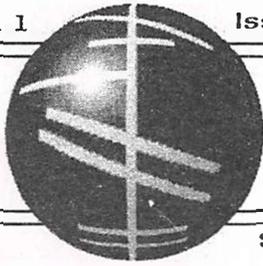


Vol. 1

Issue 1

FEBRUARY 1997



Ogham

Seriously Irish, seriously SF...Oh Mg!



£1.50

"The Vampire Icon in Lifestyle Fantasy" - *by Brian Stableford*
Definitions of Horror - *An Interview with Kim Newman*
**Science Fiction, News, Movies, Reviews, Comics,
Fantasy & Horror.**

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Editorial



Welcome to the first issue of *Ogham* (pronounced "O, M"). For those of you who don't know, Ogham was an ancient alphabet used in Ireland, and elsewhere, and its invention was credited to the Celtic

God, Ogma, who was known for his gifts of eloquence, healing and prophecy. I'm not sure we can offer the last two, but we will do our best to deliver on the first.

As to our *raison d'être* - if you are not familiar with the Irish SF (meaning Speculative Fiction, to encompass as much as possible) scene you could be forgiven thinking it was non-existent. There are a few hardy souls who are still trucking out there, but on the magazine front there is very little proof of our existence. Since we all know we are alive and kicking it seemed a good idea to publicise the fact.

We are hoping to bring you a quarterly fanzine, full of articles, news, reviews and interviews on areas of interest to us, and you - write in and request something. None of us are getting paid for this, and all of us are enjoying getting together on such a venture. I must thank the wonderful editorial team comprising of Associate Editors Loretta Culbert and Sean Harnett, and Art Editor Paul Sheridan. None of them laughed in my face when I suggested the project to them, and instead were enthusiastic and supportive. I also must thank all our contributors, Brian Stableford in particular, as well as Kim Newman for the interview.

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. I understand it's giving the Bible a run for its money in the most-published-in-the-world stakes. In the future we're planning to continue with the "theme" idea, as well as including off-topic articles. Our next issue should be delving into the world of Space Opera, and the one after that, Dark Fantasy/Magic Realism. We are planning to publish a *short* (under 2,500 words) piece of fiction in the other issues, so send us your masterpieces - see page 23 for the particulars. If you have any suggestions for *Ogham*, be sure to send them on; they won't do you any good just simmering in your mind.

Otherwise, I hope you enjoy our debut, and you'll pick up a copy of our next issue (out in May *sometime*).

Maura McHugh
Editor





Bloodlust Abounds

This year's centenary of the publication of *Dracula* has inspired, not only the theme of our first issue, but a myriad of exhibitions, conventions and competitions world-wide.

Dracula '97: A Centennial Celebration to be held by the Transylvanian Society of *Dracula* (Canada/US) in Los Angeles from August 14th to 17th will certainly be one of the more spectacular and dramatic of events.

Of a more scholarly nature Stateside are the Exhibition of Bram Stoker's Notes for *Dracula* running from April to November at the Philadelphia Rosenbach Museum and Library and Boston College's *Dracula Day* on November 8th. Nearer home the annual Bram Stoker International Summer School, sponsored by the Bram Stoker Society will run for one week from June 29th to July 6th in Dublin.

Many annual events are, this year, running *Dracula* related themes including the World Fantasy Convention to be held this year from 30th October to November 3rd in the International Hotel, Docklands, London. The International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts. (Florida, March 19th to 23rd), has extra sessions to mark the centennial and of general interest at this event are special guests Dan Simmons and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

However, if your personal bent is towards the romanticism and atmosphere of that renowned novel then perhaps one of the events being run 'on location' may capture your imagination. At the Bistritz/Borgo Pass, Transylvania, a sympo-

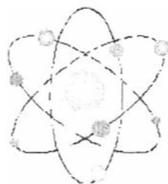
sium including scholarly papers and the optional *Dracula* tour, will be held in early May. Also from August 28th to 30th the Count *Dracula* Treasures Fair and Festival, by the same organisers, will be a more informal and accessible event. Closer to home, Thee Centenary Celebration in Whitby, England from June 13th to 15th will include re-enactments of some of the best known scenes.

So whatever your interest, literary, casual or lifestyle, there should be an event somewhere to meet your tastes, if not your pocket.

It's Full of Stars

Arthur C. Clarke is soon to come to the forefront once more with the imminent release in March of the final part in the 2001 series, *3001: The Final Odyssey*. Billed as the "the most eagerly awaited sequel of all time" Clarke takes on board the subject of neuro enhancements.

Also Dreamworks SKG, is to team up with Paramount to produce a movie loosely based on Clarke's *The Hammer of God*, and partially inspired by the film *When Worlds Collide*. With a screenplay by Michael Tölkén and Bruce Joel Rubin the project, called *Deep Contact*, will begin production on April 21st.



Awards, Awards, Awards

The recent plethora of Golden Globe Awards lavished on media science fiction must auger well for the continuing trend in well financed productions. Unfortunately this does not guarantee quality to which the volume of cancelled, underplotted and badly acted TV series of the last year bears witness.

Among the winners were both David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson in the best Actor/Actress in a TV Drama categories. The *X-Files* also took the accolades for best TV Drama Series at the award ceremonies in Beverly Hills.

NBC's *Third Rock From The Sun* took the award for best TV Comedy/Musical and Best Actor in a TV Comedy/Musical went to lead, John

Lithgow. This rather quirky series is definitely becoming something to be reckoned with in the midst of the abundance of 'Friends' type sitcoms.

Only time will tell if this recognition of genre productions by mainstream audiences, and the industry, foretells a changing of public perception of the material, or if it is just a phase which will pass as the masses tire of conspiracies and aliens.

Star Trek fans also got a piece of the action with the new Patrick Stewart star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Petitioned, and paid for by the fans, the star was laid on December, 16th.

The preliminary Nebula ballot has been released and some past winners of both Hugo and Nebula awards feature. The nominations in the best novel category include Bruce Bethke's *Headcrash*, Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* and Nicola Griffith's *Slow River* as well as offerings from more familiar names such as Bruce Sterling, David Brin and Lois McMaster Bujold.

Ursula K. LeGuin features not once, but twice, for the best novella award along with Allen Steele's "The Death of Captain Future" which earned him a Hugo award last year. The winners will be announced at the annual awards ceremonies in Kansas City in April.

A long time ago, in a Galaxy far, far away.....



Well, it's back and the hype is as hot as ever, with American fans worshipping again at the altar. We have to wait a while longer however. Whether it's your first time

to see the trilogy on the big screen or you are merely recapturing that sense of awe that us first timers experienced, then you will not be disappointed with the upcoming media coverage or the amount of related merchandise on sale.

Del Rey books are re-releasing the repackaged *Art of Starwars*, *Art of the Empire Strikes Back* and *Art of Return of the Jedi* in large format trade paperback this February. You can also expect to see repackaged novelisations of the movies in paperback as the year progresses. New to the market, but you'll have to wait until 1998,

is the full alphabetical *Star Wars Encyclopaedia*.

To get personal with the stars, (or at least one of them), meet David Prowse (Darth Vader in body if not in voice), at the **Sci-Fi Comedy Con** in the Dublin Writer's Museum. 8th and 9th of March. Watch out for further information, articles etc. on the Star Wars phenomenon in our next issue.

Director George Lucas was heard to say, "I'm flabbergasted.....It's a 20-year-old movie. I just did not expect this to happen.", in reaction to the news that the 20 year anniversary release had grossed an estimated \$36 million in the opening weekend.

Movie News



Hammer Horror followers will rejoice at the news that Christopher Lee and director Freddie Farnis are to team up for a new British occult thriller entitled *Guilty Silence*. The US ambassador's son attends a boarding school in which

some seriously satanic individuals are running the show. Certainly some vaguely familiar elements there.

Paul Verhoven's (director of *Total Recall*) *Starship Troopers*, due for release on July 2nd has been delayed for marketing reasons and will now go on general release across the United States on November 7th. This movie would appear to be accumulating the same status as a special effects giant that had us all racing to the cinema for *Independence Day* in 1996. Hopefully our anticipation will be better rewarded on this occasion.

And speaking of *Total Recall* Miramax have announced plans for a sequel.

Big budget SF movie, *The Fifth Element*, has been chosen to open this year's Cannes Film Festival. Staring Bruce Willis and directed by Luc Besson, (*Subway* and *La Femme Nikita*) the plot is a closely guarded secret.

