No.2 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1988

A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION

FEAR

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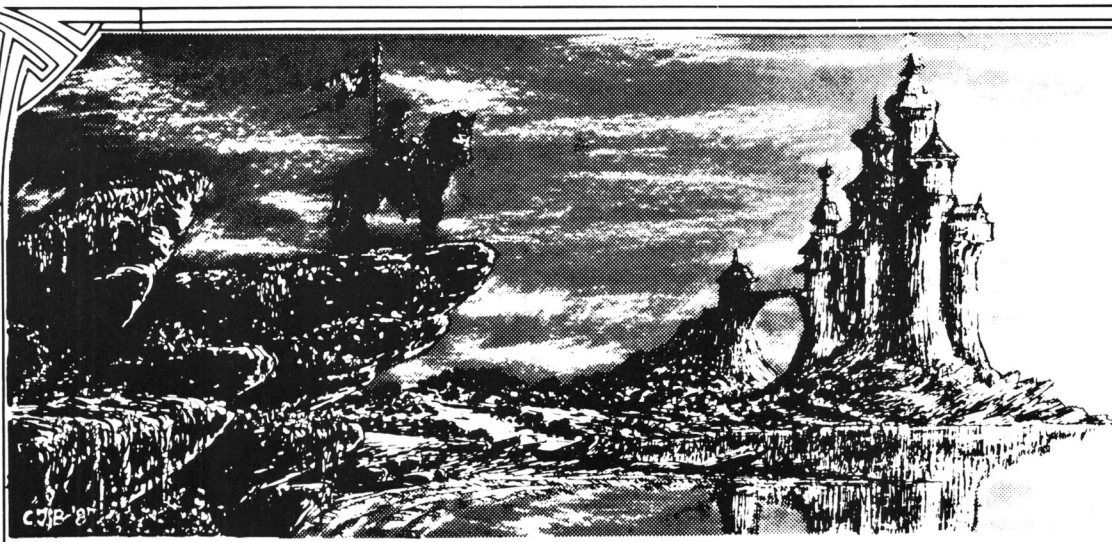

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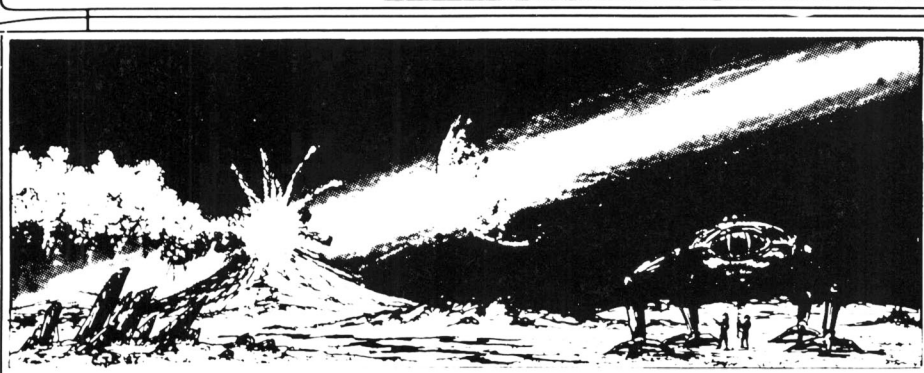

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FEAR ISSUE No. 2 CONTENTS Sep/Oct 1988

FEAR FICTION

16 UZZI
By Brian Lumley – cuddly pets won't be the same

52 A QUARTER TO THREE
By Kim Newman – late at night in a sleazy bar

70 GUILTY PARTY
By Stephen Laws – whose birthday is it anyway?

PRO-FILES

12 JAMES HERBERT
The great man tells the strange story behind HAUNTED, and explains his motivation

21 BABEL'S CHILD
Award-winning writer, artist and film-maker Clive Barker spills his guts

49 THE GENRE TRAP
Jack of all writing trades and master of most, Dean R Koontz explains how he's avoided genre tags

54 RAMSEY CAMPBELL
Part Two of John Gilbert's interview with the British master of horror

56 CHRISTOPHER FOWLER
Talks to Stan Nicholls about the politics of black humour, horror and ROOFWORLD

67 IMAGE OF THE STORYTELLER
Fantasy writer Sheri Tepper has forceful views on the current crop of pessimistic novels

LOCATION REPORTS

76 KILLING STROKE
LAST RESORT star and occasional horror novelist, Shaun Hutson, tours locations for his latest, ASSASSINS

PHENOMENA

24 DEAD OR ALIVE
Philip Nutman digs up some undead and discovers that zombies are more than living clichés

28 TALES OF A LONELY SCRIPTWRITER
John Gilbert continues movie-making with a look at how to write scripts

60 STEPHEN KING – THE DARK TOWER MYTHOLOGY
Paddy McKillop, King expert, uncovers the interesting tale behind the secret books

REVENANTS

4 DARK PLAYGROUND
FEAR Editor John Gilbert hammers a few stakes into some cherished hearts

6 NEWS
People, Books, Movies, Videos and Plays – all the latest information from Britain and the States

30 MOVIE MAINLINE
British and American film releases come under expert examination

36 VIDEO VIBES
Latest video releases reviewed

41 AWAKENINGS
Reams of literary reviews uncover hardcover, softcover and limpcover

79 THE SPOOK
She's the most FEARed person in the land, with ears like her's, no smidgeon of gossip escapes . . .

80 CLASSIFIED ADS
Find out how to reach thousands of FEAR readers

81 THE FEAR FACTOR
LAST RESORT'S Jonathan Ross isn't frightened of anything, except . . . and . . . and occasionally . . .

COMPETITIONS

38 WITCHES OF EASTWICK
Win the video from Warner starring Jack Nicholson and Cher!

39 LOST BOYS
And another Warner vid could be yours as a clutch of teenage vampires bare fangs!

42 HAUNTED
An incredible opportunity to win a personally signed copy of James Herbert's latest hardback bestseller!

42 WEAVEWORLD
Copies of artist, writer, film-maker Clive Barker's newest hardback, lovingly signed, up for grabs!

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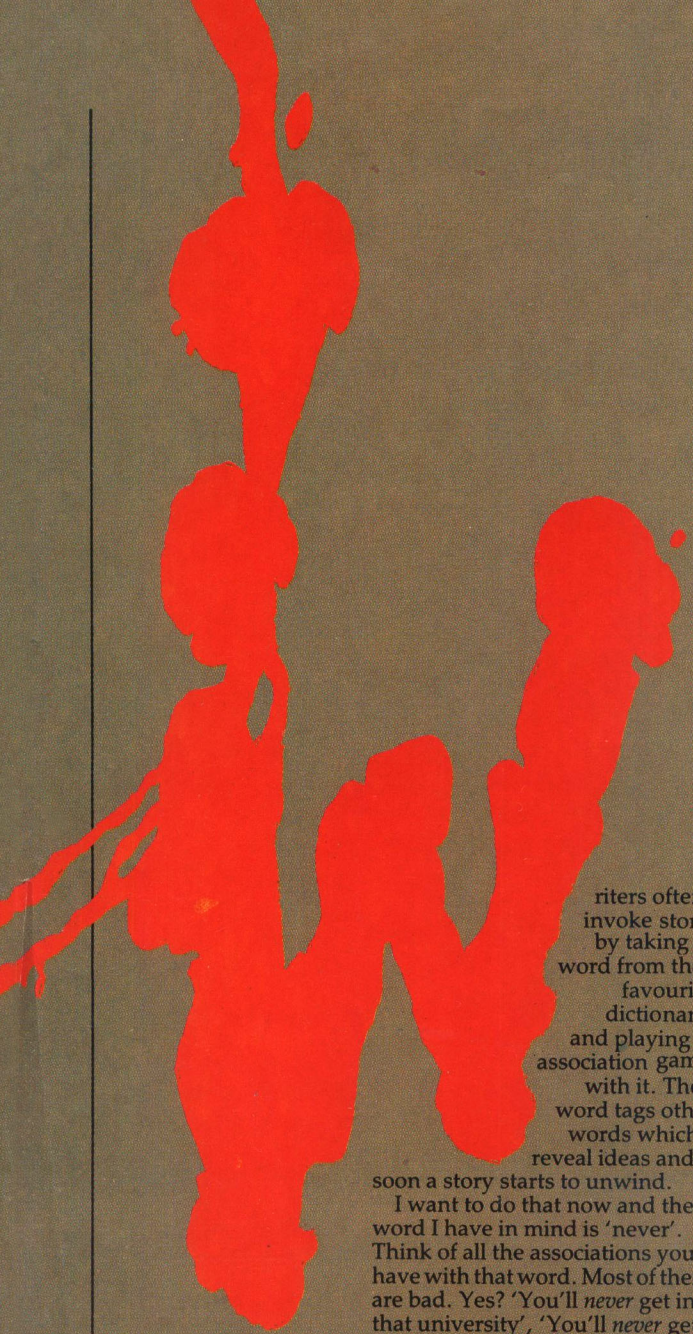


Writers often invoke stories by taking a word from their favourite dictionary and playing an association game with it. The word tags other words which reveal ideas and soon a story starts to unwind.

I want to do that now and the word I have in mind is 'never'. Think of all the associations you have with that word. Most of them are bad. Yes? 'You'll *never* get into that university', 'You'll *never* get that job', 'What's the point of doing all the work? You'll *never* get that promotion'.

There are two reasons for harping about the bad times that many of us go through: film and fiction. Let's take film first, and what we laughingly call the British film industry. Okay, in that last sentence I've earned a few enemies, but perhaps they should read further before judging me.

"It's cynical to say that money should be spent on time-after-time sequels".

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

So many people moan about the collapse of film-making in Britain. We're told, 'It's disgusting that Cannon has pulled out of Elstree; it's the beginning of end of the British film industry', 'All the talent is leaving for the States'. But is it surprising when big British financial institutions haven't the guts to back major feature films because profits are not guaranteed, and our technicians are treated like garbage by the Brits while they're looked upon as masters by the Americans?

Yes, films *are* being made in Britain but, no matter how many British people are working on them, you will eventually discover they've got US, Spanish, Italian or even Australian financial backing to some degree. Even our television networks can't fully fund the miniseries you find on our screens during the summer months.

It would, however, be unfair to say blame the lack of support for what's left of our film industry solely on the reticence of financial institutions (whose lifeblood is, after all, making profits).. Let's not forget that *The Last Emperor*, winner of so many of this year's Academy and Oscar awards, was British-backed. The reasons for *The Last Emperor*'s success stem from attitude and organisation. The producers wanted to make a British-backed feature film, they ignored the prevailing industry watchword 'never', and got the backing of several London-based financial organisations which have been well repaid by worldwide box-office returns and critical acclaim.

The Last Emperor was carefully planned, so who's to say that a British-backed horror or fantasy film could not be as successful? After all, several of Britain's larger publishers are desperate to sign up horror writers this year, ready to exploit another bubble in the genre which they believe has started to – yet again – expand and can only grow bigger during next year. The opportunities for a new British independent film studios, the like of which hasn't been seen since the demise Hammer in the Seventies, are greater than ever before. It's about time the armchair moaners within the British film industry stopped dreaming, got off their assets and dared to go for UK money without thinking that it's pointless from the start.

No, we can't just blame the money men, we must also berate the lack of entrepreneurial flair in our film-makers. There must be someone out there with the flair to pull a film company together for such a feat.

NEW TALENT

There are those who will criticise me for daring to say that it would be relatively easy to put a British horror/fantasy film together, just as six months ago those same people were telling me that we'd never get a magazine like **FEAR** into the high street shops and that a combined film and literature magazine would never sell. Those are also the people who have probably told you to forget about being an aspiring writer because there are too many already and the chances of publication are almost nil.

I've also received many letters telling me that I should encourage new writing talent within the pages of **FEAR**. The truth is this: I will publish at least one piece of fiction from a 'newcomer' in every issue of **FEAR** – that's been the plan from the start. Hand on overburdened heart, I can say that I've had more than 40 short stories from readers since the magazine first appeared, I've read every one of them personally and will reply to every submission personally. I must be mad, but I know what it's like to receive photocopied reply forms with no indication of what was wrong with the story and no advice offered for improving it. Since that time some of the rejected stories have been resubmitted and it is likely I will be using some of them.

So don't shy away from the typewriter – or pen; turn an original idea into a short story and try me. I'll take fantasy, horror, or science fiction – preferably of the social and gothic kind rather than techno or zap gun – between 1,500 to 4,500 words. If that's not specific enough, drop me a line.

