

# matrix

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The news magazine of the British Science Fiction Association

## Sunshine State

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* is an intelligent, touching and funny film about love and memory

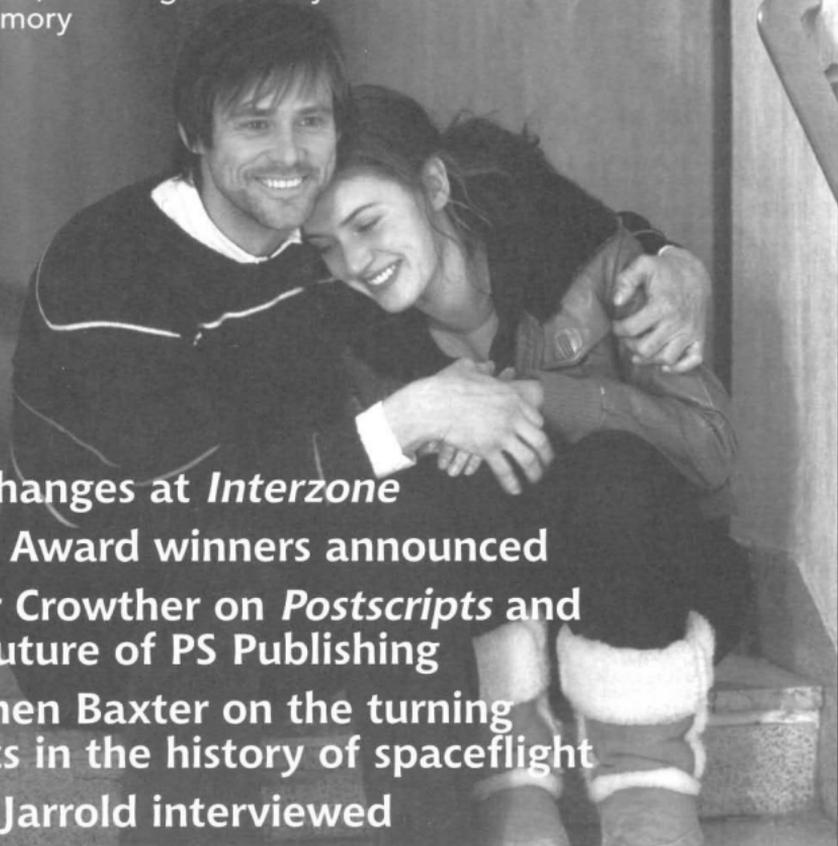
Big changes at *Interzone*

BSFA Award winners announced

Peter Crowther on *Postscripts* and the future of PS Publishing

Stephen Baxter on the turning points in the history of spaceflight

John Jarrold interviewed



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## Welcome

*Matrix* has two new editors, who'll be coming aboard from the next issue. I'm staying, so there will be continuity, but hopefully also an injection of fresh new ideas. I'll allow them to introduce themselves:

New to both *Matrix* and the BSFA but by no means new to the wider world of SF, Tom Hunter and Claire Weaver will join *Matrix* stalwart Martin McGrath on the editorial team from issue 168. Claire Weaver is 24 and lives in West London. She was one of the main organizers of Northampton's NewCon2, and is currently Arts Programmer for WorldCon 2005. Tom is 28 and lives within topping distance of Canary Wharf. He has worked as a journalist and within the arts and music industry, and is currently doing marketing for an arts venue at the unfashionable end of newly fashionable Hoxton and Shoreditch.

"Our editorial plans include keeping all of *Matrix*'s good bits (no problems there) and changing any bad bits (can't think of any off hand), which we confidently believe will leave us with no actual work to do for the duration of our editorship - but don't quote us on that. We're hopeful *Matrix*'s all-encompassing mix of news, reviews, science fact and playful opinion is the ideal way to break down that age-old misconception of SF fans as a wilfully cliquish bunch and lure new members into the bright new world of the BSFA."

Tom and Claire can both be contacted at [matrix\\_editors@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:matrix_editors@yahoo.co.uk)

Before the next issue comes, though, we've got some exciting stuff in this issue, so read on, and enjoy.

## matrix

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# RAGE against the... ...abuse of science

Cow! author **Neal Asher** gets hot under the collar about all the gobbledegook that advertisers and others throw at us to frighten us about the world we live in. It's all "a trend set by 'greenies', adopted by supermarkets, and promulgated by stupidity," he says.

I have to wonder how many people carry out the quite simple exercise of checking the meaning of words in a dictionary. Doing so, they might learn just how much gobbledegook is being flung at them every day. And just how much advertisers and those with more political motives, are perpetually playing on their fears and ignorance. Hypo-allergenic shampoo, for example, is not one that prevents allergic reaction, just one that contains lower levels of the proteins that do cause an allergic reaction. The compound word means 'less allergens' - one of those utterly meaningless statements of which advertisers are fond because there's less chance of Trading Standards jumping on them. The question you have to ask is: less allergens than what? A patch of stinging nettles? A wasp's nest?

Obviously the intention of putting these buzz-words on bottles is not to inform, but to blind with science. Perhaps realising this people could then ask themselves why fruit additives are good or why washing with herbs will give you an orgasm? At its root, all this obfuscation is playing on the simplistic idea that natural is good and chemical is bad. (This ignores everyday facts of life e.g. because we drink chemically-treated water we are utterly free of natural cholera and amoebic dysentery.)

This brings me, by a roundabout route, to the incredible ignorance surrounding the word 'organic'. While driving around in rural Essex it's quite common to see signs up advertising all sort of items for sale - knackered lawn mowers, ancient cars, flowers, honey - and some of the signs display literacy ranging from the poetic to the abysmal. But just lately I've been noticing a trend set by 'greenies', adopted by supermarkets, and promulgated by stupidity. Now you can buy organic manure, organic cheese, organic eggs... Do the people who started this strange craze have any idea what 'organic' means? Could they please explain to me what inorganic



Are these vegetables organic? They could hardly be anything else.

cheese, manure or eggs might be? If you are green then you'll probably think it means items produced without any of those nasty chemical things. What utter drivel. Everything is made of chemicals or their constituent elements. They are not something recently created by evil science but something derived from what is already here. Monosodium glutamate (flavour enhancer) ... yuk, we don't want any of that - far too many syllables. Ever wondered why tomatoes enhance a dish? Because they're packed with MSG.

An essential chemical we must ingest every day is sodium chloride: the product of a metal that if held in the hand would result in you being hospitalized shortly after, and the basic constituent of mustard gas. It is also a chemical three oxygen atoms away from being a powerful bleach and weedkiller.

How about these terrible sounding compounds: diallyl disulphide, diallyl trisulphide, S-2-propenylcysteine sulphoxide...? The list is a long one, but can be contracted to one word: garlic.

That which is organic is something relating to or derived from plants or animals, or it is any of a class of compounds based on carbon. Interestingly, a final definition in the dictionary I'm

presently studying, is: any substance such as a pesticide or fertilizer derived from animal or vegetable matter. So, organic food that you buy in the supermarket can have been sprayed with a nicotine insecticide or the organic chemical DDT. In fact few insecticides and fertilizers are not the product or organic chemistry, so they are organic.

In fact, some of the most poisonous substances on this planet are products of organic chemistry, whether performed in a laboratory or in the more potent chemical laboratories inside living things. Oh my goodness, chemicals, I hear you cry. Sigh. Get with reality. Curare is organic, so why not spread some of that on your wholegrain bread and see how you get on? And next time you buy your organic potatoes, remember they could have been sprayed with the organic compound Agent Orange and that would make them no less organic!

**RAGE against the...**  
Got something to say? Don't hold back, let us know. Letters are always welcome or, if you're really angry, let rip with your own "Rage against" whatever you loathe in SF in 750 to 1000 words and send it to Martin at the address opposite. Get it off your chest. It'll do you good.

## NEWSBITS

### Morden art

Focus editor Simon Morden has signed contracts with Telos for his novella, *Another War*. Probably due out at the back end of 2005, *Another War* is a "gods and monsters" epic set in darkest Oxfordshire, and comes complete with attack helicopters, rocket launchers and tanks. The film rights are still available...

### Short in Wrexham

This year's Wrexham Science Festival included a short of film competition. The judging panel, which included Matrix columnist Andy Sawyer, awarded the £1000 prize to *Harvest*, a chilling look at organ-farming, by Peter Crump.

### The force on disc

The original *Star Wars* trilogy will finally appear on DVD this September. The four-disc set will feature commentaries from George Lucas, Lawrence Kasdan and Carrie Fisher, amongst others, and a feature-length documentary.

### Tiptree winner

The Tiptree website has announced that the 2003 winner is *See This House in Order: A Romance of Souls* by Matt Ruff. The Tiptree Award specifically rewards work that "explores and expands gender roles in science fiction and fantasy." ([www.tiptree.org](http://www.tiptree.org))

### Daleks return

The Daleks are back. Big Finish are launching the third series in the *Dalek Empire* saga. Set two thousand years after the previous story, the longer, six-chapter, *Dalek Empire III* will be released in monthly instalments from May.

### BBC sucks

The BBC Cult website has launched *Vampires Magazine* ([www.bbc.co.uk/cult/vampire](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cult/vampire)), with specially filmed documentaries, features and some excellent fiction. New stories from Kim Newman, Michael Marshall Smith, Graham Masterton and Brian Stableford can be read or listened to.

## NEWSBITS

All change at *Interzone*...

## White award winner

Christopher Priest presents the James White Award to Deirdre Ruane.



Photo: Dave Stewart

Deirdre Ruane, a Dublin-born teacher now living in London, has won the 2003/4 James White Award. Christopher Priest presented the award, for her story "Lost Things Saved in Boxes", at Concourse – this year's British National Science Fiction Convention. Mr Priest said: "I'm supposed to say how difficult the judging was, but in this case it was really very easy. The winning story was obvious to everyone as soon as we read it."

Ms Ruane's story will be published in a future issue of *Interzone*.

The James White Award is now accepting entries for 2005 – details can be found at [www.jameswhiteaward.com](http://www.jameswhiteaward.com).

## I love you, Tomorrow

The *Tomorrow People* are returning to Big Finish audio productions with four new stories coming out by December 2004.

## Nebula winners

Online magazine *Sci Fiction* dominated the Nebula short fiction awards completing a double for best short story ("What I Didn't See" by Karen Joy Fowler) and best novelette ("The Empire of Ice Cream" by Jeffrey Ford).

Elizabeth Moon won the best novel award for *The Speed of Dark* and 2002 BSFA Award winner *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman was judged the best novella.

David Pringle steps down after 22 years. Andy Cox of *The Third Alternative* takes over UK's longest running sf magazine.

David Pringle is standing down as editor/publisher of *Interzone* – the much-delayed issue 193 will be his last as editor when it appears in May (dated Spring 2004).

*Interzone*, however, will continue. Andy Cox, founder of TTA Press and publisher/editor of *The Third Alternative* is taking over.

Departing editor David Pringle insists he remained enthusiastic about the fiction *Interzone* publishes but had become tired of the business side of running a magazine and blamed "a combination of reasons, family and financial – and also, it must be admitted, because of a certain weariness after 22 years at the helm" for his decision to step down.

Under David Pringle's editorship, *Interzone* acted as a nursery for many of the biggest names in modern British sf including Kim Newman, John Meany, Paul McAuley, Keith Brooke, Ian R MacLeod, Ian Watson, Eric Brown, Alistair Reynolds and Stephen Baxter.

David Pringle assured readers that ongoing subscriptions will be honoured and said that, while there may be changes in format and appearance, he expected that the spirit of his magazine would be maintained. He emphasised

David Pringle stepping down.



Photo: Harjo Bowen

that *Interzone* will remain separate from *The Third Alternative*, though TTA Press will be publishing both. And he expected that *Interzone* will continue to focus on science fictional stories, as distinct from *The Third Alternative's* emphasis on "slipstream" and horror.

Andy Cox has been publishing *The Third Alternative* for ten years, and, said David Pringle, he "knows how to produce a good magazine. In a business sense – and, I think, in every sense – his is a safe pair of hands." Encouraging readers to continue to support the magazine under its new owner, David Pringle offered "deepest thanks for all the friendship, enthusiasm and concern that readers have expressed over two decades and more – and to

wish you, and the magazine, all the best for the future."

Stephen Baxter praised *Interzone* and David Pringle for the central role they've played in British sf over recent decades: "Without David Pringle there would have been no *Interzone*, and without *Interzone* there would surely have been no 'British boom'. I got my first break when IZ accepted my first published story 'The Xeelee Flower' in 1986. David kept the magazine going, doggedly and bravely, and so it wasn't a one-shot but a stable and paying market for the likes of me. I was able to start building a career, and to get myself noticed by the book publishers. The Pringles' efforts in keeping IZ alive over nearly a quarter of a century is heroic, and I believe it's had a major influence on the destiny of British sf. David deserves a rest, but he will be missed!"

We at *Matrix* would simply like to pass on our thanks to David Pringle for all the adventures he has taken us on and all the doors to new worlds he opened for us. *Interzone* was part of our initiation into science fiction, the first sf magazine we ever read and the only one we've considered essential reading for the last fifteen years. And we wish Andy Cox good luck with his new venture.

## BSFA award winners

Grimwood wins after fourth consecutive shortlist nomination. Gaiman completes back-to-back short fiction wins.

The results of the BSFA awards for 2003 were announced on Sunday 11 April at Concourse, the British National Science Fiction Convention (Eastercon). The awards were presented in a ceremony hosted by John Jarrold at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool.

The award for Best Novel of 2003 went to *Felaheen* by Jon Courtenay Grimwood (Earthlight). It was presented by Richard Morgan and accepted on Jon's behalf by Darren Nash. He had previously been nominated for *redRobe* (2000), *Pashazade* (2001) and *Effendi* (2002).

The Best Short Fiction of 2003 award was presented by Ian McDonald to 'The Wolves in the Walls' by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean (Bloomsbury Children's Books). The award was accepted by John

Jarrold. Gaiman also won last year's short fiction award with *Coraline*.

The award for Best Artwork of 2003 went to the cover of *The True Knowledge* of Ken MacLeod by Colin Odell (SF Foundation; edited by Andrew M Butler and Farah Mendlesohn). The award was presented by the previous winner, Dominic Harman, and was accepted on Colin's behalf by Mark Plummer. Odell won in 2001 with the cover of Stephen Baxter's *Omegatropic* (BSFA).

The Best Non-Fiction of 2003 award was presented by Justina Robson to Farah Mendlesohn for 'Reading Science Fiction' (the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, from Cambridge University Press).

Farah Mendlesohn



## ...and at Asimov's

Gardner Dozois is stepping down as editor of *Asimov's Science Fiction* after nineteen years and fourteen "Best Professional Editor" Hugo Awards. Sheila Williams, currently the magazine's Executive Editor, will take over from January 2005. Dozois will remain a "contributing editor" offering "editorial guidance."

In a recent editorial Dozois said he was often asked whether he regretted devoting his life to sf rather than more "significant" work. He said: "I don't regret it. Other people may be richer than science fiction people, or more important, or more famous, or more beautiful, or more glamorous, or more successful. But we have the best dreams."

Talking about his successor Mr Dozois said he hoped readers would give her the same support they had offered him over the years. "Nobody loves the magazine more than Sheila, or has worked harder for it over the years, and I couldn't leave it in better hands."

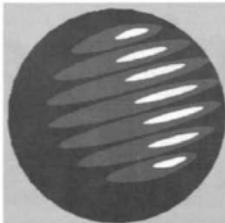
## Amazing!

One of the most famous names in sf history is making a comeback. *Amazing Stories*, first published in 1926, will be re-launched and "re-imagined" for a new generation. The first issue is due in July 2004. More information can be found at: [www.paizo.com](http://www.paizo.com).

ects her award.



Photo: Emma Brown



# RODERICK GLADWISH'S WORLD OF SCIENCE

## Fighting stem-ptation

Immune system cells have been created in the laboratory for the first time from embryonic mice stem cells. Dr Juan Carlos Zuniga-Pflucker and his team, from the University of Toronto, Canada, produced new immune cells called T-lymphocytes, and then demonstrated they fought infection.

This team succeeded by finding the cues to trigger the transformation from stem cells to T-lymphocytes. When introduced to a T-cell-deficient mouse, they produced an immune response against a virus infection.

Many illnesses, from certain cancers to HIV, suppress the immune system and are only stalled by drugs. This discovery could be the foundation of a permanent and successful treatment for many illnesses.

Source: [ananova.com](http://ananova.com)

Eric Simone, a senior biomedical engineering major at John Hopkins University, has created a new type of microchip that can move and isolate DNA and protein molecules. "This chip gives us a new tool to look into biological questions," says Jeff Tza-Huei Wang, an assistant professor, who supervised Simone's work. "Eric can actually interact with and manipulate individual DNA molecules."

Using wires about one-fifth the width of a human hair embedded in a circular pattern, the chip generates an electric field that can transport molecules to a designated area for study by microscope. It takes advantage of the natural negative charge possessed by DNA or a surface charge imposed on the molecules.

Simone believes that by linking the chip with analysis equipment, a user could identify medical ailments, monitor a patient's health or detect threats before they spread.

Source: [John Hopkins University](http://John Hopkins University).

After providing initial funding for the Science Fiction Experience, Paul Allen, Microsoft co-founder, is now donating £7.5 million to the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute. The money will be used to create a radio telescope array with more than 200 dishes measuring signals from space.

Source: [ananova.com](http://ananova.com)

Beer bubbles have been observed to go down as well as up. Many students have studied beer over the decades; however, not until now has the bubble phenomena been studied

### Stem cells transformed

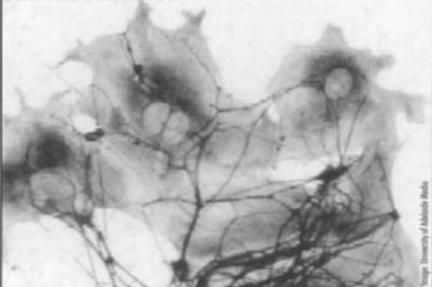


Image: University of Toronto

academically. Chemists at Stanford University and the University of Edinburgh using a camera that takes 750 frames a second have recorded what was happening and solved the mystery.

