above* - a Black Flag classic on *Cuts from the Crypt*. However, *Rise Above* serves best to show just how far the Misfits have come musically from "traditional" punk. They've also been working with Marky Ramone - from, of course, one of the bands that inspired the entire punk movement. So, the prospects for the next real album look good.

The Misfits aren't going to politicise anyone. Nevertheless, injected with a massive dose of humour - which is one of punk's most enduring, albeit often missed - qualities, the Misfits are becoming essential listening for anyone into SF-inspired music or rock generally. They are, quite simply, one of the best rock bands around.

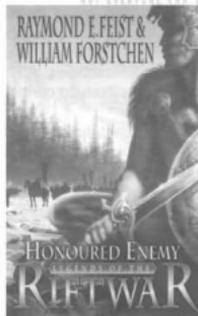
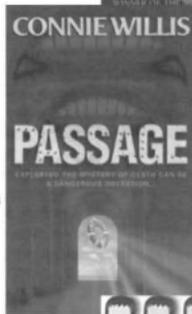
Check out the Misfit's website, which includes MP3s you can download, on <http://www.misfits.com/>



— COMING TO A SHELF NEAR YOU —

Forthcoming books, compiled by Janet Barron

- Douglas Adams & Christopher Cerf (Editor), *The Salmon of Doubt***, £16.99, (10 May, 2002), Macmillan; ISBN 0333766571
- Brian Aldiss, *Super-State***, £16.99, Hardcover - 288 pages (2 May, 2002), Orbit; ISBN 1841491446
- Mark Anthony, *Blood of Mystery***, £10.00, Trade Paperback - 544 pages (7 May, 2002), Earthlight; ISBN 0684860430
- N Anselm Audley, *Heresy***, £6.99, Paperback - 480 pages new edition (7 May, 2002), Earthlight; ISBN 0743414845
- Anselm Audley, *Inquisition***, £10, Trade Paperback - 480 pages new edition (7 May, 2002), Earthlight
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- Robin Cook, *Abduction***, Hardcover - 416 pages Reissue (24 May, 2002)
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- Peter Crowther (Editor), *Infinites***, £12.99, Hardcover - 320 pages (16 May, 2002), Gollancz; ISBN 0575073551
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- Jude Fisher *Sorcery Rising*** £15.99/£10.00, Hardback/Trade paperback, Earthlight ISBN 0743220927
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- N Gwyneth Jones, *Bold as Love***, £5.99, Paperback - 288 pages new edition
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Gary Wilkinson interviews **Matt Smith**, the new editor of **2000AD**

Gary Wilkinson: Congratulations on recently being appointed the new editor of *2000AD* (or at least Tharg's representative on earth). Can you tell us a little of how you got the job?

Matt Smith: When David Bishop left as editor of *2000AD* to go freelance in 2000, Andy Diggle stepped up as editor and they advertised for a new assistant. I was working as Desk Editor for book publishers Macmillan, saw the ad, applied and got the job just as *2000AD* was bought from Egmont Fleetway by Rebellion. Andy left at the end of November 2001 - also to go freelance - and I took over as editor, coinciding with Rebellion moving the office up from London to their Oxford base.

GW: Have you read *2000AD* from the beginning?

MS: Not quite. The first prog I had was Prog 412, back in 1985, so I would have been about 13. I was an *Eagle* reader before that! Though my older brother had read it from Prog 1 to 100, so I was aware of its existence...

GW: Was that the 'new', revived, *Eagle* that was, bizarrely, a photo-story comic?

MS: Yep. Featuring, amongst others, the now legendary *Doomlord* and - a personal favourite - the football strip *Thunderbolt and Smokey*.

GW: What's your favourite strip in *2000AD*?

MS: Judge Dredd remains my favourite, for the wonderful dryness of John Wagner's writing - the utter bizarreness of Mega-City One is offset by Dredd's no-nonsense, stoney-faced approach. It's always been full of great dialogue and great characters.

GW: Any strips you've not liked? I loathed *Ace Trucking*...

MS: There's been lots of duds, mostly during the late 80s/early 90s - *Chronos Carnival*, *Timehouse*, *Junker*, *Babe Race 2000*, *R.A.M Raiders*, *Wireheads*, *PARAsites*...

GW: In a few recent Dredd stories there have been a few cracks in his stony psyche and he's actually shown some compassion plus the character has also been aged to show some physical vulnerabilities. Any comments? Do you think that's a trend that's likely to continue?

MS: Dredd is definitely one of those characters whose emotional range tends to depend on who is writing him. Some writers just go with the stern-faced bastard, who'll shoot you just for dropping litter. But certainly when John Wagner - the character's creator - is writing him there is a depth there. Over the years, Dredd has come to terms with getting old and now with the appearance of a new, younger clone - Rico - there is the suggestion that he's expendable. There's also been a suggestion in the scripts John's been

'writing recently of the sadness of the character, of a man who's led his life by the rules, and it's quite moving. Obviously, there'll still be plenty of opportunities for more Mega-City action and weirdness, but I think we'll be returning to these touchstones in future.

GW: There have been a lot of other changes over the years. The comic seems a lot more sophisticated that used to be and a lot better than even a few years ago but do you worry that it is too adult and its readership is greying rapidly?

MS: It's true that the average age of our readers has changed drastically - when *2000AD* first started in 1977 there was a boys' action comic market, with titles like *Battle*, *Action*, *Valiant*, etc, and these were catering for approx 8-12 year olds. Now *2000AD* is all that's left, kids are not into comics so much now they've got Game Boys and Playstations, and our readers tend to be people who've grown up with the title and so are in their 30s. It's sometimes difficult to balance the stories so they're not too juvenile - because of the age of our readers - and not too adult - because they seem to want *2000AD* to stay the same as it was when they first read it. We'd like more kids to pick it up, but getting them aware that it's out there is proving a challenge. The website - www.2000ADonline.com - is an invaluable resource in helping with this, as are the *DreddCons* - the annual conventions devoted to *2000AD*.

GW: With the forthcoming *Dredd* computer game, films and possible *Future Shocks* television series you might be getting a lot more publicity soon. How are those projects progressing?

MS: Apparently, a deal has been signed with a publisher for the *Dredd* game, so the development team will be expanding and they're looking at a release date of the second half of next year. The *Dredd* movies are still in pre-production and they're looking at filming in Canada and India (for the Cursed Earth scenes). I haven't heard any more about the *Future Shocks* television series, so I don't know the current status of that project.

GW: How far ahead do you plan issues? How does the editing process take place?

MS: It depends on the length of the series and how long an artist takes to draw it. We work backwards, seeing when the last episode would be due and work backwards to the first episode from there. Spring and summer of this year are pretty much commissioned up, and half of Autumn. A lot of stories are held in what we call the stocklist, which means they haven't been scheduled for publication but have to be worked on: now to see print, say, next year, such as the next Devlin Waugh series.

The editing process usually involves a writer coming to me with an idea for a story; if I like it, they go away and write up a plot breakdown, and then when that's approved write

the script. An artist is chosen and they're sent the finished script, usually given about 2-3 weeks to finish 5 pages of artwork. The script is then edited or 'subbed' in relation to how the artist has drawn it, and then both art and script are sent off to the letterer, which is all done on computer.