Literary Pursuits

Anne McCaffrey must have dragon fire glinting in her eyes with the imminent release of *Dragonseye* in hard back from Del Rey and Pern

fans will be happy to hear she is currently working on another Pern title. And to keep you going in the mean time the second edition of *The DragonLovers Guide to Pern*, by Jody Lynn Nye, and with illustrations from Todd Cameron Hamilton and James Clouse should be available in trade paperback this month.

Three well known authors have teamed up with HarperPrism to produce a new Foundation series based on the novels by Isaac Asimov. March should see the release of the first volume by Gregory Benford entitled *Foundation's Fear*. *Chaos* by Greg Bear and *Third Foundation* by David Brin will follow at one year intervals. This project has been supported by the Asimov Estate and while each novel will be a stand alone work there will be a uniting theme which will be resolved in the final volume.

Sequels have always been a trademark of Fantasy and much Science Fiction writing. Works in progress currently being eagerly awaited by fans include part two of Allan Cole's trilogy *Wizard of the Winds* and Chris Bunch's *The Darkness of God* - the final book in his Shadow Warrior trilogy.

Media



With rumours abounding on the exact content of the two now confirmed *Babylon5* spin-offs, J. Michael Straczynski has denied that he is to be involved in production of an unfiled Gene Roddenberry concept.

He was offered the job but has stated that he had "a moral obligation to B5 and that has to come first". This is not the way the project won't be realised. *Battleground Earth* looks set to make a screen debut in September.

Babylon5 itself seems set to wind up in the fourth season as studio chiefs as anxious to move on. While you are waiting for the new series to begin on Channel Four perhaps you would like to join the campaign to have the show moved to a more suitable time slot. Those of you fortunate enough to get hold of the new episodes will know that much would have to be left on the cutting

room floor to fit the Broadcasting Commission's guidelines for the 6 o'clock slot.

Creator of comic-strip corporate hero *Dilbert*, Scott Adams has been invited to make a guest appearance on B5 following his proclamation of the series as "The best show ever made". The episode is due to be shot in February but there is no information on the role Adams will play.



X-Files creator, Chris Carter has said that the fifth series of the show may be his last as he wants to turn his attention to the big screen, including working on the much anticipated *X-Files* feature. This may as yet be a TV movie but the jury is still out. Changes are afoot in the series with the producers set to break their own prohibition on big star appearances. Whoopi Goldberg looks set to make an appearance in the fifth series. Guinan's second appearance on Earth?

Game On

The *X-Files* Collectible Card Game has at last made it to the shelves after much speculation. Early reports suggest a stylishly produced package with decent play, though nothing truly innovative. Whispered comparisons with *Cluedo* may give you a flavour of what's involved.

Cybertainment is a new word for my vocabulary. *MagicMaker* seem to be leading the field and have recently commissioned Alan Dean Foster to script a new computer/on-line game called *The Marexx*.

Industry News

The untimely death of Carl Sagan at the end of 1996 coincides with the plans to produce a film version of his 1985 novel *Contact*. Ironically Sagan, along with Warner Bros, is being sued by Zoetrope, Francis Ford Coppola's film company over that very script. The contention is that the story is based on a television project created by Coppola, on which Sagan collaborated. Permission was given for the publication of the book, but Coppola did not receive any revenue from the proceeds. He is now seeking a quarter million

Continued on Page 18...

The Vampire Icon in Lifestyle Fantasy

Brian Stableford

All lifestyle is fantasy. Conformity - which is the name we give, by logical necessity, to the most commonplace and most stereotyped forms of lifestyle aspiration - is a matter of buying in to the kinds of fantasy sold off the peg by educators and advertisers. The rewards offered by conformity are, of course, illusory and are known to be so; no one really believes that buying the products advertised on TV will give them ready access to the paradise of TVadland. It is, therefore, unjust if not unsurprising that one of the rituals which binds conformists to their conformity is a compulsion to mock the illusions bound up in the lifestyle-choices of nonconformists.

Some nonconformists arrive at their positions of relative isolation because they genuinely loathe and despise conformity. Others, as Saint Oscar shrewdly observed, only take to mocking Society because they can't get into it. Those who feel that they will be condemned to the ranks of the excluded no matter what efforts they make are wise to do what they can to make a virtue of exclusion. Given that conformists are obliged to mock the excluded, the rational exile will do whatever is necessary to turn that mockery to advantage.

The first step in any such strategy is to wear the badges of one's exile with pride, exaggerating them to the farthest degree courage, imagination and practicality will permit lest modesty be misinterpreted as apology. The workaday world being what it is, such emblems of individualism often shun the daylight and the places where conformists gather, accepting that their appointed

realm is the night and their favoured locale the covert, but the severity of those limitations should and must encourage the released expressions of self to become more assertive and more extreme.

Logic requires, of course, that there should be many kinds of nonconformity but it is easy enough to construct an ideal type of the perfect nonconformist: the bravest of the brave; the most extreme of the extreme. Such individuals will naturally prefer black to white, night to day, neurasthenia to a healthy mind, mild pallor to a healthy complexion, baroque self-decoration to tasteful self-ornamentation. Their artistic tastes will run to the morbid rather than the uplifting, the esoteric rather than the popular. Just as their aesthetic philosophy will elevate the sublime rather than the beautiful to the position of highest privilege so their moral philosophy will align itself with the literary Satanism which prefers misunderstood rebels to oppressive tyrants even if the latter have claimed and occupied the highest available ground.

The contemporary subculture which fits this ideal type most exactly is that of the self-styled Goths; it is only to be expected, therefore, that theirs is a subculture which produces spectacular specimens of wondrous good looks and supports bands whose calculated esotericism contains an authentic genius. The most authoritative commentator on the movement, Mick Mercer - author of the invaluable guide-books *Gothic Rock* and *The Hex Files* - correctly observes that the essence of the Gothic lifestyle fantasy was first sketched out in Edgar Allan Poe's description of the Decadent lifestyle of C. Auguste Dupin; it is therefore natural that the literary tastes of contemporary Goths should be drawn to the most extreme modern extrapolations of Poesque Decadence, all of which employ the vampire as their central motif. The subculture's longest-running

fanzines, *The Vampire Guild's Crimson* and *Bats and Red Velvet*, both exemplify and celebrate the power of this attraction.



There is, of course, a trivial sense in which anyone can adopt vampirism as a lifestyle fantasy - one only has to sup blood - but the rewards which the activity might deliver are presumably restricted to those capable of cultivating the relevant sexual fetishism and must be balanced against evident risks. Much greater rewards accrue to those whose identification with the vampire is much more closely akin to the kind of identification one has with characters in books or movies - the kind which can be taken up or put away at will, and whose extrapolation into private daydreams is always under firm control. These rewards are, indeed, closely tied to the particular characteristics of literary and cinematic vampires: their sexual magnetism, their charismatic hauteur, their peculiar combination of power and vulnerability, and - above all else - their awesome world-weariness. Charles Baudelaire, who took over where Poe left off in the development of the Decadent sensibility and its heroic virtues of *ennui* and *spleen*, provided the giant shoulders on which the Vampire Lestat and his numerous kin would one day stand.

The vampires in whom the members of vampire societies are primarily interested are not necessarily heroes, although some of them - like Fred Saberhagen's Dracula, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's Comte St Germain and Pierre Kast's Count Kotor - are. Nor do their predatory tendencies always force them into the abyss of guilt, after the fashion of Anne Rice's Louis or Suzy McKee Charnas' Dr. Weyland. They are free to struggle against the eternal damnation of their exclusion from society in any way they wish and any way they can, if that means returning the fervour of their despisers, so be it. One of the rewards of individualism is the freedom to see the rest of mankind as a herd, the opportunity to embrace - if only to see how the cap fits - the crown of fearsome arrogance. Anyone incapable of savouring that arrogance is probably ill-fitted to life in the modern world (except, perhaps, as an adherent of



one of the many faiths which seek to compensate for their obvious decrepitude with absurd zeal). Many brands of arrogance are available in the cultural marketplace, but the arrogance of the Byronic vampire is one of the finest vintages.



No one, of course, can aspire actually to *be* the literary kind of vampire, but that should not prevent us from recognising the importance of this imaginative species as an icon of authentic worthiness. We can read about such vampires, empathise with their existential predicaments, and show solidarity with their cause. To do so may require no more effort than is required of motorists invited to sound their horns in sympathy with picketing strikers, but those who are prepared to go the extra distance and translate their sympathy into symbolic action are to be admired and applauded by all true nonconformists. As for conformists...well, who cares what they think? They may not be stupid enough to imagine that their TV-advertised off-the-peg lifestyle fantasies will set them on the high road to happiness, but they *are* cowardly enough to buy into them regardless.