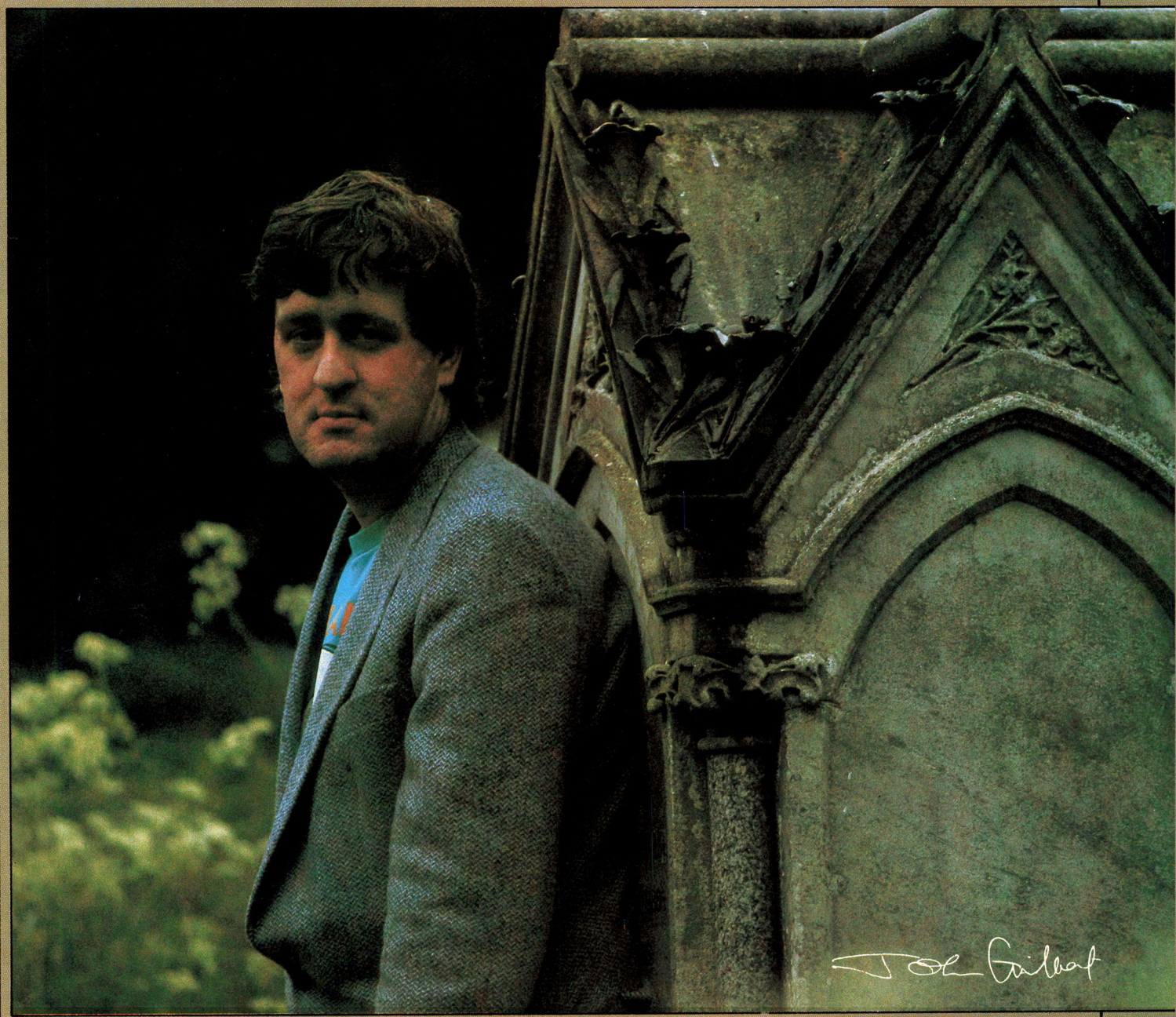
STATESIDE STAGNATION?

Leaving never-never land behind and moving on from the state of the British fantasy film industry, let's take a look at film-making in the United States.

The latest and greatest attraction is for sequels, prequels and remakes, mostly undertaken for financial rather than creative motives. Predominantly, film magazines seem happy to concentrate on reviewing the merit of individual sequels, deciding whether they're good or lousy, when there's another more important principle at stake.

Sequels and remakes may be money-spinners but they should only be made if Part II, or III, carries the plot of the first movie forward – like *Hellbound – Hellraiser II* – or the remake adds something to the original movie – like *Evil Dead II* or *The Blob*. Yet movie companies are still intent on giving us *Friday The 13th* Parts VII and VIII this year (TV series apart, I thought only kings and popes attained this kind of numerical status), *Phantasm II*, *Halloween IV* – with the return of a very dead Michael Myers plus skewered and fried Donald Pleasance – not to mention *Fright Night II*, *The Lost Boys II* and *Gremlins II*, all of which use the 'return of . . . ' scenario.

No doubt the film-makers realise that sane horror buffs go to see the latest slab of *Friday The 13th* in order to have a good laugh. They also realise that gore-hounds go to *Halloween IV* to see how Moustapha Akkad resurrects protagonist and antagonist in the latest Michael Myers episode. But, there's no excitement, no real chill, while these movies are playing. We expect a body count, we get a body



count, we shrug and leave the cinema. Jason and Michael were good in their day but let's move on – such sentiments won't, however, stop us celebrating the two psychos' birthdays later this year – for posterity's sake of course.

The bill for those admittedly low-budget goodies still adds up to nearly $15 million. You could make two Walt Disney animated features for that or, more to the point three original horror/fantasy features. But no. We're told that Jason Voorhees, Michael Myers and even Freddy Kruger are big box-office and that they've created personality cults which in one case has spawned a television series – see American Nightmares.

Am I talking sacrilege? No, I believe not. Last year *Hellraiser* made a creative big splash, this year *Beetlejuice* is about to rake in the money, so it's ridiculous and cynical to say that money should be spent on time-after-time sequels when properties such as Stephen King's *Pet Semetary* have been waiting in the wings for funding, studio facilities and a production crew. And all this is happening during a period when British distributors are finding it hard to book theatrical release dates for movies because there are so many films around.

Just a few years ago film-makers were crying over falling box-office receipts and closing cinemas. Now the moguls responsible for churning out sequels past the trilogy stage could be responsible for a renewed decline when viewers get tired of the same old movie clichés. Let's hope the movie producers see that the popularity of Freddy Kruger or Jason Voorhees is no excuse for a lack of invention.

THE DIRECTOR VANISHES

Neil Jordan, of course, is a British film-maker who refuses to fit any mould, let alone go mouldy doing sequels. In the last issue of **FEAR** Stan Nicholls looked at Jordan's early career and promised to interview the director further on the resurgence in British film-making and about his new film *High Spirits*. That is supposed to appear in this issue, but Stan ran into a technical hitch – Neil disappeared on us! Pursuit of the errant director is under way as we go to press, and with some luck Stan should have something more to tell us about Neil Jordan in the next issue.

WORLD CONVENTION LINE-UP

The VIP guest list for the World Fantasy Convention, to be held at the **Ramada Inn**, London, during Hallowe'en weekend, reads like a who's who of world horror/fantasy/science fiction. There's so many names, we won't put them all in bold typeface!

The role call so far includes: Clive Barker – *Guest of Honour* – Ramsey Campbell, Jonathan Carroll, R Chetwynd-Hayes, Michael Forman – *Guest of Honour* – Neil Gaiman, Stephen Gallagher, Joe Haldeman, James Herbert – *Guest of Honour* – Robert McCammon, Lisa Tuttle, Ian Watson, F Paul Wilson, Chet Williamson, Diana Wynne Jones – *Guest of Honour* – Stephen R Donaldson, Dennis Etchison, Charles L Grant, Kathryn Ptacek, Joe Lansdale, Brian Lumley, Rachael Pollack, Terry Pratchett, David J Schow, Thomas Tessier.

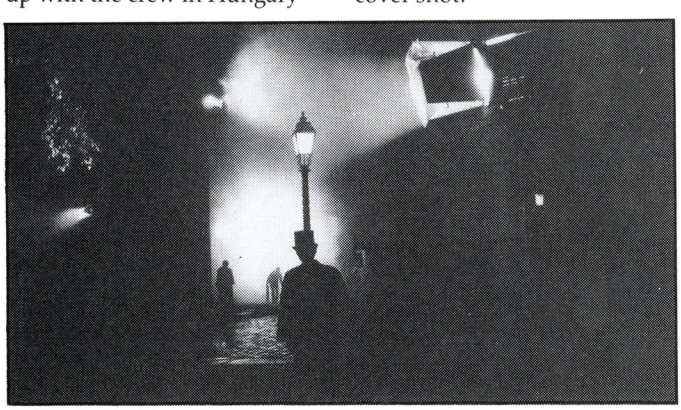
Late entries include: Raymond E Feist, Douglas Winter, Nicholas Royle, Craig Shaw Gardner, Shaun Hutson and Jim Pitts.

There are still tickets left for the weekend, which begins on Thursday October 27 and ends on the Sunday. More information can be obtained by sending a large SAE to **The 1988 World Fantasy Convention, 130 Park View, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 6JU**.

JACK'S BACK

No, not another Michael Jackson film, I'm talking Jack the Ripper, terror of Victorian London. He's come out of the closet again in a new Ripper movie, starring Norman Bate's alter-ego **Anthony Perkins**.

Filming took place in London earlier this year under strict security, but we were able to catch up with the crew in Hungary where this exclusive still was shot. **FEAR**'s undercover photographer actually lives in Budapest and was able to prowl the 'closed set' street used for filming on the grounds that the crew were invading his home. Our man had a wonderful talk with Mr Perkins, who mistakenly thought he was someone well-known, but became concerned when he was spotted by a bunch of heavy crew members. Needless to say we've all taken out insurance policies in order to bring you this undercover shot.



PHANTOM JACKO

Superstar **Michael Jackson**, currently on his world tour, hits the big screen in **Lorimar**'s *Moonwalker* later this year. It's a science fiction gangster thriller boasting incredible special effects from a team headed by **Rick Baker** (*An American Werewolf In London* among many others). It's also coproduced by Jacko and has **Colin Childers** in the director's seat.

Michael has also been tipped for the lead in **Steven Spielberg**'s production of *The Phantom Of The Opera*. (Haven't we heard about Steve and Jacko getting it together before . . . ?) Steve wants Jacko to recreate **Michael Crawford**'s stunning stage role – after all, the two have a lot in common, ethnic origin, height and distinctive voices apart . . . We wait in trepidation.

TIME FLIES FOR FISHER

Guild Pictures's new releases for later this year include *Mac And Me* and *Time Guardian*.

The former is a fantasy, a cross between *ET*, *ALF* and *Batteries Not Included*. It's the tale of a young invalid boy's friendship for an alien who's lost in space – but with looks like a Gremlin a long fingers like ET you bet he won't be lost for long.

Time Guardian is a science fiction story starring **Carrie Fisher** – not so fresh from *Star Wars* – and **Dean Stockwell**. It promises the technology of *Masters Of The Universe* but with one difference: it has an original story line.

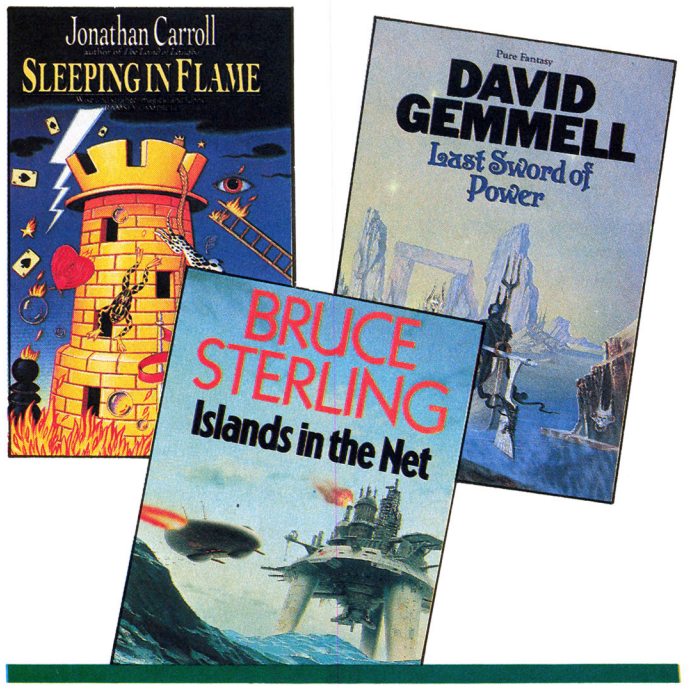
A release date isn't fixed yet, but expect both movies to arrive during the autumn.

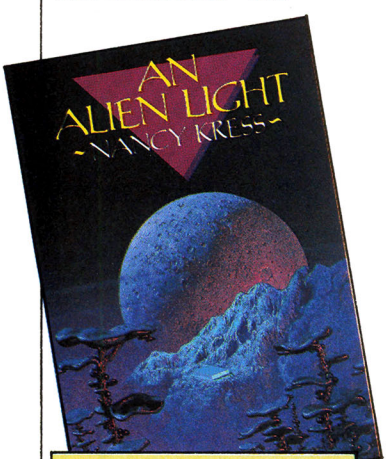
LEGENDARY LAUNCH

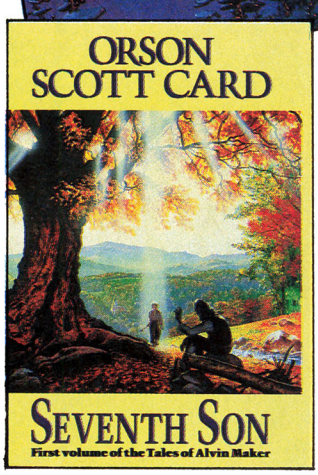
'We are laying claim to the number one position,' says editor **Deborah Beale** of the September 8 launch of **Century Hutchinson/Arrow**'s Legend imprint as a major publisher of hardback science fiction.

