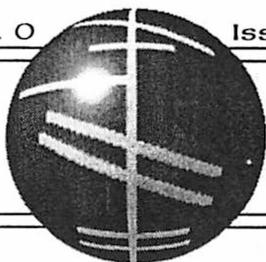


Vol. 0

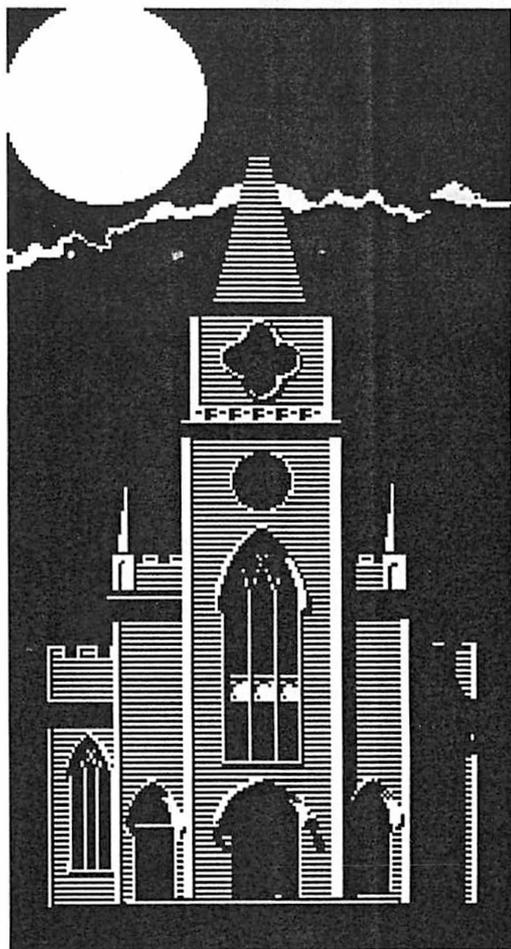
Issue 0

FEBRUARY 1997



Ogham

SPECIAL TRINCON 2 EDITION



Irish Gothic?

Editorial

Welcome to the special preview version of *Ogham* (pronounced "O, M"), the new quarterly fanzine for fans of alternative literature, media and culture, with a strong emphasis on Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror. Watch out for the full version of this magazine at TrinCon 2, being sold for a pittance: £150. However, you won't find a replica of any of these articles in the real magazine, this is just to whet your appetite.

"What's in a name?" For those of you who don't know, Ogham was an ancient alphabet used in Ireland, and other Gaelic countries. Its invention was credited to the Celtic God, Ogma, who was known for his gifts of eloquence, healing and prophecy. We're not sure we can offer the last two, but we will do our best to deliver on the first. Since we're proud of our Irishness, we choose *Ogham* as a title, but the modern masthead on the cover shows we're hoping to blend our perspective with a decidedly modern attitude.

Our first issue is revolving somewhat around the theme of vampires, to celebrate the fact that *Dracula*, written by Irishman Bram Stoker, is celebrating 100 years in publication. To this end we have an article by **Brian Stableford** called "The Vampire Icon in Lifestyle Fantasy" which should appeal to all you Goths and vampire-wannabes. There is also an interview with vampire guru **Kim Newman**, and a fascinating document apparently written by **Count Dracula** himself. There's also a discussion on vampire movies, and role-playing. But it's not all vampires - we have news, gossip, reviews of books and comics, the odd bit of mad trivia and a quick introduction to the world of the internet.

This fanzine is the joint effort of me, the Editor, as well as our two Associate Editors **Loretta Culbert & Seán Harnett**, and our Art Editor **Paul Sheridan**.

We hope you enjoy our debut, and watch out for further issues.

Maura McHugh
Editor



The Sky is Falling

Asteroid, the new NBC miniseries due to commence broadcast in the United States in February, tells the tale of an astronomer's discovery of the threat of the return of the ice age by two rogue asteroids falling towards Earth. In the midst of this crisis she experiences the usual difficulties in being taken seriously and she faces the inevitable realisation that there is little she can do to avert the catastrophe in any event. The series, starring **Annabella Sciorra** and **Michael Biehn** is expected to make it to European TV screens later this year.

Up, Up and Away

Ever fancied the full space flight experience? Well, **Casey Aerospace** are currently offering the opportunity to turn your insides out in a \$10,000 flight that will simulate all the thrills of launch acceleration and freefall not to mind a brief period of zero gee. Your wallet may handle it, but will your stomach stand up to the challenge of all 10 flights in your day's "space experience"?

Dragon's Breath

This year sees the 30th anniversary of the **Pern** novels by **Anne McCaffrey**, and **Del Rey** books are celebrating in style. Not only are there new **Pern** titles due to hit the shelves, but they have a celebratory web site with competitions galore.

Comics Enter the Information Age

Fans of **Leonard Nimoy's Primortals** will welcome the arrival of the new CD-Rom which includes, not only the interactive comic but also interviews, details on the conception of the idea

and information on the artists and writers involved. All in all it looks like quite a flash package.

Warning, Warning

It has been confirmed that 1998 will see the release of *Jupiter II*, the big screen version of 1960's TV series, *Lost in Space*. With Gary Oldman cast as the blithering Doctor Smith and William Hurt as Dad, the movie follows a growing line of remakes of hit TV shows, including *Mission Impossible* and *The Fugitive*. The fashion for nostalgia must eventually have a limited life, but in the meantime producers seem to be willing to fork out up to \$70 million for this project.