All lifestyle is fantasy: as Kurt Vonnegut once observed. We are what we pretend to be. Vonnegut went on from that observation to recommend that we must be careful what we pretend to be, and so we must - but we must be careful, too, to make the very most of the opportunities that lie before us.

Brian Stableford is the author of over fifty books, both fiction (SF/Fantasy/Horror) and non-fiction, and is a regular contributor to Interzone, who have recently serialised his latest Vampire novella "The Black Blood of the Dead". We appreciate his vote of confidence in us by contributing to our debut issue.

“This Man Belongs to Me!”

Historian's Prologue: the following document was a recent discovery among the Bram Stoker papers housed at the Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia. It has been tentatively dated about six months before Stoker's death in 1912, when he was in the throes of writing his last novel, *The Lair of the White Worm*. Written in a savage hand (though it has been authenticated as being Stoker's own) it is signed at the end as “Count Dracula, Voivode of Transylvania.” The paper has caused much debate in Academic circles, and is presented here for the reader's speculation.

Stoker always hero-worshipped, idolised, and obsessed over those men who did deeds of which he could only dream, or could exaggerate in his own pathetic scribblings. Not surprising he should choose me, a *boyar* of Transylvania, whose courage and bravery was tested many times in combat, to be the central character in his most famous book, *Dracula*. Despite the lies Stoker told of me, the half-truths and the pure fantasy, when he is long dead *I* shall be remembered, and *he* will be relegated to a shadow, a figure barely glimpsed in the mirror of history. Stoker was at heart a peasant, and history will treat him as such, recognising the true nobleman and my position of authority over him in all things.

Compare our lives - I was hostages as a child to the Turks by my very father, left in a foreign country to fend off the advances of my captors and to guard against the treachery of my own brother. Early I learned to scheme, to plot, to learn to control people in subtle and unsubtle ways. But, my lineage would allow nothing less of me. My father, Vlad Dracul, was a fierce warrior and known for his devious manouvring, and his uncompromising nature when in battle. Driven by the urges of my blood I remained in control, and

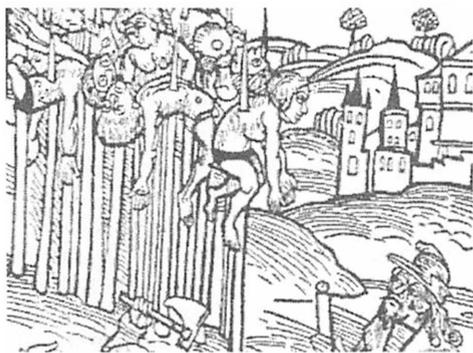
when my father broke his treaty with the Turks (as it was inevitable he would) I was not killed, and eventually made my escape.

Stoker, however, was bed-ridden for the first seven years of his life. Tended to by his over-anxious mother, Charlotte, he grew up weak and helpless, and soon sought out imaginary adventures in his mind to supplement the dreary four walls to which he was confined. His father was a bureaucrat, a pen-pusher in Dublin Castle who lived a small and safe life, and urged his son to do the same. However, in 1857 Bram finally showed some signs of courage, and emerged from his illness to engage with the outside world. Strangely, he grew up extremely hardy and healthy, and had all the makings of a warrior, except the will-power. Though he excelled at athletics, he pursued the intellect more and enrolled in Trinity in 1864. He showed his underlying unmanliness by championing the effete poet, Walt Whitman, against all opposition at his university. As is natural with those who only dream of action, he was a great talker, becoming the President of the Philosophical Society. He once described himself, thus:

“I am six feet two inches high and twelve stone weight naked and used to be forty-one or forty-two inches around the chest. I am ugly but strong and determined and have a large bump over my eyebrows. I have a heavy jaw and a big mouth and thick lips - sensitive nostrils - a snubnose and straight hair. I am equal in temper and cool in disposition and have a large amount of self control and am naturally secretive to the world”.

Ha! Bram's weakness always was his insecurity about himself, and his belief that he was somehow inferior to others. Such people look for others to dominate them, and he eventually found such a person in the figure of Henry Irving. Here was a man to admire. He was hailed as the greatest actor of his time,





Count Dracula, and a captive audience

and Stoker met him after writing a grovelling review of Irving's rendition of *Hamlet* in Dublin's Theatre Royal. At the time, Stoker was already 29 years of age, and had been an ardent follower of Irving's for several years. Irving was a predator, a man who recognised the weaknesses of others and felt no compunction in exploiting them - truly a man after my own heart. In Stoker, he saw the peasant's desire for a master, and also saw the energy which could be harnessed for his own means. Within a year, Stoker had moved to London to become the manager of the Lyceum, Irving's theatre. Before he left, Stoker proposed to Florence Balcombe. She was a wife worthy of a great man - a notable beauty, she had spurned the advances of the notorious Oscar Wilde.

So Stoker and wife moved to London, that bustling city of three million souls, the jewel of the British empire, full of vitality and promise. Yet, Stoker was a foreigner, and worse still, an Irishman, though he had the distinction of being *Anglo-Irish*, and so was not *completely* native. Irving treated Stoker like a servant, and deep in his insecurity about his race and class, Stoker allowed himself to be treated thus. The next decade was a busy one for Stoker and family; he managed the Lyceum Theatre for Irving with great flair and competency, while continuing to write, and to arrange the great tours the Lyceum made in America. He even met one of his other heroes, Walt Whitman, who was charmed by Stoker's slavish attention.

At the back of this an idea for a story began to take shape, an idea he first sketched loosely in March of 1890, for a novel he was to call *The*

UnDead. It was now that Stoker first investigated me, read of my extraordinary life and the feats which were to make me legendary. He learned how I dined among the legions of impaled people when I conquered an area, how I tolerated no disrespect from anyone of any class or creed, and how I controlled my people with the right and proper strength of one who is ordained by God to rule. These things Stoker secretly lusted for, because though he managed a staff of over forty people, juggled various jobs with great accomplishment, Irving still treated him as a menial (he once referred to Stoker as his *secretary*!). And all the time, I grew in his mind, uncoiling from the wisps of legends he grasped to his heart like the ghoulish tales his mother told him when he was a child. The novels he published during his servitude to Irving, before I gained mastery, were pale simpering children, fit only to hold the torches which lit up my entrance. Days before the book when to press, Stoker recognised the inherent strength my name could lend his novel, and *The UnDead*, became, simply, *Dracula*. I was born, again, in 1897, as Queen Victoria celebrated her jubilee and the British Empire reached its apogee.

He was never to achieve the correct artistic fusion again, because in order to birth me Stoker had to feed me, and as I nestled in his mind I continued to draw from him, slowly bleeding him of vitality. In 1905, when Irving died and relinquished Stoker from his slavery, he was so weakened by his struggles between the two of us, he suffered a stroke. This marked a turning point in his life, and as his health continued to fail, and the words likewise refused to flow, Stoker spiralled into himself, writing some of the most purile work ever. Yet, when his end comes, and I am familiar with the scent of Death and can smell it's hand upon him, I shall be there for Stoker, as Irving never was. When Stoker finally lifts his head up in the afterlife, mine will be the first face he shall see. And he will be glad.

COUNT DRACULA
VIVIDE OF TRANSYLVANIA

DEFINITIONS OF HORROR

An Interview with Kim Newman

This interview was conducted in December 1996, by *Maura McHugh*, and considering *Dracula* is a subject that is near-and-dear to Mr. Newman's heart, it was the focus of her first question.

Mt: *Why do you think Dracula is so popular?*

Kr: No idea, it wasn't a very good book when it came out. I think it was, regardless of *Varney the Vampire* and "The Vampyre" and "Carmilla", it was the first big vampire story that was actually accessible to the general audience - it wasn't a short story and it wasn't a serial that went on forever. I think that is probably the main thing. I suspect, if it hadn't have been for the various film and stage adaptations in the first quarter of a century it would be a forgotten book now. Nobody remembers, say, Richard Marsh's, *The Beetle*, which is a much better book, and of the same vintage. And I'm sure that's because it hasn't been made into a film loads and loads of times.

Mt: *So what age were you when you first read Dracula?*

Kr: 12 - 13.

Mt: *Did it leave any impression on you?*

Kr: Oh yes, of course. I saw a film first, I saw the Bela Logusi film, and that made me want to read the book. It also actually made me get interested in Horror and in cinema so that's probably a big influence on my entire life. Shortly thereafter I read *Dracula*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Frankenstein*, and all those kinds of things, and I enjoyed it as a kid. I found it very readable, even the bits I now find difficult I was able to absorb.

Mt: *How long were you stewing over the idea you used in Anno Dracula?*

Kr: A very long time. I don't know when it first came to me as an idea...I certainly remember talking about it or thinking about it in something like 1983, and not getting around to doing for a long

time.