Bubbles rise fastest in the centre where the sides of the glass don't slow them. They push the beer up and at the top the liquid slides off the column of bubbles and down the sides, pulling little bubbles down with it.

Apart from getting academic grants to buy beer, the research is relevant to fluidized beds where solid particles are mixed with liquids or gases to make them act like fluids.

Source: [Stanford University and the University of Edinburgh](http://Stanford University and the University of Edinburgh)

Philips Research has created a fluid lens system that mimics the human eye. It uses two fluids with different refractive indices, one an aqueous solution and the other an oil, in a narrow tube. The tube wall and one end cap have a water-repellent coating that causes the aqueous solution to form a hemispherical mass at the opposite end of the tube.

When an electric field is applied it changes how repellent the coating is. The aqueous solution wets more of the sidewalls altering the radius of curvature between the fluids and hence the lens focal length.

It has a focal range of 5cm to infinity in less than 10 ms and has operated successfully for over 1 million focusing operations. It is being touted for use in phones and PDAs.

Source: [Philips](http://Philips)

# Rings and boxes

A NASA artist's impression of the X-43A in flight.



**SCRAMBLE!**  
NASA announced (March 29, 2004) the successful test of a scramjet, or supersonic-combustion ramjet vehicle. The remotely piloted aircraft completed a test run off the California coast. The X-43A was launched from a modified B52 bomber and was dropped at an altitude of 12,192 metres. It was boosted to a speed of Mach 6 by an auxiliary rocket to attain its operating altitude. It achieved a speed of Mach 7 (about 8000 kilometres per hour) during the eleven seconds of powered flight. It then glided at hypersonic speeds before ditching, as planned, into the ocean.

The NASA vehicle was 3.6 metres long and a cross between a jet and a rocket. The main difference between a scramjet and a rocket is that a rocket carries its own oxygen supply, while a scramjet extracts its oxygen from the atmosphere using its high speed.

NASA hopes that this breakthrough will herald a new age in aviation and that it will significantly lower the cost of lifting payloads. They hope to test the engine to a speed of Mach 10 later this year. The previous record for an atmospheric engine was set by a SR-71 Blackbird which flew at Mach 3.2.

Source: www.abc.net.au

**Sue Thomason writes:**  
First: This is not hate mail. Definitely not.

Second: I'm a Tolkien anorak (After the first time I saw *The Return of the King*, I spent a good hour or so arguing with my partner about possible mistranslations of Sindarin puns in the English subtitles. [And people say *sfe-fans* are sad! - ed.] I can't remember how often I've read the books. Lots.)

Third: I agree with almost everything you have to say about the film of *The Return of the King*. As an adaptation of the book it is visually superb, but in many ways it trivialises the book and seriously warps both plot and character.

[...] I agree the film is too long. Way too long. Especially because what we get is mostly spectacle, not plot. I think Jackson thinks "the visuals" are what it is all about.

I agree that the characters have been shrunk. Film-Gandalf acts pretty feisty for an angel, but he's the best of a disempowered bunch. Cutting the Saruman subplot from the third film was a big mistake.

Aragorn's story in the book is a tragedy; the tragedy of a man who achieves the Glorious Destiny - that other people (chiefly Gandalf and Elrond) have decided was his before he was old enough to have any say in the matter - by completely subjugating personal desire to Duty.

[...] Yes, in the film, the hobbits go on and on about returning to the innocent Eden of the Shire. In the book they go home and find that the Shire has been violated - corrupted and polluted (literally) by Saruman and Co. - but not utterly and irreversibly so. The book also says, again and again, that the complacent innocence of the Shire-folk exists only because the Shire has always been guarded by, among others, the Rangers. A large number of people have worked in secret, for generations, to preserve an idyll they can never share.

You're also right that the film ignores the moral and emotional complexity of the book. In the book, Frodo *fails*. Ultimately he is corrupted by the Ring, he cannot give it up. And for the rest of the book he has to live with the adulation of the rest of the world, who praise him for doing something he actually didn't. He doesn't find it easy to live with. And daily he has to meet Sam's unwavering love - Sam, who passed the test he failed. No wonder Frodo is not a comfortable hobbit. No wonder he leaves the world as soon as he decently can. Aragorn loses his freedom, Gandalf loses his humanity and his life, Denethor loses his sanity, the Elves lose *everything*. It's a book about loss. It's not a book about winning the Good Fight. It comes very close to saying that the Good Fight cannot



**We want your letters and comments.**

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be won, but that we have to try anyway.

So yes, I think the film is a very different experience for someone who is steeped in the book. It gives the book a visual dimension it never had for me (I'm not a very visual person). Minas Tirith looked just as it should. And I could fill in the blank characters and plot holes

with my own decades of acquaintance. But no, even for somebody who loves the book, it wasn't ultimately a satisfying film. Wonderful, yes; spectacular, yes; deserving every technical award it has won, yes. It's a film that looks perfect and misses the point. **Martin writes:** For those who admired the film more than we do, Gary Wilkinson's review (page 11) redresses my biased view.

**Steve Jeffery writes:** Glad I'm not entirely alone in my heretical viewpoint that Jackson's *LoTR* was a triumph of technical ability over story - and patience. I was bored with long chunks of the third film, by the end was checking my watch every five minutes waiting for it to be over. Several people have commented, and on reflection I think it's true, that the mistake was to omit the harrowing of the Shire, which loses the point of the trilogy, that you can never return to the place you left. Leaving the Shire as a pastoral Tellytubbyland, it negates this point.

Unfortunately, I fail to be moved or thrilled by CGI as a medium. When you can do anything on screen, nothing is epic anymore, merely admiration of the programming involved rather than the direction.

**Mike Brain writes:** I agree with Sue Thomason about the grey boxes/ backgrounds, and yes, this edition with slightly larger font is some improvement. However, some of us older fans already need more light to read by, so these grey tints are unhelpful - perhaps there should be a 'large print' edition like in the libraries! All this minor criticism belies the fact the we very much appreciate you carrying on as Editor with a thesis to finish (I hope that does not contain any grey boxes, as other 'old fogies' who vet your masterpiece might also object?).

I always enjoy the media news, so it was great to see that *The Sparrow* is to be filmed, and we can also look forward to *HHGTTG & Red Dwarf*.

**Martin writes:** We'll keep trying to make Matrix as readable as possible, though a large-print edition may be beyond our budget. As for the Princess of Mars adaptation, there is bad news in *Flickers* (page 12).

**Apologues for editing all the letters this month - we just have a lot of stuff to fit in.**

## Obituaries

### Robert Merle 1908-2004

Robert Merle died on 30 March 2004, aged 95. He was best known outside France for his 1969 novel, *Un Animal Doué de Raison*, which inspired Mike Nichols' 1973 film *The Day of the Dolphin* starring George C. Scott as a scientist who trains talking dolphins. Merle also wrote the science fiction works *Malevil* (1972), *Les Hommes Protégés* (1974, translated as *The Virility Factor: A Novel*) and *Madrapour* (1976).

Martin McGrath

### Sir Peter Ustinov 1921-2004

The author and actor Sir Peter Ustinov had a fatal heart attack in Switzerland on 28 March, 19 days short of his 83rd birthday.

Ustinov wrote his first play at 19, appeared in his first film at 25 and directed the second screen adaptation of F Anstey's fantasy novel *Vice Versa* two years later.

Other genre appearances included the Old Man in Logan's Run (1976), the Walrus in *Alice in Wonderland* (1999), the title roles in *Blackbeard's Ghost* (1968) and *Grendel Grendel Grendel* (1981, vocal only), Grandfather in *The Phoenix and the Magic Carpet* (1995) and Old Major in *Animal Farm* (1999, vocal only).

Steve Green

# Memories are unmade of this

Martin McGrath takes a look at *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, the new film from one of Hollywood's strangest minds, Charlie Kaufman.

About a year ago, I read Charlie Kaufman's (*Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*) script for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and loved it. I think it is as fine a piece of sf as I've ever read and confirmed my opinion that Kaufman is one of the best writers of speculative fiction (or any other type of fiction, for that matter) currently at work.

So I approached this film with sky-high expectations, but I also had two reservations.

My first concern was the presence of Jim Carrey in the lead role of Joel Barrish. Carrey can be funny (*The Mask*) and he can act (*The Truman Show*) but he can also be overwhelming, sweeping away decent material in a relentless onslaught of ruthless enthusiasm. On the page, Joel is sensitive and fragile and ordinary and it was hard to imagine Carrey successfully portraying any of those traits.

I needn't have worried. This is by some distance Carrey's most convincing and touching screen outing, proof that he can act and, more importantly, that he can subordinate his own ego to the material. At times I entirely forgot I was watching the guy from *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* so that, later in the film, when he gets to open up and some of his trademark gurning makes a fleeting appearance, there is a sense in which he's earned it and that it makes sense within the story.

More worrying, however, was the choice of director. Michel Gondry has already made a hash of a good Kaufman script (2001's *Human Nature*) and has done very little since to suggest that he deserved another chance. For the first half an hour, I began to believe that he'd messed up again. As I sat watching the film



ponderously and stodgily unfold I became increasingly frustrated, even angry. I couldn't believe that the source material could have been this badly treated.

After about half an hour my interest perked up, the film started to move at a faster pace, and the slowness of the opening began to make sense. From this point on *Eternal Sunshine* is a triumph - combining big sf ideas, philosophical coherence and emotional truth in an entertaining, even amusing package.

The skeleton plot is simple enough. Joel meets

Clementine (Winslet) and they fall immediately in love. Then we skip to the end of their relationship. Joel discovers that Clementine has used the services of a company called Lacuna to remove him and their relationship from her memory. Furious, he resolves to do the same, but when it comes to it he realises that the cost of losing the memories of the miserable times is the loss of the good times. Joel fights the procedure, but fails. While this struggle is going on in Joel's head we get to know Mary (Dunst). She is having a relationship with Stan (Ruffalo), one of the technicians removing Joel's memories, but she loves Dr Mierzwiak (Wilkinson). We also learn that the other technician, Patrick (a post-hobbit Wood), is starting a relationship with Clementine using her

discarded memories of Joel as material to win her over.

It would be unfair to reveal more, but *Eternal Sunshine* is not a typical romantic comedy. Just when you think you have everything sorted and are preparing for the obligatory happy ending, the film throws viewers a curveball that is honest, bittersweet and satisfying.

*Eternal Sunshine* is most visually impressive and inventive in the scenes that take place in Joel's mind. Buildings disassemble themselves, worlds shift and everything has a touch of hyper-reality about it. But, while the special effects are eye-catching, they are kept under control and the film's great strength is in the relationship between the characters, which are believable and touching.

I've already praised Carrey, but the other cast members also deserve kudos. Winslet (*Titanic*) is, I think, in career-best form as Clementine and both the leads receive excellent support from the rest of the cast. In particular Dunst (*Spider-man*) and Wilkinson (*In the Bedroom*) are excellent in small, but perfectly realised parts.

*Eternal Sunshine* is not quite as good as the script I read - from which the final version differs quite considerably - but if I see a more intelligent, more coherent and more touching fantasy film this year, I will consider myself very lucky indeed. Sadly, but not surprisingly, this darkly comic, challenging, intellectual film has done rather badly on release in America, but it deserves your support. See it in the UK from the end of April.

## *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

Director: Michel Gondry  
Screenplay: Charlie Kaufman  
Cinematographer: Ellen Kuras  
Starring: Jim Carrey, Kate Winslet, Mark Ruffalo, Elijah Wood, Kristen Dunst, Tom Wilkinson, Thomas Jay Ryan, Jane Adams  
108 minutes



# Dead from the neck up

Martin McGrath takes a look at the remake of a classic, and wonders why they bothered.

I am entirely unable to see the point of this film. *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) is an efficient, modern horror movie – by which I mean that there is a lot of special effects and almost no real horror. On its own, that's fine, but what is so perplexing is that the film purports to be a remake of George Romero's 1978 *Dawn of the Dead* while excising from the story every aspect that lifted the original above the mass of schlock horror movies.

*Dawn of the Dead* hardly needed to be remade, but it certainly did not need to be remade in this glossy, empty, bowdlerized form.

Comparing this version to the original is a lesson in how inferior mainstream Hollywood movies can be. Romero might have been operating on a shoestring budget, and his work outside the zombie trilogy might charitably only be called patchy, but his *Dawn of the Dead* had ambitions to say something important and he possessed the imagination and intelligence to succeed.

By contrast, this new version has been scripted by the man responsible for *Scooby Doo 2* (see review on page 10) and is the first directorial outing for Zach Snyder, whose previous experience has all been in the making of commercials.

And commercial is precisely the word for this new movie.

From the zingy one-liners to the predictable "shocks" and from the cute dog (I kid you not) to the stereotypical characters, this is as precisely targeted, risk-free and shallow a movie as it is as ever been my misfortune to watch. It is more than ironic, it is laughable, even unbelievable, that Romero's anti-consumerist original has been transformed into this marketing-friendly, idea-free fodder. It says far more about how cinema and society has changed in the last thirty years than any film ever could.

Of course the 2004's *Dawn* does have advantages over the original. The new film is obviously bigger in scope. We get to see much more of the chaos engulfing the world



– the new film does away with the original's discussions about the importance of logic versus emotion and replaces them with streaming TV broadcasts of riots and disaster. This film also has far more, and far better looking, zombies. Romero's film had, perhaps, one hundred monsters, but in 2004 the zombies congregate in football stadium-sized crowds. And the special effects are far better. The zombies are more effectively realised and the explosions, gun shot wounds, etc. all pack a far greater punch.

There are small treats too. I like Ving Rhames and he is his usual cool, sharp-tongued self in this movie. There is an entertaining selection of songs (accounting for some of the film's better jokes) though the soundtrack is notably inferior to Dario Argento's oddball music in the original. The updating of the zombies into fast-moving, ferocious monsters (in the style of *28 Days Later*) makes them a far more convincing menace.

It is what is missing that makes this film inferior to Romero's original.

Gone is the moral ambiguity of the core characters. Romero's policemen deliberately deserted their posts, putting their own safety above others: the helicopter they escaped in was stolen.

Also missing is the raiding party who destroy the comfortable lives the survivors build for themselves in the mall. Without the raiders, the decision of the survivors to desert the mall seems to be without motive, as if they get bored and decide to risk their lives on a whim.

Absent, too, is the satirical critique of the consumerist society and the dark humour that Romero extracted from placing his monsters in a palace of consumption.

Stripped of this extra layer of meaning, the new film aspires to be nothing more than mindless fun. The new *Dawn of the Dead* succeeds in its limited ambitions – it can be entertaining.

But if that is all the filmmakers wanted, why remake a more sophisticated film? There isn't enough respect for the original here to suggest an homage. There isn't enough intelligence to suggest that the filmmakers were offering an alternative to Romero's bleak view of the world. There is no sense that this film updates the social commentary of the Romero's film.

The only obvious motivation is that the filmmakers did not have the imagination to come up with an original idea of their own.

Had this film been given another title and setting, I don't think I'd have found *Dawn of the*

*Dead* (2004) as annoying as I did. The dumbing-down of the source material is, ultimately, offensive. You wouldn't let a load of toddlers loose with their crayons on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and if George Romero isn't (remotely) in Michelangelo's class, he doesn't deserve to have the memory of his superior movie defaced by the graffiti of the people who made this carthorse of a film.

A word of warning: if you have to see the film, don't leave at the start of the credits. There is a *Blair Witch*-style coda that at least rescues the sappy ending.

*Dawn of the Dead* seems to have done well at the box office, especially with its young target audience. But my guess is that, a decade from now, it will still be Romero's film people mean when they talk about *Dawn of the Dead*.

## Dawn of the Dead

Director: Zack Snyder  
Screenplay: James Gunn  
Cinematographer: Matthew F. Leonetti  
Starring: Sarah Polley, Ving Rhames, Jake Weber, Mekhi Phifer, Ty Burrell, Michael Kelly, Kevin Zegers, Michael Barry, Lindy Booth, Jayne Eastwood, Boyd Banks  
97 minutes

# Zombie nation

*Shaun of the Dead* is the best zombie movie reviewed in *Matrix* this month, says **Martin McGrath**. It is also the funniest, cutest, cleverest, nicest, best written, best directed and best acted. If you haven't already seen it, go now. If you only see one zombie movie this year, make it *Shaun of the Dead*.

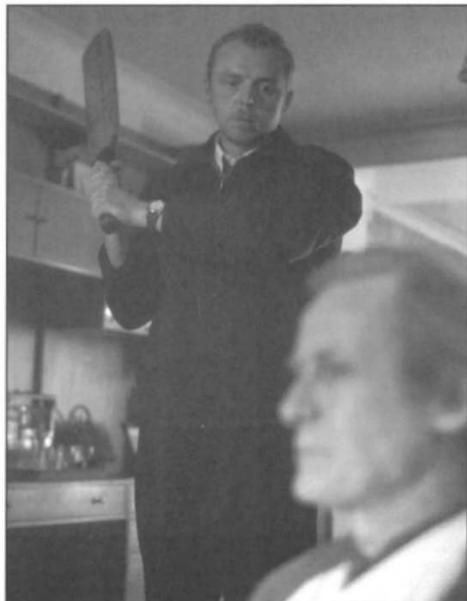
I honestly can't decide what I liked best about *Shaun of the Dead*, whether it was the effective, oddball humour, the neat doses of restrained, but genuine horror, the tons of geeky film references dumped in to keep the anal-retentive genre fan (me) happy or the sheer, good-natured fun of it all. Whatever, it doesn't matter, because, hours later, as I sit here writing this review, I'm still smiling about the film I just watched.