GW: What are your plans for the future?

MS: Being an old-school fan, I'm planning to follow Andy's direction and try to get back the excitement and great characters that made the comic what it is. This Summer - kicking off from Prog 1300 - has a pretty strong line-up and promises to be a real retro-fest: *Strontium Dog* by John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerro, old-skool *Rogue Trooper* - back on Nu-Earth - by Gordon Rennie and Staz Johnson, the return of *The V.C.s* by Dan Abnett and Henry Flint, and of course *Dredd*, which has some real surprises in store. Plus, of course, there will be new series that will hopefully go down well, such as *The Red Seas* by Ian Edginton and Steve Yeowell this Autumn.

GW: Do you have exciting new writers or artists in the wings?

MS: Most of the new writers and artists are tried out on *Future Shocks* and *Terror Tales*, and there are many who show potential. There's a new series coming in the Autumn called *Asylum*, which is looking good, by Rob Williams and Boo Cook. Rob has written for *ComX* and *SFX* magazine, but this is his first series for *2000AD*; and Boo has done only one or two *Future Shocks* and three episodes of the *A.B.C. Warriors*, but this will be his first series in colour and I think he is a very talented young artist.

GW: Do you think *2000AD* will still be here in another twenty-five years?

MS: I can't see why not. It's weathered recessions, slumps in comic reading, and it's still going. As long as the stories remain exciting and interesting, I'm sure the fans will keep reading it into retirement age - I know I will!

GW: And finally, what's Tharg like to work for?

MS: A hard taskmaster, but you're prepared to accept anything when you're working on the Galaxy's Greatest Comic!



Stephen Baxter takes off with Superman and TV21

Congratulations, in 2002 AD, to 2000 AD, for your 25 years. Where would we be without the comics?

My staples were *Superman* and *TV21*.

Growing up in 1960s Liverpool, American comic books weren't so easy to find. My brother and I found scattered sources in newsagents – and especially in North Wales, where the family decamped for annual summer holidays in a fixed-site caravan near Prestatyn. We would scour the racks, buying up comics for 10 (old) pence or a shilling, and lusting after the 80-Page Giants we saw advertised. We had to keep our comics in the caravan, so they became a summertime adventure, drenched in sunlight. I suspect I soaked up a lot of subtle American propagandising.

My brother was a Batman boy, but Superman was always my favourite.

The 1960s Superman was like an extreme fever-dream. He had virtually infinite powers – and yet he was alone, his life a hall of secrets, and many of the speech-bubbles were actually Superman's introspective thoughts.

Superman is a great modern myth, as shown by his frequent reinvention from the 1970s movies to *Lois & Clark* to *Smallville*, all of which I enjoyed. I once wrote a story (in my collection *Traces*) about a thinly-disguised Superman who submits to death at our hands, Christ-like. This was a reaction to the unsatisfactory comic-book 'death' of Superman in the 1990s, when he just got whupped by a bigger, badder villain; surely Superman's death would go deeper than that. Later, I was startled by the opening image of *Smallville* – Clark Kent crucified in a corn field.

Meanwhile, back home, *TV21* was essential reading.

I was immersed in the Anderson puppet shows anyway, and from the comic's first issue I (or my mother) had it on order from the newsagent, 7d a week. *TV21* was beautifully produced, broadsheet-sized and printed on high quality paper, with every other spread in full colour. I read it from cover to cover, played with the free gifts (like a cardboard Fireball XL5), and entered the incomprehensible competitions. I loved the newspaper-style front page of headlines and photos. I got even more immersed when I was bedridden for a month in 1968 (I think) with a bout of enteritis. I dug out my precious collection of dog-eared

comics, treasured since issue one, and read the stories through again.

I relished the cross-references between stories set in the different Anderson worlds – which hinted at a *future history*, a joined-up vision of the world of the 2060s. This was my first exposure to such an idea. But the future history came from the comic, not the originating shows.

In many ways the strips went beyond Anderson's own imagination. I think my favourite was always Fireball XL5, the most space-operatic, and the first show I imprinted on at age 5 or so. But the TV show had run from 1962 to 1963, just 39 episodes. In the strips the characters and technology were developed just that bit further, and sometimes taken to (relatively) gritty depths – like the time when a rogue cadet hijacked Fireball Junior, and Steve Zodiac, stranded on a planet's surface with an ailing Professor Matic, had to improvise a way to launch a wrecked Fireball ... There was authentic sf going on here.

Later I tried to write and draw my own little comic books, featuring such forgotten TV heroes as Rocket Robin Hood. I couldn't draw well enough, but it was a start, of sorts.

Times changed, the shows moved on, I grew up, *TV21* died. The last issue I remember had a picture of Alan Ball, England football star, on the cover. All power to Alan Ball, but it wasn't what *TV21* had been about. My mother had us burn our comic stashes – which I don't blame her for, and which seemed a good idea when I was 12 and busy putting childish things side – but which, of course, I have always regretted since.

I still buy *Superman*, from time to time. And I was thrilled when in the 1980s an Anderson fan magazine reprinted some of the old *TV21* strips. They were as good as I remembered the first time around.

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

LOC AND LOAD

Letters received. Please forward all comments etc to the main editorial address marked 'For Publication'. Letters may be edited. Best letter is awarded a prize.

First Focus editor Simon Morden on LotR:

Gary's delightfully restrained piece about "the best film ever made" *Lord of the Rings* (*Matrix* 154) reminds me to ask: does your reaction to LotR depend how old you were when you first read it? Anecdotally, it seems to be the case. Prime brainwashing time appears to be between the ages of 11-14 – admittedly I can't imagine anyone attempting it at a younger age. I was 13 when a friend of mine offered to lend me *The Fellowship of the Ring* when he'd finished it. Since I couldn't wait for him to read *The Two Towers* and *Return of the King*, I bought my own. And I was strangely changed. Many years later, I found out that I wasn't alone. Those who started LotR in their later teens didn't seem to have the same steely-eyed fanaticism as us True Believers, even down to the fact they'd side with Men, and not the Elves – how strange is that?

Well I don't really count myself as 'True Believer', struggling to get through the book as a teen – in fact I think the film was a big improvement!

And now Steve Sneyd (who wins his choice from the *Matrix* freebie pile) on *Hawkwind*:

As a footnote to the very interesting Mark Greener article re *Hawkwind*, in case of any interest to our readers a few more info points/sources: A very detailed site indicated to Robert Calvert, among much other content contains the full texts of his two long (too long) out of print poetry collections, *Centigrade 232* and *The Earth Ritual*, it's called *The Spirit of the PiAge, A Video and Multimedia Portrait of Robert Calvert* at: www.thing.de/projectile/ future, run by Knut Gerwers. On Jerry Krantz *Aural Innovations* site sf music is archived, and can be freely accessed / downloaded, plus the long out of print Hilltop Press book

Gnawing Medusa's Flesh about Calvert – it contains bio/discussion of his creative projects generally / discography by the late David Jones, and my detailed overview of Calvert SF poetry – at: <http://aural-innovations.com/ISSUES/issue18/medusa.html>. Brian Tawn's *Hawkwind Feedback* is a regular source of info on new *Hawkwind* releases/forthcoming gigs. (His book, *Dude's Dreams*, which covers Moorcock's music involvement in detail, including his *Hawkwind Links* and prints his lyrics also is available from the same address) The newsletter is free for SAE from 27 Burdett Rd, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 2PR. Calvert's short stories / surreal texts from the counterculture '60s mag *Frenz* have been unearthed and reprinted (for an incredibly cheap £1 – cheques payable to T. Hughes) by *HawkFrenz* which also publishes various books re Calvert etc – PO Box 6, Liscard, Wallasey L45 4SJ

Hey, hey, it's Glenda Pringle!