The schedule is: September 8 *Seventh Son* by **Orson Scott Card**, which is the first volume of his fantasy sequence *The Tales Of Alvin Maker*, and *Islands In The Net* by **Bruce Sterling**.

October 6 *The Last Sword Of Power* – the sixth heroic fantasy novel from **David Gemmel** (who we interview in the next issue of **FEAR**) – *Roofworld* by **Christopher Fowler** – see interview in this issue – and







Jonathan Carroll's *Sleeping In Flame* – look out for a **FEAR** interview later this year.

And finally, November 3 *An Alien Light* by **Nancy Kress**.

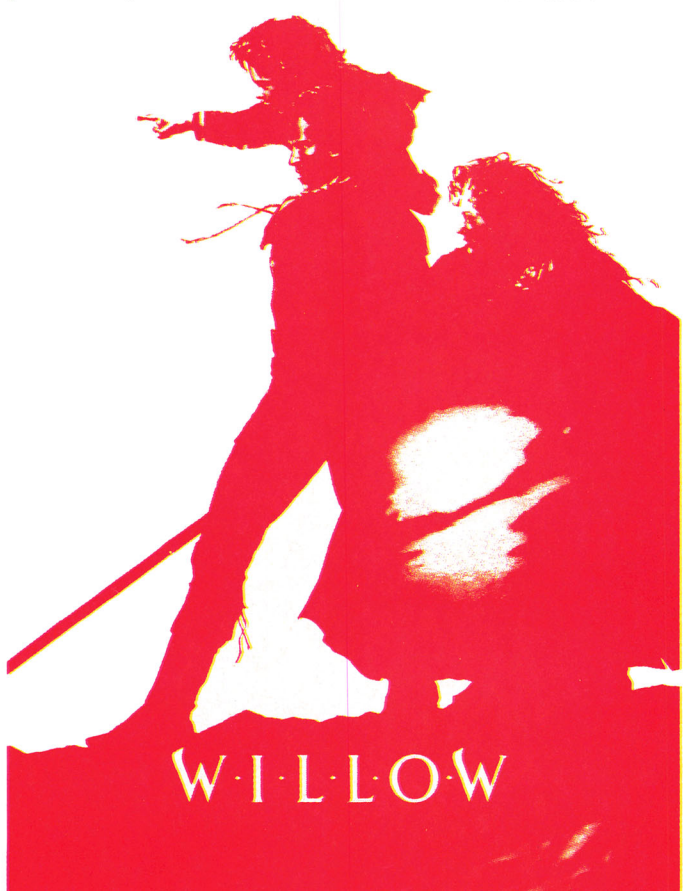
Now that the hardback components are in place, Legend becomes a fully-fledged science fiction, fantasy, and horror imprint, publishing in cased, trade paperback, and mass-market formats. Whether Legend gets into the limited edition market is still a matter of debate.

Stan Nicholls

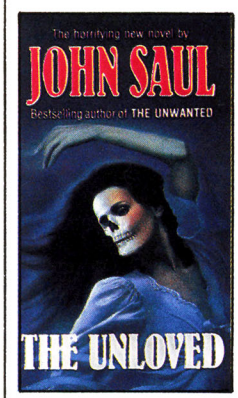
WILLOW WARS

Ron Howard's fantasy movie *Willow* will not see a British theatrical release until the early part of next year.

The screenplay was written by **George 'Star Wars' Lucas** and features little **Warwick Davis** as Willow Ufgood. He's one of a race of small people, called the Nelwyns, the only peaceful people in a world at war. It's Willow, however, who, with an oddball bunch of friends, pits himself to defeat the evil queen Bavmorda, played by **Jean Marsh**, and her henchman General Kael – **Pat Roach**.



NEW SAULS



Horror author **John Saul**'s latest book, *The Unloved*, is due out from **Bantam** on November 11. It's another tale of supernatural unease from the writer of *Nathanial* and *Hellfire* which this time focuses on family secrets unleashed when the mother dies suddenly and horribly. The price is £3.50.

Terry Pratchett's latest *Discworld* novel, *Mort*, is also out in paperback on the same day. It's as hilarious as the others and focuses on Death's apprentice. Priced at £2.99, full reviews of both books will appear in the next issue of **FEAR**.

TWINS?

David Cronenberg's movie *Twins*, starring **Jeremy Irons** as twin psychiatrists who share more than looks, has been renamed *Dead Ringers* – groan – and is unlikely to be released until next year because of a dearth of theatrical release slots. **Rank**'s other big movie *The Running Man* – see review in this issue – is still on track for September 23 release.

STRAUBERY KING

Peter Straub's *Koko*, a thriller about a murderous aftermath of the Vietnam war, is to be published in hardcover by **Viking** on October 27, price £12.95. (In the next issue of **FEAR**, you could win a copy.) Viking is also planning to publish a new **Stephen King** book in November. A King book with a difference. It's non-fiction, about gargoyles, and includes some wonderful full-colour pictures of the creepy, church-bound beasts. More details as we get them.

AMERICAN NIGHTMARES

AND THERE'S MORE

The attack of the killer sequels is on again. Most important is *Hellraiser III: Hell On Earth*, and probably the pick of the crop if *Hellbound* is anything to go by. Its blends the fantasies of hell with reality, and with the massive reduction in available characters since *Hellbound* it probably won't seem like a Part III at all. The movie's already into preproduction and is one of only two movies planned for release by **New World Pictures** next year.

Warner Brothers is also keeping in with the sequel game. *The Lost Boys II* is on the cards – although it's a toss up whether any but two of the original cast will sign contracts – and *Gremlins II* is also shining bright . . . at the moment. You might also look out for *The Blob*, a remake rather than a sequel. **Jack Harris** – the original's producer – is back in the chair, but the story line's been changed to be more in keeping with today's gore climate. *The Blob* will have a theatrical release in February 1989, while the other movies mentioned are unlikely to get UK release dates until the summer 1989.

NIGHTMARE GAME

A Nightmare On Elm Street – The Game? Yessir, Freddy Krueger's found another outlet for his talents, scaring the wits out of boardgame players. Your aim is to beat all the other players and wake up before the finger-blades get you. The game's produced by **Victory** in the States but is available here through **Virgin Games** outlets, priced at £21.95.

FORBIDDEN SIGNINGS

There is a host of author/artist signings at the new **Forbidden Planet**, *71 New Oxford Street, London*. Get along to these:

- **August 27:** Annual *2000 AD* signing includes appearances by **Brett Ewins** and **Pete Milligan**.
- **September 10: William Horwood** signs his latest novel, a return to the world of *Duncton Wood*.
- **October 1: Pat Mills** and **Carlos Ezquerra** unveil *Third World War*, the future of British comics.
- **October 22: Raymond E Feist**, author of *The Riftworld Saga*, signs copies of *Faerie Tale*.
- **October 29:** *Amtrak Wars* author, **Patrick Tilley**, signs his new novel.

Philip Nutman has been hit by strike action – the USA writers strike he mentioned in the last issue of FEAR. Production on both East and West coasts has dwindled to a trickle and all projects in development have been frozen. As a result his column this issue is a jamboree bag of events 'n' happenings

CENSORSHIP

The end of June was marked by an amusing, and often frustrating, panel discussion on censorship at London's National Film Theatre (NFT). It was chaired by **Derek Malcolm** of *The Guardian*, with **James Ferman** of the British Board of Film Castration, Freddy creator **Wes Craven**, and **Clive Barker**.

The lecture/discussion was designed to wrap up a retrospective of Craven's movies shown at the NFT that month. In the audience were colleagues **Mike** and **Di Wathen**, *Shock Xpress* editor **Stefan Jaworzyn**, *Cinefantastique*'s **Alan Jones**, **Mel Donovan** of Colourbox Video, critics **Nigel Floyd** and **Francis Lynn**, *Hellbound* screenwriter **Peter Atkins**, author **Nicholas Royle** (*The Dandelion Woman*, **FEAR** fiction, Issue 1), and LA special effects man **Mark Shostrom**, plus an assortment of contentious idiots who were clearly offended by horror films.

The proceedings began with three film clips, two from Craven (*Last House On The Left* and *Nightmare On Elm Street*, and one from Barker's *Hellraiser*. Almost immediately a moron seated behind me – the kind clearly in love with the sound of his own voice – shouted unnecessary comments, and it became clear that the evening was going to have its ups and downs.

Derek Malcolm kicked off the conversation by asking Craven how he got into the business and what his intentions were concerning the highly unpleasant *Last House On The Left*. Craven explained his aim was to make a movie about violence, to strip away the surface gloss and confront the audience with its true, ugly face; which he certainly did, his technical inexperience adding to the discomforting effect the film presents.

James Ferman was next to bat when Malcolm inquired why *Last House* is still banned in Britain. According to Ferman, the film was submitted for theatrical release in 1974 and rejected. It has not been resubmitted since and is unlikely to since it was considered obscene by numerous courts around the country during the height of the Video Nasties witch-hunt a few years ago.

The conversation proceeded to plod predictably onto the subject of children, stalk 'n' slash films, the responsibility of the film-maker, and sexual violence – seemingly the area that most concerns Ferman. Within a short space of time Wes Craven took a backseat in the discussion, though not necessarily through choice, as Barker and Ferman dominated conversation for nearly half an hour.

Barker tried, and succeeded in injecting some levity into the affair by citing his experiences at the hands of the MPAA (Motion Picture of America Association) who stated that only a certain number of bum thrusts are acceptable in a sex scene, any more than this and said scene becomes pornographic. The scene in question was the passionate flashback seduction in *Hellraiser*.

Just when the discussion was running out of steam – and the middleclass moron behind me was making periodic smartass remarks to those within earshot, his comments displaying a closed mind and a definite dislike of Clive Barker – Derek Malcolm invited the increasingly restless audience to participate. A wise move which injected much needed energy.

One member of the audience fired off a broadside at Craven about exciting audiences and encouraging bloodlust. Craven countered by commenting on the cathartic effects of horror movies to act as a safety valve for the antisocial desires we all have.

From there on the range of questions were fairly predictable: anticensorship remarks, Ferman responding with facts and figures, going to great pains to explain the way

FILMS IN PRODUCTION OR NEARING COMPLETION

BATMAN
Warner Brothers. Producers: Peter Guber, Jon Peters, Chris Kenny; Director: Tim Burton; Screenplay: Sam Ham; Cast: Details not available, although Jack Nicholson has signed to play The Joker and Mel Gibson considered as Batman; Shooting starts at Pinewood Studios in August.

CYBORG
Cannon. Director: Albert Pyun; Screenplay: Steven N Rostov; Cast: Jean Claud Van Damme; Shooting at DEG Studios, North Carolina, July/August.

LITTLE MONSTERS
Vestron. Director: Richard Greenberg; Screenplay: Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio; Cast: Details not available; Shooting at DEG Studios, August/September.

THE MAN WHO BECAME DRACULA
Cine Productions. Producers: D Constantine Conte and Sid Ventress; Director: Stephen Traxler; Screenplay: ML Palmer; Cast: Details not available.

VILLAGE AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE
New World. Producers: Lawrence Mortoff and Tony Canzoneri; Director/Screeplay: Michael Wadleigh.

In Development: *Psycho Night, The Doomed, Roadkill, Spawn.*

movies either desensitise audiences or encourage misogynistic perceptions of women as images/rape material, Barker criticising the Rambo movies. Nothing new was said, no consensus reached, with violence toward women featuring heavily as one of the main issues. Although there were a many women in the audience, not one of them asked a question or made remarks about how they feel about women-as-victims in stalk 'n' slash flicks.

STEWART GORDON MOVIE CANCELLED

The **Stewart Gordon** project mentioned last issue is, I can at last reveal, HP Lovecraft's *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. Or was. Despite being well into preproduction with character designs by **Berni Wrightson** and makeup effects tests supervised by **Dick Smith**, Vestron, which was financing the £5 million movie, pulled the plug at the end of June. No specifics were released to the press, but our sources indicate that it looked as if the budget was threatening to creep up to £7 million, which didn't please Vestron. The company is trying to keep budgets down to the £5 million mark, and it was also unhappy with Gordon's decision to shoot a period horror pic. The project's death is sad news as it promised to be one of the few genre movies to break new ground.

MOVIE SNIPPETS

Beetlejuice, reviewed last issue, has grossed £67 million at the US box offices. There's already talk of *Beetlejuice II*. Meanwhile, *Poltergeist III* clocked up a healthy £8 million in its first 10 days on release.

Anthony Perkins – Norman 'Yes, Mother' Bates – the world's best known *Psycho*, recently made a low-budget science fiction flick called *Destroyer*. It has one of the most amusing tag line we've seen in months: '3,000 volts couldn't kill him. It just gave him a buzz'. Destined for video by the sounds of it.