And that has to be a good thing. It really is impossible to discuss *Shaun of the Dead* without referring to its small-screen predecessor, *Spaced*. The two share the same writer/director team of Pegg and Wright. Pretty much the whole cast of *Spaced* make an appearance at some time and the film imports the geeky loser lifestyles of the sitcom characters pretty much wholesale.

So if you don't "get" *Spaced* this film might not be for you. However, if (like me) you adored that sitcom, then *Shaun of the Dead* is as tasty a treat as you could hope for.

One of the most appealing things about *Shaun of the Dead* is the delight it takes in the traditions of the genre. This film takes its horror pedigree seriously and, though it's light on gore and real shocks (it is rated 15), it plays the key elements of the classic zombie movie perfectly straight. Like all good zombie movies, the lead characters, Shaun (Pegg), Ed (Frost) and Liz (Ashfield) are on the sidelines of earth-shattering events, which impinge on their lives when the dead begin to rise and eat the living. Like all good zombie movies, our heroes then fortify themselves in an unlikely location – this being a British film, Shaun chooses a pub. And like all good zombie movies, they are then besieged by the monsters and must fight for their lives against the lumbering hordes.

The action sequences are convincingly done, the special effects good for film with a British film industry-sized budget and the horror moments did enough



to raise one or two gentle shrieks amongst the laughs from the audience at my screening. There is nothing overly flashy in the direction, but Wright does enough to suggest he can comfortably handle both action and comedy and that he could do more with a bigger budget, given the opportunity.

But *Shaun of the Dead* is a comedy and all of this spooky cleverness would be for nothing if it wasn't funny. Fortunately, there are plenty of laughs. One of the biggest things the film has going for it is the presence of the likeable Pegg. He's playing safe as the bumbling loser, essentially a retreat of his character from *Spaced*, but he does it very well. More surprisingly, perhaps, is how convincingly he manages the switch to (still bumbling) action hero. Add to that a script full of neat jokes, some clever sight gags

and support from a cast that, as well as most of the *Spaced* regulars, includes an almost unrecognisable Dylan Moran (*Black Books*), Lucy Davis (*The Office*) and Bill Nighy (not *Doctor Who*) and you have a package almost guaranteed to bring a smile to even the stoniest face.

Particularly impressive is the opening half hour. One great early sequence has a hungover Shaun stumble from house to corner shop and home again blissfully unaware of the chaos erupting around him. It combines a growing sense of the horrific with good jokes.

And the sight of Shaun and Ed staggering home from the pub singing "White Lines" by Grandmaster Flash & Melle Mel not only made me laugh, but brought back many happy memories. We never noticed the zombies either.

It is hard not to compare *Shaun*

of the *Dead* with the remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (reviewed opposite). Both films have been released in the UK within weeks of each other, both feature the risen dead ripping flesh from the living, and both owe their inspiration to Romero's zombie trilogy.

It seems to me that the smaller, cheaper, funnier British film wins out because it populates its world with real, likeable characters and places them in a recognisable and plausible setting. But also, crucially, it grabs a character and does what all good storytelling should, it takes him on a journey. I don't want to ascribe too profound a meaning to this light-hearted film, but *Shaun* is a zombie struggling through a mundane twenty-something existence in suburbia before the disaster that turns everyone else into flesh-eating monsters. In a crisis, he finds a purpose – even if he never learns to shoot straight. In *Dawn of the Dead* the characters are all avatars waiting for the cue to go into action – capable, crack shots, tough – the arrival of a crisis doesn't change them, just allows them to strut their stuff.

*Shaun of the Dead* might play for laughs, but at its core is a soft-hearted likeability that the crueler, flashier *Dawn of the Dead* doesn't think it needs. *Shaun of the Dead* is cleverer, more original, better written and better acted. It has the best movie use of a Queen song since *Wayne's World* and one of the most plausible endings to a zombie movie ever.

If you only see one zombie movie this year, make it *Shaun of the Dead*.

## *Shaun of the Dead*

Director: Edgar Wright  
Screenplay: Simon Pegg & Edgar Wright  
Cinematographer: David M Dunlap

Starring: Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Kate Ashfield, Dylan Moran, Lucy Davis, Bill Nighy, Peter Serafinowicz, Penelope Wilton  
99 minutes

# Scarey movies?

Martin McGrath struggles to stay awake with Johnny Depp and Halle Berry

As a double-bill of psychological horror films go, *Secret Window* and *Gothika* are perfectly suited – combining, as they do, neither psychological insight nor a fright worth the name.

In the Stephen King adaptation *Secret Window* Mort (Depp) is a writer living alone, suffering from writer's block and recovering from a traumatic divorce. Then Shooter (Turturro) turns up, claiming that Mort stole his story and demanding that he fix the ending.

*Secret Window* has two things going for it, one of which is Turturro, in fine form as the "villain" Shooter. The other is writer/director Koepp (*Stir of Echoes* and as writer on *Spider-man*, *Jurassic Park* and *Carillo's Way*). He can't quite escape the self-regarding straitjacket of King's original story, but at least he presents it in a competent and well-written form. *Secret Window* is let down by Mort. The character sleeps or sleepwalks through much of the story and



Depp looks dazed as he coasts through the film.

The ending isn't exactly a surprise, if you've been paying attention, but it is nicely creepy. It's hard to imagine anyone getting excited by *Secret Window* or wanting to see it twice, but it is an easy on the eye, if slightly dull, film.

Even allowing for *Secret Window's* ordinariness, *Gothika* is significantly worse. Miranda (Berry) is a psychiatrist in a mental hospital and is exasperated by

Chloe (Cruz) who claims she is being raped by the devil. Then Miranda drives home through a storm, almost runs over a mysterious figure and crashes. When she comes around, she is in a cell in her own hospital and being accused of murdering her husband.

It turns out she's being possessed by the ghostly figure of her boss's dead daughter, and has to put right the wrong that was done to her. And, in the process she will "learn to listen" to her patients (barf!).

There is neither suspense (if you don't work out what's going on in the first twenty minutes, you need a slap) nor excitement in *Gothika's* plodding plot. The acting is flat – even Bernard Hill has nothing to do but take the money and run – and there is no one to care about. This is the first English language film by director Kassovitz (*La Haine*) and it is simply tedious.

## Secret Window

Writer/Director: David Koepp  
Cinematographer: Fred Murphy  
Starring: Johnny Depp, John Turturro, Maria Bello, Timothy Hutton, Charles Dutton.  
96 minutes

## Gothika

Director: Mathieu Kassovitz  
Screenplay: Sebastien Guillerrez  
Cinematographer: Matthew Libatique  
Starring: Halle Berry, Robert Downey Jr, Charles Dutton, John Carroll Lynch, Bernard Hill  
98 minutes

# Out of Toon

Nothing here to get animated about, says Martin McGrath.

It is more than fifteen year's old, but *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* remains the best combination of cartoon and real characters in a movie. Two recent releases, *Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed* and *Looney Tunes: Back in Action* won't be changing that fact.

The first *Scooby-Doo* movie had a couple of good jokes at the expense of the loathsome Scrappy. The sequel lacks even these, though – as the title suggests – it does feature the television programme's most famous monsters, notably Miner 49er and Captain Cutler's Ghost. Shaggy (Lillard) and Scooby are well realised and there are some not too terrible jokes, but even the sight of Sara Michell-Gellar going all Buffy on the *Scooby* ghosts doesn't compensate for an pervading sense of dullness. Overall it's hard to imagine anyone getting much out of the movie.

I didn't expect much from

*Scooby Doo 2* but there was a time when a new movie by Joe Dante (*The Howling*, *Gremlins*, *The 'burbs*, *Matinee*) would have had me queuing outside a cinema and I hoped that *Looney Tunes: Back in Action* would see a revival in the director's fortunes.

Dante's best films are filled with dense layers of pop-culture references. As a film geek making films, only Quentin Tarantino comes close to matching Dante for the depth of

his knowledge about film. Some of this survives in *Looney Tunes* in two memorable and enjoyable sequences. The first, inside a laboratory filled with monsters, gives you the only chance to see a working Dalek this side of the new *Dr Who* and features beasts from *This Island Earth*, *Forbidden Planet*, *Them!* and *The Day of the Triffids*. The other sequence takes place in an art gallery and is a perfect tribute to the great Warner Brothers cartoons of the past – even taking the risk of

making jokes about art.

These are *Looney Tunes'* high points. Almost everything else is tedious. I still can't work out how a film that featured both Wile E Coyote and Marvin the Martian could be this consistently boring. Steve Martin, even by recent standards, is embarrassingly bad.

## Looney Tunes: Back in Action

Director: Joe Dante  
Screenplay: Larry Doyle  
Starring: Brendan Fraser, Jenna Elfman, Steve Martin, Timothy Dalton, Heather Locklear, Joan Cusack  
90 minutes

## Scooby Doo 2

Director: Raja Gosnell  
Screenplay: James Gunn  
Starring: Freddie Prinze Jr, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Matthew Lillard, Linda Cardinelli, Seth Green, Peter Boyle, Tim Blake Nelson, Alicia Silverstone.  
88 minutes



# Return to Middle Earth

Matrix doesn't normally review the same film twice, but since *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, without question, the biggest fantasy film event to date, and since our first review was somewhat controversial, we've given **Gary Wilkinson** the chance to provide a more positive review of Peter Jackson's final instalment - *The Return of the King*.

**I**t's been two years since *The Fellowship of the Ring* hit cinema screens and the whole enterprise has been seven years in the making, but the final film in the trilogy that is *The Lord of the Rings* has now arrived. And what a film! Whilst other movie franchises, like *Star Wars* and *The Matrix*, have floundered, this one has gone from strength to strength.

In sheer special effects terms alone each instalment has surpassed the last, and *The Return of the King* has more effects than the first two put together. The war of the ring reaches its peak. The dark lord Sauron, after the defeat of his ally Saruman in *The Two Towers*, turns his attention directly to the kingdom of men.

His armies are massing, and never before have such armies been seen on the screen. If you thought the battle of Helm's Deep was spectacular then, in those immortal words: "You ain't seen nothing yet!" The three battles that form the core of the film are so huge, with over twenty thousand digital participants, that another room had to be built at the effects house to store the extra computer equipment needed to render all the scenes. Director Jackson's horror background ensures that these conflicts are anything but the anaemic fare seen in the other, aforementioned, film trilogies. There's plenty of blood and guts and severed heads and trolls and winged beasts and giant pachyderms. He gets his camera right into the heart of the action, swooping around like a documentary maker.

However, this film is not just fancy fight scenes: there is depth behind the spectacle. Sometimes the moments of stillness are when this film is at its most intense. Because, in the end, this film comes down to individuals struggling against adversity. Minas Tirith is under siege but its steward, Denethor



(Noble) – poised between arrogance and madness – is taking no action. McKellen's Gandalf, now the heroic White Wizard, has to take charge himself. Plus it all starts to get a bit serious for the pair of mischievous hobbits, Merry (Monaghan) and Pippin (Boyd) transformed from jokers to warriors. And, above it all, Aragorn (Mortensen) has to achieve his destiny and return as king.

In the meantime Frodo and Sam must somehow drag themselves towards Mount Doom. Gollum is not being exactly helpful, leading Frodo into giant spider Shelob's lair for one of the best, if not the very best, drawn-out movie monster moments. I shudder to think how someone who is actually arachnophobic would react to this sequence. Andy Serkis, in collaboration with the CGI wizards, recreates the same brilliant performance from *The Two Towers*. We even see him 'in the flesh' for Gollum's origin story in the first scene of the film. Elijah Wood's performance is note-perfect but it is heroic Sam (Astin) who carries these scenes.

Unfortunately, good as the film

is, there are one or two moments when Jackson fumbles the ball. Partially it's Tolkien's fault – for instance, he was never one for female characters. Although Jackson has given them increased significance, they still struggle to make the on-screen impact that the blokes do. (And there are a lot of blokes. I've not mentioned Gimli, Legolas, Theoden or Faramir yet, all who have significant contributions.) The romance between Arwen (Tyler) and Aragorn is largely a side issue for most of the film and Eowyn (daughter of King Theoden) goes into battle disguised as a male warrior but gets one particular dull piece of (non-Tolkien) dialogue.

Sadly, and more importantly, there is the void left by the absence of Christopher Lee's superb Saruman. For one it gave a face to the evil, though the Big Flaming Eyeball does get to do some acting this time. Wait for the inevitable extended DVD for 7mins of Lee. Wait forever for the Scouring of the Shire (where Saruman nearly gets his revenge) because that was never filmed. Jackson's multiple endings do seem to drag slightly and with

welling music and soft-focus slo-mo, they have more than a whiff of Gorgonzola to them. Although I can understand why he omitted it, the Scouring would have added a touch of humanity to the epic.

But a few stumbles certainly don't detract from the journey as a whole. With *Return of the King* Jackson has proved himself the king of cinema and I eagerly await his next voyage. Because, leaving Middle Earth, he is now headed for Skull Island and a remake of *King Kong*.

## *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*

Director: Peter Jackson  
Screenplay: Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens & Peter Jackson  
Cinematographer: Andrew Lesnie

Starring: Sean Astin, Cate Blanchett, Orlando Bloom, Billy Boyd, Bernard Hill, Ian Holm, Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, John Noble, Miranda Otto, John Rhys-Davies, Andy Serkis, Liv Ullmann, Hugo Weaving, David Wenham, Elijah Wood  
201 minutes

# Princess in trouble



Robert Rodriguez's plans to direct the adaptation of Burrough's *A Princess of Mars* may be in jeopardy. The director recently resigned from the Directors' Guild of America - the trade union for Hollywood film directors - so that he could give comic creator Frank Miller a co-director credit on the forthcoming *Sin City*. Such credits are against the Guild's policy. But Paramount, the company that is producing and owns the rights to the John Carter stories, is a signatory to the Directors' Guild's code of practice and will only employ Guild members to work on its films.

Paramount have a budget of \$100 million set aside for John Carter's first adventure on Barsoom and have said they want to match the scale and scope of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Rodriguez quit the Directors' Guild once before, ten years ago, to work on one part of *Four Rooms* - though he later rejoined.

At the time of writing, Rodriguez seems set on neither rejoining the Guild nor leaving *A Princess of Mars*, having already done significant work in pre-production and built new studios and special effects facilities in Texas for the project. This leaves Paramount in an awkward position and the future of what they hoped would be a major new film franchise in some doubt.

## FLICKER

### Fantastic Films Weekend

The third Fantastic Films Weekend takes place on May 22 and 23 at the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television, Bradford. The 48 hour film marathon features all three *Lord of the Rings* films, a Terence Fisher double-bill (*Brides of Dracula* and *The Devil Rides Out*), *Gozu* and *Battle Royale II: Requiem*. There will also be a Douglas Adams tribute. Further details on [www.nmpft.org.uk/](http://www.nmpft.org.uk/) film or email [filmnews@nmsi.ac.uk](mailto:filmnews@nmsi.ac.uk).

### More Scanning

In our last issue we reported that Richard Linklater (*School of Rock*) wanted to adapt Philip K Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* using the weird "animation" technique seen in his earlier film *Waking Life*. It now appears that the project has taken a step further with Keanu Reeves (*Matrix*) keen to star and the George Clooney/Stephen Soderbergh production company Section 8 producing. It still seems impossible that this can be commercially viable, but Flicker can't help wanting to see it.

### Running again

Brian Singer will remake *Logan's Run*, probably this year before work starts on *X-Men 3*. No cast details, but it appears the age of termination has been cut from 30 to 21 - making the new film more teen-friendly.

### More Spidey

The second film cost \$200 million and isn't quite finished, but Marvel and Sony are already planning further adventures for Spider-Man. A third outing is already locked, set for release in 2007, with director Raimi committed and star Maguire almost certain to return. But that is not all. The two companies are already in discussions about even more Spider-Man films - at least another three and perhaps even more beyond that. Of course with over forty years of Peter Parker's adventures to pick from, there's plenty of material.

### Water wars

Leading Indian director Shekar Kapur (*Elizabeth*, *Bandit Queen*) is working with Andrew Niccol (*The Truman Show*) on a dual-language (English and Hindi) of

movie to be made in India. Called *Paani*, the film is set in Mumbai 25 years in the future. Water has become a scarce resource and is used as currency. *Paani* tells a love story set against the background of a war that breaks out over who has control of the remaining water supplies. With a budget of over \$20 million Kapur has been quoted as saying that he hopes the film will do for Indian cinema what *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* did for Asian films in America.

### Keep an eye on Eye

Robert Jordan's fantasy epic *The Eye of the World*, the first part of his *Wheel of Time* series, has been optioned for film, television, video games and merchandising rights by Red Eye Entertainment. Jordan's massively successful *Wheel of Time* novels have sold more than 15 million copies in America alone. It is not clear what track-record Red Eye Entertainment have in getting anything made: they describe themselves as a firm that "builds global value in franchise entertainment properties" and are not a production company themselves.

### Spielberg at War

The *War of the Worlds* will be remade for cinema by Stephen Spielberg and will star Tom Cruise, Variety reports. David Koepp (*Jurassic Park*) is writing the script and shooting is expected to start later this year.

### Episode 3 date

*Star Wars Episode Three* will be released in America and Canada on May 19, 2005. There is no confirmation on other releases, but unlike the previous two movies in the second trilogy, there will be no worldwide simultaneous release. Lucasfilm is said to be preparing for a July release in Japan.

### X factor

David Duchovny claims that there will be a new *X-Files* movie. Talking at a press conference for his new film *Connie and Carla*, Duchovny said: "It's definitely happening. Chris has a great idea for a new movie and I expect we'll be able to begin shooting in the next year or so." Is there still a market for the *X-Files*? Even an ex-*X*-fan can't summon up much enthusiasm.