Mt: *The short story "Red Reign" is based on, well, is really the entire story of Anno Dracula condensed. Were you asked to do the story?*

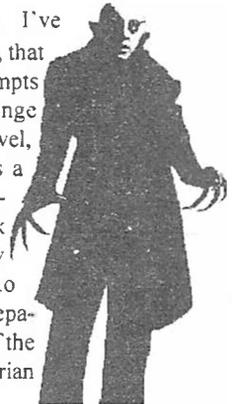
Kr: Yes. I was asked to contribute a story to Steve Jones's *Mammoth Book of Vampires* and I decided that this was the time to write my *Anno Dracula* idea. The thing it took me a long time to come up with was an actual plot. It wasn't until I decided to do a Jack the Ripper story that I really realised what *Anno Dracula* was. I'd previously outlined, for Games Workshop, a *Dark Future* novel which was about Genevieve and Jack the Ripper, and the part that was eventually done by Charles Beauregard - the leading guy in *Anno Dracula* - was Wyatt Earp. But that was much more a chase thing. It had a far future setting and that character was plucked out of time. So, that kind of triangle relationship was grafted into *Anno Dracula*.

Mt: *What is it about the alternate reality that appeals to you, or alternate history?*

Kr: Ah, I just like fiddling with things. I suppose what I like is not just the "how would history be if some big thing had changed..." but just how that would then filter down to the ordinary lives of people, what that would mean their newspaper would look like, or what they would have for breakfast, or stuff like that, all those tiny things. Doing a book which is full of stuff like that is very appealing. I enjoy it as a game. I get feedback from readers who enjoy it.

Mt: *So how do you view Horror as an artistic expression?*

Kr: I'm not sure it is. I've come to believe recently, that regardless of all the attempts to trace Jacobean revenge tragedy to the Gothic novel, I don't think Horror as a genre actually existed until quite recently. I think we have various literary cycles which feed into each other which are separate. There are echoes of the Gothic novel in the Victorian



Ghost Story, for instance, but they are separate cycles. It's only now in retrospect, that we can weave a continuity. Certainly, Horror stories, ghost stories, compte cruelle, those kinds of things, they've been around for a long time, but it may even be that in terms of Horror as a commercial genre, in publishing, I don't think it existed before 1975. There were various stand-alone writers doing things in this country but, even though when I was a kid you could pick up, say, H. P. Lovecraft and a lot of the *Weird Tales* writers which were published in paperback. They tended to be stuck onto people's Science Fiction lists, or to not be labelled as Horror. But Horror was, I think, defined as a genre in the cinema much earlier than in literature. And even then that was only defined about 1931. Whereas, most other genres strike me as being discrete and ancient and having a long strong true line, the love story - or whatever - and a constantly repeating vision. Whereas Horror, I think, has only recently been systematised. And I think that might not have been a good thing for the genre, I think it was better off being hated and despised and persecuted, and kicked out. I think the fact that Horror is now a category in book shops may not entirely be a good thing.

Mt: So why do you write in the Horror area?

Kr: Well, I question that I do... [laughs] And, I hate that. I really hate it when certain other writers whose names we shan't mention, but who are Clive Barker, say things like, "Oh, I don't write Horror, I write *magique, fantastique* [in a High French accent]." Stuff like that. But, let's fact it, it wasn't called *The Books of Slightly Arty Magique Stuff* was it? I think that having made a reputation in Horror he has ducked it real quick. And I remember him actually telling me would never do this, and then he did it about a week later. And fair enough, his later books aren't strictly Horror, but I don't think they are as good as his early books which are. But, I'm not sure how comfortable I am within strict genre confines. I would certainly concede that of my six novels under my own name that *Bad Dreams* and *Jago* are squarely Horror novels. *Bad Dreams* is "girl being chased by a monster" (*Nightmare on Elm Street*) and *Jago* is "small community being over-



whelmed by an evil force" (*Salem's Lot, Ghost Story*). And they were explicitly written on those patterns. The other books I think don't quite comfortably go into Horror. *Anno Dracula*, although it has vampires in it, isn't a particularly frightening book. Very rarely does it use the vampires as figures of fear, or dread or menace or whatever, but maybe *The Bloody Red Baron* does a bit more. But both of those are multi-genre books. I mean they are both also strongly Science Fiction novels if you accept alternate world fiction as being part of Science Fiction. *The Bloody Red Baron* is also an entry in that particular turn of the century genre of the imaginary war story, like "The Battle of Dorking", and that is very deliberately a part of the makeup of them. And, of course, *Anno Dracula* is also an attempt to do a police procedural. It's various people tracking down a serial killer, so it's also a political thriller, it's leading up to a revolution, and the various manipulations between the factions in the city. And there's a strong element of a romantic comedy. I wanted the lead characters to be like Patrick MacNee and Diana Rigg in *The Avengers*, but they got a bit more tormented than that in the rewrite, but that's certainly still there. There's all kinds of elements in them, and the Horror aspect of it comes from the fact it's a vampire novel, but that's probably got equal weight with all the other aspects of it. And the other novel of mine, is *The Quorum*, and it takes a very old Horror theme, the Faust story. But, again, I don't think it necessarily tries to be scary or horrific although I think it is morally frightening, or politically and emotionally frightening which is a different thing and not often done for very good reasons.

Mt: Do you think that there must be something other than just a story?

Kr: Yes. I love telling stories. I did those Jack Yeovil books which were essentially just stories, although they probably have a bit more in them than the average "barbarian on a quest" type fan-

tasy. Certainly, the *Dark Future* books have a lot of satire in them. What I tend to be saying recently is that I'm a satirist. But, not in the sense that people think of them. I'm not a comedy writer like, say, Terry Pratchett or whatever. I think of myself as a satirist in the "classical" sense of the word [mockingly], holding up a distorted mirror to society. So, I suppose what I do is quite like some of those political cartoons which aren't necessarily funny but which are true. You show something in an exaggerated sort of way in order to get to something which is really going on, or something that really annoys me. I tend to write about things that annoy me rather than things that frighten me. And I think again that probably makes me a satirist rather than a Horror writer. Although I'm not ashamed to have written Horror, and I still write in that area - some of my short stuff is about going "boo" very loud.



Mt: *You've said you find the alternate history paradigm a very useful one, and you like to use a technique and exaggerate it, so I suppose this holds true with vampires?*

Kr: Certainly, I see vampires as us, but exaggerated, that's what I do in the books. I looked at books like Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* and Brian Stableford's *The Empire of Fear* all of which had vampire societies. The thing I wanted to do which they didn't do, was they rigidly stratified it. They said you'd have rich vampires and human slaves, that sort of thing. That worked for those stories, but I thought it would be interesting to say that vampires were us, just exaggerated so there would be rich vampires and poor ones, and living people also have the same social pressures. So there are all mingled in, almost completely, but there are still aspects of ourselves that becoming a vampire exaggerated. For instance, although there are sympathetic vampire characters in the book, I also have people who refuse to become vampires because they think it's a bad

thing. And in many ways I think it probably is.

Mt: *So you don't want to live forever?*

Kr: I could do that, it's killing people I'm not keen on. And I think it's a cop-out to have your vampires to be able to live forever without killing people.

Mt: *What do you think should be the ultimate aim of a writer, or particularly, a Horror writer?*

Kr: To shout "wake up" very loud.

Mt: *You think people need to be woken up?*

Kr: Not necessarily, I think people need to confront the bad things as well as the good things. And I do write about nice things too. I'm not an entirely miserable person. [laughs] I don't entirely paint a black depressing awful picture of the world. For me, the process of writing a novel is as much one a process of exploration as well as explication. I don't think "this is what I want to say, and I will write this book which will say it", I tend to think of a subject, and use the book to explore it. Particularly with the last couple of books, I've been interested in the idea, before I've know what the message was, what the specifics were going to be that would become important.

Mt: *So you think there's a message in your books?*

Kr: I don't think there's a simple message, no, I think...there's editorial in my books; I don't trust books that don't have that actually.

Mt: *Really, why?*

Kr: Because if it's just a job then do something else. I read very early, an article by a critic called Franz Rottensteiner on Robert E. Howard, and he said "Any art form which sets out only to entertain will end up not even doing that." I still believe that.

Mt: *You'd see that in films as well.*

Kr: Yes. Films are much more disposable in a way, I personally prefer films which don't set out just to entertain. That said, I'm as capable as enjoying a big action movie as much as anybody else. Roger Corman used to say that his films needed to have a certain amount of violence, and a certain amount of nudity, and a certain amount of comedy, and oh remember to put in just a bit of

social significance for the college crowd. Well, I went to college, and I like that bit of social significance. And I don't think he was as cynical about that as that statement sounds, I think, he meant it as well. I think it's important. I find completely empty films uneffecting. To a certain extent, *Star Wars*, a film which I find has nothing to say or do, and it's just like exciting wallpaper - kinetic and dazzling - but leaves no impression at all, well on me anyway. And so, I grew up with Robert Altman films and that kind of stuff.