Don't hold your breath waiting for the *Friday The 13th* television series to turn up on the box here in the forseeable future as neither BBC or ITV are interested. Meanwhile, Mr Kruger, the scourge of Elm Street, finally makes his television debut with *Freddy's Nightmares*, another anthology show, this Hallowe'en across America.

Tin Star Void, the low-budget post-modern rock 'n' roll western featuring authors **John Skipp** and **Craig Spector** in a cameo, is now going out under the title *Death Collector*, and it looks unlikely that they will contribute to the soundtrack.

Television horror hostess **Elvira** – she of the heaving cleavage – makes her big screen debut in the flick *Mistress Of The Dark*, a New World production.

Bruce Campbell of *Evil Dead* fame stars in the upcoming science fiction/horror outing *Moontrap*.

Canadian big bug movie *Blue Monkey* – aka *Invasion Of The Body Suckers* shown at last month's Shock Around The Clock film festival in London (see this issue's Union Hack) will be released on video in the UK by Sony.

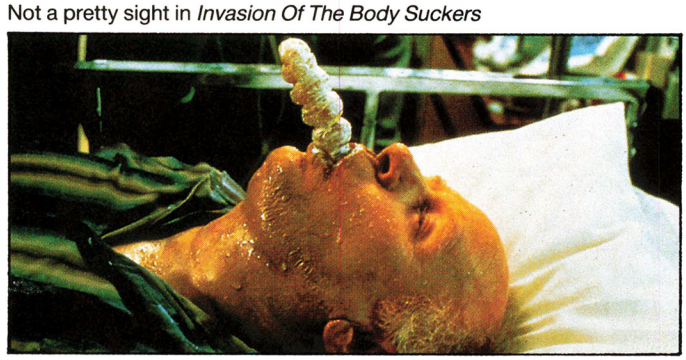
Most ridiculous title of the decade: *Piranha Women And The Avocado Jungle Of Death* – and we're not kidding. Said flick stars **Adrienne Barbeau** and **Shanon Tweed**. Credits list the film as being a 'Guacomole Production'. Bet you can't wait for this one.

While on the subject of movies made by vegetables with fruity titles, watch out for *Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes II*.

You want more dumb movies? Try *The Brain*, directed by **Ed Hunt** who did *Plague* a few years back. This flick features a gigantic human brain on the rampage. **David Gale** of *Re-Animator* fame stars as the scientist in this Canadian turkey.

Demons III: Demon Cathedral is due to shoot in Rome around late-September/early-October. **Sergio Stivaletti** again provides the special makeup effects, but this the story is set in the middle ages where most of the bloodletting takes place in – surprise, surprise – a church. **Michali Soavi** – *Bloody Bird* – directs while **Dario Argento** produces.

Not a pretty sight in *Invasion Of The Body Suckers*



PRIME EVIL BREAKS ALL RECORDS

The **Douglas E Winter**-edited anthology *Prime Evil* has broken two publishing records. In the US it has had the largest first print run for a collection of stories – 75,000 copies. And the UK rights were sold for a reputed £36,000, certainly the biggest advance for this kind of book in Britain.

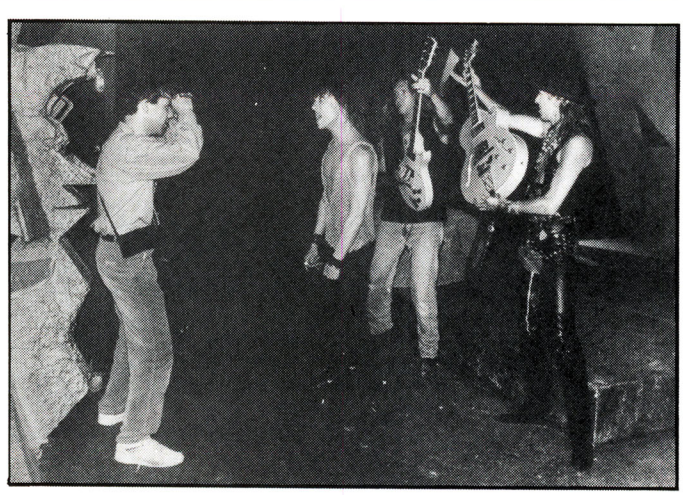
UK release schedule for US films

Dream Demon, High Spirits – October.
Hellbound: Hellraiser II – November.
Lair Of The White Worm, The Hidden – December (to be confirmed).
The Serpent And The Rainbow – December.

IGGY POP – HORROR STAR?

In a recent interview in *Sounds*, The World's Forgotten Boy and pal of David Bowie, **Iggy Pop** revealed that he's considering the title role in *Zombie Cop*, a film he describes as 'a moral tale'. No contracts have been signed yet, but with the infamous Iggy anything is possible – remember, we're talking about the man who made onstage self-mutilation an art form in the late-Sixties and early-Seventies.

Meanwhile, Mr Pop has just teamed up with *Evil Dead* director **Sam Raimi** to shoot the video (*make your own jokes up* – **Ed**) of his new single *Cold Metal*, the first from his new killer LP *Instinct*.



Sam Raimi (left) pretends he's got his famous prowling camera in hand as he directs his first music video, Iggy Pop's *Cold Metal*

Although the video clip doesn't feature any horror apparel, the production lineup is an *Evil Dead II* reunion with several key crew members working in the same capacity as on the aforementioned feature: director of photography **Peter Dennings**, art director **Philip Duffing**, and editor **Kay Davis**.

Raimi and Pop are fans of each others' work and the collaboration, produced by The Promo Palace, an offshoot of Palace Pictures, was a great success filled with the kind of hyperactive camera work for which Raimi is renowned.

FAN-FILE

The regular FEAR feature which keeps you in touch with the fan network

OUT OF THE CLOSET

SKELETON CREW, from **Grim Reaper Publications**, is a relatively new fanzine dealing with one author or subject per issue. The latest issue is built around **James Herbert**, but also includes a profile/history about the creation of **FEAR**, so look out for it.

Grim Reaper Publisher **Dave Hughes** is also launching a limited edition black-and-white portfolio of **Dave Carson** illustrations, all of which are based on the works of horror authors such as **James Herbert**, **Clive Barker**, and **Ramsey Campbell**. Stocks are, of course, limited so get in there fast.

Information on *Skeleton Crew* and the *Dave Carson* portfolio can be obtained from: Dave Hughes, Publisher, **Grim Reaper, 104 Highcliffe Road, Wickford, Essex**.

LIMITED EDITIONS

US EDITIONS of books are hard to come by, but British dealers, such as **Michael Anft** can be of help. His catalogue includes signed,limited, edition books from Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Stephen King, and Dean R Koontz. It can be obtained from **Fine Edition Books, 30 Frazier Street, London SE1 7BG**.

DARK SCRAWLING

MIDNIGHT GRAFFITI is a handsome US dark fantasy literature magazine which is already making a name for itself. Not easily available in the UK, it's latest issue contains an interview with the Splatterpunk pack, fiction from **Harlan Ellison** and a comic-strip depicting scenes from a Mexican vampire movie. More info from **14156 Tobiasson Road, Poway, California 92064**. One issue costs £4.95.

SPOOKS AND SCHOLARS

THE GHOST STORY has a sizeable following, so we were delighted to find in the post *Ghosts And Scholars*, a regularly published collection of supernatural tales. The current issue contains three stories – which are atmospherically illustrated – together with an article about **MR James** and a well-stocked book review section. More information about this, and other, ghostly publications from **The Haunted Library, Flat One, 36 Hamilton Street, Hoole, Chester CH2 3JQ**.

SHAKEN

IF YOU prefer the sleazy, gory, side of horror try *Shock Xpress*, a magazine which has been around for some time – and that shows in its excellent on-the-ball coverage. The spring issue included interviews with **Kathryn Bigelow** and **Clive Barker**. Editor **Stefan Jaworzyn**'s tight control of content and biting editorial comments make it ideal for fans of shock and sleaze. A single issue costs £1.25.

More information from: **109 September Way, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 2SF**.

CARPENTER CLUB

FANS of of film director **John Carpenter** can get the latest news and analysis on his doings from the **John Carpenter Info Club**. Its newsletter provides up to date information on the great man's whereabouts plus an analysis of his former films. More information from **Nazir A Ali, 1 Mount Edgerton House, Imperial Road, Edgerton, Huddersfield**.

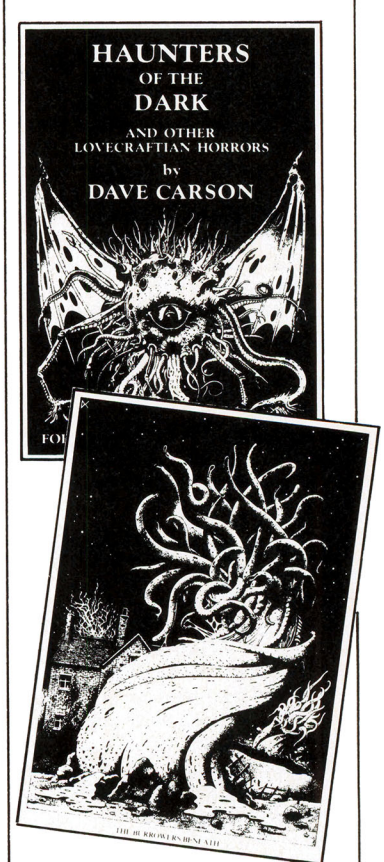
NEX PLEASE

NEXUS, the Journal of Imaginative Media, is a well-laid-out, computer-typeset title which features science fiction, horror and fantasy. Recent issues have included interviews with **Stephen Laws**, a feature on *The Storyteller* television series, and a look at Italian Horror movies. Price £1.00.

More information from **Brian Robb** or **Brigid Cherry** at Nexus Publications, **7a Woodhaw, Egham, Surrey TW20 9AP**.

STILL HAUNTED

COPIES of Dave Carson's *Haunters Of The Dark* portfolio are still available from Carl T Ford, Dagon Press, 11 Warwick Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW2 6SW. The demand for the portfolio has been high, so move quickly and, while you're at it, ask about the next issue of *Dagon*, the magazine for all fans of HP Lovecraft.



To send information on fan clubs or events to FAN-FILE, write to: FEAR FAN-FILE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB.