# Reboot camp rewind

Denis Jackman reckons it's time we gave an old *Soldier* another chance.

**O**n the face of it *Soldier* is just another movie in the *Cyborg Terminator* genre that may have you reaching immediately for the eject button on your DVD. But in this case, if you do, you'd be missing out on a treat.

The story centres on the conditioned soldier Sergeant Todd 3465 (Russell), who is discarded after a better model is grown. Presumed dead after a training accident, Todd is dumped with the rubbish on a distant planet inhabited by settlers who were shipwrecked many years before. They take him in and adopt him. In return Todd later saves them from Colonel Mekum (nicely portrayed by Isaacs), the evil leader of the new breed of soldiers.

This, however, is simplifying the storyline. There are expansive opening sequences that explain how Todd came to be, combat scenes and little vignettes of action that show Todd to be a lean, mean, killing machine.

Russell is a treat as Todd;

using just 200 words of dialogue (everything else is left to expression and body language), he is excellent. The supporting cast is surprisingly strong, with Isaacs, Lee, Pertwee and Busey all giving good performances.

The script is by *Blade Runner* writer David Webb Peoples and the two stories are linked; check out Todd's service record during the opening sequence. The underlying story, in between the action, is that humanity will conquer all.

Maybe there is a cautionary tale here for our society, on how we should treat our soldiers who are (supposed to be) fighting in our name. The scenes between Todd and the civilian Mace (Pertwee) serve to show the gulf between the ordinary people and the soldier. When Todd reaches across that gap, to offer assistance to the mute child Nathan, it is misunderstood and he is cast out. However it seems that it is only Nathan who truly understands Todd.

At the end you are left



wondering about the question "what is humanity?" Certainly there is a more going on here than you might expect, and the old SF lecture on "before the futures you are making now" is trotted out. There are other films that have covered similar ground - *Universal Soldier*, *Solo*, *Cyborg* and even *Terminator* - and had greater commercial success.

But this film has more depth to it. The action scenes are well scripted and the ending, even if it is too pat, is good fun. We see too little of Kurt Russell in roles like this (Jack O'Neill, Snake Plisskin) and I personally would like to see more.

I want to know what happened after the Trinity Moons? Where did Todd go? Will he ever organise sentences and address people by gender? Above all I want this to have a TV spin off series like *Stargate*, that other underrated Kurt Russell of action movie. But then I am a dreamer, I watch the stars from the gutter that is humanity.

## Soldier

Director: Paul WS Anderson

Scriptwriter: David Webb Peoples

Cinematographer: David Tattenthal

Starring: Kurt Russell, Jason Scott Lee, Jason Isaacs, Connie Nelson, Sean Pertwee, Gary Busey

98 minutes



Martin McCrath gets briefly excited at the promise of sci-fi lesbians in 1997's *The Sticky Fingers of Time*. It's nothing like *Pi*, whatever *Total Film* claimed!

**Sticky Fingers of Time? That sounds promising.**

**What does it mean?**

Time has five fingers, apparently. What is, what was, what will be, what could have been and what could be to come.

**What happened to the thumbs?**

I don't know.

**You can't do anything without a thumb! Ask a dolphin.**

I don't think you're meant to worry about it.

**Well, what am I supposed to worry about?**

This female sf writer, Tucker (Terumi Matthews - who once played Madonna) gets blasted by radiation at a H-Bomb test and, instead of just dying of radiation poisoning, she becomes a "non-linear person."

**I can be non-linear too, after enough whisky.**  
Ever jumped forward 44 years in time?

**Not recently.**

Well Tucker does, and meets Drew (Nicole Zarya - who was once streetwalker no.7 in *Whore 2*) whose life is falling apart.

**You'd think it could only be getting better, after a career start like that?**  
Now she travels through time, but doesn't know it.

**Isn't that true of all of us?**

This isn't the time to get profound. We meet Isaac (James Urbanik), He's Tucker's ex and also a "non-linear person." With Tucker, he drags Drew into an increasingly weird set of situations, mostly involving Ofelia (Belinda Becker) who is Tucker's sexy girlfriend and a "time freak" from the future.

**Wait! Lesbians? Why didn't you say so?**

Don't be so sad! Anyway, there's nothing going on except some snogging.

**Aww...**

Then Tucker gets two fingers in the mail.

**Now that sounds dirty.**

They're in an envelope and they're decaying.

**Ugh! Maybe they're the missing thumbs?**

They're definitely fingers.

**Are they time's fingers? Do they look sticky?**

How would I know? Tucker and Drew go to a bookshop. Tucker looks up radiation poisoning and discovers that standing next to an exploding nuclear device is probably causing her nosebleeds and thinning hair. Drew, meanwhile, finds a copy of Tucker's book, *The Sticky Fingers of Time*, but the author's photograph shows Ofelia, and there's a newspaper cutting that proves that Tucker won't die of radiation poisoning.

**That's good news.**

Not really, it says she gets shot as soon as she goes back to her own time.

**Oh... not so good. So then what happens?**

Drew tries to change the past. Or is it the future?

**Does it work?**

Erm... kind of... watch the movie.

**So how do the critics describe this film?**

"Lesbian *Pi*-like sci-fi flick." say *Total Film*.

**I'd buy that! But how would you describe it?**

As pretentious as *Mulholland Drive*, but without the rude bits. A disappointing night in for the lads.

# Bubba Ho-Tep under

"We couldn't tell them the truth. That Elvis and JFK were chasing an Egyptian mummy that was wearing cowboy duds.... We didn't want them to think we were crazy." Clever direction and strong performances make *Bubba Ho-Tep* a surprisingly thoughtful, enjoyable experience, says **Martin McGrath**. Bring on the She-Vampires!

**B**ubba Ho-Tep, from Don Coscarelli (five *Phantasms* and two *Beastmasters*), based on a Joe R Lansdale short story, targets every geek's erogenous zones and gives them a hefty tweak. The idea is suitably wacky. The casting, especially of Campbell (*Evil Dead*), is inspired and the buzz from the few people who'd managed to see the film (which was completed in 2002) was intense.

The very fact that almost no one had managed to see *Bubba Ho-Tep* – because it had only a very limited cinema release in America and had been seen only at scattered festivals in Europe – helped give the film that essential cult mystique long before the opening titles rolled.

Having seen it, at last, my impression is that *Bubba Ho-Tep* is an odd, surprising film that may disappoint many of the expectations built up by the delayed release. It is by no means a bad film, and it will certainly win a place in the heart of those who enjoy quirky B-movies, but it will disappoint those who are expecting a straightforward popcorn romp. The first thing to be clear about is that this is not the broad, campy horror movie that the title and plot summary might lead you to expect.

There is humour – particularly in Campbell's pitch perfect Elvis narration – but it is dark, earthy to the point of vulgarity and sometimes poignant. Large swathes of this film focus on the aging Presley's regrets (his failed marriage to Priscilla, the loss of Lisa Marie, the terrible movies, the drugs) and on the obsessions of an old man who has a "growth on his pecker" and whose life revolves around mealtimes and fear of dying.

The key to this film, however, is Ossie Davis (*Do the Right Thing*) as JFK. The audience aren't expected, I think, to take seriously his claims

Bubba Ho-Tep: "Ask not what your rest home can do for you, but what you can do for your rest home."



to be the late American president dyed black by a scheming Lyndon B Johnson, but the film treats the tale and the character with respect. In the warped, strangely empty world of the old folks' home, one mad story is as good as any other and deserves to be taken at face value.

In the same way, the story of two old men fighting a soul-sucking monster is played as straight as possible. *Bubba Ho-Tep* rarely takes the obvious route to laughs – Elvis is never suddenly reinvigorated to work his mojo against the evil beast. The "action", such as it is, is pretty much what you'd expect



from two arthritic old men, one in a wheelchair, the other on a walking frame. There is one slapstick moment – when some kung fu styling goes predictably wrong – but if a septuagenarian Elvis and an octogenarian JFK were going to battle against a supernatural monster, well, this is pretty much

what it would look like. Which means that those hoping for kick-ass fight scenes are going to be disappointed.

In many ways, then, *Bubba Ho-Tep* simply doesn't work.

It doesn't deliver as an action/horror flick. Coscarelli does a fair job of making the decrepit old folks home feel spooky, but there are no jump-out-of-the-seat horror moments or psychological tricks and the plot is too straightforward to deliver any surprises. Worst of all, the film's low-budget limitations are cruelly exposed when the monster finally does appear on screen.

Nor is *Bubba Ho-Tep* the knock-out comedy the silly premise will lead the viewer to expect. The jokes are good, but the dark humour and atmosphere of decline and decay are not going to appeal to everyone.

Yet, despite all this, I enjoyed this film. There is a surprising warmth about the way the characters are portrayed. Both Davis and Campbell are immensely likeable and the respect accorded to their stories makes the film far more successful than it might have been had it been played just for laughs.

Campbell, especially, is brilliant as Elvis. His impersonation of The King is spot on and frequently touching. When, in a moment of reflection he asks himself: "Why didn't the fame and money hold off old age and death?" *Bubba Ho-Tep* takes a giant leap beyond what I'd been hoping for.

*Bubba Ho-Tep* is emphatically not what I expected, but when the credits rolled to an end, I found myself genuinely pleased to see the promise that: "Elvis returns in: *Bubba Nosferatu: Curse of the She-Vampires*".

Make it this surprising, and I'll be there.

Thank you very much!

## Bubba Ho-Tep

Writer/Director: Don Coscarelli  
Cinematographer: Adam Janeiro

Starring: Bruce Campbell, Ossie Davis, Ella Joyce, Reggie Bannister, Bob Ivy, Larry Pennell, Heidi Marnhout  
92 minutes

*Bubba Ho-Tep* will be available on Region 1 (US) DVD from 25 May, 2004

# Dæmons return

"Immediately absorbing and ultimately satisfying," **Stuart Maddison** could hardly be happier with *Dæmos Rising*, from Reeltime Pictures. He enjoyed the plot, the acting and the special effects... if only they'd left out "that *Star Trek* crap" at the end.

**I**mmediately absorbing and ultimately satisfying, the latest drama from producer-director Keith Barnfather should please lovers of *Doctor Who*, of which it is an unofficial spin-off, and the less demanding genre fan. There are no former *Who* stars in the cast, but the initial release is splendid in the DVD format; two firsts for Reeltime Pictures, I think. This is ambitious stuff – a 'ghost story' set in the present, but with shadows of humanity's ancient past and a visitation from a disturbing possible future. *Dæmos Rising* has been beautifully shot on high-quality video and prepared for DVD with pretty much all the professionalism one would expect from a genuine BBC release with a full TV budget behind it.

The story opens with a classically narrated in the immediately recognisable voice of one-time possible Doctor, Ian Richardson. The scene is further set by an evocative opening sequence that reminds those in the know of the lecture given by Jon Pertwee in *The Dæmons*, the popular 1971 *Doctor Who* story providing the main inspiration here. This quite wonderful opening is hardly let down by a narrative that proceeds, at a steadily quickening pace, to a conclusion that may, admittedly, disappoint some. Forgoing *Who* fans and anyone who appreciates the work that goes into such labour-of-love 'amateur' productions will, however, certainly feel they've got their money's worth. As should be the case, the various making-of featurettes included on the disc add to one's appreciation of the film, not to one's enjoyment of it.

We are quickly introduced to Kate Lethbridge-Stewart (Cressman) – daughter of the Brig, don'tcha know. Hers is the only performance that slightly lets the side down – though interestingly she is better as a seductive evil twin towards the story's climax. The



rest of the small cast excels with some difficult material and the sort of SFX-added-afterwards acting challenges that are the mainstay of the genre. The standout, as ex-UNIT captain Douglas Cavendish, is Miles Richardson, of whom a great deal is expected as the character juggles madness, suppressed feelings for Kate and a creeping terror. Richardson's totally convincing performance shows that his limited previous screen-acting credits in no way reflect his talents.

Another of the production's strengths is the atmospheric music from the modest Alistair Lock (who is also called upon to surpass himself with some voice work). His score is sure to send shivers up a few spines. *Dæmos*' visuals, too, are worthy of a mainstream drama. Able director Barnfather and his tiny team work wonders with some terrific lighting and just a few choice props, notably a convincing book of spells and the fabulous statue that graces the DVD cover. The story is set and was filmed in the

depths of the Devon countryside and full, imaginative use is made of locations in and around an isolated cottage and a local tourist attraction that makes a wonderful, memorable setting for the story's final chapter. Spoiler-phobes skip to the next paragraph now, as I must say that the sudden shift from the earlier open surroundings to the enclosed subterranean environment of the stunning Kents Cavern 'show caves' came as a marvellous surprise for this viewer.

Those who remember hiding behind the sofa as children will enjoy the general spookiness and mounting tension as the forces of darkness move against Kate and the increasingly troubled Douglas. There's more than a touch of *Sapphire and Steel* to the proceedings, as acknowledged by screenwriter Howe in another of the behind-the-scenes pieces. Reeltime has used a number of different writers (I await their call!) and this is excellent for, apparently, a first effort. However, in the brief running time, Howe's script attempts too much. A sequel to the previous Reeltime drama, *Downtime*, as well as *The Dæmons*, it also has to encompass references to other *Doctor Who* stories (visually there

are many references for *Who* fans to savour) – and even ties into Telos Publishing's *Time Hunter* novellas.

*Dæmos Rising*'s problems are really those of plausibility within the plot logic. Even if one is familiar with the protagonists from *Downtime*, their acceptance of some bizarre happenings and fazed reactions to others can't help but jar. Later, a confessed insubstantial 'ghost' is seen to close a door – something the actor (Andrew Wisler, son of Michael – Davros himself!) questions in another featurette, though no explanation is forthcoming. And why no ominous, dragging, stone-on-stone footsteps as the 'cold' Kate stalks the real one at the climax? A touch like that would have been highly effective – and useful for determining who's who when, unintentionally, things get a little confusing.

Finally, the denouement – though blessed with CGI effects that do not disappoint – dips into what one episode of *Reel Dwarf* memorably dubbed that *Star Trek* crap, as alien and human debate the concept of love. The ending of original *Who* serial *The Dæmons* has often been derided, though it's not actually as bad as this. Since, thankfully, the original's other faults – notably unconvincing monster designs – are not reproduced here, *Dæmos*' cod philosophising cannot be a deliberate, but misguided, homage. Luckily, though, we then get a rather good last scene that offsets this clumsiness and offers possibilities for the future of the characters and of Reeltime productions, too. I look forward to seeing what happens next. (Something involving the roving vampiric monoliths from *The Stones of Blood*, perhaps?)

## Dæmos Rising

Director: Keith Barnfather  
Screenplay: David J Howe  
Starring: Miles Richardson, Beverley Cressman, Andrew Wisler, Ian Richardson (voice)  
53 minutes

To win a copy of Reeltime Picture's *Dæmos Rising* turn to the back page.





# Woo-Who!

No shortage of Who news since the last issue of *Matrix*. Christopher Eccleston earned the bookies a lot of money when he was named as the ninth Doctor. Eccleston, whose credits include *eXistenZ*, *28 Days Later* and *The Second Coming* (with series writer/producer Russell T Davies) told journalists that working with Davies again was a big draw: "This man can give the Doctor a wisdom, wit and emotional range as far-reaching as the Doctor's travels in time and space. It's going to be a magnificent, epic, entertaining journey, and I can't wait to start!"



Who he? Christopher Eccleston.

Also announced was the writing team that will work on the new series. Experienced television writer and genre novelist Paul Cornell got the nod, as did Mark Gattiss (*The League of Gentlemen*), Steven Moffatt (*Coupling*) and Rob Shearman (three Big Finish audio dramas). Julie Gardner, head of drama for BBC Wales, said: "Finding writers for the new series of Doctor Who has been one of the best jobs I've ever had. The talent available was exceptional."

The show's producers are in negotiations with the creators of some of the series' original monsters – including, it is reported, the estate of author Terry Nation for the rights to use the Daleks. The BBC Publicity department say that negotiations are "going well" but stressed that it was still to early to confirm which of the Doctor's rogues' gallery would appear in the new series.

Filming of thirteen forty-five-minute episodes starts in Cardiff this spring and transmission is scheduled for 2005.

## It's frelling back!

*Farscape* is returning to television screens. American cable channel Sci-Fi has finalized a deal to air *Farscape: Peacekeeper War*, a four-hour miniseries that will tie up all the loose ends left dangling when the network axed the space opera last year. Production has wrapped and is slated to air at the end of the year.

## Wizard all at 'sea

The Sci-Fi Channel's adaptation of Ursula K LeGuin's *Earthsea* stories is taking shape. Shawn Ashmore (*X-Men*), Danny Glover (*Predator 2*), Isabella Rossellini (*Blue Velvet*) and Kirstin Kreuk (*Smallville*) will star in the four-hour miniseries, to be directed by Rob Lieberman, veteran of numerous genre television shows including *The X-Files*, *The Dead Zone* and *Jake 2.0*.

*Earthsea* will tell the story of a Ged (Ashmore) a powerful young wizard who seeks guidance from an old master, Ogion (Glover), and struggles to reunite the kingdom. The adaptation is based on the first two novels in the series.

## Even more from Sci-Fi

The Sci-Fi Channel's new production slate continues the US cable network's policy of adapting major genre titles. Larry Niven's *Ringworld* will be made as a four-hour miniseries. Jim Butcher's *Dresden Files*, the story of a wizard making a living as a Chicago PI, will be adapted as a film and "backdoor" pilot for a possible continuing series.

Clive Barker will produce *History of the Devil*, a six-hour series about the devil's attempts to litigate his way back into heaven. *Witchhunter Robin* is a live action adaptation of a popular Japanese anime series. Bruce Campbell (*Evil Dead*) will write and direct two films, Stan Lee will produce three and Joel Schumacher (*Batman Forever*) will produce an as yet untitled ongoing series described as *V* meets *Sex and the City*.