As I shall be reviewing a fanzine later in the column (do feel free to skip down to the next section if you'd rather read the review than suffer my random thoughts), I thought I would cogitate a bit on the nature of fandom.

I've noticed over the years that the degrees of fandom range from the sublime to the ridiculous. As a teenybopper, I can remember being 'nuts' over the Monkees (forgive the pun and, yes, I know that dates me – but then I've dropped several hints in previous columns about the venerableness of my age). Hard-earned allowance money was spent on Monkee records, Monkee fanzines, Monkee-style clothes, Monkee-style haircuts, Monkee anything. When the show was on TV, I could not be budgeted for love or money. I wasn't just crazy about the Monkees, I was convinced that someday my Prince Charming (Davy Jones) was going to come and sweep me off my feet and we would live happily ever after in wedded bliss. I'm pretty sure that this is an example of the 'ridiculous' end of the fandom scale. However, at the time it seemed as reasonable to me as, no doubt, similar feelings do to modern teenage fans of, say, Robbie Williams, Westlife, Britney Spears or any of the other current pretty boy (or girl) heartthrobs.

At the 'sublime' end of the scale, I would cite my being a film fan or a cricket fan. I enjoy these pastimes and know something about them, but I don't consider myself to be a film 'buff' or a cricket 'boffin' as I can't pretend to know 'everything' about them. Nor, I might add, would I care to. There are too many other interesting things for me to be a fan of – like sf, for instance. Although I have been reading sf and watching sf films since the mid-1960s, I can't claim to be an expert. This is partly because my interest in these activities is quite diverse and, to put it bluntly, hit-or-miss. I don't attend conventions, I am not personally acquainted with any of writers beyond saying 'Keep up the good work!' at the occasional book signing and I hardly ever watch TV, let alone follow a sf programme avidly. Yes, I do get excited every time a new *Star Wars* film comes out and, yes, I have been to see *Lord of the Rings* three times, but then so do have a lot of people.

However, even my feeble level of sf fandom is seen in a weird light by some people. Herewith two examples that hopefully will serve to illustrate and amuse. A friend (not, I might add, a sf fan) recently said to me that there was someone in her evening class who 'writes science fiction stuff like you do ... I think his name is Brian.' As her class takes place in Oxford, I asked 'Is his last name Aldiss?' 'Yes,' she replied, 'That's him!' Well, knock me down with a Corellian freighter, but that must be the first (and probably the last!) time my 'writing' has ever been compared to that of Brian Aldiss! (To give my friend some credit here, she has never read anything by either one of us.) I found example number two to be even more cringe-making. A stallholder at a wargames show asked if I was a wargamer. 'No,' I replied, 'I like science fiction. My husband's the wargamer.' 'Oh, are you a Trekkie, then?' 'No, I like to read science fiction, not eat, sleep and breathe it!' was my response. Jeesh! The next time I run into someone who likes fishing, I shall refrain from asking if they spend their time hauling in marlin off the Florida coast!

I am, quite frankly, in awe of those sf fans who have an

almost encyclopaedic knowledge of things sf. 'Wow!' I think, 'How can they know all that?' I suppose the simple answer is that they make a study of their particular area of interest and the knowledge they gain fills in those spaces of their brain that are reserved for 'general trivia' in mine (which is,

DOG Breath

I can assure you, a lot of space). My admiration for fans who know and love the

object of their affections to such an extent that they publish their own fanzine has increased no end now that I've seen two issues of *Dogbreath* (Nos. 4 and 7) – a fanzine dedicated to all things 2000AD-ish, and especially Strontium Dogs. (Those with long memories may recall that in Issue 146 of *Matrix*, I waxed lyrical on the many charms of 2000AD and if you haven't taken me at my word and rushed out to get your weekly dose of thrillpower, then it is, I can assure you, your loss.)

Dogbreath strikes me as more than just a fanzine. It is a boisterous celebration containing short fiction, comic strips, interviews, features, letters, and lots and lots of artwork: all of which are mostly contributed by fans. Although I'm fairly green in the 2000AD sense as I didn't start reading it until long after it was in glorious technicolour, *Dogbreath* has such a friendly, welcoming feel about it that I didn't feel in the least bit intimidated or 'outside the in-joke' (to coin a phrase). Perhaps this is because it has such a humorous, tongue-in-cheek feel about it. *Teletubbies* as bounty hunters, *Durham Red's* Marks & Spencer wedding list, Snoopy pretending to be Johnny Alpha and a *Strontium Dog/Sesame Street* crossover – c'mon ya gotta laugh! Amanda Kear (that's Dr Bob to you) is to be commended for producing such a 'zarjaz' fanzine. [Contact her for copies at: 17 Greenbank Avenue West, Easton, Bristol, BS5 6EP or by email at: Amanda.Kear@bbc.co.uk]

Finally, two apologies. I owe one big apology to *Aurealis: Australian Fantasy & Science Fiction* because I failed to mention in my response to Vaughan Stanger's letter in the last issue of *Matrix* that they send me gratis copies. Although I have previously reviewed *Aurealis* and *Scheherazade* (and *Spectrum SF* has been reviewed in *Vector*), that shouldn't stop me highly recommending these magazines once again (and not just because they send me free copies!). Your subscription money would definitely be appreciated, so contact one or all of the following email addresses for further details: *Aurealis*: keith.stevenson@optusnet.com.au; *Scheherazade*: liz@shez.fsnet.co.uk; and *Spectrum SF*: pf@spectrumsf.co.uk. (Contact me if you would like full postal addresses.) And, second, dear reader, I must apologise to you. I keep promising to review magazines 'in the next issue' because they have not arrived by deadline time. As this seems to be a jinx insofar as the promised magazine then *never* arrives, I promise that I will cease this behaviour ... permanently.

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

AN IRONING BOARD ON A DUCK POND

MACS AND METALWORK

Martin Sketchley goes to the galleries for sf art.

When I was young, sf art was incredibly exciting, the visualisation of the fantastic possibilities I read about in the sf novels I loved. As a result of my interest in sf, I was bought books as gifts, such as *Spacewreck*, and *Spacecraft 2000 to 2100AD* – both published by Hamlyn – which contained wonderful pictures by Fred Gambino and Bob Layzell, among others. Then there was the *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* – published in 1978 by Octopus Books – which included work from artists such as Chris Foss, Josh Kirby, Jim Burns. There was also the comic *2000AD*, which I bought religiously for ages. And yes, I can say that I once owned a pristine copy of that first issue. However, I am not the kind of person who is particularly careful with my reading material (to me then, comics, and novels now, are works of entertainment to be enjoyed rather than objects of desire to be coveted) and so it very probably remained pristine for a very short time. A great part of *2000AD*'s appeal was the artwork, which could be both

dark and spectacular, especially for series such as *Flesh* (in which 23rd century man travels back in time to harvest dinosaurs) and of course *Judge Dredd*. Plenty of examples of the kind of thing I mean can be found at the official *2000AD* homepage, and many other websites devoted to the comic. In truth, it's fair to say that many of the images in all of the above continue to have an influence on me to this day.