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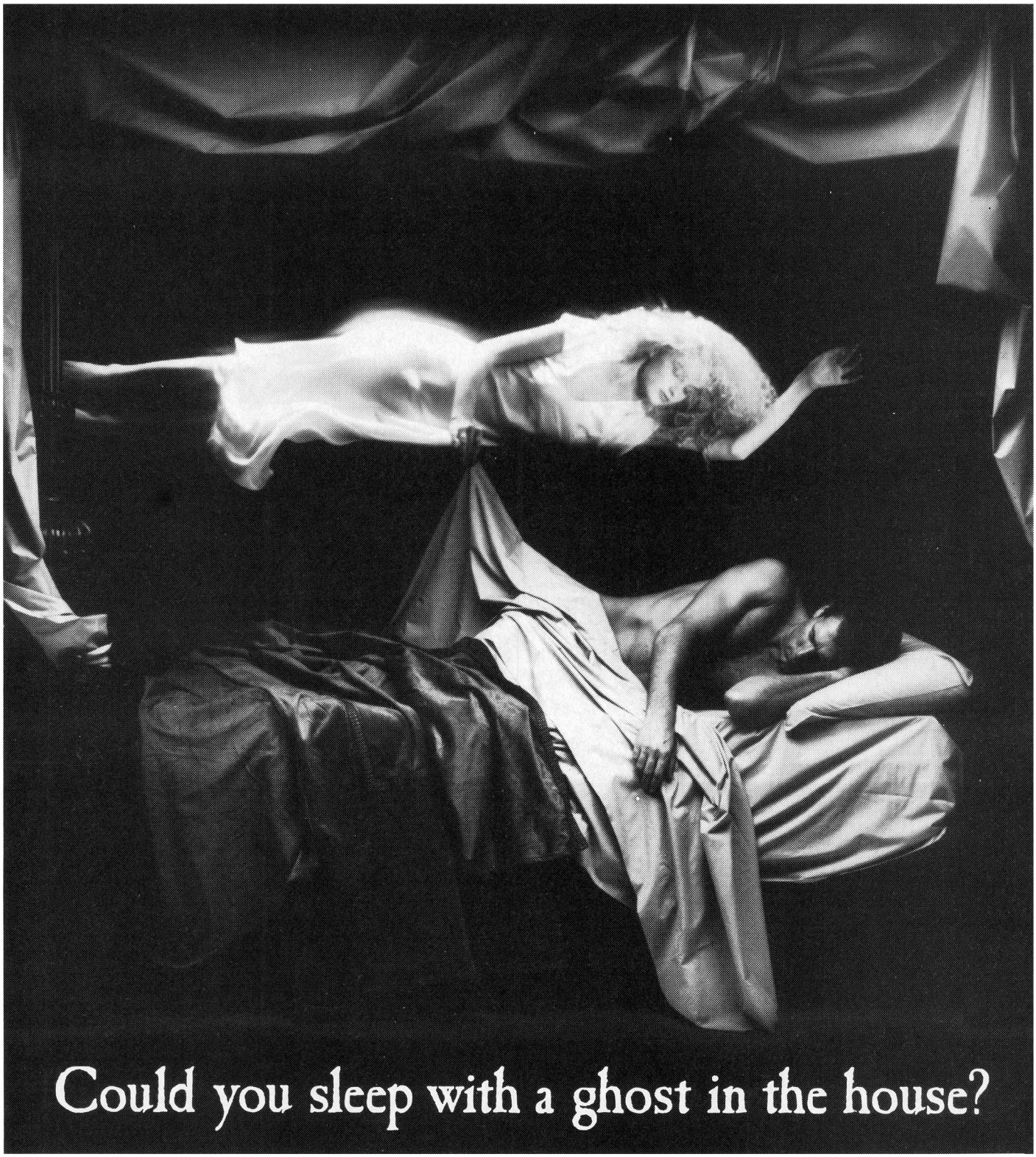
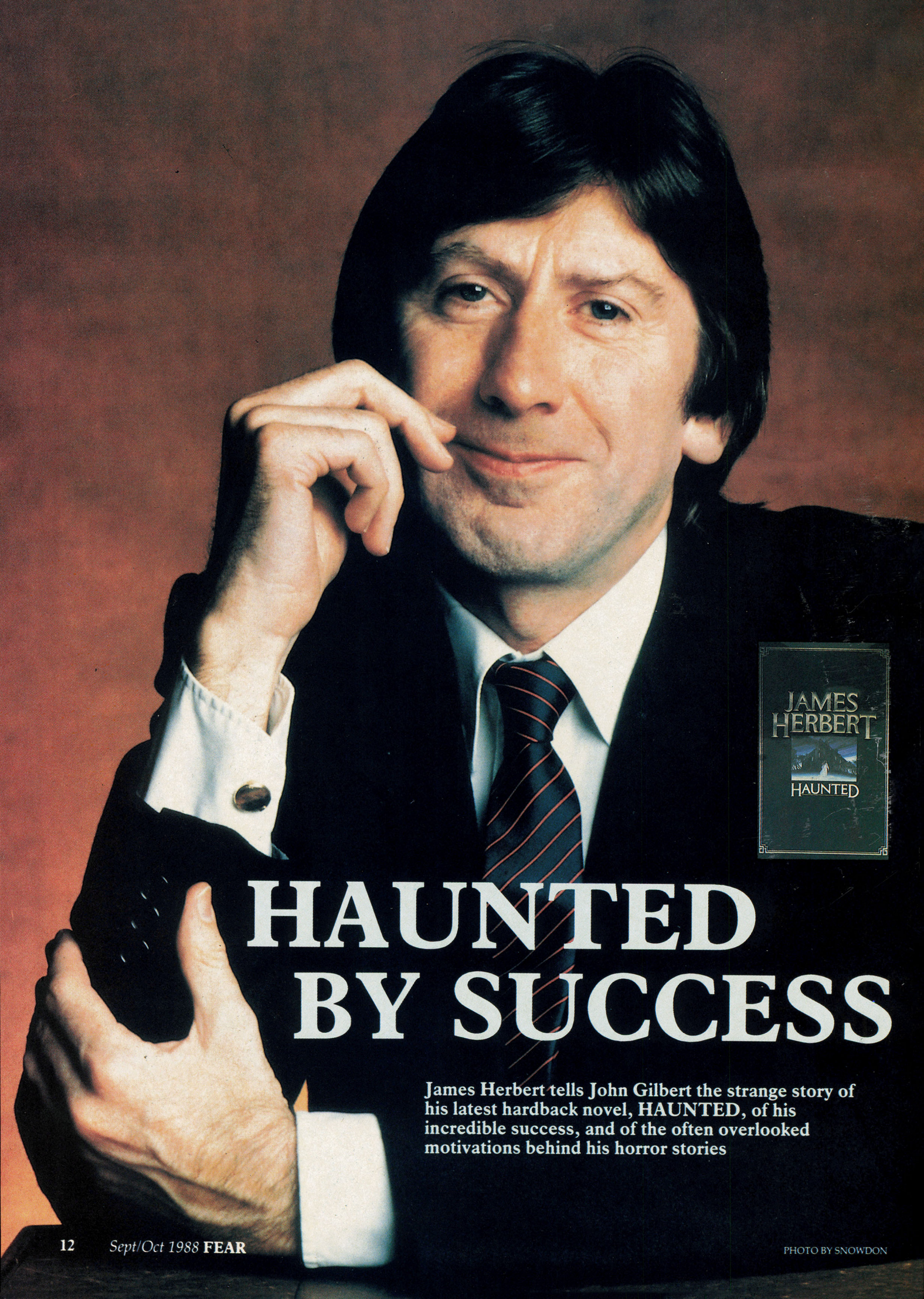


James Herbert's "Haunted."
A contemporary ghost story in the classic tradition. Hodder & Stoughton £10.95.



HAUNTED BY SUCCESS

James Herbert tells John Gilbert the strange story of his latest hardback novel, HAUNTED, of his incredible success, and of the often overlooked motivations behind his horror stories

PHOTO BY SNOWDON

British Master Of Horror. British maybe, East End born and bred certainly, but James Herbert hates the MOH tag which even his rapacious critics give him. He's still learning his craft and hardly tapping middle age, although many of his fans have been with him since the days of *The Rats* in the early Seventies.

The Rats was the first of the bestselling horror novels to hit Britain. In fact, it beat Stephen King's *Carrie* to the bookshelves by a few months. Since then James Herbert has sold 20 million copies of his books, the latest of which is *Haunted*. No doubt you've read at least one critical review of those books. So, you've heard from the critics, now listen to the man . . .

JG: Why did you choose to start your career in the world of advertising?

JH: I was never a writer to begin with, I was an artist. I was a kid that loved to draw and paint. But also I was good at English, so I guess that storytelling ability was always there, but art was the dominant factor in my life. I knew advertising was a very exciting job, it paid very well, and from my circumstances I was going to get a good job and earn money. I wasn't going to become indulgent and become a fine artist, I just didn't have the luxury of that. Art was my subject and the natural thing for me to do was to go into advertising.

JG: How long did it take you to become an art director?

JH: I was one of those lucky guys. I left art school at 20, and by the time I was 26 I'd become a group head, which is a kind of manager. You're doing creative work but you have a team – copywriter, art director, typographer. I had two around me. Normally to become group head in those days you were usually into your mid-30s, if not 40s. I wasn't a whiz kid, but I worked hard and I was good at what I did. It just developed very fast and I found myself in that position.

JG: What made you switch to writing?

JH: I was attending more meetings than doing creative work. I still did a lot myself, but that meant working late evenings and weekends because of all these meetings. Eventually I did find that I was getting more and more away from the drawing board, so whatever creative urge was in me wasn't being used up. I needed more challenge. So, I decided to write a book.

This is all post-rationale, you understand. You make excuses or find reasons afterwards. It just seemed to happen with me. Because I was working with copywriters always talking about the great novel they were going to do, I guess that influenced me in some way, I thought yes I'll write a book.

Also, it was very heady days for me because I'd been promoted fairly young, I was making really good money in advertising, enjoying the work, enjoying the people. I seemed to be unable to do anything that was wrong. Everything was good for me. It sounds a bit . . . I don't know . . . I guess I sound as if I'm boasting, but this is just the way it was. Everything I touched seemed to come good and it filled me with a kind of confidence, although I've always been able to step back and look at myself and have a chuckle and that's stopped me getting very arrogant.

I just kind of assumed I could write a book. That was the weird thing, I had that confidence to do it. But, I never imagined it would be published. I hoped it would be, but I never really thought it was going to happen. I needed to tell a story and so I did. I sat down and wrote the story at evenings and weekends and it just happened. I filled a gap in the publishing market.

It's like Elvis Presley came around at the right time, the Beatles came along at exactly the right time. It's some kind of synchronicity of timing that you can be there at exactly the right moment, there is a hole in the market, people suddenly tune in to what you've done. It's not me tuning in to the public taste, it was the public taste – or lack of taste you'd probably say with *The Rats* – that tuned in to me. It's called breaks, isn't it? A good break.

JG: Stephen King came in shortly after *The Rats* . . .

JH: Yeah, Steve came very shortly after, with the same publisher, and that's how Steve and I became good friends. We were both beginning together, he wrote *Carrie* and me previously with *The Rats*. We became good buddies then. He came over here, we did talking sessions and interviews together, and I reckon I was always Steve's PR man over here.

I get very embarrassed with interviews. I listen to myself and think 'well, I'm going over the top and making myself sound too good', and what I used to do in the old days, I'd always divert it to Steve and say: 'Yes, I do this, but have you read Stephen King, this guy is fantastic', and not too many people had heard of him in those days.

A THOUSAND RATS

JG: Did you choose horror, or did horror choose you?

JH: Horror really did choose me. I thought of this subject of the rats because of my upbringing. Also I was influenced by the *Dracula* film, the old Bela Lugosi film with the vision of a thousand rats staring up at this madman Renfield. For me as an art director that was very visual.

I think, because I was an art director, I've always written visually, people can see the pictures as I write. So, I tied the two up; but I never intended to be a horror writer. I'd never intended to be a writer. But once I'd done *The Rats* it turned out to be a horror story. It wasn't a conscious effort to make it a horror story. And it was a different kind of horror story. It was graphic, said a lot more than most horror stories said before that; and I realised 'I like this'.

I'd always been interested in the supernatural and the paranormal and horror, I'd always liked horror. I was not a fanatic about it, but I'd always liked it, and it seemed to fit me like a glove. And then when the next one turned out to be horror, *The Fog*, I thought 'well, that's obviously what I am, I'm a horror writer'.

JG: After *The Fog*, unlike other writers, you switched away from the single-threat novel to broader-based novels. Were you worried about being typecast?

JH: Not at all. I've never been that self-conscious of what I do. I'd explored the territory of mass violence with *The Rats* and *The Fog*, then I wanted to do something to do with the supernatural and more of an intimate story, hence *The Survivor*. That was horror but on a different level. I've always done this, always gone on to different levels.

If you look at my past four books, they could almost be by four different authors. You could go to *Domain*, *Moon*, *Magic Cottage*, *Sepulchre* and now *Haunted*; they're all different in their own way. *Magic Cottage* is a far different tone of voice than any of the others, apart from *Fluke*. So, I've always tried to do something different each time to sustain my own interest, to keep me going. And if I'm interested I can usually be sure that the reader would be interested.

But it was no conscious effort of me feeling typecast. It was just what I had to do. That's why I wrote *Fluke* after *The Survivor*. Totally different. If I wrote it today it would be totally different, and it wasn't very well accepted by my

"I'd always liked horror. I was not a fanatic about it, but I'd always liked it, and it seemed to fit me like a glove"

publisher because it seemed as if I was killing the golden goose. I insisted that it remained exactly the way I'd written it, they could change nothing.

They tried to make it into a rabid dog and I was quite happy for them not to publish the story at all. I would have taken it elsewhere. But I had a good job in advertising, I wasn't taking any risks, I wasn't going to starve if they didn't publish the book, but even if I had, it was always my principle that I've got to do exactly what I've got to do, and people can't change it.

SPEARED

JG: Did you always intend *The Rats* to be a trilogy?
JH: No, far from it. People have said to me time and time again that I was really smart to leave *The Rats* open-ended so I could do a sequel, but I didn't even know *The Rats* would be published, let alone have a sequel.

Very basically, *The Rats* really was symbolic of the system that we're all up against, that does us down, every day we have our own short empiric victories against that system, but it still trundles on. That's why the rats continued after the hero, our Everyman, had won his own battle. The system still trundled on.

Years later there was a huge demand for that sequel, but I didn't want to do it, I didn't feel right to do it until I'd written *The Spear*, which was a very involved story, involved a tremendous amount of research – and I ended up in court. One of these books that I'd used, this guy, through his solicitors , said that he'd gained his facts from transcendental meditation, therefore they were unique to him and nobody else could use them. However, if I paid him £25,000 then I could use those facts. And that went to court . . .

But that happened after – I was so drained after writing *The Spear* that I wanted something a bit easier. I didn't need to research *The Rats*. And so *Lair*: I'd moved out into the suburbs. I'd lived near Epping Forest before – when I got married I moved to Epping Forest, Buckhurst Hill – then I moved to Woodford, but still within the region of the forest. And so I was able to stroll over to the forest and get all my locations, details. They weren't going to let me in the forest. I contacted the warden and said 'I'm going to write a book about Epping Forest. I should warn you, though, it's going to be a horror story', and he said, 'we really don't like this sort of thing, we get too much bad publicity . . . ' because all the villains in the East End dump bodies out there.

He said 'you should write your book, without going to their [the forest's research] establishment, without seeing their facts and figures. Submit it to us and we'll tell you what is right and what is wrong'. I said, 'no way'. That's why in *Lair* the warden is not a very sympathetic character. I think he may even get gobbled up by the rats.

For me, then, having made that statement that the rats existed in the poor part of London, they bred on that poverty as symbolic of the system, I was saying that it's not just that part of London that's involved, it's everybody, and I moved the rats out to suburbia.