Other projects include *Amazing Screw-On Head* from Mike Mignola (*Hellboy*), and *in Monster Mash*, special effects expert Stan Winston will create monsters that fight each other.



## Marlin McGrath watches *Smallville*.

Why has Superman lasted so long? There can hardly be a duller character in all of fiction. Capable of doing almost anything, it is true, but practically invulnerable and with the moral complexity of Mom's apple pie, the big boy scout is guaranteed to do the right (that is, American) thing in any given situation. Add to all the charisma of a two-by-four, and the fact that Siegel and Shuster's caped hero is still going after almost seventy years seems incredible.

One argument for the Kryptonian's continued popularity casts him as the archetypal power fantasy of the pubescent boy. Awkward and ordinary on the outside, underneath his day-to-day clothes is a seething powerhouse, capable of incredible, terrible acts if only he were to let loose. It is hardly surprising, this line argues, that two depression-era teenage schoolboys created the character as an outlet for their fantasies and a reflection of their impotence in the face of the grown up world.

Whether or not you buy this psychological profile, the argument is done no harm whatsoever by *Smallville*.

*Smallville* recreates Superman as a teenage soap-opera. With the pressures of school, the first fumbblings of adolescence and the centrality of belonging, whatever the costs, *Smallville* perfectly encapsulates all the horrible things about teenage life that Superman is supposed to provide escape from.

And yet, Superman is entirely absent.

Faced with the question: "How do you make Superman interesting?" *Smallville* creators have decided to remove him from the equation.

Of course there is Clark Kent (Tom Welling), neophyte alien superhero, learning how to use his powers (not all of which have developed) and being taught the importance of doing the right thing in a rural idyll. To keep him busy there are girls, particularly Lana (Kirsten Kreuk), and Lex Luthor's evil father Lionel (John Glover hamming it up brilliantly) and there are a host (nearly one every episode!) of kryptonite-empowered mutants threatening the American idyll. Should Clark get too big for his boots, the town is also smothered in nasty green Kryptonite.

Even though he's been sidelined, *Smallville*'s biggest weakness remains Superman. The need to shackle Clark, to prevent him simply sweeping aside obstacles in the plot, means that some wicked character or another is always working out that he has these amazing powers and immediately working out how to counteract them with the abundant Kryptonite. It is a fundamental weakness of the Superman character, he is just too powerful, dependable and predictable.

Add to this the recycling of plot ideas and the irritating, will they/won't they relationship between Lana and Clark and one must ask how long *Smallville* can go on reworking the same formula. Longevity questions are made more acute by the fact that the star, Welling, is now 27. He no longer looks out of place in a High School – it has gone far beyond that – he looks downright creepy.

*Smallville* lacks anything one might call creativity or originality, but it does have the occasional interesting episode – in season three I enjoyed both "Extinction" and "Hereafter" and it was nice to see Christopher Reeve's return in "Legacy."

*Smallville* is diverting enough and it seems solidly set in the ratings, so that a return for a fourth season appears a certainty, but there is nothing inspiring or exciting about it. It is hard to understand why it, like its absent hero, has survived so long.

# Dear John

Foundation  
Favourites  
Number eight: *Odd John* by Olaf Stapledon

"He had to be stopped, for all women were his playthings and all men his pawns." Admit it, you're reaching for your credit card already! **Andy Sawyer** wonders whether anyone got what they expected from Olaf Stapledon's *Odd John*.

**Y**ou wonder what they thought they were buying. An apparently naked man with bulbous, staring eyes is coming out of the sea. Facing the reader is a reclining naked woman. You can tell that she is naked because one arm and some convenient branches from a cast-up log are chastely covering parts of her anatomy which might cause complaints from the prudish if they were revealed, but these attempts at modesty draw attention to the fact that she is as nude as only a badly-drawn cover of a soft-porn novel can proclaim nudity. The blurb reads

*He had to be stopped  
For all women were his playthings  
And all men his pawns*

Oo-er gosh. Time for a cold shower. One can imagine the incredulous laughter if the reader of the novel were to point out that this is a book by one of our field's most significant figures. "So much for science fiction!" would be the scornful reply, for this is quite clearly a downmarket, spicy, trash-novel, not fit to be allowed in the possession of our nation's youth, and by the way, could I possibly borrow it to see if it's as luridly awful as I think it is?

And when this book has been purchased furtively from the kind of bookstore you'd rather your parents or your wife didn't know you frequented, or delivered to your home in that traditional plain brown envelope, what happens when you turn the pages?

You get a long discussion about the nature of humanity more suited to the philosophy seminar.

For this is, of course, *Odd John* by Olaf Stapledon, former lecturer in philosophy for the University of Liverpool's Extension Studies programme and author of the magnificent and influential futuristic *Last and First Men* (1930).

This is the 1959 Beacon "Galaxy Science Fiction selected novel" edition of a book originally published in 1935.

Instead of a slaving sex maniac, "John Wainwright" is a mutant superman of that kind found in novels like J. D. Beresford's *The Hampdenshire Wonder* (1911) – which Stapledon mentions in his text – or Stanley Weinbaum's *The New Adam* (1939).

John is born to (relatively) normal parents but his slowness to develop physically is matched by his uncanny mental development. Although not a "superman" in the sense of possessing "powers," his intelligence is far greater than ordinary *homo sapiens* and he is able to read thoughts and communicate with others of similar status.

The story is narrated by his faithful human follower whom he patronisingly dubs "Fido". It is gripping and inventive, not to mention chilling – philosophy seminars can be unsettling places. John's despair when faced with "A whole world of cattle!" is real, and the narrator's slave-like devotion disturbing. There is also some surreal comedy: John can "hypnotise" electrons and protons to release atomic power. (Shades of *Monty Python* and the man who can hypnotise a brick, but Stapledon's description of John doing this manages to be both amusing and – well – not too completely daft.)

There is, if you want to refer back to the cover, even some bizarre sexuality as John, in physical form a rather grotesque twelve-year-old, seduces (perhaps metaphorically) his older male friend Stephen and



(certainly not metaphorically) Europa, the beautiful ship-owner's daughter. John's disgust at the latter is telling. We are not even of the same species as him. Stapledon's focus upon sexuality is not prurient, but suggests an even deeper unease. The main focus, however, is upon the gathering of the "supernormals"

Here, Stapledon, not usually known for his characterisation, presents some remarkable figures who would be the subject of entire novels in lesser hands: Jaqueline, the French woman born in 1764, making her way as a courtesan; the Satantically evil limbless Scottish baby; Jones, the musician trapped in an asylum; Adlan, the Sudanese mystic, dead by John's time, who can communicate telepathically with the future and the past.

But it's John, both charismatic and coldly ruthless, who is the novel's most disturbing character. Bringing back two other supernormals from Egypt, John

plans to found a colony and sets out to collect other mutants and settle on a Pacific island. Its inhabitants are coldly and efficiently eliminated: this, after all, is just like the way we "normal" humans destroy animals who are in the way, even though we may have sentimental attachments to them. All goes reasonably well until they are discovered, and, outnumbered, the supernormals destroy themselves with the island.

In the same way as John Wyndham was to do in the 1950s with *The Midwich Cuckoos* and *The Chrysalids* (both novels which seem to owe something to *Odd John*) Stapledon is dramatising the evolutionary struggle for existence. What if a superior human variant were to be established? Where do questions like "rights" and "morality" stand in the competition between "Us" and "Them"? What exactly do we mean by "superior human variant"? And the underlying question, which both Wyndham (post Nazi Germany) and Stapledon (post the Russian Revolution) understood, is: how does this illustrate those social movements which claim to be "advanced" or "in the vanguard" or even "defending humanity (or a strand thereof) from a ruthless enemy? A question which we seem to be still unable to resolve.

It's a rather complex issue for a book which, by its cover, claims to be about a man for whom "all women were playthings". One wonders, again, what this edition's purchasers thought they were buying, and if they read it right through to the end. One wonders what Stapledon thought of it.

Ironically, a few years later, Stapledon was to publish *Sirius: a Fantasy of Love and Discord* which actually has sex between a super-intelligent dog and a woman. But perhaps we'd better leave that for another time...

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We are grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Board for funding the "Science Fiction Hub" project, which will develop and enhance our catalogue.

# Afterthoughts

PS Publishing has come a long way, very quickly. Its editor and founder, **Peter Crowther**, talks to *Matrix* about the history of his company, his surprise at just how far his expectations have been exceeded, and his ambitions for the future (is John Updike listening?).

**I** sometimes wonder why I started PS Publishing... such reflections usually coming hot on the heels of comments from my accountant, my bank manager or one of my two literary agents. And the answer always comes up the same: 'Well, someone had to do it and in the absence of floods of volunteers, I suppose it had to be me.'

Publishing books (as I discovered when I was in the throes of the whole process) was something I've always wanted to do. It seemed to be a natural progression from editing anthologies – which I've now done 21 times, with another couple in the pipeline – and so it seemed to be the way for me to go in order to expand both my experience and my horizons. But also, more than anything else, I dearly wanted to put out some of the stuff that the big publishing houses seemed unable or unwilling to accommodate.

I honestly didn't know whether it was going to work at first. In fact, when I started out, I actually did sums so as to figure out just how much money I could realistically afford to lose. So, it's fair to say that my expectations have been exceeded by a colossal degree. Of course, that would lead you – and, indeed, any sane person – to ask why bother trying something if one thinks it's not going to work? My answer is I felt it needed to be done.

I wanted to put something back into a business that has been very kind to me... in terms of both a lifetime of entertainment value and, latterly, my own work as a writer and editor. I wanted to provide a few high-quality opportunities, not only for the type and length of fiction – particularly novella-length, which I feel is potentially the strongest and most satisfying length for fiction – that I like personally, but also for some authors who are not yet household names. My only criterion was that the work must appeal to me. Obviously, it's nice if a project turns out to be hugely commercial and successful but that's not my primary consideration. So far, it's worked extremely well.

By far the most exciting aspect

of what we do here at PS is the novella line. I think that the novella is potentially the most effective length for fiction. Some of the very best work of Stephen King, for example, is to be found in his novellas. *Different Seasons* is a classic book – three absolutely remarkable (dare I say 'faultless' yes, I dare!) novellas and one pretty good novelette. And his 'Hearts In Atlantis' – which is probably best described as a short novel – is, for me, the best work of his ever done. Of course, other pieces may be more popular – *The Shining*, *Pet Semetary* and so on... and many of them are pretty wonderful stuff – but the language, characterisation and tightness of story-telling in 'Hearts' are absolutely first class.

But it's not only King – check out Connie Willis's 'The Winds From Marble Arch' which appeared in *Asimov's* a couple of years back... or Peter Straub's *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat...* or, if you prefer mainstream fiction, Martha Grimes's *The Train Now Departing*. There's lots of fine novella-length fiction to be had for the discerning reader... but not enough. And that's because there are not enough markets publishing it. So I decided to create one more, an imprint that actually specialises in novella-length – ideally, 20,000 to

30,000 words. PS is now securely on its own feet and I'm looking to increase the number of books I publish each year. I've got a whole bunch of stuff in the pipeline but I'm also keen to expand the type of material – I'd love to put out work by the likes of John Irving, Robert B. Parker, Richard Ford, Martin Amis, Anne Tyler, John Updike and so on... so if they're reading this, I would ask them to please drop me a line.

When we started out, our standards were modest – and that's putting it mildly. I cringe when I look back at some of those early books, but one has to start somewhere and the idea is to improve as you go along. Thus we've introduced several little 'touches' – such as colour covers on the paperbacks (they started out as black and white), slipcases, coloured endpapers, bookmarks, binding-tops and -tails, and so on. My aim



Cover art for PS Publishing's *Mayflower* by Stephen Baxter.

is to improve constantly while freeing up more of my own time, and I've been able to do this thanks to my editor, Nick Gevers; my web designer, Ariel; and my typesetting and layout design specialists, Robert Wexler and, most recently, Andy Cox, of *The Third Alternative* and *Crime Wave* fame. All of them are absolutely indispensable.

Book publishing is a costly business and my hat's off to the big publishers. There are shortcomings, of course, but one has to bear in mind the colossal overheads they have to bear... not to mention the punitive demands made on them by bookstores. I couldn't possibly afford to produce a limited run of books priced at the standard hardcover price (£16 for the UK and around \$25 in the US) and supply them to the bookstores at 50%+ trade discount with payment in three months and with returns permitted. But, of course, while the price has to reflect the production costs it also has to reflect the product. Thus one has to make a more expensive book as desirable as possible. As a book collector myself, I know what this entails: it entails a short print run, specially commissioned introductions and afterwords, and author signatures.

Right now I'm returning unsolicited material unread. I've also been refusing most unsolicited approaches for about a year...

**“I actually did the sums to figure out how much money I could afford to lose. So, it's fair to say my expectations have been exceeded...”**  
Peter Crowther



Photograph: Samuel A. Ryan

though, every now and again, I weaken when something really interests or intrigues me. Three such examples are Adam Nevill's upcoming massive horror/ghost novel, *Banquet for the Damned*; *Desperate Moon*, a collection of upcoming horror/ghost stories from R. Andrew Heide; and a big fantasy novel entitled *Night of Knives* by Ian Cameron Eslemont, which is set in Steve Erikson's Malazan mythos, albeit long before Steve's books take place. I read those three and was so blown away that, despite their being written by completely unknown writers, I just couldn't let them go.

We've built up a strong contingent of customers who take all our titles, simply because they feel assured that they're going to be getting top quality work. Not surprisingly, this makes me very proud. We concentrate on quality at all levels, and that doesn't refer only to the actual stories and the books' production but also to our relationship with customers – thus a customer who receives a damaged book (which I'm pleased to say is very rare) gets a replacement immediately. All we ask is prompt payment, with retail customers paying in advance and wholesale customers paying within 30 days. The latter doesn't always happen, of course!

There generally seems to be a healthy appetite for what PS is publishing so, with fewer than one thousand copies printed of any title, we're regularly selling out. And as time goes on, the time taken by a book to sell out is shortening dramatically. Of course, the "hot" authors are always going to sell out – China Miéville's *The Tain* sold out in hardcover within a week or so of our taking delivery of the books! – but we're also finding that some of the newer authors and the ones who are not yet household names are performing remarkably well: Mark Chadbourn's *The Fairy-Feller's Master Stroke* and Paul Di Filippo's *A Year in Linear City* – two absolutely wonderful novellas – are fine examples, with both titles nearing 'sold out' status. But perhaps the best example of this would be Tracy Knight's

*The Astonished Eye*, a short novel (around 60,000 words) that we published four years ago. If ever a book deserved cult status it's that one... and I'm pleased to say that all of the customers who bought it seemed to agree.

In terms of the material we look for, we're about as broad as a church can be. We're open to all kinds of genre fiction – that's all the sub-categories of SF and the various types of Fantasy plus, to a degree, Horror/Dark Fantasy. You're not likely to see anything excessively gory from PS simply because that's not my particular thing: I don't have a problem with it *per se*. I just don't particularly enjoy it. Thus I suppose the easiest catch-all to describe PS's output is 'stories Pete Crowther enjoys'. As a result, the emphasis is and will continue to be on thoughtful work

– good writing, good dialogue and believable and sympathetic characterisation – that encompasses a feeling of awe, wonder and excitement, whether that work is SF, Fantasy or Horror. I believe we've stayed true to that so far with both the books we've already published and the projects we've got stacked up and

waiting to go.

The biggest thing we've got on the go at the moment is our new magazine, *Postscripts*. It will be digest-sized, 176 pages, mainly fiction but there'll be an article or two plus the occasional interview. The first issue is scheduled for late April/early May and number 2 is down for August/September. So far, so good, but the real test will be how well it's received and how well it sells. We'll see.

We're always interested in feedback, both good and bad, so don't hesitate to drop us a line with views and comments.

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# Addendum

Roderick Gladwish reviews the first issue of PS Publishing's new magazine, *Postscripts*.

Planned to be a quarterly, *Postscripts* has some big names contributing in issue one and are promising more (they are already talking about issue three on their website). Its spread of fiction is wide, moving from straight science fiction to well into the genre's fuzzy edge. I'm concerned this spread could be their biggest weakness, though being a first issue it could be a taster of the range they are hoping to cover.

A genre fringe story began *Postscripts*. 'Roads Were Burning' by Adam Roberts began with the roads doing just that until they consume the whole country. Ed Gorman's 'Riff' was a neat story of a jazz musician dying of cancer with a wife cheating on him as he had cheated on previous spouses. It wasn't SF at all, whatever you choose the initials to mean. In 'The Overwhelm' Allen Ashley describes a world being crushed by a descending atmosphere – or is it the story of a social worker cracking under the strain of her job?

'Tarzan of the Alps' was another 'is this SF at all?' story. Brian W. Aldiss describes a poor couple seeing a movie that doesn't represent reality leading to dreams that sustain them through their hard lives. Feeling like a fable 'Seventeen Syllables' follows a man who goes to simplify his life. James Lovegrove's cautionary tale has an inevitable spiral because nothing is simple.

Horror came in a trio of tales. 'Stripping' by Joyce Carol Oates was brief and experimental, with someone trying to strip away the traces of murder, both physical and mental. 'Direct Line' by Ramsey Campbell has a teacher find a mysterious mobile phone that makes him face past guilt or inherit someone else's. Stephen Gallagher goes for a murder victim returning to claim his killer in 'Restraint'.

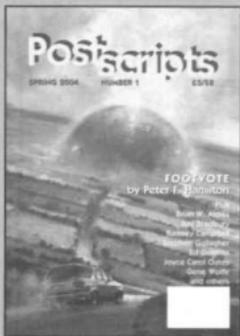
'The Rose Egg' by Jay Lake had an imaginative use of nanotech, instant graffiti in a projectile, gang speak, complex relationships, evolution of a concept, life-changing decisions – all in one story.