But my interest in both comics and sf waned as I got older, and entered my "lost period" (a bit like Picasso's blue period, but without the colour) when sf was replaced by other interests and diversions. During this time sf, and especially sf artwork, seemed to increasingly confirm the almost entirely derogatory opinions of those whose knowledge of the genre was at best limited. While I returned to the genre some years later, I have to admit that a certain derisive attitude towards sf art remained for a time.

However, my perceptions were changed at the 1997 Eastercon, when I attended Jim Burns' slide show. The work of this longstanding sf artist has incredible depth and realism, and his reproduction of the human – and not so human – form is particularly skilful, no more effectively demonstrated than through the cover he produced for Colin Greenland's novel *Seasons of Plenty*. Other well-known recent covers produced by Burns include that for John Meaney's novels *To Hold Infinity* and

Paradox (the image for the former was also used for the cover of *Transluminial*, the second collection of his work published by Paper Tiger), and Peter F Hamilton's *The Reality Dysfunction*. The first of these is a demonstration of Burns' skill in visualising realistic characters, the latter his ability to produce work reflecting huge scale, both of which are integral and essential aspects of science fiction.

At the time of the slide show Burns was beginning to get to grips with his new Mac (a piece of technological kit rather than an overcoat), and has since produced covers such as those for the Christopher Priest omnibuses, recently published by Earthlight.

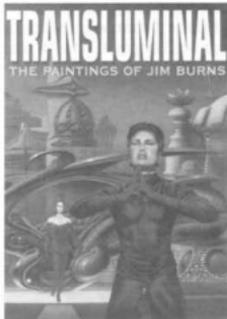
At Novacon 31 I was pleasantly surprised to find that I was able to buy a day membership for half the price of a standard membership, which meant that I had £20 not previously budgeted for (a bonus to this was that my badge simply said "Saturday", which led to numerous "where's Man Friday" jokes, and endless hilarity all round). So it was that, on entering the Art Show, I began "A Collection" when I bought a copy of Jay Hurst's Paper Tiger Award-winning image, *Dispatch Duty* – a beautiful and atmospheric green nightscape, which recently adorned the cover of *Interzone* issue 174.

The amazing thing about Hurst is that he has two kids and lives in a four-bedroom house. No, hang on; that should be, he has four kids and a two-bedroom house. I think that's right. He apparently works on the dining room table, having to clear away stray Weetos before he starts, and making way for various condiments as tea-time approaches. You have to admire the fellow. While as far as I am able to ascertain Hurst doesn't have a web site of his own, many examples of his work are out there.

However, a stark contrast to the material produced by the above artists is that of Joachim Luetke. Luetke, born in 1957 in Germany, studied art in Switzerland during the late



Jay Hurst's *Dispatch Duty*



Jim Burns's *Transluminial*



Jim Burns's *Seasons of Plenty*

1970s, then from 1980 to 1986 attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, where he still lives. Much of his work is simultaneously breathtaking and disturbing. His website is wonderfully designed, and features a wealth of this man's amazing material, which ranges from more traditional artwork to incredible, bizarre sculptures. His material is exactly the kind of thing I'm drawn to, touching on the raw aspects of humanity that often remain buried beneath the layers of social ritual humans are so good at building.

Luetke's work is grotesque and dark, stimulating reaction not only through the forms he creates, but also the materials he uses: pieces such as *The Principle Of Doubt* and *Dialogue*, for example, seem to be constructed from metal, leather, wood, prosthetic limbs and electronic components, assembled to resemble that with which we are familiar, exposing that we wish we weren't. You know that bizarre doll in *Toy Story*, the one modified by Sid? It's a bit like that, with *A Clockwork Orange*, Marilyn Manson, and the nightmares of HR Giger and Hieronymus Bosch all rolled into one. *Fertility Goddess I* could be the source of jokes referring to Madonna's famous conical brassiere, but the weightier aspect of the piece is again its sinister side.

Fertility Goddess II is even darker: bound mouths, rusting chains, blooded claws. Other astonishing sculptures are *The Veteran*, *Winddemons* and *Dark Karma*, as are digital art and mixed media pieces such as *The Last Supper* and *The Night Breed*. It's truly inspirational, and anyone with an interest in the surreal or darker aspects of life should pay this site a visit. Dark Asylum TV is extremely interesting, especially if you have a command of German (which I do not), but I suspect is really only viable if you have a fast internet connection (which I do). The same goes for *Dark Karma*.

Alas, I have virtually no aptitude in terms of visual art, and have great respect for, and a certain level of jealousy towards, those who do. I can do Mr Tall and Thomas the Tank Engine fairly well these days, but that's about the limit of it. At least it keeps the kids happy.

Spinnerets

There's a spectacular "webvert" for Jon Courtenay Grimwood's *Pashazade* and *Effendi* novels to be found at www.j-cg.co.uk/pasha.htm. This may take a while to download if you're using a 56k modem or slower, but is well

worth the wait. Ensure you turn on your speakers, and don't be tempted to click the "JCG main page" link that could well appear first.

The Zone sf webzine is now online. Apparently it's "a rapidly expanding site with critical articles, celebrity interviews, author profiles, genre essays, incisive media reviews, top 10 listings, competitions, and lots more!" Furthermore, it's updated with new material at least every fortnight. Who could ask for more? Pay it a visit to <http://www.zone-sf.com>.

There's a new sf website specifically designed for sf authors "past, present and future", and "anyone with an interest in science fiction". There's not much meat here, the site being comprised mainly of links and lists, but it's possible that something may prove useful. Go to <http://www.sfauthor.com>.

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

URLs of relevance

The official 2000AD website:

www.2000adonline.com/

The 2000AD links project:

www.2000ad.nu/linksproject/

Jim Burns:

www.sflink.net/events/artgallery/jim_burns.htm

www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/burns_jim.html

www.fantasiasonline.com/burns/

www.abandonart.co.uk/artists/biog_jb.html

Fred Gambino:

www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~fredgamb/

Chris Foss:

www.altanen.dk/

Jay Hurst:

www.papertiger.co.uk/archive/issue22/from_den.html

www.ufbs.co.uk/dwm/jayhurst.html

Joachim Luetke:

www.luetke.com/

Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists:

www.asfa-art.org/

Online sf art shop:

www.synthverse.com/

A Clockwork Orange:

www.clockworkorange.com/

Hieronymus Bosch:

www.archive.com/rtchive/B/bosch.html

HR Giger:

www.hrgiger.com/

Pixar Animations (makers of *Toy Story*):

www.pixar.com/

Thomas the Tank Engine (a good site for kids):

www.thomasthetankengine.com/home/homepage.html

Martin's own site is:

www.msketchlyp.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

(Check out www.bsfa.co.uk for this, and past, articles including links and colour pictures!)