So that was the point of the second book, and *Domain*, well that was the whole irony of the trilogy. *Domain* justifies the other two. I don't think any one stands up on its own, but when you put the three together you understand what the whole series was about. It was me saying that we have this system. These rats which were symbolic of the system were created by the very establishment that created nuclear arms, and these mutant rats were bred from that. This system happened to be the government of the day.

I'm not antiright, I'm not antileft, but it is a fact that whatever government's in power have their own shelters. They're all safe when the bomb goes off. They've got their shelters under the Thames Embankment. I thought I might get served a D-notice on *Domain*. I gave away a lot of secrets, I know where most of these places are, but nobody seems to have picked it up, which is disappointing in a way.

But they had their little base where they were going to be safe, all the elite of our society, and yet when our hero, our Mr Everyman – I used to like my heroes to represent me, you, the woman reader, whoever's reading that book; that's why in the past I've rarely described a hero, because I wanted the person reading the book to put themselves in the hero's place – when Mr Everyman got across to this underground shelter and the establishment had been wiped out by a symbolic system, they'd been torn to pieces by the rats themselves. That was the whole irony, the system being eaten by its own creation.

There's another piece in there that not many people seem to have noticed. Culver, our hero, he found the mother rat and it had just given birth and the embryo, fetuses, resembled the human embryo. That was just one of my little twists, I said 'well maybe we didn't evolve from the ape, maybe we evolved from the rats that's why they were so like us'. that's why they were mutating more to what we've become.

BENEATH THE IMAGE

JG: Does horror hold more value than just entertainment?
JH: It has to, but think that any piece of good writing does have more value than its obvious face value. Again, we can get very pompous about this, and I notice the whole horror genre does tend to get this way. We can get very pretentious. So, I've always held back from that.

But I do have to make the point that, yes, on one level it is entertainment, on another level I try to make lots of points about the human condition, society today, often a lot of politics, all sorts of things. There's also quite a bit of humour in my stories, apart from *Sepulchre*, which is about the meanest book I've done.

There are different levels, and you hope the reader is going to catch them. But if they don't it doesn't matter. They've paid their money and they take whatever they want from these stories. It's just satisfying for me as a writer to put these things in, these great ironies. All my books are full of irony. It's satisfying for me to do that, whether it's noticed or not, that doesn't matter. I think most of the reasonable critics see that in the stories, the others just don't want to see it.
JG: Some critics seem to start sharpening their knives even before your new book appears. How do you feel about their comments?
JH: I've always had that. I'm okay with the national press. On the whole, for every bad review I've had I can show you six or seven good ones. So they kind of accept me for what I am, and a lot of them don't even like horror, but they can accept what I do. Even my worst critics in the national press say that I'm a good writer, I tell good stories. But, it's those within the horror genre, they're the guys that don't like me. They hate my success. One of the several things they don't like about me is that I'm not a purist as regards horror; I'll make political statements, I'll write about terrorist activities, I'll write adventure novels.

I don't often go into the fantasy of horror. I bring it in but I like to take the reader along with me and keep it very real until I decide I'm going to go over the top, and that invites them to take the mental leap with me. I'm resented because of that.

The other reason I'm resented is because I don't attend the conventions, and that again is only because I've been too busy. When I've met these guys, most of the guys, I really like them; people like Ramsey Campbell, I really like that

"For every bad review I've had I can show you six or seven good ones"

guy. I actually understand what he does in his books and in his statements about horror. I'm not deliberately locking myself away from that, it's just that I really have been too busy, I don't join clubs and in a way I guess they feel that I'm letting the side down. But, it was only when I started to talk to these people in the horror genre that I realised how hated I was.

FILM AND FAILURE

JG: How do you view the films of *The Rats* and *Survivor*?
JH: I try not to view them. They had nothing to do with me. They just happen to be adapted from my stories.
JG: Loosely . . .
JH: Yeah, very loosely. The film-makers just took them away and filmed them. *Survivor*, I thought I had more say in what went on because I was involved with the production company and saw the first script, but then they sold it to another company who then sold it to another company. So I got lost on the way.

I couldn't believe it. I saw *The Survivor* when I was in Australia on tour and they put it on at this huge cinema in the afternoon. I fell asleep halfway through. I couldn't understand the story. So, yes, it's made me very cautious of films.
JG: Would you want to produce or direct?
JH: No, I wouldn't want to do either of those things because they're too time-consuming, too fraught with other people's opinions, that's why I've always refused to do scripts. Writing books is very pure. It comes from you and there's very little change and I like it. But with scripts there's too many other fingers in the pie, although I've done one for *Haunted*.

But now I'm thinking I'd quite like to get heavily involved. This is the thing I admire about Clive Barker, that we can all moan about the film industry over here and that nothing is happening with our books, and yet Clive comes along and he just does it, he makes it himself. It's great. Maybe later I'll get involved. I always think of Steve [King], though, when he directed his first film. He'd always resisted anything like that. He'd always also said that if he did direct his books for a movie, it would be the most scary horror film yet and unfortunately . . . I haven't seen *Maximum Overdrive*, but has anybody . . . ?
JG: What about the film version of *Shrine*?
JH: Yes, funny story about *Shrine*. This has been in, not production even, but trying to get the finances together for a couple of years now. The guy who's writing the screenplay was a legend in his own lifetime, called Jesse Lasky. He's about 82. He wrote *The Ten Commandments* and *Samson And Delilah* – see, there's this religious content. He was writing the script for *Shrine*. Trouble is, he died a couple of weeks ago.

[Short pause for commiserations and hysteria . . .]
JH: It's still being written and I don't know, we'll just keep our fingers crossed. The producer is David Wickes, who's making the *Jack The Ripper* film with Michael Caine. But again, it's a matter of getting the finance together.

Magic Cottage; there may be a good film of that. The guy who's doing that wrote *The Fly* and the director wants me to be involved. The other one is *Fluke*, which an Italian is doing. It's going to be made, they say, in Philadelphia.
JG: Which of your books would *you* like to see as a film?
JH: *The Fog*. I'd like to personally remake *The Survivor*. I do like that story so much that I think such an opportunity was missed there. *Magic Cottage*, I'd like to see filmed, but then all of them I'd like to see filmed, let's face it.

HAUNTED

JG: What's the story on the TV version of *Haunted*?
JH: That was an ongoing situation that I had very high hopes of and the BBC persuaded me to do it. I didn't want to do it. They were going to make a two-hour TV movie, to be shown on the screen in the States and on television here at Christmas. There was a great buzz about it. Then, unfortunately, politics got involved. The head of drama there was Jonathan Powell and he's been moved upstairs. A new guy came in and I got a phone call just a couple of weeks back from the producer. He was just on the way out the door, not fired but his contract hadn't been renewed. I didn't even get a letter from the BBC, all I got was this phone call from this obviously very disgruntled producer saying 'Jim, we're not doing it'.

I think it's a missed opportunity for the BBC and it's something the public would want, a good ghost story, not overtly horrific, just a nice psychological ghost story. There's a lot of subtleties in there, but there's a lot of subtleties in all my books. Some of them, the horror pervades everything else, so you lose sight of the twists.
JG: There seems to be some sort of plan within the styles of your books which throws the reader off the scent of what you're going to write next. Is there a plan?
JH: That's exactly right. It's just the way I go on. It's not self-conscious of me doing that, but I don't want the reader to know what's coming next. It's not like the *Carry On*, it's not *Carry On Horror*, you know, *Carry On Herbert*. For me to sustain my own interests I've got to try something a little bit new each time.

Sepulchre is the very antithesis of *Magic Cottage*, and it's because having done *Magic Cottage*, having enjoyed it because there's a lot of warmth in there – a lot of humour – and the horror is gradual. With *Sepulchre* I needed to go to the other extreme, really hard, quite horrific and again not as graphic as some people might suppose. There's no warmth in that book at all. The hero, I mean this guy is a wicked man, and he has to be that way to do what he does at the end of the story. The challenge was to use this lesser evil.

The other statement I made was that there are no absolutes, no absolute good, no absolute evil and that is one of the reasons that Kline, this archvillain, fails at the end. He's not absolutely evil.

The last few pages of the book are almost a soliloquy of Kline lying there limbless having this mental conversation with his deity, the Devil, saying 'have I been too weak?'. He couldn't be ultimately evil, he's let his master down, because it was hard work being evil. It's hard work being a saint so it stands to reason that it's going to be hard work being evil. Even Hitler loved his dogs. Nobody's absolutely evil, nobody's absolutely good.

CORRUPTING?

JG: Do people often see you as responsible for putting violence and horror into young minds?
JH: What I'm doing is not really new, it's of this era. Anything less would be bland. I don't do what certain books do nowadays, certain video nasties. I hate video nasties, I find them distasteful, but mostly I find them very boring. I write for my generation and generations after. I couldn't have done what I did ten years before [*The Rats*] because nobody was ready for it. In every one of my stories there's a strong moral tale. So these kids are reading these stories, and yes, they're getting their rocks off reading about this very scary stuff, but probably, subliminally, maybe overtly, they're taking a message from those stories and they're saying good should win throughout.

The cowboy doesn't wear the white hats anymore, that's too unsubtle. For our day and age there's gotta be a little bit more too it. Nobody's perfect.

"I'm resented because I don't attend conventions, and that is only because I've been too busy"

Uzzi

BY BRIAN LUMLEY

Powell. Refer it to Powell.

That could well be the answer. Geoffrey Powell, who cribbed all my work at Oxford where we studied together, and stole my girl, too, and lives with her in that big house which should really be mine, making mine look like a kennel. Yes, I shall refer the matter to him. Big-headed, pompous bastard that he is, in his Harley Street consultancy, still he might be the only one to come up with the right answer. And if he does, certainly it will have been worth his exorbitant fee.

None of which would be necessary if Miles Clayton had gone to Powell in the first place; but he didn't, he came to me. He was overdue for a shave, bleary-eyed, and the smell on his breath was probably whisky. He didn't reek of drink, no, but he'd had a few. On the other hand his clothes were of an expensive cut, his car was new and rather superior to mine, and his wallet when he gave me his card was certainly well-stuffed.

A large, florid man, Miles Clayton smoked fat cigars and dealt in fancy liqueur chocolates which he imported. If this rather brief description of him makes him seem disagreeable or unpleasant, that is not the impression I wish to convey; on the contrary, he is a very 'nice' man. One cannot help one's looks. And of course, in his condition, which was other than unusual . . .

Anyway, this is the story he told me:

I was in Germany on business. The Teutoberger Wald. Been over there for five days, driving myself from venue to venue, and was up in the mountains around Holzminden to visit a small family firm specialising in dark chocolate brandies. I had just got used to driving on the right-hand side of the road – or at least I thought I had – when it happened.

On the outskirts of a tiny village, where the road swept out of miles of pine forest and down into the harbour of a valley saddled between three hills, suddenly I found myself back on the left again! It must have been the absence of other vehicles, the repetitious twisting and twining of the road where it followed the contours through the trees which were almost hypnotic, the sheer loveliness of the scenery all about. Anyway, I started to correct my error immediately; but in the next moment, coming around a bend in a built-up area–

I mean, she was just there! Now I *believe* that by then I was on the right side of the road again – my side, I mean – but having just the moment before corrected myself – I may be a bit confused, d'you see? Whichever, I didn't react fast enough: even as I slammed my brakes on I was into her. *Bump!* She went in the air, banged about on the roofrack, plopped down on the road behind me. By which time I'd just about slewed to a halt.

I'd been well inside the limit – well, just inside it; it hadn't been my fault at all; she'd just appeared there, right the hell in my way! And it had happened right outside the local police station, where as luck would have it an 'Offizier' had just come out of the door. He'd seen the whole thing.

After that things happened very quickly. I suppose I was very nearly in a state of shock. I got out of the car, fell down – I was shaken, you see? – got up again and went where the officer was kneeling beside her. On my way I'd seen the dent in my bonnet, the way the mascot had bent right back, a little blood on the roofrack. But oh my God, there was a great deal more blood on the road, around the crumpled form of the girl!

Her dress at the front was torn, red and wet under her left breast, and blood was pumping from a great laceration in her neck. I thought about her being torn by the roofrack and it made me grind my teeth. She was conscious, but only just.

The officer was a good 'un: cool as a cucumber, efficient as only the Germans can be. "Go inside," he told me. "Hold the doors open for me. I have to move her." And he very gently picked her up. I held the doors for him while he carried her inside the police station, into a room where he laid her down on a bed. Then he did what he could to staunch her wounds. Where her dress was torn I saw a wound which I couldn't believe I – my car – was responsible for. It was round and black in its middle, as if a bite had been taken out of her. I could see ribs in there. Then the officer put a thickly-wadded dressing over it.

"Wait," he told me, "and I'll call an ambulance." Of course he called it a 'Krankenwagen', but I'm quite fluent in German; I'll simply tell it all in English.

Anyway, he left the room and I heard him using a telephone. The girl caught my hand. I sat there

sweating, looking at her, and I saw how young she was, and how pretty. "Oh, my God!" I said. "My *God*!"

She patted my hand, I mean, she *patted* it! "It wasn't your fault," she said. "An accident."