Mn: *Is there anything you'd like to finish off with?*

Kn: I am of course obliged under law to plug the projects I'm working on, so I have done another *Anno Dracula* story which will appear in *The Mammoth Book of Dracula* edited by Stephen "Mammoth Book of" Jones. That will be probably the first part of the next-but-one *Anno Dracula* book. Next year I hope to write a book called *Dracula Cha Cha Cha* which will be next book in the series, which opens with *Dracula dy-*

ing.

Mn: *Don't give the story away...*

Kn: Ah, I'm not giving the story away. *Dracula* has died several times. The final book in the series will be called *Johnny Alucard* and opens, with this novella, "Coppola's *Dracula*".

Mn: *So, you've it all planned out then?*

Kn: No. I'm making it up as I go along.

Kim Newman, pictured here, is author of six horror (or mixed-genre) novels, as well as several critiques of the movie industry. He is a full-time writer, critic, radio and TV broadcaster and occasional Kazoo player. His latest publication is the BFI Companion to Horror (review on page 19).



Nietzsche: With Fangs

There are a too many obvious things that can be said about *Vampire: the Masquerade* (White Wolf, 1991). The players assume the role of vampires; there is a skilful blending of existing vampire mythology which creates a fictional universe they dub the 'World of Darkness'; it demands a whole new way of talking about role-playing. All of these arguments have been well-rehearsed. But a much more significant, and much less advertised, element of White Wolf's reinvention of the vampire mythos is the way in which they re-imagine the world and society of the vampire: they politicise the vampire. Previously a solitary creature - at best existing in small, discrete covens - the demands of a style of game that is largely communal necessitate that White Wolf construct their imagined universe in such a way that the players (who are, remember, playing the *vampires*, not the vampire

hunters) are required to interact socially.

Drawn in stark noir *chiaroscuro*, their shadow world exists behind the mundane surface of a human world of daylight, and is ruled by vampires; vampires who are organised according to the feudal model, with each vampire owing fealty to those who are older and of more ancient blood. The essential - the eternal, even - conflict of this society is the conflict generated by graceful, arcane manoeuvring for prestige and position. Even those who are on the periphery of this society, whether through choice or circumstance, are entirely entwined in its machinations, as they are



invariably the pawns in the fanged *realpolitik* of their elders.

So, *Vampire: the Masquerade* is also a game of generational conflict. In most hierarchical societies it's guaranteed that the leader you now serve will - eventually - pass on, leaving open the possibility of succession into that position. In a society of immortals such a traditionally mortal argument for subservience is somewhat less compelling. Fear is, then, the tool used to keep younger vampires in line, given a tenuous legitimacy via a system of boons owed and boons owing.

It is just one of the refreshingly savage ironies of *Vampire: the Masquerade* that by the time a vampire survives long enough to accumulate the power to escape or subvert the system of power which enslaves them, they are often too deeply enmeshed to extract themselves, owing too many favours. Being owed too many favours.

A dark vision, indeed, and one that has been labelled 'nihilistic' by those who wish to discredit the game. Such claims miss the point, though. The game *is* nihilistic; the point being that the players are expected to move beyond the nihilism and, in a world where God is very dead, create meaning for themselves: Nietzsche. With fangs.

Admittedly, a certain image of the game is communicated by those players who find the style of the game more compelling than its content. I have to guiltily admit that at first my love of *Vampire: the Masquerade* was based primarily on an attraction to the surface of the product. Its style: gothic, self-indulgent, dark, a tad perverse, lathered in adolescent angst. All that bondage gear, the leather, the tacky silver jewellery; its attitude: pretentious, a lot pompous, self-confident, in your face with all the vibrant, unsubtle panache of MTV.

But the real essence of the game is contained a kind-of-editorial/kind-of-mission-statement which is called "The Meaning of the Myth." It says:

Paradoxically, these characters, who are the paragons of tragic evil, have the potential to become heroes of uncommon valour. They are evil, not because of who they are but because of what they are.

*As drinkers of blood, they possess the taint of evil. They are tragic because they care about their evil but can ultimately do nothing about it. The characters in **Vampire** are expected to be heroes - they must care about what they have become and about what they may soon be.*

Justice is only served if the good overcomes the evil - the monsters must lose. Thus, for the vampire characters to find some way to "win," they must somehow become heroic. ... (25)

This passage bears all the hallmark self-satisfied pretentious that the game occasionally lapses into. But it also bears something else, another and more interesting legacy. To wit, a desire to offer the vampire as a symbol of the moral confusion that heralds the end of the millennium. In an era when the vampire exists as a comedic or a romantic icon, or as an icon of tragic hipness (something which *Vampire* docs, admittedly, fall into more than a little) such an approach - even more so than the politicising of the vampire, or possibly in tandem with this politicisation - opens up the vampire to the possibility of being, once again, a figure of horror.

Seán Harnett



Showing how it's done:
Inspirational angst from the lead singer of Bauhaus

COMICS TODAY

Heartlands

Garth Ennis and Steve Dillan

This comic offers an insight to the harsh realities of coping and dealing with life in 1994 Belfast, before the ceasefire. The hero of the story is Kit from *Hellblazer* and that's where any connection to science fiction ends, and we enter an all-too-real form of horror. Kit's sister brings her boyfriend over to Northern Ireland to visit her family. It's through his eagerness to broaden his mind and comprehend the ghastly way bizarre things - such as squaddies in a chipper which are accepted by the Belfast folk as a daily part of life - that the reader is shown a harsh reality. Kit/Ennis doesn't start offering opinions, and instead allows the readers to judge for themselves by showing how people are effected by the Troubles.

This comic has to be one of the most sincere that Ennis has written since *Troubled Souls* for Crisis. He has the amazing ability of not only being able to tell an excellent story, but also using it as a vehicle of education and understanding. Steve Dillon's graphics complement Ennis' script very well. It is pretty obvious that he has been in Belfast a number of times; unlike other artists who would not pay as much attention to detail.

Only a Belfast man could do what Ennis has done, and it is a tribute to his skills that the reader feels gutted and enriched at the same time. It is also a fresh reminder that somebody who is determined enough to get something done will make it happen; I'm sure D.C comics had some qualms about this one. It is ironic though, that the story should be written before the ceasefire. Now the ceasefire, in Ennis' own words, "will return to normal service."

I was totally transfixed by this comic - it isn't pleasant, but it isn't a lie.

Justice League Of America.

Grant Morrison and Mark Miller

Now in its forth issue, Grant Morrison has

taken this dead, mediocre, boring comic and relaunched it with real characters not just superhero cannonfodder like Metamorpho, Superuselessman and Totally Defuncted Dude, but with the greatest characters in the D.C Universe.

It's pretty obvious at this stage that he intends to have lots of fun. The superheroes in his comics are hitters and punchers and have no time to save the Ozone layer. Already Batman, Superman, Wonderwoman, The Flash, etc., etc., have kicked Martian ass. The story so far has been very strong with twists and turns: Batman, with his mortal capabilities, has managed to rescue the Man of Steel and the rest of his team.

Mark Miller's art work is very sharp, his action scenes convey the speed and force with the vividness that these, the "greatest heroes on earth", deserve.

It would have been nice if this comic had been aimed at a more mature readership, or at least had a mature reader's label slapped onto it, so Morrison could at least show a more hardened and brutal version of the superhero team we all love. Recently, Morrison said that he hopes to "address why superheroes don't fix things. They hang about in alleyways and beat people up, but they don't fix pollution and go green." He also has plans to add other characters to the League including Green Arrow, a new Hawkman, and possibly Garth Ennis' Hitman. He would also like to bring back Buddy Baker, better known as Animalman, by introducing him to the League. This obviously shows his commitment to the comic on a long term basis but also that the stories will be anything but boring old shite.

Up and Coming.

Unknown Soldier from D.C. comics by Garth Ennis and Irish artist Kilian Plunkett should be out by the middle/end of March. Plunkett's other work includes *Star Wars*, *Shadows of the Empire*, and, *Aliens Labyrinth*. The story is about a maverick CIA agent who goes in search of the Unknown Soldier. This promises to be an exciting story in the mold of *Johny Red* and *Charley's War* from the 70's British War comic Battle.