Joachim Luetke's Dialogue



Joachim Luetke's Doubt

OBITUARIES

R. A. LAFFERTY 1914 – 2002

Dave M. Roberts on a singular *sf* writer

Raphael Aloysius Lafferty was an unusual writer in many ways. He worked in the electrical business and didn't start writing until his late forties. His first story 'Day of The Glacier' was published in 1960 in *Original Science Fiction*. Over the course of the next twenty years he wrote over 200 short stories and 20 or so novels.

Lafferty stopped writing in the early 1980s following a stroke, and suffered a second more severe stroke in 1994. Since then he had been very inactive, living the last years of his life in The Franciscan Villa Health Care Centre in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. He was a devout Roman Catholic and, depending on who you talk to, this either affected every word he wrote or made no difference to his work.

The height of Lafferty's popularity was in the late sixties and early seventies, in which time his stories and novels regularly appeared on both the Nebula and Hugo short lists, and he won the Hugo in 1973 for the story 'Eurema's Dam'. He has also been nominated for the Philip K. Dick award, and was awarded the World Fantasy Award for lifetime achievement in 1990.

Attempting to define Lafferty's works is an impossible job: surreal, hilarious, tall story, witty, bemusing,

exasperating, dreamlike and so on and so on but he was one of the few writers whose work could rarely, if ever, be confused with anyone else's. It featured strange and often deadly children ('The Seven Day terror' (1962), *The Reefs of Earth* (1968)), a bizarre collection of scientists ('Thus We Frustrate Charlemagne' (1967), *Arrive at Easterwine* (1971)), mythology and folklore that if it isn't based on real myth then it should be ('Groaning Hinges of The World' (1971), *The Cosquin Chronicles* (1971,1984)), one of the most intriguing and entertaining histories I've ever come across (*The Fall of Rome* (1971)) and a great deal more. And all written in delightfully poetic prose.

For some time Lafferty's work has been hard to come by. However since the early 1980's, a considerable amount has been published by a variety of highly dedicated small presses, and I am pleased to say that a number of the works have recently been made available again by Wildside Press.

R. A. Lafferty has been largely unknown for a long time, and this is in itself a minor tragedy. His work was strange and unique and, for those who connected with it, utterly absorbing. It would be sad to think of it being forgotten.

SPIKE MILLIGAN 1918 – 2002

Gary Wilkinson on the last Goon

Spike Milligan was the genius revolutionary of British comedy. The leading writer and performer on the anarchic and surreal *The Goon Show*, a radio show which dominated its time and influenced all that followed it, Milligan remained one of the most unorthodox and consistently funny performers from the end of the Second World War until his death. He was also an accomplished poet of mainly nonsense verse, an author of several novels along with the volumes of war memoirs, which, though riotously funny, contained the bitter after-taste of brutal conflict.

Milligan working with John Antrobus also wrote the ultra-black comedy play *The Bed Sitting Room*, set in the aftermath of World War III where the madness of nuclear war was presented as an equally mad farce which was later made into a film. The *Q* series of television sketch-shows were as significant as Milligan's earlier radio work, heavily

influencing *Monty Python* (and having the best ever use of Daleks outside of *Dr Who*.)

Milligan was also an active campaigner for environmentalism. In 1986, he was thrown out of Harrods when he tried to stuff 28lb of spaghetti down the mouth of the food hall manager as a protest against the force-feeding geese to produce *fois gras*.

Unfortunately his life was blighted with bouts of clinical depression that saw him hospitalised on several occasions, partially due to his workaholic tendencies.

Anarchic to the last, when he received a lifetime achievement comedy award he famously called Prince Charles a "little grovelling bastard..." and on the occasion of his 75th birthday announced: "When I look back, the fondest memory I have is not really of the *Goon*s. It is of a girl called Julia with enormous breasts."

CHUCK JONES 1912 – 2002

Gary Wilkinson on the animator who brought us Bugs Bunny and the Road Runner

In career of over sixty years that brought him four Oscars (one honorary), Chuck Jones in various capacities as animator, director, author and artist, made over 300 animated films, bringing us Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, the Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote in his 'Looney Tunes'.

He first found fame as a child actor in silent films. After art school, his first job as an animator was in the studio of former Disney cartoonist Ubbe Iwerks. But it was Jones' leap in 1936 to a Warner Bros studio that led to development of his talent during the 'Golden Age' of animation through the 1930s and '40s

In contrast to the features then emerging from Walt

Disney's studio, Jones's cartoons displayed a darker humour that appealed to adults as much as to children. After the closure of Warner Bros studio in 1962, he moved to MGM, where he brought his wit to the Tom and Jerry cartoons.

One of his most popular films, *What's Opera, Doc?*, a highly sophisticated spoof on Wagnerian opera starring Bugs Bunny, was inducted into the National Film Registry in 1992 for being "among the most culturally, historically and aesthetically significant films of our time".

"Animation isn't the illusion of life," Jones said on his internet page. "It is life."

CAPITAL CINEMA

Dave Lally watches the first London Sci-Fi Film Festival

This event - backed by the SciFi Channel - had a number of interactive parts starting with a debate, in honour of the late Douglas N. Adams, on Wednesday 20 January.

Over the following weekend, there were many sf films shown, including anime, shorts (with one short preceding every full-length screening), several film retrospectives and premieres at two Soho cinemas: the Curzon (non-anime) and the Metro (anime).

There was also a three-stream all-night showing over the Saturday/Sunday at the Curzon (Themes: 'Anime', 'John Carpenter' / 'Aliens'). There was also a Mini-Cine and throughout the festival - a "talkaoke" (ongoing discussion in the round) at the Curzon.

Matters started at London's ICA with the debate chaired by Science Fiction Foundation administrator Andy Sawyer and with a full sf line up: Kim Newman (author) / Brian Johnson (sfx: *Alien*)

Anne Gay (author) / Doug Naylor (writer *Red Dwarf*) and John Swallow (the only Brit working on *Trek*) - it looked formidable. The topics were: Do the SFX obscure the messages? Are books/films compatible? Which mediocre books became great films?

Despite Andy attempting to control him, Kim Newman dominated the proceedings which included in the audience, in honour of Adams, a number of ZZ 9-ers (the *Hitch-Hicker* fan club). Nevertheless after a slow pick-up, things got livelier later when the audience, including myself, got stuck in. No final conclusions were arrived at but all felt it was a useful exposition of varying views.

I was unable to attend any of the rest of the festival - other than the three premieres (all non anime) held at 9pm each evening on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, at the Curzon: each film with a 'short' opener.

On the Friday, the short *Inferno*, introduced *American Astronaut*. The former, about two petty criminals caught inside a huge computer game of the title, opened with a Kubrick/Trumbull Tribute (Strauss music/ London Eye-Wheel and the camera turning) followed by some good CGI. Director Paul Kousoulides is ex-National Film and Television School and it shows. Since Film Four have backed this, we will eventually see it on the big screen.

The main feature, directed by Cory McAbee was noir, very Buck Rogers and was, for me, only so-so. Astronaut Sam Curtis transports a youngster from Jupiter to the men-starved women of Venus and in turn takes the old man (his predecessor : now well worn out) from the planet back to Earth.