"But . . . but . . . " It was all I could say.

"An accident," she repeated. Her blood had seeped right through the mattress whe. she lay and was dripping on the floor. The young policeman was still on the phone.

"For God's sake hurry up!" I called out to him.

The girl was in a great deal of pain. Her face had twisted up and the dressing had come away from her side again. I pressed it home, gritted my teeth when I saw her grit hers. "God! if there's *anything* I can do –" I said.

"The Devil," she answered me, looking me straight in the eye. "Don't ask it of God. This isn't His work." She was sinking into delirium.

"Listen," I gasped, wringing my hands. "I have money. A great deal. Only hang on, and – "

"No," she said, her voice a whisper. "I can't. This is punishment had forsaken . . . "

"Yes?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter. It's the end of me, and the end of Uzzi."

Uzzi? Her child? A pet cat or dog? "Listen," I grabbed desperately. "While you're recovering, I'll look after Uzzi. I'll – "

She shook her head, but oh so weakly. "No," she forced something of a smile, more of a grimace, onto her face. "I'll not recover. And don't . . . don't worry about . . . about Uzzi."

"God!" I cried again. "Don't die, please don't die. I'll look after Uzzi. I *swear* it!" I hardly knew what I was saying.

"*Swear it?*" Her eyes had shot wide open. She reached out a bloody trembling hand toward my lips, as if to seal them . . . and fell back. Her eyes stayed open. When the policeman came back into the room he closed them and covered her body with a blanket. Covered her face, too . . .

That was the end of it – or should have been.

The ambulance came and took her away. I gave a written statement of what had happened. The policeman had seen the entire thing and corroborated my statement: it hadn't been my fault, no blame at all attached to me. There might be an inquest but I wouldn't be required to attend; the evidence of a police witness would suffice. I found it all too easy, too . . . simple. A girl was dead, and I was being told – quite literally – to drive on, not to concern myself.

"But her family . . . "

"No family. She lived alone. Here, in the village."

"Relations, friends . . . "

He shook his head. "None."

"What? A pretty girl like that? I can't believe – "

"Wait," he said, cutting me short. "Look, she wasn't . . . an innocent. She wasn't . . . a good person."

"What? Do you mean she was a whore? A criminal, perhaps? But what does that matter? I mean – "

"Please!" he said. "I know what you mean. Very well: yes, she was a criminal. And I agree, that doesn't matter at all. But you are not to blame. I doubt if you'll ever hear anything about this again."

I wasn't until I reached my destination later that night that I remembered Uzzi. I'd sworn to take care of him/her, whatever Uzzi was. A pet, I supposed. Ah, well – the Germans are a pretty humane lot, in their way. Doubtless Uzzi would find a new home. In any case, it was out of my hands now. If I didn't feel so guilty, maybe I was even a little relieved that I was out of the affair so lightly.

But I did recall seeing something in that police station that struck me as strange. Well, perhaps not then, but more recently it has taken on certain significance. It was while I was waiting for the ambulance men to take the girl's body away that I noticed a stack of old, browning occurrence books on a shelf behind the duty desk: those great, ledger-like diary things in which the officer on duty at the desk keeps his daily log or record. The books were old, as I've said, and the dates on some of their spines went back as far as the mid-Thirties, before the war.

The spines read: *Polizei Hohstadt*, followed by the specific dates when the books were first taken into use, and the dates when they'd been completed and closed. These particulars were written in capitals, in heavy black ink, on labels glued to the spines. Several of the labels had fallen off, however, and the unfaded spines where they'd been bore a uniform legend: *Polizei Hexenstadt*, and then the dates as before. So, it seemed fairly obvious to me that at some time in the not-too-distant past the town had been renamed.

The reason I make mention of this is very simple to explain: Hexenstadt means 'witch town'. This is a fairly trivial fact which, in the circumstances, I might reasonably be expected to forget. But I haven't been allowed to forget it . . .

The morning after the accident I woke up bathed in stinking sweat – I *thought* it was sweat – following a night of hideous dreams. I couldn't remember what those nightmares were for sure, except I believe they went over, time and time again, the details of the accident and that look on the girl's face as she died, when I swore I'd take care of her Uzzi.

My hosts were the manufacturers of those chocolates I mentioned. God only knows what they'd think of me when I left and they came to tidy up my room. It stank as if a pig had spent the night there – or something worse than a pig. I thought that *I* had made the room smell like that. I threw open the windows, let in the sweet mountain air, and dumped my bed-sheets into a dirty-linen basket. Pillowcases, too. Then I found fresh linen in the drawer and decked the bed, set the room to rights again.

After a shower I felt better; but I must have struggled in the night or been lying in an awkward position or something. My left side ached just under the armpit, causing me to favour that arm and hold it a little tenderly away from my side. But about what I've said with regard to the condition of my bedding:

Please understand, I have always been the most scrupulous of men personally. It's been a habit of mine as long as I can remember to bathe or at least shower every night, and often in the mornings, too. It was quite beyond me to fathom what sort of nightmare could squeeze juices like *those* from a man's pores!

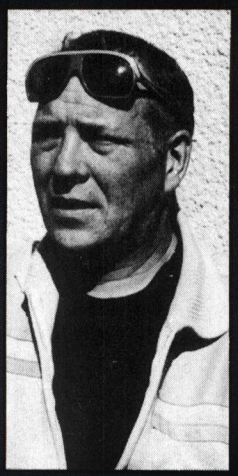
Two days later I was on the car ferry out of Bremerhaven and so returned home. And no repetition of those terrible dreams until I found myself back at work here in London. Then, just a week ago –

The same thing again, but this time in earnest! And it has steadily progressed, worsened, until finally I've found myself driven to come and see you. Not that I've told you all of it – not yet – nor even the half of it. But God it's so weird, so utterly horrible that–

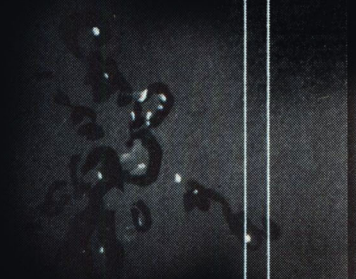
– that the fact is, I think I'm losing my mind!

I've told you about the 'sweat', which I thought was mine. Well, and at first I *did* think it – what else was I supposed to think? But as it got worse I knew it couldn't be mine. No man – nor any living, breathing, healthy creature of God's sweet earth – could possibly exist and have poison like that in him! Well, perhaps there are creatures that could: the octopus, maybe. Slugs and snails. But nothing remotely human.

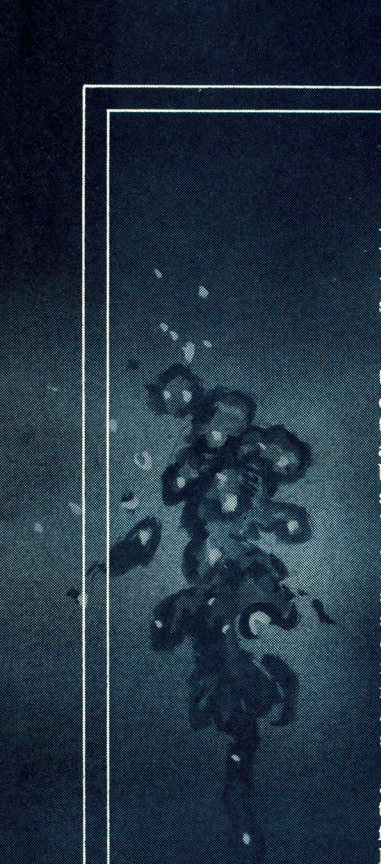
My dreams began to change, take on a new and more desperately frightening form. So simple, and yet so terrifying. Part of it was the sensation of having somebody or something else in the bed with me, a living person or being that snuggled to me as if for



BRIAN LUMLEY is the prolific author of *Necroscope*, *Demogorgon* and *The Burrowers Beneath*. His work includes some brilliant extensions of HP Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos and indeed he was one of the last writers to be discovered by August Derleth. His latest blockbuster, *Wamphyri*, is the sequel to *Necroscope*, and is due out soon from Grafton in paperback.



It was beyond me what kind of nightmare could squeeze juices like those from a man's pores!



warmth and fastened to my flesh like a suckling child. With a child's greed, yes – but without its love or vulnerability. And most certainly far larger and stronger than any child. That was part of it.

The other part was . . .

You know how a cat purrs? Well, something in those nightmares of mine purred. But not like a cat. It did express a sort of satisfaction, contentedness, but that was where the similarity ended. Nor was it truly a purring; no, it was more the wet, frothy, huskily breathed repetition of a single word, spoken slaveringly over and over again: *Uzzi – Uzzi – Uzzi*!

Finally, Monday morning just four days ago, the thing reached its peak. Or perhaps I should say it reached *a* peak. The dream was the same as before: a sort of lulling, warm embrace, a hypnotic drifting on some slimy ocean whose tides were irresistible. And deep inside a gnawing horror of some monstrous, impossible thing, which drifted with me and sang to me its hypnotic lullaby, sang to me to numb my mind, anaesthetise me to the pain of its damned, leech-like sucking!

But when I woke up . . . the nightmare hadn't gone away. And it was no longer any use kidding myself that this . . . this *slime* was sweat. No, for it was in fact slime: a sticky film of the filthy stuff that clung like clear, stinking jelly to my bedsheets – *and to me*, all down my left side. What's more, there was a deep slimy depression in the bed to the left of where I'd slept: a wet, oval-shaped indentation as if a great cracked egg had lain there, all through the night, seeping its fluids into my bed. And worse than any of this, I could no longer fool myself but had to admit that I was in pain; the left-hand side of my ribcage hurt like hell and felt . . . totally wrong.

I showered, carefully examined myself in a full-length mirror – and went immediately to see my doctor. Oh, yes, for I'd seen something like this before, except that then I'd thought my car was to blame. I also knew that it could get much worse, and I certainly wasn't going to wait around until it – whatever 'it' was – had eaten right through to my ribs!

The doctor took samples – blood, urine, tissue – and said he'd send them for testing. But he couldn't tell me what was wrong with me, not right there and then. In fact I got the impression he was baffled. He thought it was a purely physical thing, do you see? And I wasn't about to tell him what I *thought* was wrong with me. How could I? How could I explain to him what I made of the large, darkly indented weeping sore under my armpit? If I'd told him that, he'd think it was my mind that needed mending. And perhaps it is, which is why I've come to see you . . .

So that was four days ago. Since when–

It seemed to me that I must sort out my priorities, take some positive course of action. The first thing I must do was catch this beast 'in the act', as it were. At the doctor's (on the pretext that I had a lot of night studying to do), I'd got hold of some tablets to help me keep awake. That night I drank a lot of strong, black coffee, put a powerful electric torch under my pillow, finally took two of the tablets before going to bed. I tried to look at a book, but after reading the same paragraph five or six times gave it up as a bad job. And at last, at about 1:30 am, I turned out the light. I wanted it to come, do you see?

I tried to stay awake, but . . .

. . . The luminous hands on my alarm clock stood at 2:55 . . . I was adrift on that alien sea again, but striving against the lure of its tides . . . and at the same time I was in pain . . . and I knew that something bulky, clammy-cold and evil was glued to my side, droning its hideous song to keep me asleep:

Uzzi – Uzzi – Uzzi!

Don't ask me how I kept from crying out. Have you *tried* to cry out, when you're only half awake? Maybe I couldn't. It was like a dream when you want to run but don't seem to have any any legs, when you want to scream and haven't got a voice. But as I struggled up from sleep, so my sense of reality got stronger, and with it my feeling of freezing horror!

I was lying on my back and my left arm was draped loosely over the – torso? – of some slimy, oozing, corrugated oval shape which was pressing itself to me like a limpet. Its stench was that of the tomb, or perhaps some long-dead seabed heaved up to the surface, or a combination of the two with the thick, cloying reek of crushed toadstools thrown in for good measure. And in another moment I was conscious and my mind had switched itself on, and I knew that this was one hundred per cent reality. No longer a dream but the real, the *very* real thing. This was Uzzi!

Paralysed? Very nearly. But somehow I managed to work my hand up under the pillow, find my torch and draw it out – and press its rubber stud. And I shone the beam full on the sick-gleaming unnatural *Thing* that lay there in the bed with me, sucking on my side.

Should I say it was a monstrous slug? A huge octopus which was all body-sack, with short feelers or tentacles fringed about its suctorial mouth? How to describe a thing which is indescribable, except to a madman? But I do recall that it had eyes. Where placed? Don't ask me, it's something I mustn't dwell on. It's difficult to tell it without picturing it, which is what I mustn't do. If I say they tipped *three* of its stubby tentacles . . . but, God! . . . they were very nearly *human* eyes. And evil leered out of them like the Devil himself through the gates of Hell!

It was Uzzi, the dead German witch's familiar, and it *was* something that the Devil had sent to her out of Hell. Except that now Uzzi was mine. And I was Uzzi's!

All of these thoughts, this knowledge, coming to me in a single instant, from one brief glimpse – the merest blaze of light from my torch – for in the next moment the horror was gone. Just like that: gone! Disappeared from my bed, the room, the house. But not gone far, never gone far; and as usual, it had left its stink and its slime behind . . .