James Bacon

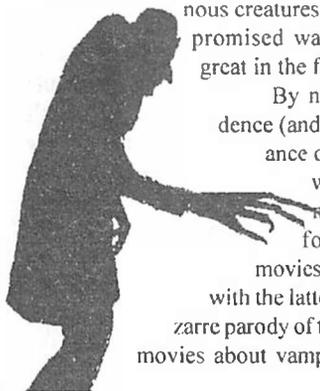
Vampire Movies

Two things come to mind when I think about vampire movies. First, there are the movies about vampires, more on them later. Second, are the movies that are vampires; movies that come to you with the promise of eternal satisfaction, endless thrills and excitement, but also with an altogether darker purpose. They may give you some minor reward. You might get that ephemeral, orgasmic rush that comes with watching the alien ship explode in *Independence Day* or seeing the helicopter blades grate to a halt inches from Tom Cruise's throat in *Mission: Impossible*. But when the curtain closes it's all over. When you leave the theatre, you feel drained and lifeless. Then you realise that you've been used. You've shelled out cash for the sake of mass-market merchandising and you don't have a single human emotion left to take home with you. It hasn't inspired you, it hasn't stimulated your finer feelings, or encouraged you to grow on from where it left you. It has simply taken what it wanted and moved on to the next victim. The movie lives forever, but you are just passing through. And the scariest thing about these heinous creatures is that what they promised was often not that great in the first place.

By no small co-incidence (and no little contrivance on the part of this writer) there are many of the former types of movies which cross over with the latter. In a kind of bizarre parody of themselves, many movies about vampires promise se-

duction and chills, but turn out to be repulsive and numbing. Francis Ford Coppola's Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1992) is the most obvious example. The director of *The Godfather* (1972) promised us an even more monstrous father figure to terrify a new generation of moviegoers used to the conceits of the house that dripped blood or the camp excess of Universal. Back to basics, back to Stoker, back to period detail and the original plot devices such as *Dracula* moving around by day and growing younger. But for all its elegance and visual magnificance, Coppola's film was no more faithful to the book than any previous version, and perhaps more significantly, it wasn't the least bit terrifying. Like many genre films of its era, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* suffered from the insecurity of being preceded by years of laughable slasher films that the public no longer took seriously, if indeed they ever did (Friday the 13th Part Six even rose to self-parody with a pre-credit sequence in which a James Bond-type eye followed Jason across the screen until he turned and slashed at it with his machete). The result was that Coppola gave us all the surface detail we could ever have wanted, all the sophisticated superficial veneer required to lull the senses. But like all vampires, there was nothing under the surface, no heart beating in its chest. Uncertain that audiences could be scared by vampires anymore (after years of being exploited), Coppola gave us lame and hamfisted comedy embodied in Anthony Hopkins' Van Helsing; an apologetic wink to the sophisticates who were trying to deny that there is something frightening about vampires.

Then there are the crazy ones; movies so whacked out that their very confusion makes them interesting. Tobe Hooper may live forever in horror history for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), but there will be those of us who will equally remember him for the truly oddball vampire movie *Lifeforce* (1985). Based on Colin Wilson's *Space Vampires*, this one gave us naked women, alien space ships and a completely straight rendition of the apocalypse, all in the service of some of the least convincing acting in film history (from a cast including Patrick Stewart). But it did have something going for it: it was committed. And while it had no idea where it was going, it was determined to get there.





Another is cult fave Jean Rollin's *La Vampire Nue/The Naked Vampire* (1968) which initially plays like an extension of the *Theatre des Vampires* scene from *Interview With the Vampire* (1994), with a weird cult chasing a half-

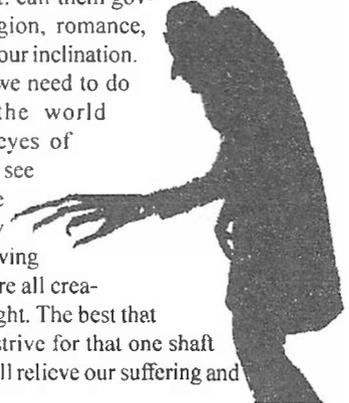
naked girl through darkened streets until she runs into the stoic leading man who tries to protect her. It then veers off into extremely strange sci-fi. Its vampire cult turns out to be a group of inter-dimensional travellers intent on doing nothing more terrifying than occupying a huge baroque mansion in which they get to chase various cast members until the hero finally crosses over into their world, which is basically a beach shot through green camera filters. There is something endearing about the utter inanity, and you sometimes feel that it all has to mean something. Of course, maybe it is the search for meaning which damns us. Brad Pitt's Louis spends almost the entire duration of *Interview with the Vampire* looking for meaning. It is in seeking a higher moral order outside of himself, which is capable of punishing or excusing his actions, that he comes into contact with the amoral, asexual world of Anne Rice's vampires. He lives out various societal charades, playing father, mother, lover and finally child, until he comes to realise that the world has no more use for him than he has for it. His last purely patriarchal act is to tell his story to Malloy, and when even that narrative is misinterpreted as a prelude to making the boy a vampire, Louis finds that the artifice of storytelling can't express what it is he really feels.

No, my favourite vampire films are the ones which understand what vampires are, and try to locate them in our world. F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) remains the greatest vampire film of all time because it really is about human darkness. Emerging from the depressed German sensibilities of the post-war period, it brought with it the sense of darkness and light which artists called expressionist. It was about showing the inner realities of things by exaggerating their external appearance. For Murnau, this meant that the vampire was seen as shadows on the wall, a

tall gaunt figure framed against angular doorways of ancient, decrepit buildings, a creature of darkness dissolved by light in that famous climax. This was a film which understood that the inner life of humanity was more frightening than its outward appearance, and that the cinema had the same power to turn a revealing light on our inner selves as the fatal dawn sunbeam had on Max Schreck.

Another is George Romero's *Martin* (1976), made half a century later and having very little to do with classical fang-sprouting, maiden-nuzzling undead. This movie located its vampire in the dreary and decaying suburban America of the 1970s; post Vietnam, post Watergate, when people were tired of seeing tall men in capes express the horrors of the human soul. Instead, Romero gave us a mentally disturbed teenage boy: impotent, unemployable, disaffected. His victims were ordinary people, his weapons were razor blades and hypodermic syringes, and the only person who tried to stop him was a barmy old uncle who followed him around shouting 'Nosferatu' and throwing holy water over him. But there was nothing supernatural about his vampirism, or that of the society which failed to contextualise it. To the blind, a vampire is a silly myth, a monster with easily identifiable characteristics which can be dealt with by a handy stake through the heart or other nasty but ethically approved methods. But to eyes that really see, vampirism is a human condition, feeding from one another to survive, giving nothing in return to God or man.

The real vampires are the ones we meet every day, attractive bloodsuckers promising to love and cherish us if only we will give them our complete trust: call them government, religion, romance, according to your inclination. Maybe what we need to do is look at the world through the eyes of vampires and see where the darkness really lies – we are living in it, and we are all creatures of the night. The best that we can do is strive for that one shaft of light that will relieve our suffering and



restore to us a sense of what it is to be a human being.

I guess the real vampire movies are that other kind, the ones which creep up (usually during the summer, in the light of day) and try to squeeze some life out of us by convincing us that they have something we really, really want; but ultimately leave us with nothing. Sometimes they even come back from the dead, with re-issues, director's cuts, fan clubs and other grotesque mutations haunting our video stores and television screens. Even our long-cherished favourite Star Wars is about to be dug up from its barely cold grave and sent boldly forth in search of prey once more in a newly-restored, rejigged and reedited version. What is the point? You'll see in the next issue...

Harvey O'Brien

Hue and Cry Continued from Page 5...

and to halt production on the movie.

Viacom continues its crackdown on unofficial *Star Trek* web sites. Site owners have been receiving correspondence from Viacom's attorneys demanding that they remove material which would infringe on Paramount copyright. While at this stage only a fraction of those operating such sites have been contacted, many others can expect a sharp wrap on the knuckles shortly. Viacom have stated that they recognise the value of the fan network and they are only tackling the "most serious kinds of infringement".

Any News?

We're only too happy to include on any news or events you may be aware of. Please feel free to contact us with any questions, news, gossip or scandal you may have (as long as you don't get us sued for liable), and make this page more relevant to your interests. Write to the address listed on this page.

All information compiled by Loretta Culbert

Event Guide

21-3 Feb, TRINCON2, Dublin, Ireland. Many GoHs. Contact 40 Daniel St, Dublin 8, Ireland.

1-2 Mar, LEPRECHAUN, (Trinity Gaming Convention).

8-9 Mar, SCI-FI COMEDY CON, Dublin Writers Museum, Dublin. GoH David Prowse. Contact Holy Ghost Missionary College, Kimmage Manor, Whitehall Road, Kimmage, Dublin 12.