The Saturday short (title: unknown) comprised a *Star*

Wars-based item featuring the Imperial Storm Troopers who rationalised every event in conversation - including dealing with two people on Tatooino who have just lost their nephew 'Luke' - and they then go and simply shoot people. The Northern Line Tube Delay that evening prevented me from seeing the beginning. [*This sounds like the short film Star Wars spoof Troops - downloadable from several sights on the web - Ed*].

The main feature, *Náufragos Stranded* directed by María Lidón, backed by the Valencia provincial government in Spain and using the red landscape of the Canary Island also concerned the first Mars manned-mission with five astronauts, whose lander crashes on the planet.

The dilemma of facilities available aboard for which allow for the survival of only two people out of five - how to choose just who survives / dies - forms the basis of the first part.

The second part - when the three who decide to walk to their deaths in the space suits but still on scientific discovery - is more interesting when they discover the remains of an ancient civilisation, now long gone, who also used (and left) war and oxygen.

Sunday's events featured the short *Fifty Per Cent Grey* with female director and fellow Irish National Ruiria Robinson. Sergeant wakes up to a TV and is in Heaven. Shoots himself, wakes up again - another TV but now it is purgatory... and so on. Excellent graphics.

The main Sunday finale, and World Premiere, was from that *eminence grise* himself: Ken Russell. He attended with some of the cast - having only just finished his piece earlier in the week. Mostly shot at his home over 1 year, *The fall of the Louse of Usher* (story by Ken Russell and one EA Poe) concerns the mental hospital run by Prof Kalahari (Russell) plus a bizarre set of staff and patients. These include one

inmate who is hypnotised on the point of death, another (a rock star) who murdered his wife but has incestuous interests in his sister, another (but on the staff) who is bleak nurse, etc, etc. In other words, the usual visual cacophony to be expected from our, now 76 year-old, Ken.

The organisers, including Festival Director Louis Savy made it clear that they were primarily aiming at the general (i.e. non sf fan) public and attempting to remove sf from its otherwise perceived slot of *Trekkie* / *anorak* / *nerd*. He stated that some

events had been booked-up whilst others were less well attended. Nevertheless they (and the SciFi Channel) were happy and there would be another festival, same time, next year - probably starting on the Thursday.

I personally enjoyed what I went to (and managed a short conversation re *The Devils* with Ken Russell).

Here's to next year!



— AND THE WINNER IS ...

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

The winners of the British Science Fiction Association Awards for 2001 were announced at the 2002 Eastercon, Helicon 2, in St Helier (Jersey) on 31st March 2002. Despite relatively low attendance at the Eastercon - largely attributable to the cost of travelling to Jersey - the Awards ceremony on the evening of Easter Sunday was well-attended.

The winner of the BSFA Award for **Best Novel** of 2001 was Alastair Reynolds, for *Chasm City* (published by Gollancz). The award was accepted by Alastair himself.

The winner of the BSFA Award for **Best Short Story** of 2001 was Eric Brown, for 'The Children of Winter' (published in *Interzone* 163). The award was accepted by Tony Ballantyne on Eric's behalf.

The winner of the BSFA Award for **Best Artwork** of 2001 was Colin Odell, for the cover of *Omegatropic* by Stephen Baxter. The award was accepted by Claire Brialey on Colin's behalf.

The winner of the BSFA Award for **Best Non-Fiction** of 2001 was Stephen Baxter, for *Omegatropic* (edited by Andrew M Butler, and published by the BSFA). The award was accepted by Simon Bradshaw on Stephen's behalf.

The awards were voted on by the members of the BSFA and of Helicon 2. Postal and email voting was open to all BSFA members: paid-up members of the Eastercon were eligible to vote using the ballot form provided at the convention.

The British Science Fiction Association would like to congratulate the winners, and to thank Jess Bennett for making the awards.

Nominations for the 2002 Awards (which will be presented at next year's Eastercon, Seacon '03 in Hinckley) are already being received!

Novel:

Effendi - Jon Courtenay Grimwood
The Years of Rice & Salt - Kim Stanley Robinson

Short Story:

'Singleton' - Greg Egan (*Interzone*, February 2002)

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

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

The closing date for nominations for the 2002 Awards is 31st January 2003. The rules of eligibility are as follows:

Best Novel, for the best novel first published in the UK in the calendar year 2002. This award is (in theory, at least) open to any work of fiction - not just adult-oriented science fiction.

Best Short Story, for the best short fiction that first appeared, regardless of country of origin, in the calendar year 2002. Stories in non-UK magazines, anthologies, and even on the web are eligible. Please let me know where the story appeared (anthology title and editor, magazine name and number, URL) as well as the author and title of the short story.

Best Non-Fiction, for the best single piece, anthology or full-length critical work to appear in the UK in the calendar year 2002. Please give author or editor, title, and magazine / journal details if applicable.

Best Artwork, for the best single piece of artwork that appeared in the calendar year 2002. Where possible, please give the artist's name and the title of the work, and where the item appears (magazine name and number, website URL, and so on). Please note that animated films are not eligible for this category.

Please note that 'advance votes' are not eligible: the book, short story, critical essay or piece of artwork must actually have been published, not just be due for publication.

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



Stephen Baxter finally receives his award at Signs of Life. No he's not auditioning for Saturday Night Fever.



Winner Alastair Reynolds...



... receives his award from Justina Robson

The award itself - it's a mobile



Steve Green brings us news of all things fannish

Start saving your pocket money now: barring a nuclear holocaust or its supporters turning up at September's bidding ceremony in San José wearing "I ♥ Osama" t-shirts, the Brit contingent has already won its campaign to host the sixty-third World Science Fiction Convention in Glasgow three summers hence. With the official deadline for bids now passed and no rival unveiled, only an unprecedented vote of no confidence at this year's worldcon can derail this juggernaut.

This doesn't, of course, defuse the very real concerns many British fans still harbour about the entire enterprise. Last time I checked, fewer than 150 of us had actually shelled out to pre-support "UK in 2005", and I'm sure I wasn't the only person who did so in order to remain in the loop as to the latest developments (the sacrifices we *Matrix* columnists must make...) That's about half the membership of a Unicorn, and considerably fewer than a Glasgow worldcon will need in on-site crew alone, so I fully expect to see the first press-gangs patrolling hotel corridors no later than Novacon.

Speaking of which (cue shameless plug), Novacon 32's website is finally up and running at www.novacon.org.uk/2002. The programme's beginning to shape up now, but we're still on the lookout for fresh ideas, donations for the United Fan Funds auction and old photos for the opening ceremony (scanned images can be forwarded to novacon32@yahoo.co.uk).

No news yet on the fate of Birmingham's legendary Andromeda Bookshop. Whilst the original company is definitely deceased, Rog Peyton's attempts to relaunch the business were undermined by a paucity of interested parties with at least £5000 to invest. Rumours spread in late March that a mysterious speculator had stepped forward to rescue this great institution, retaining both city centre site and staff, but Rog confided to me shortly afterwards that the landlords were still proving intransigent. Offers of cash, support, etc, should be directed to rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk; meanwhile, watch this space.