Loretta Culbert

The Eliminator

Dir: Enda Hughes

1996, Ireland

This film is the best movie ever to come from this island. Currently showing in the IFC until 2nd March, it is essential viewing for any movie lover who is easily bored by tedious happy-ending, Hollywood trash which costs millions.

The plot begins with two factions, The Organisation, and the British Secret Service, fighting over a armoured vehicle called the Viper.

It soon degenerates into a chaotic rivalry between Stone and Hawk, both members of The Organisation. Within two minutes of the movie starting the whole audience in the IFC was cracking up with laughter. This movie has everything, lots of John Woo-style shooting and fighting, high speed car chases in superb vehicles such as Fiat 121's and Datsun Sunnys, there are Vietnam flash-back sequences and eyeball eating zombies; you name it, it's in this movie.

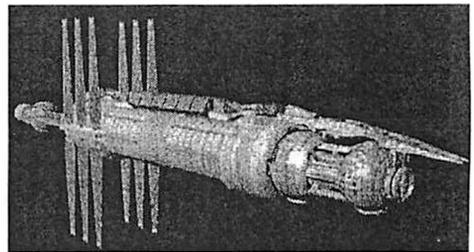
The humour never stops and neither does the gratuitous violence. The characters in themselves are portrayed so stupidly that it's funny.

Enda Hughes, the director, has done a magnificent job in not only putting this



lunacy together, but also producing a low budget classic that stands beside such movie greats as *Bad Taste*. It is amazing to think that a bunch of dedicated 'Lads' from Keady in County Armagh, have achieved the goal of actually having their movie shown on the Big Screen. It is noticeable that none of the major British movie magazines have picked up on this movie, and to date the only reference, or major plug for the movie, has been in *SFX*. Although thanks to the excellent marketing ploys of the *Eliminator* gang in the City (*watch out for the "logo" under your feet in Dublin - Ed.*) it doesn't really matter. This is definitely not an opportunity to be missed.

James Bacon



"The Adventure Begins at the Dawn of the Third Age of Mankind"

or

How the Third Age was delayed in Europe because of a distribution glitch

After a number of production delays *The Babylon Project*, a role-playing game from Chamelcon Eclectic Entertainment, Inc. in association with WireFrame Productions, Inc. based on the *Babylon 5* television series, will soon finally be released - on 28th February. Well, released in the United States on that date. European fans and gamers will have to wait until June before the game is distributed in this part of the world, because of a reluctance on the part of Warner Bros. to allow Chamelcon to distribute the game here. Instead, the European rights belong to Titan Books; these rights include, apparently, the right

to print the game how Titan see fit, giving them a licence to hack around with the original product. Chameleon, in a recent press release, assured Europeans that Titan Books' version will "be virtually unaltered, so European fans can look forward to the same great game system and background material that American players are getting." *Virtually unaltered?* More worryingly, Titan Books have not committed themselves to publishing any of the game supplements that Chameleon plan to issue within a few months of the original book being published (including an Earth Colonies sourcebook, and an EarthForce sourcebook).

So, we have to wait. What are we waiting for? What is the game like? A preview of the Character Generation and Task Resolution systems on Chameleon's web site (www.blackeagle.com) suggests that the game will be elegant, dice-based, revolving around the performance of tasks à la *Traveller*. These previews also suggest that the game system will be nothing spectacularly original. This, however, is not a problem - for me at least. As long as it works without unduly interfering with the creation of a shared story, I consider a system - any system, however 'unrealistic' - to be a 'success.' The critical element in any game is the background, and the role-playing opportunity this background affords. *The Babylon Project* has a wealth of background material already created, and is in an enviable position because it is this background which will excite immediate recognition among a certain section of role-playing fandom. The real concern, then, is how well Chameleon have managed this background, and expanded it in directions that accommodate the peculiar kinds of stories and situations that role-playing creates.

Licensed role-playing products fall or stand on their ability to mould the original background into an exciting role-playing environment: *Indiana Jones* from TSR is an example of how not to do it; *Star Wars* from West End Games (WEG) is an example of how to do it brilliantly. The difference? Well, it's hard to articulate exactly why these games differ so much in role-playing quality. Both are derived from primary sources that are, in many ways, the archetypal pools of role-playing, full of dashing heroes, strong but

yet feminine heroines, strange lost worlds, sword fights, shoot outs, derring-do. Swashbuckling stuff, indeed. And both games do try to re-create the feel of their respective sources. I think, though, that the distinguishing factor is that WEG opened up the *Star Wars* universe with originality, took the existing *Star Wars* mythos, distilled its essence, and ran with it. TSR's *Indiana Jones* was constrained by its focus on the main characters of the movies, and the lacklustre and overly-reverential manner in which it tried (and failed) to further the world of the Indiana Jones movies.

From reading Chameleon's press releases, it seems as if they have chosen the first route for their game: it is set on the infamous five-mile-long station, and the players can play any of the main alien races (except Vorlons and Shadows, obviously); also, the game is set concurrently with the first season of show, avoiding any clash with the arc, as it develops.

Any final judgements will have to be reserved until we actually read the final product. JMS seems happy with it, though:

I just got in the full-color proofs of the main book, and it's not only gorgeous, it's the best single compilation of B5 universe information that I've ever seen. They had to do a fair amount of filling in the gaps here and there, but what went in fits perfectly, and I highly recommend it. They went to a great deal of work and research on the show, and you can see it in every panel. (rec.arts.sf.tv.babylon5.moderated, 30 Jan, 1997)

And that's exactly the sort of thing I was talking about; hopefully, this background fosters good role-playing. If it does, this could be one hell of an experience.

Seán Harnett