Gene Wolfe's 'Prize Crew' was a tale of a human crew aboard an alien vessel with something nasty. Eric Brown's 'A Choice of Eternities' is similar to his 'Thursday's Child' that appeared in *Spectrum SF 9*. Again the alien Kethani help humans cheat death with more discussion on the morality of the choice between death or life; again there are religious objections to choosing immortality, if physical survival is immortality.

Lawrence Gordon Clark's 'Original Sin' suggests an alien origin for humanity as a reason for us screwing everything up.

'Footvote' from Peter F. Hamilton offers little Englishers an option of a little England (New Suffolk) off-world. It amazed me he got planning permission for the wormhole. Many stories set in England could be anywhere, this one could only be here.

There was even poetry, 'The Visitation' by Ray Bradbury. It's about a year since another independent publisher, Big Engine, produced, with equal fanfare, a quality (semi-)pro magazine. 3SF made it to issue three before going down with the publisher. Has PS Publishing and *Postscript* got the legs for a longer haul? The publisher has a solid base of quality products; however, I buy books on the author not publisher. Someone else picks the stories in a magazine. One with a strong style reduces the risk of buying something that will not be read, but of course can't appeal to all. *Postscripts* is trying for a big audience which may be a weakness. If you buy it, there will definitely be stories you'll like, whatever your taste, but there could be a good portion you won't read.



# Rocketmen

Stephen Baxter takes a look at the history of manned spaceflight, and considers some of the turning points. Why didn't Britain launch men into space? Whatever happened to the manned moonbase? And what a sight Project Orion would have been, if it had flown!

In April 2003, with a party from the venerable British Interplanetary Society, I made a visit to Peenemünde. Here Werner von Braun developed the V-2 ballistic missile that was the intellectual ancestor of both the American and Russian post-war space programmes.

The site, on the Baltic coast, is all ocean views and sea birds; it is oddly reminiscent of Cape Canaveral, on another ocean coast in Florida. Peenemünde was flattened by Allied bombing, and at the end of the war was stripped as Germany was deliberately demilitarised. The main V-2 launch sites are inaccessible: it's said that some 500 tons of Allied bombs remain unexploded in the woods. But you can see the neat-looking residential units used by von Braun and his top scientists, and the foundations of V-1 (doodlebug) test stands, and some ruins that were just too massive to be demolished, such as the oxygen power plant and the power station, the latter now converted into a good museum.

There are ghosts of other conflicts too, such as nuclear-hardened bunkers which once housed fighter planes of the East German air force. Long abandoned, some are now used by the locals as barns; their inhabitants would be the only cows in Europe to survive a nuclear strike.

The Nazis poured money into this place – perhaps mistakenly in terms of war aims – but, standing on that haunted coast, I could well believe that von Braun and his team could have touched the Moon.

After my Baltic visit Ian Watson kindly loaned me *Vengeance 10* by Joe Poyer (New York, 1980). In this alternate-Nazi tale it occurs to the Germans in 1941 that a missile platform based on the Moon would be a formidable base from which to strike at America, a proposal actually floated by the Americans during the Cold War, a decade or so later. So the development of von Braun's more formidable rockets beyond the V-2 is accelerated – especially the A-10 (in the technical jargon of Peenemünde, the V-2 was the A-4).



Werner von Braun holding a model of the A4/V2 rocket. After the war he played a key role in American ballistic rocket and spacecraft research.

With a large first stage booster and a winged V-2 mounted on top, it would have been comparable to the Atlas rocket which launched John Glenn's Mercury into orbit in 1961. Amid Russian advances and SS treachery, and fuelled by alcohol made from Polish potatoes, the A-10 reaches the Moon, where its wreck is discovered by American lunar explorers in 2009.

This isn't a great book – Poyer tweaks history once or twice too often to make it convincing

alternate history – but there are few books in which the hero is a member of the British Interplanetary Society.

All this brought back to me my fascination with counterfactuals of space programmes, as I documented in *Vector 197*, and my BSFA book *Omegatropic* (2001). My own last fictional foray into alt.space was in fact another alternate-Nazi tale, a collaboration with my good friend and webmaster Simon Bradshaw called

'First to the Moon!' (Spectrum 6, 2001), in which we described a 1950s space race between Britain and an undefeated Germany – and the British Interplanetary Society stars again.

More recently, new information about Britain's real-life space programme has been released under the government's thirty-year disclosure rules (see *Vertical Empire* by CN Hill, Imperial College Press, 2001). As the Cold War chill deepened Britain developed a medium-range ballistic missile called Blue Streak, capable of hitting Moscow, and a test rocket called Black Knight. Black Knight was developed into a satellite launcher called Black Arrow, which launched our one and only satellite Prospero, on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1971.

Prospero weighed only 132lb – less than Sputnik One in 1957 – but the technology was very sound, and could easily have been developed further. There were proposals dating back to the 1950s, such as the 'Black Prince' study, showing how Blue Streak and Black Knight could have been combined to produce a larger launcher, for instance using Black Knight as strap-on boosters or as an upper stage for Blue Streak. Perhaps the most promising idea would have been an American Centaur rocket used as an upper stage to a Blue Streak. As this would have been able to lift the weight of the two-man American Gemini capsule, we could readily have sent British astronauts into orbit! – much as Simon and I sketched in our story 'Prospero One' (*Interzone* 112, 1996).

But it wasn't to be. We saw no need for a large satellite launcher – for instance we always shared US reconnaissance satellite data. The men from the ministry shut everything down, and Dan Dare remained fictional.

The hinge of history of recent manned spaceflight history is, of course, the loss of the shuttle *Columbia*. That tragic event turns books like my own *Titan* (1997), which began with the loss of a shuttle (in fact *Columbia* in 2004), from prediction to alternate history. Another fictional shuttle crash



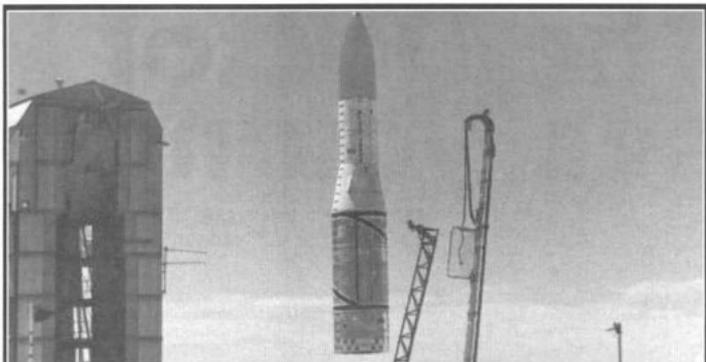
“ We could have seen six-man Apollos, astronauts equipped with personal lunar flyers, and teams working together to construct the first lunar base. ”

Stephen Baxter

- the loss of the *Endeavour* in 2002  
 - kick-started a new space push  
 in a book by a real-life astronaut,  
*Encounter with Tiber* by Buzz  
 Aldrin and John Barnes (Hodder  
 & Stoughton, 1996). Aldrin exists  
 in his own fiction: there is a Mars  
 Cycler spacecraft (Buzz's own  
 design) called 'Aldrin', and so on.  
 But Aldrin's life after Apollo's  
 splashdown has not been easy:  
 bypassed by history, he is a stranded  
 Moonwalker, himself an iconic  
 figure in alt.space fiction: see my  
*Titan*, or Dan Simmons' *Phases of  
 Gravity* (1989).

Meanwhile raw material for  
 counterfactual speculations about  
 the American space programme  
 continues to turn up.

Simon Bradshaw kindly pointed  
 out a piece on 'paths not taken'  
 by a space historian given at a  
 NASA symposium, no less, which  
 mentions my 1996 novel *Voyage\**.  
 In addition to my scenario of a  
 might-have-been NASA mission  
 to Mars in the 1980s, Professor  
 John Logsdon lists a series of  
 other possibilities. The Apollo  
 push to the Moon was born of  
 political pressure and competition;  
 historically speaking it was fragile,  
 and might never have happened  
 if astronaut Alan Shepard had  
 launched just a little earlier and  
 beaten Yuri Gagarin to become  
 first in space, thus subtly changing  
 the perceived technological gap.  
 Logsdon interestingly muses on  
 how JFK's survival of Dallas, as  
 in *Voyage*, might have changed  
 history. Perhaps Khrushchev would  
 have accepted Kennedy's offer to  
 cooperate in space, rather than  
 compete. Logsdon's point is the  
 divergence between choice and  
 outcome, and how little control we  
 have on history.



Begun in 1964, with a budget of only £9 million, the Black Arrow project took just seven years to put the UK's only solo-launched satellite, Prospero, into orbit (launch pictured above). Despite this success, Black Arrow had already been cancelled. Prospero still circles Earth every 100 minutes.

More lost possibilities are  
 documented in *Apollo: The Lost  
 and Forgotten Missions* by David  
 J Shayler (Springer-Praxis 2002).  
 Apollo did achieve six landings on  
 the Moon, and the hardware was  
 used for the Skylab space station  
 and a docking with a Soviet Soyuz  
 in 1975. But ambitious Apollo  
 engineers sought ways to extend  
 their technology. We could have  
 seen six-man Apollos, astronauts  
 equipped with personal lunar flyers,  
 and teams working together to  
 construct the first lunar base. And  
 multiple Saturn launches could have  
 sent Apollo spaceships on flybys  
 of Venus and Mars, as precursors  
 of the full-scale assault on Mars  
 confidently predicted for the 1980s.

Meanwhile, there were lost  
 social possibilities too. Did all  
 those pioneering missions have to  
 be flown by men? (See *Promised  
 the Moon: The Untold story of the*

*First Women in the Space Race*  
 by Stephanie Nolen, Four Walls Eight  
 Windows, 2003.)

In 1959 Randy Lovelace, chair  
 of NASA's Life Sciences Committee,  
 recruited thirteen female pilots to  
 take tests that paralleled the  
 Mercury astronauts'. Lovelace, no  
 social reformer, was motivated by  
 scientific curiosity, thinking that  
 women might be more tolerant to  
 pain and isolation. NASA never  
 officially sanctioned the trials,  
 and curtailed the programme;  
 no American woman reached space  
 until 1983. In 1963 the first  
 woman cosmonaut, Valentina  
 Tereshkova, stayed aloft longer than  
 all the (male) Mercury astronauts  
 combined.

Meanwhile, other lost  
 possibilities were remarkable  
 indeed. From 1957 to 1965, the  
 Americans ran a project which  
 might have resulted in the opening-  
 up of the solar system with H-  
 bombs (see *Project Orion* by George  
 Dyson, Holt 2002). The premise  
 seems outrageous: to launch a  
 spaceship by exploding H-bombs  
 beneath it - four detonations  
 per second, in some versions of  
 the design. But in the 1950s the  
 'weaponers' became obsessive  
 about their ability to shape their  
 terrible toys, and what might be  
 done with them.

In comparison with Apollo's  
 spidery Lunar Module, the  
 designers imagined immense space  
 liners - and, more sinisterly, vast  
 orbital weapons platforms, bristling  
 with Minuteman missiles. The  
 Orion engineers took advice on  
 bomb-delivery systems from Coca  
 Cola and their vending machines,  
 and from surfboard manufacturers  
 on materials for the crew

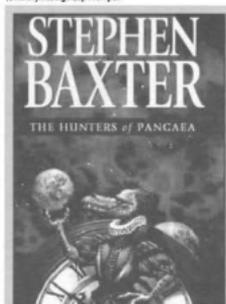
compartment. To Saturn with H-  
 bombs, Coke and surfboards: Orion  
 was a classic 1950s dream - and  
 perhaps it's sadly more likely that  
 NASA would have sent an atomic  
 rocket to Saturn than let a woman  
 be first to walk on the Moon. In  
 the end Orion was scuppered  
 by concerns about fall-out. But  
 imagine seeing it launched!

The space race is a rich source  
 of alternate-historical speculation  
 because momentous events  
 depended on decisions made by a  
 handful of (mostly) men, and on  
 small chance occurrences. Options  
 like Orion seem outrageous now.  
 But I have a feeling if history had  
 unravelled differently, if the Moon  
 programme had been scrapped, we  
 would look back on Apollo as just  
 another lost and impossible dream.  
 Maybe we should be grateful we got  
 as far as the Moon.

\* John M Logsdon, 'What If? Paths Not  
 Taken', *Looking Backward, Looking Forward*,  
 ed. SJ Garber, NASA SP-2002-4107, <http://history.nasa.gov/sp4107.pdf>



In the 1960s Project Orion investigated a pulsed nuclear fission  
 propulsion system. Nuclear bombs would explode sequentially  
 to propel the spacecraft. A blast shield and shock absorber  
 system would protect the crew. This image is a modern NASA  
 take on such a craft.



'First to the Moon' and 'Prospero  
 One' are in Stephen Baxter's new  
 collection *The Hunters of Pangaea*  
 (NESFA Press).

# The Doctor will see you now



Former Earthlight and Orbit editor John Jarrold, one of the most respected figures in literary sf, has relaunched himself as "The Script Doctor." **Martin Sketchley** asked him about his website, his new venture and his plans for the future.

**M**any of you will know of John Jarrold, who has held the position of editor at many UK SF imprints, including Earthlight (Simon & Schuster), Legend Books (Random House UK), and Orbit Books with Macdonald Futura (now Time Warner UK). Well, Jarrold has now metamorphosed, Jekyll and Hyde-like, into The Script Doctor. What does the Script Doctor do? Well, if you want your book to be edited by a hugely respected professional with a great deal of experience in the science fiction and fantasy field, there's surely no one more qualified.

As part of this new venture Jarrold's launched a new website, so I asked him a little bit about this, and more about the whole Script Doctor business...

First off, I asked Jarrold who designed the site for him. "Mark Roberts, who also designed the Tor UK site and many others." Will it be updated regularly? I wondered. "I'm planning to update the news page regularly, yes, and I'll warn of changes to my rates when these are unavoidable. The Script Doctor website gives any visitor an idea of who I am and what I do very quickly. Mark has designed it wonderfully well. It's informative, but not too cluttered, and is also simple to navigate. I'm really pleased with it."

In recent times Jarrold's been copy-editing on a freelance basis. What kind of things had he been working on? "I've dealt with scripts for publishers such as Hodder & Stoughton, Random House, HarperCollins, Pan Macmillan, Transworld, Simon & Schuster, Orion/Gollancz, Constable & Robinson and Time

Warner. I've also recently copy-edited filmmaker Alan Parker's first novel, as well as mysteries, thrillers, SF and fantasy and historical fiction. There have also been non-fiction projects ranging from Iain Banks' book on Malt Whisky - Raw



"The Script Doctor website gives any visitor an idea of who I am and what I do very quickly... It's informative, but not too cluttered, and is also simple to navigate"

John Jarrold

*Spirit* - to several books on military history, celebrity biographies, and even one on shark attacks! It's been incredibly diverse."

Given this wide range of work, I wondered what had led Jarrold to become The Script Doctor. "Working for oneself is much more flexible than spending the week in a publisher's office and seemingly endless meetings," says Jarrold. "However, I didn't want to spend the next fifteen years crossing T's and dotting I's on typescripts that had already been edited by someone else. So, I decided to move from straightforward copy-editing, and set up a website to help publicise my Script Doctor venture. I'll still be doing the basic copy-editing work, but this will no longer constitute the bulk of what I do."

I asked what medicine Jarrold will

be administering. "Apart from structurally editing work, I can advise new writers on what they need to do to present their script professionally to any agent or publisher. I can't promise anyone they're guaranteed to be published

to make them as professional as possible. New authors are also approaching me to make presentational suggestions, so that their scripts will be taken seriously by the publishers to whom they are submitted. So, as you can see, the remit of what I'm doing these days is very wide indeed!"

As well as all this, in September 2003 Jarrold visited South Korea to take part in a UK-Korea Fantasy Publishing Forum, at the request of the British Council. This led to him working with the Korean Government's creative agency - KOCCA - to involve UK science fiction and fantasy authors in Korean animation projects, and also investigating the possibility of UK universities setting up a creative writing course for Koreans.

Given Jarrold's extensive experience in the publishing industry, I wondered if he'd seen any changes that have occurred as a result of the rise of the Internet - other than the obvious things such as e-mail improving ease of communication; has the internet

after working with me, no one can do that, but they should have the best possible chance."

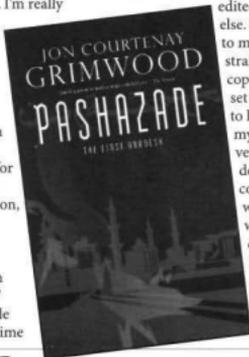
Given all this, I wondered just how full Jarrold's surgery is... "In the last few months I've made editorial suggestions on the new book by Alexander Beshar, Philip K Dick Award-nominated US author of *Rim, Mir and Chi*, at his request. I've also worked on partial and complete scripts by several new writers from the UK, and have also been asked by Gollancz to structurally edit Maggie Furey, who they have just taken on for three books. This is particularly pleasing as I published Maggie's first four novels a few years ago. As well as this, I've had meetings in New York and London with literary agents who want me to work through new ideas and changes of direction with long-term authors, and to get typescripts by their new authors as ready for publication as possible."

So there's a lot of interest, then. "That's right," says Jarrold. "Publishers on both sides of the Atlantic are asking me to be an outside editor for them. I'm also being asked by both published and unpublished authors to look through synopses and outlines

## Spinnerere

Colin O'Mahoney is the editor for Other Realms online. Other Realms is an SF, comics, fantasy and merchandise shop located in Cork, Ireland. Other Realms has recently launched a "webstore". The site also provides news, reviews, events listings, etc for the world of comics, SF and gaming. [www.otherrealms.com](http://www.otherrealms.com).