I wasn't able to make this year's Eastercon (holding it on Jersey tends to put off the day visitor), but by all reports, Helicon was a jolly – if ensmalmed – occasion. The BSFA Awards were dished out (see coverage elsewhere), whilst Dave Tompkins received the Doc Weir Award (named in honour of a much-liked 1950s British fan and presented annually to an "unsung hero", more often than not from behind the scenes at conventions).

Despite two highly amusing spoof bids (one to restage the 1957 Kettering con, another offering Liverpool's Adelphi Hotel across a multiplicity of parallel worlds: I highly recommend their website at www.cobrabay.freeserve.co.uk/concurrence), the contest for the 2004 Eastercon was unsurprisingly won by Concourse, which then ran a vote

between its proposed London and Blackpool venues. In the event, Blackpool's Wintergardens got the thumbs up. The guests will be Mitchell Burnside Clapp, Danny Flynn, Christopher Priest, Phillip Pullman and fanzine artist Sue Mason; full details are available on www.eastercon.com/concourse or from 479 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8JJ.



Amongst the sadder news since last issue was the announcement of Harry Nadler's death on 1 March, although the massive turnout for his funeral service in Salford was a heartening reminder of just how much affection he was held in both by fellow fans and by those in the movie industry he lured to Manchester's annual Festival of Fantastic Films.

This year's instalment, the thirteenth, will be held at the Renaissance Hotel over the August bank holiday (details are available from www.fantastic-films.com or from Tony Edwards at 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN). It's a tribute to Harry's seemingly inexhaustible enthusiasm that virtually everyone present will feel they've lost a friend.

For those more into comic panels than film frames, I can't recommend Caption too highly. Easily the most informal and least expensive event of its kind, this loose gathering of international small press artists, writers and readers takes place each summer in the rooms and grounds of the Oxford Students' Union, with the minimum of heavy programming and the maximum of casual interaction (the traditional highpoint is Saturday evening's alfresco pizza and wine supper). This year's dates are 17-18 August, and full details can be obtained from caption2001@alleged.demon.co.uk, at least until they update the address.

Those keeping notes may recall my namechecking Walt Willis in the first of these columns, a fanzine writer and editor of such import that US fans raised enough cash to enable him to attend the Chicago worldcon in 1952. As with many a fannish "one off", the TransAtlantic Fan Fund was swiftly established as an annual tradition, an alternating exchange between North America and Europe.

It's a westbound race this summer, as Tobes Valois and Chris O'Shea (both excellent candidates) vie for the British ambassadorship to San José. Ballots are available for a reply-paid envelope from Sue Mason at 3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH, or can be downloaded from the Plokta News Network on www.plokta.com/pnn/taff/taff2002; the deadline's 2 June.

Finally, a round of applause for Terry Jeeves' fanzine *Erg*, which celebrated its forty-third birthday in April. As institutions go, that's pretty damned impressive; congratulations can be forwarded to 1965's TAFF delegate at erg40@madasafish.com.

News items should be sent to sfcheckpoint@yahoo.co.uk or 33 Scott Road, Solihull, B92 7LQ.



Future conventions and other gatherings

3-6 May 02 - Dam Fine Convention (Twin Peaks theme)
Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Shepperton, Surrey. Guests of Honour rumored to be Colin Odell and Mitch Le Blanc. Free for Norwegians resident in Norway! Cheques (made payable to 'Dam Fine Convention') to: DFC, 37 Keens Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 1AH. Rooms £30ppn twin or double, £40ppn single. Contact: info@damfineconvention.org.uk; www.damfineconvention.org.uk

12 May 02 - Fantasy Fair

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

18 May 02 - Arthur C. Clarke Award.

Science Museum, Kensington, London by invitation, from 6:30pm. However, panels etc arranged by Pat Cadigan, 2pm-6pm, admission free to all.

1-4 Jun 02 - plotka.con 2.0

Hilton National Hotel, Basingstoke. Guest(s) TBA. £25 reg. Cheques to *Plotka* at 24 St Mary Rd, Walthamstow, London, E17 9RG.

28th - 30th June - Science Fiction Research Association Conference.

New Lanark, Scotland. Guest Authors: Paul McAuley, Pat Cadigan, Ken MacLeod. Keynote Speaker: Andy Sawyer (Science Fiction Collection, University of Liverpool). Booking form: <http://www.sfra.org/sfra2002.htm>

2-7 Jul 02 - Eurocon 2002

Chotebor and Prague, Czech Republic. GoH G.R.R. Martin, K. Bulycov, R. Holdstock, A. Sapkowski, others TBA. \$20/\$25 (US dollars) registration. Contact avalcon@avalcon.cz; www.eurocon2002.scifi.cz

9-11 Aug 02 - ConteXXt (Unicon 20)

University of Gloucestershire. Guest of Honour: Keith Brooke. £25 reg, £15 concessions, small children £1. Contact 17 Cow Lane, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7SZ.

16-19 Aug 02 - A Discworld Odyssey (DWcon 3)

Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leicestershire. Guest of Honour: Terry Pratchett. Guests: Stephen Briggs, Paul Kidby, Dave Langford and more. Reduced rates from 1 April: £45 reg, £30 concessions, £10 supporting. Reverting to £50, £35 and £15 at the end of July. No memberships after 16/7/02. Contact: SAE to 23 Medora Road, Romford, Essex, RM7 7EP; info@dwcon.org; www.dwcon.org

17-18 Aug - Caption (Small-press comics)

Oxford Union Society, St Michael's St, Oxford. Contact 18 Hawkins St, Oxford, OX4 1YD.

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

McEnery Convention Center, San José, California. Guests of Honour: Vernor Vinge, David Cherry, Bjo & David Trimble, Ferdinand Feghoot. Toastmaster: Tad Williams. Membership: Now \$180/£125 reg. Contact: PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-4128, USA, info@conjose.org, www.conjose.org; UK Agents: 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, RG30 2RP; www.stslc.org/worldcon/

4 - 6 Oct 02 - Conquest (media con)

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

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

Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. GoH China Mieville; many other guests. 20 euros Irish cheques to 'Octocon' c/o Yellow Brick Rd, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland; £15 sterling to 'Dave Lally #2 A/C', c/o Dave Lally 64 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX.

25-28 Oct 02 Cult TV 2002

Southport Theatre and Floral Hall Complex, Merseyside, UK. Various guests, including Terry Jones. Contact PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE7 1ER.

31 Oct-3 Nov 02 World Fantasy Convention 2002

Hilton Minneapolis and Towers, Minneapolis, MN. Guests of Honour: Dennis Etchison, Jonathan Carroll, Kathe Koja, Stephen Jones, Dave McKean. Membership: \$100 to 4/1/01, then more. Info: World Fantasy Convention, c/o DreamHaven Books, 912 West Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN 55408, wfc@dreamhavenbooks.com, www.dreamhavenbooks/wfc.html

1-3 Nov 02 - Novacon 32

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

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

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

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

Venue confirmed as the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics (same as 2001 Easter event). Guests of honour: Chris Baker (artist known as Fangorn and involved in Spielberg's *A.I.*), Chris Evans, Mary Gentle. £40 full attending membership. Contacts: www.seacon03.org.uk or 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR, UK

9-12 Apr 04 - Concourse (Eastercon)

Blackpool Wintergardens. GoH Mitchell Burnside Clapp, Danny Flynn, Christopher Priest, Philip Pullman, Sue Mason. £25 register, £15 supporting, £15 children (5-17), infants (0-5) free. Rates to rise in June if not before, except that full reg for the unwaged will be held at #25 until the con. On-line credit card payment facility planned. Contact 479 Newmarket Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8JJ.