28-31 Mar, INTERVENTION (Eastercon), Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. no at-the-door memberships available. Contact 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS.

18-20 Apr, NEBULA AWARDS WEEKEND, Holiday Inn Crown Plaza, Kansas City. SFWA c/o 808 W 39th Terrace, Kansas City, MO 64111-4002, USA.

5-6 July, JUMPOINT (ST/B5), Victor Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin. GoHs Walter Koenig, Mira Furlan, Stephen Furst and more.

11-14 July, THE ALLIANCE (B5), Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. GoH J.Michael Straczynski and many others. Contact Wolf 359, 141 Warden Road, Canvey Island, Essex SS8 9BE.

28 Aug - 2 Sep, LONESTARCON (55th Worldcon), San Antonio, Texas. Contact PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755-2277, USA, or 27 Hampton Rd. Worcester Park, Surrey, KT4 8EU.

24-26 Oct, EUROCON '97, Dublin Castle, Dublin 2. Contact PO Box 5130, Dublin 4, Ireland.

30 Oct - 2 Nov,
WORLD FANTASY
CONVENTION,
Britannia International
Hotel,
Marsh Wall,
L o n d o n .
Contact PO Box
31, Whitby, North
Yorkshire, YO22
4YL.

Write To:
17 Harrington Street
Dublin 8
Ireland
imago@indigo.ie



BOOK

REVIEWS

BFI Companion to Horror

Edited by **Kim Newman**

British Film Institute, 1996, PB £19.99

ISBN: 0-304-33216-X

Strikingly, the *BFI Companion to Horror* manages to simultaneously operate within a very broad definition and a very narrow definition of horror. As far as Kim Newman is concerned the horror *genre* "can easily be recognised as a developing tradition that branches off from a line beginning with the gothic novels of the 18th and 19th centuries and epitomised in cinema by the cycles produced by Universal in the 30s and 40s and Hammer Films in the 50s and 60s." (11) However, Newman also recognises that the more one tries to expand the parameters of the *genre* "the

more blurred distinctions become, and horror becomes less like a discrete *genre* than an effect which can be deployed within any number of settings or narrative patterns," (ibid.) which rather expands the criteria against which any companion to horror ought to be judged. So, although it doesn't quite succeed when measured against its own enunciated standards, the *BFI Companion to Horror* is very comprehensive.

There are entries on most of the conventional aspects of horror (in no particular order: Stephen King, Anne Rice, Hammer Horror, John Carpenter, Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, vampires, mummies, et cetera) in addition to more unusual entries: Italian horror movies, the Indian horror industry, *Alice Cooper*. There is only one striking omission that springs to mind: that of Jonathan Carroll, who is certainly the most interesting and experimental genre horror writer of the last decade. However, there are some quite interesting compensatory entries: Kafka and Orson Welles, Ingrid Bergman and Neil Jordan. Like all such books the delights that it offers are derived in equal measure from recognition of the familiar and discovery of new and interesting information. For instance, until I read the Jordan entry I had not realised the extent to which his *oeuvre* is informed by the imagery of horror (*Company of Wolves*, *High Spirits*, *Interview with the Vampire*). Having no doubt that such personal 'revelations' are in store for other fans of the numerous forms of horror I thoroughly recommend a browse through the *Companion*. I'm rather less sure about advising one to buy it, however: it's quite expensive and serves no purpose except as a reference manual (unless you have a distinct lack of variety on your coffee table).

Seán Harnett



Spares

Michael Marshall Smith

HaperCollins, 1996, HB, £9.99

ISBN: 0-00-224656-2

Michael Marshall Smith has become the darling of the British SF scene, fêted on such

shows as *FutureWatch*, and winning far too many awards considering the duration of his career. The proof of the pudding: is his second book, *Spare*s, any good?

The action revolves around the efforts of Jack Randall, from whose point-of-view the narrative is told, to rescue some Spares (cloned humans) from a Farm and somehow give them some semblance of a life. Spares are normally kept in cramped conditions, not taught any social skills, and are mere fodder for their unknown twins when they have need of a body part. Randall, at the start, is a recovering junkie, and his shepherding of the Spares to safety seems ludicrous to him, and to the reader, initially. Slowly, as the novel progresses, it becomes apparent that Randall's motives are fuelled by a series of personal traumas

which stem to his childhood, his career as a soldier, and then a cop, and what happened to his family. The expression, "this time it's personal" seems to hover over Randall's lips on several occasions.



The setting is in a city called New Richmond, and the tone is all Cyberpunk - with sharp divisions between dirt-poor, middle class, and the super-rich, rampant drug use, an overall nihilist attitude towards life, lots of madcap inventions, and, of course, guns. Tipping his hat to Douglas Adams, we have prissy elevators, neurotic computers, and caring warmachines - even the locks have opinions (and useful ones at that). One of the statements which stuck with me was: "So many objects and machines these days are stuffed full of intellect - and most of the time it's just turned off. We're surrounded by unused intelligence, and for once it's not our own... It's like selling people the American Dream and then telling them they can't afford it. We created things which are clever and then told them to be stupid instead." (p 101)

Yet, M M Smith carries it off well; Randall's emotionally-crippled, but sarcastic, character is sympathetic, and manages to teeter quite well between self-indulgence and parody, somehow never devolving into either. Though you sometimes wonder how one person can be so unlucky, I enjoyed the journey into Randall's psy-

che, and certain events do leave a smidgen of hope for life in the future. Buy it and experience post-Cyberpunk.

Maura McHugh



Ancient Echoes

Robert Holdstock

HaperCollins, 1996, PB, £5.99

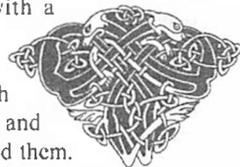
ISBN 0006480004

In a fantasy marketplace mostly deprived of originality, the fiction of Robert Holdstock has those most welcome of elements: originality and daring. Holdstock is not afraid to use his fiction to explore *depths*.

Those familiar with Holdstock's other work, notably the *Mythago* series, will recognise many of the themes and situations of *Ancient Echoes*: the nature, and origin, of myths; the psyche of the individual isolated by a capacity to see and experience other realities; the blurring and questioning of the borders between the mundane and the extraordinary. Such readers will also be familiar with many of the settings of *Ancient Echoes*: English countryside and primal wilderness.

However, Holdstock themes are deepened in this book by being filtered through an opening set largely in the town of Exburgh, telling the story of an urban boy, Jack Chatwin, who is possessed by voices; and, later, by being filtered through the exploration of this possession by a psychologist who uses Virtual Reality to investigate the links between the conscious and unconscious minds, a process which leads to a vivid but ambiguous ending, as the archetypes of city and the wilderness clash.

Ancient Echoes is Holdstock's most original and thematically dense work. There are some problems, however: those not familiar with Jung or Freud may struggle with some of the concepts. Even those familiar with a smidgin of psychology may find that the conclusions the characters reach are a little perplexing, and wonder how they derived them.



It sometimes feels as if they are a plot element used to forcefully move the characters from point A to point B, rather than theories which arise naturally out of the characters, their expertise and the situation they are in. Also, the writing can sometimes lapse in over-exposition, and it is never enough to make the relationship between Jack and his wife, Angela, seem genuine.

Minor quibbles, though. This is a great book, perhaps Holdstock's best. It is a stirring read for both the mind and heart, an alchemical wedding much modern fantasy signally fails to achieve. Highly recommended.

Seán Harnett



Albedo One - Issue 12,
1997

Acon Press

Any review of the latest *Albedo One* must give some consideration to the new format. A4, new cover design, and general higher production quality, doing justice to the cover artwork, may be unfamiliar to the regular reader, but will certainly attract more attention on the shelf.

Inside, the less cluttered style makes for easier reading, though the lack of artwork or format design to break up the text can be a little monotonous, - something the editors have professed a desire to rectify.

This issue contains a balanced mix of Science Fiction and Fantasy stories, including, among others, a cautionary eco tale from John Lee, and erotic fantasy from Alan Casey.

An offering from Dave Murphy was inevitable in an issue which gives voice to his ongoing frustrations with the publishing industry. "The Gravity Pool", is a familiar theme of liberation and salvation from mistrust, rejection and fear although how this is actually achieved is slightly obscure.

"Camels" by John Lee, effectively mixes a study in self discovery with ecological awareness in a simple story that could just as easily be set in present day as the near future. Also of note is "Saccade" by J.D. Bancroft. This story of a pros-

titute's redemption by a mysterious stranger is told in sharp dialog and crisp images.