Award-winning fantasy author Mark Chadbourn has relaunched his website in time for the publication of his new novel, *The Queen of Sinister* (published on April 3rd by Victor Gollancz). The site - [www.markchadbourn.net](http://www.markchadbourn.net) - now features a new forum and novel



actually changed the way publishing works at all? "Well, obviously the internet has made it easier for publishers to find out about authors, and vice versa. Search engines are wonderful things! For instance, I believe that Simon Taylor of Bantam UK heard about Mary Doria Russell via the 'net, before acquiring *The Sparrow*. And of course Amazon is now a major customer for every publisher."

I asked Jarrod which of the titles he's worked on are particularly dear to him. "Some of the books I've edited and/or published to which I'm most attached are *Use of Weapons* by Iain M Banks; *The Star Fraction* and *The Stone Canal* by Ken MacLeod; *Celtika* by Robert Holdstock; *The Light Ages* by Ian R MacLeod; *Aurian* by Maggie Furey; *The Eye of the World* by Robert Jordan; *Pushazade* and sequels by Jon Courtenay Grimwood. And I commissioned the *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* from John Clute and Peter Nicholls when I was at Orbit. There are many others, but these are some that really stand out."

So what's Jarrod been reading recently? "Among other things I've enjoyed Iain Banks' *Dead Air*, Charles Stross's *Singularity Sky*, China Miéville's *The Scar*, Alastair Reynolds' *Redemption Ark*, Terry Pratchett's *Monstrous Regiment*, Ken MacLeod's *Newton's Wake*,



Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Years of Rice and Salt*, Peter Hamilton's *Pandora's Star*, Philip Pullman's *The Amber Spyglass*...

So it's all been SF or fantasy, then? "Far from it!" says Jarrod. "I've also read Rick Stein's *Food Heroes*, Francis Pryor's *Seahenge*, Adrian

Tinniswood's *His Invention So Fertile* (a biography of Christopher Wren), Erle Bradford's *Mediterranean, Portrait of a Sea*, Gore Vidal's *The Golden Age*, Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory*, Jane Grigson's *English Food*, Field Marshal Slim's *Defeat into Victory*, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (again!)... Do you want me to go on?" That's quite enough!

So, there it is: if you're a new author looking for advice and valuable help, or a more established author seeking an experienced critical eye for your work or advice on making a change of direction, the Script Doctor's surgery is open! Jarrod's rates are currently a very reasonable £100/\$180 for the first four chapters, up to 25,000 words, while for £350/\$650 Jarrod can edit a full typescript up to 100,000 words. Rates for longer scripts are negotiable. Payment can be made via PayPal, cheque or direct bank transfer. Jarrod will be delighted to hear from anyone who thinks he can be of use on the editing front. Given the prestigious authors and titles listed above, what are you waiting for...?

## URLs of relevance to this issue

<https://www.sff.net/people/john-jarrod/>

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 at the address below with the relevant URLs.

**Martin Sketchley**

[www.msketchley.gwp.bluyonder.co.uk](mailto:www.msketchley.gwp.bluyonder.co.uk)  
[mksketchley@bluyonder.co.uk](mailto:mksketchley@bluyonder.co.uk)

# Dark roads

The fiction in *Midnight Street* is as dark as it is in Trevor Denyer's earlier *Roadworks*, says Roderick Gladwish, but the new magazine is slicker and more stylish.

Metamorphosis is a strong theme in *SF* and *Roadworks*, a digest-sized magazine, has – thanks to an Arts Council grant – broken free of its cocoon to become *Midnight Street*. A colour cover and more illustrations come with a new A4 format. Reviewed in *Matrix* 164, *Roadworks* had much in common with *The Third Alternative*. *Midnight Street* carries on in this vein. Once more I am disturbed by what I've read, but that's what horror and dark fantasy are about. Most stories are dark realism with a hint of fantasy.

Editor Trevor Denyer has used the greater space to showcase two authors, adding interviews and bibliography to round them off. Showcase One was for Andrew Humphrey. His tales 'War Stories' and 'Other Voices' (first seen in *TTA*) began the magazine. The first is a view of the terminal days of a man with no future clinging to a past that isn't his. Second was the aftermath of domestic violence haunting a witness. Showcase Two was for Antony Mann, whose *Milo & I* short story collection is published by Elastic Press. His two were the cleverest in the magazine. 'Sweet Little Memory' made denial of grief something to be excoriated. Young men are the victims of nearly all violent crime, yet young female victims linger longer in the news. 'Showtime' gives a clue why, with an uncomfortable prediction of where crime TV programmes may go.

'Jesus God in Heaven' (first in *Grotesque* no. 4 1994) by Cathy Buburuz, followed a child in a nightmare of domestic violence who finds there is no haven from abuse.

David Rawson waded the SF flag with 'The Final Thing'. Far-future genius of artificial gravity creates immortality, but is it heaven or hell he has created?

Paul Finch's 'Rat' returns us

*Midnight Street*  
Trevor Denyer, 7 Mountview, Church Lane West, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 3LN [www.midnightstreet.co.uk](http://www.midnightstreet.co.uk)



to grim life and death with a son who decides pesticide will solve his problems.

Until the shocking last line 'Having Taken Psychedelics' by Geoff Stevens almost achieved positive genre poetry status.

Death and complex bisexual relations follows the general theme in Gary Couzens's 'Outstuck'. In 'Against my Ruins' Joel Lane looked at survivors of a ruined world in a dead city who probably won't see another night end.

Steve Redwood's 'Nastassja's Honour' revolves around a sado watching the film *Cat People* and the characters coming out of the screen. Genitalia descriptions and uses filled the text which I think was there for humour since it served no other function in a reasonable dark fantasy.

A perfect counterpoint to a cartload of downbeat endings came in 'Old Songs'. Catherine J Gardner showed it's easier to enter Hell than most believe, but redemption is possible.

*Midnight Street* has grown from *Roadworks* in size and now needs to make its voice clearly different from *TTA*. Reprinting stories, no matter how strong, dulls distinctiveness. To remedy this there is a short-story competition on the magazine's website. When *Midnight Street* does show its own character it goes very dark.

extracts with more additions expected. The relaunch comes on the back of a fantastic year for this author, who in 2003 won a British Fantasy Award for his novella *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke*, while his novel *The Devil in Green* – just published in mass-market paperback – was shortlisted for the August Derleth Award for Best Novel. Chadbourn says: "2003 was an amazing year for me and with so much activity in the film and TV worlds, 2004 is shaping up to be the same. It's the perfect time to publish a novel like *The Queen of Sinister*, which I feel is my best work to date."

# A sense of wander

From transatlantic jaunts to Corflu in Las Vegas to the meandering around London with fandom in search of a pub, **Mark Plummer** certainly gets around.

Press deadlines preclude comment on Concourse, this year's Eastercon in Blackpool, which will begin a matter of days after I have to turn in this column. I suppose I could improvise a selection of audacious tales about BSFA luminaries engaging in nefarious practices, perhaps featuring the legendary Blackpool donkeys, but I'm sure fandom isn't ready for fictitious reportage. No, it'll never catch on.

Therefore I will mentally hop across the Atlantic and trek into the Nevada desert to report the FAAN Awards which were presented at Corflu on 21 March. Corflu is the annual fanzine fans' convention which this year took place in, on the face of it, unlikely setting of Las Vegas. Unlike Britain's Nova Awards, all participants in the fanzine scene are eligible for the awards irrespective of nationality, and voting is open to anybody who feels qualified to do so.

Best Fanzine went to *Trap Door*, edited by Robert Lichtman. Its solitary 2003 issue, #22, was atypical, being mostly given over to a single item: a short story written by Gordon Eklund and extensively illustrated by Dan Steffan. It's a science fiction tale, although one that's equally if not more about science fiction and science fiction fandom. It's a good piece and worth seeking out as it was also presumably a major factor



in Eklund himself winning the fan writer FAAN Award. Steve Stiles picked up the award for fan artist, denying Dan Steffan and thus *Trap Door* a hat-trick, but that's OK because Stiles and Steffan are probably the two best fan artists working today and I'd be hard-pushed to choose between them. A new award for fan humourist went to Andy Hooper, one of the co-editors of the fanzine *Chunga*, and best new fan went to the UK's Pete Young, editor of *Zoo Nation*.

Bill Burns was given a Special

Fan Achievement Award for his [www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com) website on which several of the above-mentioned titles can be found, and Tracy Benton was given a special Appreciation Award for the [www.corflu.org](http://www.corflu.org) site. The Past-Presidents of the Fan Writers of America—you are appointed to the post for previous rather than current year, so you don't have to (indeed can't) do anything with the 'power' it confers—were Arnie and Joyce Katz.

The Corflu guest of honour is traditionally chosen by lot from the entire membership. This year, chance favoured Ted White, the only person to have attended all twenty-one Corflus. In his speech, Ted spoke about the ever-popular subject of 'The Greying of Fandom', a subject which is very much in my mind after the BSFA's AGM last month. In the pub afterwards, I was chatting to a young student I'd not seen at a fan event before. After a while, she said it was interesting to talk to somebody 'of your age'. Clearly I am still reeling from the revelation that I have become somebody 'my age', as I now have a curious urge to talk about fannish things that have been around even longer than I have.

Things like *Erg*, for instance—although according to editor Terry Jeeves that may now have seen its last issue. In a world where any fanzine that appears more often than annually is likely to be seen as frequent, and where mean average issues per title is somewhat less than two, *Erg* is really rather remarkable. It first appeared in April 1959 as part of an OMPA (Off-trails Magazine Publishers Association) mailing and this month celebrates its 45th anniversary with #165. Terry was also one of the earliest editors of the BSFA's *Vector*.

In London, the long-standing 'First Thursday' pub meeting has relocated to the Florence



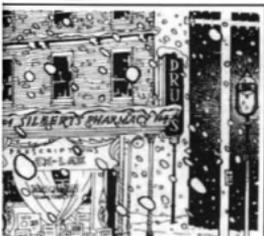
Nightingale on the roundabout at the south end of Westminster Bridge. This event outstrips even *Erg* when it comes to consistency and longevity, having been around for getting on sixty years now. Of late it's been pursuing a somewhat peripatetic existence: the Florence Nightingale was abandoned in mid-2002 following a difference of opinion with the management, after which we moved to The Silver Cross (on Whitehall) and The Barley Mow (Farringdon). Unfortunately, the longevity of the meeting is matched by an inversely proportional degree of structure and organisation; nobody's in charge and thus there's actually no mechanism for making decisions, something which always comes as a surprise to any pub landlord trying to work out how to deal with a group of as many as a hundred people. But at the moment the group mind has somehow decided that the Florence Nightingale is the place to be and we seem to have reached an accord with the management. Meetings take place on the first Thursday of

every month and on the Thursday before Christmas Eve; early arrivals present from five PM. Dave Langford maintains a page about the meeting at: [www.dcs.glo.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Ansible/london.html](http://www.dcs.glo.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Ansible/london.html).

Tobes Valois, European TAFF (Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund) administrator, has declared a 2004 race. The winner will attend Noreason, the Worldcon in Boston this September. There's a tendency to see TAFF as being a fan fund between Britain and the USA but it is, and always has been, about trips between Europe and North America. Cynics may argue that this is only theoretically the case; the last winner from the European mainland was in 1971 and I'm not sure there's even been a North American winner who wasn't from the US. However, Tobes himself is a Channel Islander, although now resident in the UK, and one of the eastern aims was to make the latter end of TAFF more European. This race is unique for a westbound trip in that it has no British or British-resident candidate: James Bacon is from

# CHECK POINT

News on fans and fandom



## Sense Of Wonder

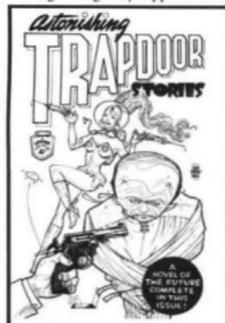
Gordon eklund

### PROLOGUE

"Gernsbach, die!" I hiss.  
 As my guts jammed in my throat like a  
 python I shove my revolver right  
 straight into the drooling, slack-  
 jawed visage of the crazed maniac  
 standing in front of me, his eyes bugged like  
 in a soap, the lips like two skinned  
 rebs.

Ireland and Anders Holmström is from Sweden. TAFF's another long-standing fannish institution which dates back to the 1950s; see the TAFF website ([www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Taff/Index.html](http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Taff/Index.html)) for information on what the fund does and how you can support it. Voting closes at midnight 5 June 2005.

I'll go and get my slippers now...



The artwork on this page is from the FAAn award-winning *Trapdoor* #22, available for download at [www.fanazines.com](http://www.fanazines.com)

# Once more, with feeling...

The 2003 BSFA Awards may still be warm in the sweaty palms of the winners, but **Claire Brialety** isn't pausing for breath. Here she opens nominations for 2004 and announces some changes to the rules for this year.

The results of the BSFA awards for 2003 will be announced in this issue of *Matrix*, but as I write the awards ceremony is still a week in the future and I'm worrying about transporting the awards to Blackpool. The awards for 2003 are framed images from the Hubble Space Telescope on a gold-tinted background; I hope the winners appreciate the way that in winning a BSFA award they have in fact each been presented with a nebula. Congratulations again to all the winners.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Tanya Brown, John Jarrold, and Mark Plummer for help and advice throughout the whole process; and I'd like to thank everyone who nominated and voted for the 2003 awards as well.

On that note, I should report that 84 ballots were received, with the most votes being cast in the novel and artwork categories (we displayed copies of all the nominated artwork at the Eastercon as well as publishing them in *Matrix* and on the BSFA website).

In future years I'd like to encourage even more BSFA and Eastercon members to vote for the awards, and I'll be working on that between now and next year's presentation (which will be at Paragon 2, the 2005 Eastercon, to be held in Hinckley, Leicestershire).

By the time you get this, the time will have come to declare nominations open for the 2004 awards – with one crucial change for the coming year. We've decided to suspend the non-fiction award, with a view to coming up with a better approach for highlighting and rewarding good writing about science fiction.

Having invited comments through these columns throughout the year, I sought

specific views from people who have expressed particular concerns or opinions about the non-fiction category. I'm grateful for the thoughtful responses I received, but this has unfortunately confirmed my view that the current eligibility criteria for this award, whilst wholly logical and internally consistent, are non-intuitive and don't allow the award to do what people want it to. In other words, quite a lot of the works that people would like to nominate are not eligible, at least not in the form that people logically think to nominate them; and the focus on individual pieces presents people with too wide a choice which conversely limits them from making nominations.

The most frequent suggestion made was that we should divide the non-fiction category, perhaps into short and long forms as we have with the fiction categories, but based on other comments made and my experience of nominations this year, I don't think that we could sustain an additional non-fiction award. And that still wouldn't provide a logical approach to a number of the other issues raised.

So our conclusion is that we need to think about doing something rather different on non-fiction. Watch this space.

In the meantime, please start nominating any works that you've already enjoyed which are eligible for the three categories in which we will be making awards for 2004:

- The Best Novel award is open to any novel-length work of science fiction or fantasy first published in the UK in 2004. (Serialized novels are eligible provided that the publication date of the concluding part is in 2004.) If

a novel has been previously published elsewhere, but it hasn't been published in the UK until 2004, it will be eligible.

- The Best Short Fiction award is open to any shorter work of science fiction or fantasy, up to and including novellas, first published in 2004 (in a magazine, in a book, or online). This includes books and magazines published outside the UK.
- The Best Artwork award is open to any single image of science fiction or fantasy artwork that first appeared in 2004. Whether or not an image is science fictional or fantastic is perhaps the most subjective judgement call within these awards (but the more information you can give me about it, the better). Again, provided the artwork hasn't been published before 2004 it doesn't matter where it appears.

This is subject to the additional criterion that anything published by the BSFA itself, whether in the magazines, in book form or on the website, is not eligible for the awards. But the awards are open to works by BSFA members (including Council and committee members) provided they have been published elsewhere.

Remember, you can nominate as many works you like in any category – but your nomination for a specific work will only be counted once. The deadline for nominations will be in January 2005 – but you can send in nominations at any stage between now and then, whenever you've encountered something that you think deserves recognition. Vote early, vote often.

# Conventional wisdom

Okay, so I jumped the gun last time, but by the time you read this, Eastercon really will have been and gone and I'm sure you all had a wonderful time in Blackpool.

## 5-8 Aug 04 Bulgacon (Eurocon 04)

Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Including Gamecon - a discussion of the impact of computer games and a Bulgarian/European film festival. No accommodation/site/GoH details. FREE, but please register at website. Website: [www.bgcon.org](http://www.bgcon.org)

## 20-22 Aug 04 15th Festival of Fantastic Films

Manchester Conference Centre & Hotel. Guests to be confirmed. £70/£110 reg. Contact: 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN. Tel: 0161 707 3747

## 20-23 August 04 Discworld Convention IV

Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leicestershire. Guests to be confirmed. Website: [www.dwcon.org](http://www.dwcon.org)

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

Boston, Mass. Guest of Honour: Terry Pratchett, William Tenn, (fan) 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.