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

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

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

Boston, Mass. Guest of Honour: Terry Pratchett, William Tenn, (lan) Jack Speer and Peter Weston. \$120 reg (kids \$85), \$85 supp conversion, \$35 supp. Mastercard and Visa accepted. Contact PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

Note

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

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

GROUPS

Local groups and other gatherings of fans and writers

Belfast Science Fiction Group

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

Birmingham: Brum SF Group

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

Cambridge SF Group

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

Cardiff SF Group

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

Colchester SF/F/Horror Group

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

Hull SF Group

Second and Fourth Tuesdays, 8.00 to 10:30pm at The New Clarence, Charles Street, Hull. Contact Carol & Steve on 01482 494045 or Dave and Estelle on 01482 444291. Please note that the pub room is not always available so if you intend to come along, please phone first to check on venue, or see: www.mjckeh.demon.co.uk/hullsf.htm for the current list of events.

London BSFA meetings

Fourth Wednesday of the month (except December) from 7:00pm at the Rising Sun, Cloth Fair (off Long Lane), EC1. Barbican/Farringdon tube. Check *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 5:00pm at the Florence Nightingale ('Dead Nurse'), on the Westminster Bridge Road/York Road roundabout. Waterloo/ Westminster tube.

Manchester: FONT

FONT meets on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at The Goose on Piccadilly from about 8:30pm onwards. Contact Mike Don on 0161 2262980.

North Oxford

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

Norwich Science Fiction Group

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

Peterborough SF Group

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

Portsmouth/South Hants SF Group

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

Reading SF Group

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

Southampton: Solent Green

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

Walsall SF Group

First Saturday of every month at 2:00pm in the Meeting Room of Walsall Central Library, Lichfield Street, Walsall. http://members.nbci.com/walsall_sf/ [This group seems no longer to exist - Ed]

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

NOTICES

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

Wanted

I'm desperately seeking the following to complete my archives of reviews, letters and so that I contributed to BSFA publications. If any one has any of the following that they would like to sell, loan, photocopy or scan.

Matrix: Jun 1979; Aug 1979; Apr 1980; Aug 1980; Jun 1984; Aug 1984; Dec 1984; Feb 1985; Apr 1985; Jun 1985; Aug 1985.

Vector: Apr 1981; Feb 1982; Oct 1982; Oct 1983; Aug 1985; Dec 1985; Feb 1986; Aug 1986; Apr 1986; Oct 1986; Dec 1986; Apr 1987.

Please contact Mark Greener at greenermj@aol.com

SIG

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Thanks to all contributors, Carol Ann Kerry Green, Steve Jeffery and Matt Smith

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Photos page 20 - courtesy of Tanya Brown

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JO'S TIMEWASTERS

Competition 155

And on the subject of comics...

1. Superman first appeared in a fanzine; the strip was then bought by Action Comics. When did it first appear in *Action*? a) March 1929; b) June 1938; or c) January 1960
2. Who was the science consultant for the *Dan Dare* strip? a) Arthur C. Clarke; b) Chad Oliver; or c) Willy Ley
3. Alfred Bester and Henry Kuttner combined on which strip? a) Green Lantern; b) I Married a Vampire; or c) Dogs of War
4. When did *Little Nemo* first appear? a) 1905; b) 1917; or c) 1929
5. Batman was loosely based on a character appearing in *Black Bat Detective Mysteries*. a) True or false? b) Who illustrated the original *Batman* strip?
6. Oh Boy Comics featured *The Tornado*. Was it the work of: a) Danny La Rue; b) Spike Milligan; c) Bob Monkhouse; or d) Des O'Connor?

Answers by June 25, please, to John Ollis, 49 Leighton Road, Corby NN18 0SD

[Please note that from now on the prize has been increased to £10, so no excuse not to enter! -Ed]

Results of competition 153

Several correct answers here, one by devious means, and the winner is John Howard. Nobody got too confused by our noble editor's inadvertent addition to Q6 b [no point in making it too easy, is there? -Ed]

1. Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest.
2. Red, green, blue.
3. Black: *Black Star Rising* / Pohl; 'Bordered in Black' / Niven; 'The Little Black Box' / Dick; *Black Easter* / Blish.
4. Green: *The Green Millennium* / Leibler; *The Green Man of Kilsona* / Pragnell; *The Green Brain* / Herbert; *Green Hell* / Arthur K Barnes.
5. White: The letter combinations represent the physiological characteristics of aliens (and humans) in James White's many stories about Sector General.
- 6a. Nightmares, from the collection *Nightmares and Geesezstacks*.
b. 'Something Green' is another short, from the collection *Space on my Hands*.
c. Brown: all of these are to be found in *The Collected Short Stories of Fredric Brown*.

MEGA 2000AD COMPETITION

We've got some great prizes to give away courtesy of Titan Books and *2000AD* itself, a pile of graphic novels to the winner including *Judge Dredd: Helter Skelter* (Titan), *Doomsday for Dredd* and *Doomsday for Mega-city One* (both Hamlyn), plus copies of the latter two each for the two runners-up. Answers to main editorial address by the end of June, please. The Judges decision is final, perp!

1. What's 'perp' short for?
2. "Something, Something, Oranges, Something" - Fill in the 'somethings' and what strip is it from?
3. Feek the Freak, what strip?
4. "Be Pure. Be Vigilant. Behave." What strip?
5. "I'm a pipe-fitter!" Which strip?
6. "She went out." Who?
7. Who likes "Big Jobs!"?
8. Who might say: "Oh my heartsies!"?

9. Who had, as one of his friends, a robotic cigar?
10. In *Judge Dredd*, Citizen Snork was famous for what?
11. Hammerstien the robot from the *A.B.C. Warriors* and *Ro-Busters* has which car badge on his front?
12. What is Judge Anderson's first name?
13. And what is Judge Dredd's?
14. Old One-Eye is what?
15. Judge Dredd lives in which block, (well until very recently)?
16. Name all the Dark Judges
17. Who was Chief Judge Cal's deputy?
18. Who or what is the Wally Squad?
19. Who has a companion called Ukko?
20. In the Cursed Earth of *Judge Dredd* the head of what President has been added to the Mount Rushmore of the future?
21. What free gift was given away with Prog 1

Stop Press:

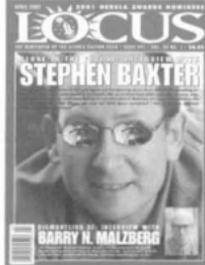
Book signings at Forbidden Planet, London.

29 June, 1pm: Gwyneth Jones and Bryan Talbot - *Castle Made of Sand*

6 July, 1pm: Alastair Reynolds - *Redemption Ark*

Ricardo Pinto will be informally signing copies of *The Standing Dead* on May 7th

Our very own Stephen Baxter - cover star of *Locus*. Is it just me, or does anyone else find this picture really scary? What's with the eyes?



That's all folks!