I think I missed the point in Alan Casey's "Drowning Spiders". I could not reconcile the harshness of the action and images with the tenderness of the emotion being explored. But then again this contradiction may have been exactly what the author intended.

While there are no surprises in this issue, there are some nicely related tales, also some that are mediocre. As usual, in a compilation of this sort one or two stand out from the others in either execution or concept. All in all, this issue draws a fair balance. I'd like to see some longer fiction in future to allow some of the ideas room to develop.

Loretta Culbert

The Hex Files: The Goth Bible

Mick Mercer

B T Batsford, 1996, PB, £17.99

ISBN: 0-7134-8033-5

On the front cover of this lush reference book, printed over the picture of a what looks like a zombie chick, are the words: "Goth, Vampire, Fetish, Pagan". Obviously Mr. Mercer is used to keyword searches and decided to stake his colours (black and white, naturally) on the front cover.

There is little I can say to fault this tome. It's divided up geographically, with a list of resources covering the four above words. Therefore, I can discover that there is a Goth fanzine called *Dark Angel* in Australia which Mr. Mercer rates very highly, a Goth-friendly radio show called "Unknown Deaths" in Croatia, a crazy grrrl band called Lady Domino in Italy, a leather/bondage shop called Noir Leather operating in the USA, and I can join the Bat Conservation Trust in England if I so wish. This is an incredibly detailed book, which shows a great deal of research, and an eye for the bizarre. Lots of



Net. Watch



The Internet is awash with information on every imaginable topic. Fiction of the imagination is no exception, indeed genre fiction and anything relating to the strange and mysterious is probably better represented on the Internet than in any other form of publishing or broadcasting.

The problem is not finding it, it is filtering the wheat from the chaff. At the same time with the explosion of interest in the World Wide Web many traditional, and in some cases, more valuable sources of information are being overlooked.

At the heart of the Internet since its very inception has been Usenet News and e-mail. While the web is genuinely revolutionary as the first popular, truly global, interactive publishing environment, it lacks Usenet News' chief asset: interaction with real people. For anyone with eclectic interests it is perhaps the best way of finding people with similar tastes. All common web browsers double as news readers, why not give it a try? DejaNews now provides a searchable archive of articles you may have missed. If you are new to a newsgroup I would advise reading its FAQ (frequently asked questions list) before posting.

Also of increasing value is IRC (Internet Relay Chat) which has the advantage over Usenet News of its immediacy, but the disadvantage of having to stay up late to join in interesting discussion groups hosted in other time zones; and the fact that it isn't archived, so that you can't catch up on interesting discussions you miss. IRC is the most basic chat technology, new virtual world based chat technologies are appearing all the time, but none has yet achieved the critical mass of IRC, although Compuserve's World's Away comes close.

Finally, to return to the problem of finding what you want on the web, there are several ap-

proaches. One of the most popular is to use a search engine such as AltaVista, which indexes tens of millions of pages and regularly crawls the global web to update its information. This can be extremely valuable but suffers from not supplying a quality rating, leaving you to sort through thousands of matches to find the best sites.

Indexing services such as Yahoo try to do this for you with some success. This does however impose a delay in new sources being listed. Some of the most successful indexes are built by individuals for their own use but made available to all. Quality varies so if you find a good one bookmark it immediately for future reference. Other invaluable resources are specialised databases devoted to a particular area, one of the best examples being the Internet Movie Database, which seeks to build one of the most comprehensive online sources of information on movies.

Why not start your search at <http://arrogant.itc.icl.ie/zines/Ogham/Issue1/resources.html> which contains the addresses of all the resources above and many more beside.

See you there.

Padraig O'Hiceadha

The Hex Files Review Continued from Page 21

fantastic, and artful black and whites decorate the interior - some of the more lecherous among you will appreciate some of the photos accompanying the Fetish sections (honest, I didn't look). Where possible, Mr. Mercer comments on the resources he lists, and he is not one to pull punches, or to miss the opportunity to lay on the sarcasm where appropriate.

For the serious Goth, Pagan, Fetishist or Vampire this is the only resource guide you should buy. Even though I'm only passingly interested in some of the four (I'm not saying which), I found it a fascinating read. Oh, and there's not one listing for Ireland. Where *are* you guys?

Maura McHugh

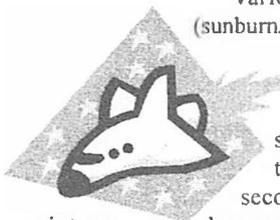
How Long Can a Human Live Unprotected In Space?

If you *don't* try to hold your breath, exposure to space for half a minute or so is unlikely to produce permanent injury. Holding your breath is likely to damage your lungs, something scuba divers have to watch out for when ascending, and you'll have eardrum trouble if your Eustachian tubes are badly plugged up, but theory predicts - and animal experiments (*Yuck! - Ed.*) confirm - that otherwise, exposure to vacuum causes no immediate injury. You do not explode. Your blood does not boil. You do not freeze. You do not instantly lose consciousness.

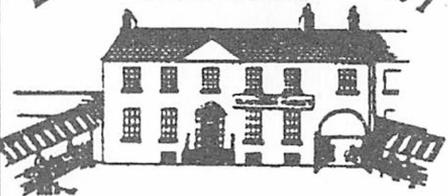
Various minor problems (sunburn, possibly "the bends", certainly some [mild, reversible, painless] swelling of skin and underlying tissue) start after ten seconds or so. At some

point you lose consciousness from lack of oxygen. Injuries accumulate. After perhaps one or two minutes, you're dying. The limits are not really known.

Taken from Frequently Asked Questions list, from the newsgroup sci.space.



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be considered (on production of a convincing argument) for fan groups and other "good" causes.

Contributors:

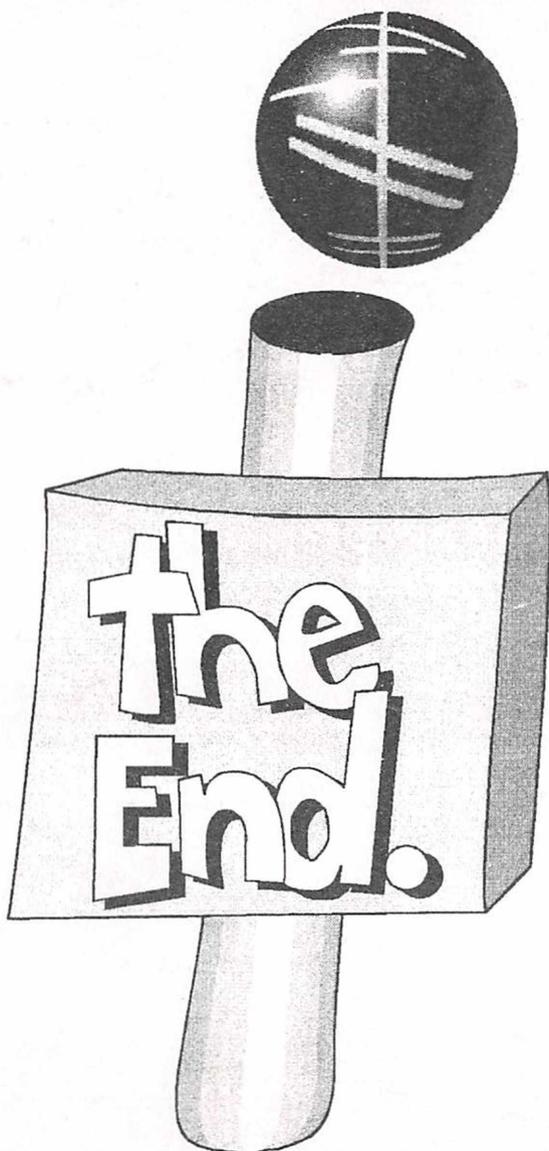
James Bacon, Loretta Culbert, Seán Harnett, Maura McHugh, Harvey O'Brien, Pádraig O'hIcheadha & Brian Stableford.

Great Big Thanks!

James Bacon, Martin Feeney, Kim Newman, *Nosferatu* (1922), Pádraig O'hIcheadha, James Peart, Michael Scott, James Shields, Paul Sheridan, & Bram Stoker (despite himself).

Useless Trivia

This magazine was constructed on a PC with a Cyrix 150 Pentium Processor, running Windows '95 (oh pity us), and utilising Aldus PageMaker 5.0. with a round of applause to Paint Shop Pro 4.12., & printed on an OKI 4W.



"You think to baffle me, you - with your pale faces all in a row, like sheep in a butcher's. You shall be sorry yet, each one of you! You think you have left me without a place to rest; but I have more. My revenge is just begun! I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side. Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine - my creatures to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed."

Count Dracula - an ancestor of Hitler's?