## 16-17 Oct 04 Octocon 2004

Irish national convention, Chief O'Neill's Hotel, Smithfield Village, Dublin 7. Guests TBA. €20/€15 reg until 1 November; €10/€7 supp to 'freeze' total price at €25/€20. Contact Basem Flat, 26 Longford Terrace, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

## 5-7 Nov 04 Novacon 34

Quality Hotel, Walsall. Guest of Honour: Ian Watson. [xl5@zoom.co.uk](mailto:xl5@zoom.co.uk)

## 13-14 Nov 04 P-CON 2

Ashling Hotel, Parkgate St, Dublin. Guest of honour, Juliet E McKenna, other guests include Diane Duane and Charles Stross. Rates €20/€15 until 13 April (€30/€20) thereafter, support rate £10. Contact: Yellow Brick Rd, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland. [www.slovobooks.com/phoenix/p2.html](http://www.slovobooks.com/phoenix/p2.html)

## 25-28 Mar 05 Paragon 2 (Eastercon)

Hanover International, Hinckley, Leicestershire  
56th British National Science Fiction Convention. Guests of honour: John & Eve Harvey, Ben Jeapes, Ken MacLeod, Richard Morgan, Robert Rankin. Membership rates (until April 2004): Attending £40, supporting £15, junior £20, child £5 and infants free. Email: [memberships@paragon2.org.uk](mailto:memberships@paragon2.org.uk) Web: [www.paragon2.org.uk](http://www.paragon2.org.uk)

## Take note:

### Are you attending a convention?

- 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 the details with the conference organisers. Never make a journey to a convention without confirming the details in advance.

### Are you organising a convention?

- Please forward updates, corrections and any information on new events to: [martinm@earthlink.net](mailto:martinm@earthlink.net)

## 4-8 Aug 05 Interaction (63rd Worldcon)



# INTERACTION

The 63rd World Science Fiction Convention  
4-8 August 2005, Glasgow

Glasgow, UK. Guests of Honour: Greg Pickersgill, Christopher Priest, Robert Shekley, Lars-Olov Strandberg, Jane Yolen. £95 from 1st December 2003 attending, £30 supporting, children £32. Contact Interaction, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S2 5HQ, UK. Email: [info@interaction.worldcon.org.uk](mailto:info@interaction.worldcon.org.uk) Web: [www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk](http://www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk)

## 11-15 Aug 05 Tolkien 2005

The Tolkien Society, Aston University, Birmingham, UK  
"The Ring Goes Ever On" - celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, an international conference on Tolkien's life and works. £50 adult (£45 for members of society), Juniors £25 (£22.50 member), child £1, supporting £17.50. Website [www.tolkinsociety.org/2005/](http://www.tolkinsociety.org/2005/)

## 12-14 Aug 05 Consteration (RPG)

New Hall, Cambridge. With David Pulver, Marcus Rowland. £20 reg until 1 August 04. Contact: 130 South Rd, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6EL

## 23-27 Aug 06 LA Cons IV (64th Worldcon)

Anaheim Convention Centre,  
Anaheim, California, USA.  
Guests of honour: Connie Willis, James Gurney, Howard DeVore, Frankie Thomas. \$125 attending, \$50 supporting and child rates. [info@laconiv.org](mailto:info@laconiv.org)

**L.A. CON IV**  
64TH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION  
23 - 27 AUGUST 2006  
ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA

## Books and magazines for sale

Recent donations and bequests mean that the Science Fiction Foundation has hundreds of sf/fantasy books and magazines for sale. Income from this goes to support the work of the Foundation, including its sf library at Liverpool.

For further details look at the website at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/~asawyer/sale.html> or contact Andy Sawyer, Special Collections and Archives, University of Liverpool Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA, UK (email [asawyer@liv.ac.uk](mailto:asawyer@liv.ac.uk)).





The Tun meetings in London have been a bit uncertain since we stopped gathering in the Florence Nightingale in Waterloo in 2002. In December Pete Young wrote on the then stopping-place, the Barley Mow in Smithfield:

December saw two London 'Tun' meetings, one on the usual 'first Thursday' and a second pre-Christmas gathering on the 18th. The Barley Mow has been slowly upgrading its premises, and the upstairs room was replete with a properly stocked bar in lieu of it being turned into a restaurant. On that evening the Tun was particularly well-attended. Most of the usual fanfash faces arrived, with others dropping in for a short while before heading to the noodle bar next door, and most of the evening was spent in an enjoyable exchange of cards and gifts and doubtless some looking back over the last year particularly with memories of our own Martin Smith, who we lost in August. I expect there was also some discreet (and slightly embarrassed) last-minute scribbling of Christmas cards going on for those we had somehow forgotten to write cards for. Roger Robinson was at last also able to proudly show off Beccan Publications' first handsome hardback John Clute's Scores which Steve Jeffery has already reviewed in Vector 233.

January's 'Tun' meeting was, regrettably, back to the cramped downstairs bar, a move that once again brought forth calls for a new venue or a likely return to The Silver Cross. Once again, watch this space.

Since March, we have been meeting again at the Florence Nightingale (see details below), and I hope more people are content with the old venue, instead of raising yet another cry of "Worst Pub Ever!". Really, it's about fans enjoying the company of fans, more than the surroundings.

Reader Steve Rothman asks me to remind fans in the Thames Valley that Reading SF Group meets every week, not just the 3rd Monday of the calendar month. It's just that the 3rd Monday meetings are the special early meetings that tend to be attended by fans from further away.

In other news, the BSFA has a full programme of guest author interviews at its new venue at the White Hart on the 4th Wednesday of the month. May's guest will be Ken MacLeod on the 26th. I haven't been yet, but I'd welcome a Matrix reader's impressions of the new place.

'Til next time,

Del Cotter  
matrix@branta.demon.co.uk

## Basingstoke

**Genesis SF Club**  
Meets every four weeks on Thursday; starts 7:30pm.  
The Hop Leaf, Church Street, Basingstoke RG21 7QQ  
Contact: Mark Sinclair [genesis@rhvention.demon.co.uk](mailto:genesis@rhvention.demon.co.uk)  
Web: [www.genesis-sf.org.uk](http://www.genesis-sf.org.uk)

## Belfast

**Belfast Science Fiction Group**  
Meets alternate Thursdays, starting at 8:00pm.  
The Monaco Bars, Lombard Street, Belfast BT1 1RB  
Contact: Eugene Doherty [tomans@technologist.com](mailto:tomans@technologist.com)  
Web: [members.fortunecity.co.uk/tomans/moica.htm](http://members.fortunecity.co.uk/tomans/moica.htm)

## Birmingham

**Birmingham Science Fiction Group**  
Meets 2nd Friday, starting at 7:45pm.  
Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham  
Contact: Vernon Brown [blansgroup@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:blansgroup@yahoo.co.uk)  
Web: <http://bfsg.liveservers.com>

## Birmingham

**The Black Lodge**  
Meets 2nd Tuesday, 8:30pm. The Hoghead, Newhall Street, Birmingham B3 1PU  
Contact: Steve Green [ghostwords@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ghostwords@yahoo.co.uk)

## Cambridge

**Cambridge SF Group**  
Meets 2nd Monday, starting at 7:00pm.  
The Cambridge Blue, Gwydir Street, Cambridge CB1 2LG  
Contact: Austin Benson [outine@am.org](mailto:outine@am.org)

## Colchester

**Colchester SF/F Horror Group**  
Meets 3rd Saturday, starting at 12:30pm.  
The Playhouse pub, St. John's Street, Colchester CO2 7AA  
Contact: Des Lewis (01255 812119)

## Croydon

**Croydon SF Group**  
Meets 2nd Tuesday, at 8:00pm.  
The Dog and Bull, Surrey Street, Croydon CR0 1RG  
Contact: Robert Newman (020 8686 6800)

## Didcot

Meets 2nd Wednesday, starting at 7:30pm.  
The Ladygowe, Cow Lane, Didcot OX11 7SZ  
Contact: Nigel and Sabine Furlong [faulsting@aol.com](mailto:faulsting@aol.com)

## Dublin

**Dublin Sci-Fi Club**  
Meets 1st Tuesday, starting at 8:00pm.  
Captain's bar in Bowen Pubs, Fleet Street, Dublin 2  
Contact: Frank Darcy [ddub@bushpark.com](mailto:ddub@bushpark.com)  
Web: [www.kustarpark.com/Alldub/](http://www.kustarpark.com/Alldub/)

## Edinburgh

**Forth**  
Meets every Tuesday, at 9:00pm.  
The Doric Tavern, Market Street, Edinburgh EH1 1DE  
Contact: Jim Darroch [jd\\_dar@btmail.net](mailto:jd_dar@btmail.net)

## Edinburgh

**Meeting in K Jackson's**  
Meets every Thursday, starting at 8:30pm. K Jackson's pub, Lady Lawson Street, Edinburgh EH3 9DW  
Contact: Charlie Stross [charlie@antipope.org](mailto:charlie@antipope.org)

## Hull

**Hull SF Group**  
Meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday, 8:00pm.  
The New Clarence, Charles Street, Hull HU2 8DE  
Contact: Mike Cross [mike@mjsh.demon.co.uk](mailto:mike@mjsh.demon.co.uk)  
Web: [www.mjsh.demon.co.uk/hull.htm](http://www.mjsh.demon.co.uk/hull.htm)

## Leicester

**The Outlanders: The Leicester Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Group**  
Meets 1st Friday, starting at 8:00pm.  
The Globe, Silver Street, Leicester LE1 5EU  
Contact: Mark E. Cotterill [theoutlanders@hotmail.com](mailto:theoutlanders@hotmail.com)  
Web: [www.outlanders.finet.co.uk](http://www.outlanders.finet.co.uk)

## London

**Z29 Plural Z Alpha - the Official Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Appreciation Society**  
Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:00pm.  
Pender's Oak, High Holborn, London WC1V 7HP  
Contact: Robert Newman [meeting@z29.org](mailto:meeting@z29.org)  
Web: [www.z29.org](http://www.z29.org)

## London

**London BSFA meeting**  
Meets 4th Wednesday, starting at 6:30pm.  
The White Hart, 119-121 Bishopsgate, London, EC2M 3TH  
Forthcoming guests: Ken MacLeod (May), Les Edwards (June), Justin Robson (July).  
Contact: Farah Mendelsohn [farah@fm3.demon.co.uk](mailto:farah@fm3.demon.co.uk)  
Web: [www.bsfa.co.uk](http://www.bsfa.co.uk)

## London

**East London fans**  
Meets Tuesday after the first Thursday, starting at 7:00pm. The Walnut Tree, Leytonstone High Road, Leytonstone, London E11 1HH  
Contact: Alex McLintock [elazme@yahoo.com](mailto:elazme@yahoo.com)

## London

**The City Illustrates**  
Meets every Friday, starting at 6:30pm.  
The Red Lion, Kingly Street, off Regent Street, Westminster W1B 5PR

## London

**The Ton**  
Meets 1st Thursday, starts at 7:00pm.  
The Florence Nightingale, 199 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7UT  
Web: [www.dts.glo.co.uk/SF/Articles/london.html](http://www.dts.glo.co.uk/SF/Articles/london.html)

## Manchester

**FONT**  
Meets 2nd and 4th Thursday at 8:30pm.  
Waldorf Hotel, Gore Street, Manchester, M1 3AQ  
Contact: Arthur Chappell [arthurchappell@dora.net](mailto:arthurchappell@dora.net)  
Web: [www.arthurchappell.dora.net/Font.html](http://www.arthurchappell.dora.net/Font.html)  
[www.gencon.demon.co.uk/Fontzone/Font.html](http://www.gencon.demon.co.uk/Fontzone/Font.html)

## Norwich

**Norwich Science Fiction Group**  
Meets every second Wednesday, starting at 9:00pm, people gather from 8:00pm. The Cellar Bar, Ribs of Beef, Eye Bridge, Norwich, NR3 1HY  
Contact: Andrew Stitt [astiff@twam.net](mailto:astiff@twam.net)  
Web: [www.homepage.nfworld.net/reality/optional](http://www.homepage.nfworld.net/reality/optional)

## Oxford

**North Oxford**  
Meets last Thursday of the month, starting at 7:00pm.  
The Plough, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8RD  
Contact: Steve Jeffrey [psenn@oxd.co.uk](mailto:psenn@oxd.co.uk)

## Peterborough

**Peterborough Science Fiction Club**  
Meets 1st Wednesday, starting at 8:00pm.  
The Blue Bell Inn, St. Pauls Road, Dogsthorpe, Peterborough PE1 3RZ  
Meets 3rd Wednesday, starting at 8:00pm.  
Goodbarn Yard, St. John's Street, Peterborough PE1 3SD  
Contact: Pete Lacey [petel@btinternet.com](mailto:petel@btinternet.com)  
Web: [www.pifob.btinternet.co.uk/pifob.htm](http://www.pifob.btinternet.co.uk/pifob.htm)

## Portsmouth

**South Hants Science Fiction Group**  
Meets first Thursday, starting at 7:00pm.  
The Magpie, Fratton Road, Portsmouth PO1 5BX  
Contact: Mike Chester [mike.chester@ntlworld.com](mailto:mike.chester@ntlworld.com)  
Web: [www.pompey.demon.co.uk/sfsg.htm](http://www.pompey.demon.co.uk/sfsg.htm)

## Preston

**Preston SF Group**  
Meets every Tuesday, starting at 8:30pm.  
The Gary Friz, Friargate, Preston PR1 2EE  
Contact: Dave Young [plg@hairy1.demon.co.uk](mailto:plg@hairy1.demon.co.uk)  
Web: [www.hairy1.demon.co.uk/plg/](http://www.hairy1.demon.co.uk/plg/)

## Reading

**Reading SF Group**  
Meets every week on Monday, starting at 9:00pm except third Monday, when they start 7:30pm.  
The Corn Stores, Forbury Road, Reading RG1 1AX  
Contact: Mike Young [emquiry@rfsf.org.uk](mailto:emquiry@rfsf.org.uk)  
Web: [www.rfsf.org.uk](http://www.rfsf.org.uk)

## Sheffield

Meets Every Wednesday, starting at 9:00pm.  
The Red Lion, Charles Street, Sheffield S1 2ND  
Contact: Fran Dowd [fran@dowd.demon.co.uk](mailto:fran@dowd.demon.co.uk)

## St. Albans

**Polaris: The St. Albans SF Group**  
Meets 1st Tuesday, 8:00pm. The Plough, Tittenhanger Green, St. Albans AL4 0RW  
Contact: Martin Stewart [polaris@yahoo.com](mailto:polaris@yahoo.com)  
Web: [www.polaris.org](http://www.polaris.org)

# New times

## Win *Dæmos Rising* on DVD and two Time Hunter novellas.

Three great prizes from the Dr Who universe. *Dæmos Rising* is the new DVD from Reeltime Pictures. A sequel to both Reeltime's own *Downtime* and the Pertwee-era *Who* story, "Dæmons." *Matrix* reviewer Stuart Maddison (see his review inside this issue) described *Dæmos Rising* as "immediately interesting and ultimately satisfying."

*Dæmos Rising* also ties into Telos Publishing's Time Hunter stories and we've got the first two Time Hunter novellas to give away. Follow the adventures of time-sensitive duo Honoré Lechasseur and Emily Blandish in *The Winning Side* and *The Tunnel at the End of the Light*.

Complete the crossword, the shaded answers are deliberately unclued and make up the titles of six novellas from Telos Publishing's excellent Dr Who range. The titles please, plus the authors' names, to:

[matrix.competition@ntlworld.com](mailto:matrix.competition@ntlworld.com) by 9 August 2004.

### Across

- 1 Not clued (15)
- 7 and 21 Not clued (5,3,4)
- 9 Final drinks can go to your head (9)
- 11 *Dangerous Visions* editor (7)
- 12 Not clued (7)
- 13 and 19 Not clued (5,5)
- 15 and 27 Not clued (9,5)
- 18 The bit of *Today and Tomorrow* with Sophia Loren? (9)
- 19 see 13 (5)
- 21 see 7 (7)
- 24 Teach (7)
- 26 Business title (9)
- 27 See 15 (5)
- 28 Not clued (7,2,5)

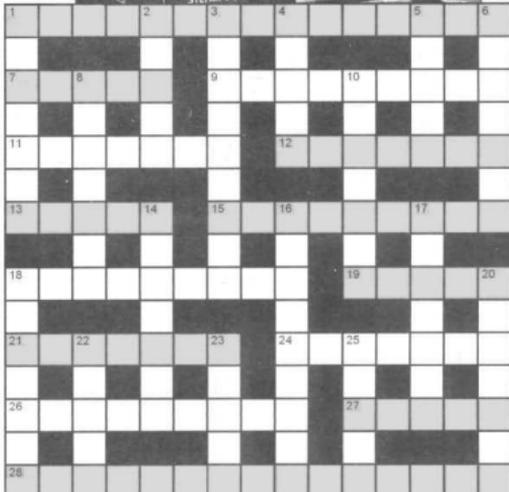
### Down

- 1 Inconvenient medium for lawgiving, medicine (7)
- 2 Mountain range - possibly 'armless' (5)
- 3 Restaurant - the chef is in training? (6,3)
- 4 \_\_\_ Rice Burroughs, creator of Barsoom (5)
- 5 Native of Baghdad, for example (5)
- 6 5 are Middle \_\_\_ (7)
- 8 Source of 5's national wealth (3-4)
- 10 Worn at weddings, Ascot and while playing Monopoly? (3-4)
- 14 Graceful (7)
- 16 Canadian symbol (5-4)
- 17 Leave alone, purify (7)
- 18 Very worried about Harrison Ford film (7)
- 20 Finders do this, probably in the zoo (7)
- 22 Early effort at military call up (5)
- 23 Virtually written, not via snails (1-4)
- 25 The highest part of a shoe? (5)

## Contributors

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**News:** Martin McGrath, Claire Brailey, Denis Jackman.  
**Flicker, Goggle Boxes, and Crossword:** Martin McGrath



## Crossword 166

Because we've changed the closing date for competition entries to prevent issues appearing after the deadline has passed, there is no crossword solution in this issue. It will appear in the next issue of *Matrix* with the winner's details.

## Timewasters Competition 167

We all have our favourite novels, that we read and reread, but how about the **worst** novel you've read? Can you sum it up in a few words?

Entries within three weeks of the receipt of this mailing to: John Ollis, 13 Berneshaw Close, Snatchill, Corby NN18 8EJ

## Competition 165

No result for this, because I have received no entries! The closing date is therefore extended to match that of this month's competition.