I staggered through the house putting on all the lights, sobbing, holding my side, loathing Uzzi, myself, this whole nightmare existence in a universe we so wrongly imagine to be neat, tidy and ordered. And then I turned my fire up and sat there before it all through the rest of the night, drinking whisky, burning in my fever of terror and at the same time shuddering right through to my soul.

Since when I haven't slept at all, and I suppose it's starting to show.

Well, that's my story – it's why I've come to see you, Dr Charles. Now tell me: am I mad?

How to describe a thing which is indescribable, except to a madman? But I do recall that it had eyes.

I had been so wrapped up in Miles Clayton's story that it took a little time to sink in that he was finished. I shook myself, asked if I might see his wound.

He took off his jacket, opened his shirt and showed me, explaining: "Of course, it's had three nights to heal a little. I haven't slept, haven't let myself be alone in the dark for a minute."

I looked at it: the bruising, the central, sore area itself. I simply looked at it, didn't touch it, and I came to my conclusions. As Clayton did up his shirt and put his jacket on again, I said: "Do you follow your stars, Miles?"

"Eh?" I'd taken him by surprise. "Astrology, d'you mean? Oh, yes – I'm a Pisces." He frowned. "A good year ahead, allegedly."

I shrugged. "Maybe, and maybe not. First I should get that cleared up, if I were you. And then I'd say you probably have a good many good years ahead."

"Oh?" He looked doubtful, but interested.

I nodded. "Tell me, have you ever had any psychic

experiences?"

"Ghosts?" He shook his head. "I'm not saying I don't believe, mind you. No, for I'm open-minded on such things. But Uzzi is the first time anything like this has–" He paused, looked puzzled. "You changed the subject. I thought you were going to give me your opinion on my wound?"

"It might very well add up to the same thing," I told him. "In fact, I'd be willing to bet you don't walk under ladders, either."

"You'd win your bet," he answered, looking tiredly mystified. "Why tempt fate? But what're you getting at?"

"Three possibilities with that trouble of yours," I told him. "Two of them purely physical. But first tell me something: did you ever have anything like this bruise – this damage, let's call it – before the accident in Germany?"

"Never so much as a pimple," he answered. "Now tell me what's on your mind."

"Ah!" I smiled. "But it's more what's on *your* mind, Miles. Three things, I said – three possibilities. But first let me say this: I for one *don't* believe in ghosts. I don't read my star forecasts and I'm not especially careful about ladders, or black cats crossing my path. In other words, I don't let that sort of thing influence me. But they do influence you. For all that you're a hard-headed businessman, you're susceptible to extramundane suggestions."

He inclined his head. "Extramundane?"

"Not of this world," I told him. "You're a believer . . . in things. Do you believe in God, too?"

He looked a little indignant. "Don't you?"

"Frankly, no. Nor do I believe in the Devil. Good and evil are real, certainly: evidence of both is all around. But their *origin* lies in the mind. In the minds of men!"

We both sat down. "Go on," he said.

I looked into his hollow, red-rimmed eyes and smiled. "Right! First the wound in your side. While you're waiting for that doctor of yours to spark, I'd get a second opinion. Go to a specialist – you can afford it. Now, I'm obviously not that sort of doctor, but having looked at this damage of yours three things spring immediately to mind. One: it's a cancer. A skin cancer, nasty but not fatal, and you should get it seen to at once. Two: it's a nest of rodent ulcers, which–"

"What?" He leaned forward. "What sort of ulcers?"

"Rodent." I repeated. "Burrowing. Gradually working their way under the skin, and destroying tissue. I've an old friend who gets them, and he also gets treatment for them. Radiation, laser – there are several types of treatment. Every now and then he breaks out, but in a matter of weeks they have it under control. That wound of yours has precisely the same sort of dark indentations around its circumference, and–"

"Teethmarks," he cut me off. "That's where Uzzi clamps himself onto me – if it is a 'he'." He sighed wearily. "All right, you've made two guesses – wrong ones, I'm afraid – so what's the third?"

I shrugged, said: "It's psychosomatic – and that *is* something I know about. And if all else fails, it's the only possible diagnosis."

"Psychosomatic?" He curled his lip, then immediately apologised. "I'm sorry. But does that mean what I think it means?"

"A mental illness," I answered. "Of a sort."

"Go on."

"Mind and body are linked, Miles," I continued. "It's not just a one-way deal – each controls the other. The problem is your guilt. You're doing this to yourself."

His interest at once turned to anger. Which was what I'd more than half expected. "Am I really paying you for this?" he said. "You mean you think

Good and evil are real, certainly. But their origin lies in the mind. In the minds of men!

I'm eating my own side away? That everything that's happening to me is generated up here?" He tapped his head. "And does that explain why my bed's a swamp every time I sleep in it, after Uzzi's visited me? I mean, are you really telling me that I'm–"

"Insane? But that's what you came to find out, isn't it?"

He closed his grimacing mouth, slumped down in his chair. "And am I?"

"No," I shook my head. "You just feel guilty, that's all, and you feel you have a great debt to pay."

His eyes opened wide and I knew he was hooked. And I believed I knew how to cure him. "A debt?" he said. "To the girl, d'you mean?"

I nodded. "To her, and to Uzzi."

He shrank down again. "You're forgetting something," he said. "I've *seen* Uzzi!"

"But only in the night, in the dark, when you're half asleep and your conscience is most vulnerable. Only wake up, turn on the light, and – no Uzzi. It's a figment of darkness, of the night, *of your mind*!"

"Guilt . . . " he said. But there was hope in his eyes.

"Oh, yes!" I drove my point home. "Guilty, because you can't be sure even now that you were driving on the correct side of the road. Guilty – because you'd let your attention wander. Guilty, of course, for you drove your car into that poor girl and broke her body. Guilty, because there was nothing you could do to save her – and more especially guilty, in your own mind, because you got off scot-free. But worst of all: guilty because you couldn't even honour her last request, that you look after Uzzi! And so your mind's paying your debt for you, and in so doing is slowly destroying your body – and must soon destroy itself, too. Except we won't allow that. Psychosomatic, as I said."

He put his face in his hands and sobbed, real tears that dripped from between his fingers. "God, yes." his muffled, racked voice came to me. "God, I *am* guilty!"

"But you're not," I told him, "and there is a cure."

He looked up and his face was pink jelly. "A . . . a cure?"

"Of course. To begin with, you weren't to blame for the accident. Now, I know you've *said* you weren't to blame, but you have to really believe it. After all, that young German policeman *saw* the whole thing, didn't he? So that's all it was, an accident. There are thousands just like it, all over the world, every day. As for Uzzi: you were probably right. A pet kitten, or maybe a dog. But Germany's a civilised country. Uzzi will be taken care of."

He stood up, stumbled to my desk, almost fell across it to grasp my hand. "Lord, if only I could be sure of that!"

"Listen," I said. "You can be sure. It was that promise you made, that's all, when you swore you'd look after him. That's what made the connection in your mind. A wrong connection. And now all we have to do is break it."

"And you can do that?" He was crushing my hand. I gently freed myself, said:

"Of course. For I have no belief in such things. Now Miles, I want you to try very hard and remember everything we've talked about. You'll very soon see how it all makes sense. And I want you to believe that you're going to be OK. As for Uzzi: you can forget about that. You see, I'll take care of Uzzi. I swear I will!"

That was a week ago. I've tried to contact Clayton but he's in Switzerland. I understand they make fabulous chocolates there. My God, chocolates!

My bedroom's a mess and there's this horrible sore in the middle of my chest and my wife has run away; where I don't know.

I woke up this morning at 4:00 am, and Uzzi was lying on me like some obscene nightmare cover, with those . . . appendages sliming on my face.

That's why I've made up a story – similar to Clayton's except mine is a false one, about a gypsy curse – which I plan to tell to that fat greasy bastard Powell. Yes, I'll refer my case to him, and then I'll take a nice long trip abroad somewhere. No guilt will attach to me, for I don't believe in such. And I know that Powell doesn't either. After all, he has my office, the girl I should have, the house I should rightly occupy. So why shouldn't he have this, too?

It couldn't happen to a nicer fellow.

Uzzi . . . Uzzi . . . Uzzi . . .

BABEL'S CHILD

Going from dole queue to champion of multimedia horror, Clive Barker was no child prodigy. But in the first half of a two-part interview Clive admits to Mark Salisbury that he's always had a wild imagination

Award-winning writer, artist and film-maker, Clive Barker is the complete artist, a true Renaissance man. Born in Liverpool in 1952, Barker graduated from the city's university with a BA degree in philosophy and English literature. He swiftly moved into the field of fringe theatre, forming his own group – The Dog Company – to

"Somebody at Gollancz sent the first set of short stories back saying they were the most disgusting things she had ever read."

produce his own plays, which included *The Secret Life Of Cartoons*, *Subtle Bodies*, *Frankenstein In Love* and *The History Of The Devil*.

In 1984 he made his literary debut with the first three volumes of his ground-breaking *Books Of Blood*, followed by a powerful first novel, *The Damnation Game*, three further volumes of the *Books Of Blood* and two screenplays, *Underworld* and *Rawhead Rex*, before making his cinematic directoral debut with *Hellraiser*.

His second novel, *Weaveworld*, has its paperback launch this month (you could win a signed copy in the competition on page 45) and it's followed by the premiere of *Hellraiser II: Hellbound* in the autumn, various films in development and a collection of short stories called *Cabal* due out in January. He's not resting on his laurels and he's still only 35.

DISCIPLINE

MS: What influenced you as a child?
CB: The major influences, I think, are also personal influences rather than literary or cinematic influences. When you actually put in scale of importance, or measure off, the significance of a particular teacher, or a particular uncle, or a particular experience, even as against the literary influences or the movies you saw, I think finally the personal influences are the more significant.

Yes, Bradbury and Poe and certain movies – maybe Disney movies when I was a little kid, and later on Hammer movies and Universal pictures – influenced me in no inconsiderable fashion. Equally I think it's important to say that I probably wouldn't have been drawn to those things as strongly had I not had other influences upon me. An English teacher of mine, called Norman Russell, was enormously influential in the sense that he celebrated my imagination in a way that other teachers didn't. He sort of said 'You have a very special imagination and you should learn to nurture it', which is something I had never really thought of doing – the nurturing that is. That was a significant influence.

My schooldays, generally, were influential in the sense there were many things I kicked very hard against, and those are as influential as the things that push you from behind onwards. And certainly some major authoritarians in my school – which was still a beating school when I first came to it, and still had a very old-fashioned, almost public-school, notion of prefects and hierarchies and badges and houses and all that shit! – that was influential in a very negative way as well, because it gave me a sense of things that I hated and still do hate. And if there's an anti-authoritarian streak in my fiction, which there clearly is – policemen, judges, the upper echelons are very often discovered to have feet of clay – it's because I discovered quite early on in my life that they did. So that's an influence, certainly.

My parents inevitably; in part because their imaginations were pretty much stylised by the the world into which they were born, the time into which they were born, and their decision to actually raise children as opposed to go out and make pictures; as my father was a very fine artist. Or in my mother's case, writer, because she has great imaginative skill. Neither of them saw those ambitions through to fulfilment and I think that was also part of the influential texture of my childhood.

All of those things – teachers, the system that had to be bucked, genetics – influenced, very strongly, my sense that imaginative fiction, or imaginative movies, or imaginative paintings were things, even though they might be denigrated, and still are hugely denigrated, were, somehow or other, the field in which I was going to work. That, quite early on, at age 11 or 12, shaped the kind of fiction that I was really trying to make in my school compositions, or the kind of drawings I was trying to make in my art class, and it shaped, very much, my own internal strengths.

I never was a very pragmatic man. I might have been had I not decided at 11 that maths, biology and physics were a waste of time and that I should really pursue, with major gusto, the arts. I did that and basically agreed with myself that I would not emphasise, in my endeavours, the sciences. I felt very much, in my early 20s, a need to catch up with that, because if you're writing, you need a kind of breadth. Often I've felt the need to support my fiction, support the narrative, with the kind of detail about geography or physics or biology which I was sleeping through at the age of 12. [Laughs.] So therefore I've gone back to a kind of re-education, self-education.
MS: There wasn't one single moment or event which start it all off?
CB: Biographies will try and insist that there is, but I honestly don't think there is. I don't think the human mind works that way, I don't think the imagination works that way. I think what happens is there is a slow accrual of realisations, some of which are personal, some of which are academic; but it builds. I don't think there's a movie moment in which somebody clicks their fingers and a light turns on above their heads and they say 'Gee! You know I've always wanted to be a writer!'. That certainly wasn't my experience.

FANTASIST

MS: What attracted you to the horror and fantasy genres?
CB: I'm attracted to all kinds of imaginative fiction . . . no I should say imaginative art because that would be true of my taste in painting – I'm very attracted to situations in which the imagination is allowed full range; the liberation of the imagination. And some of that will be defined as horror fiction, some of it will be defined as fantasy fiction, some of it will be defined as fantasy fiction, some of it my be defined as science fiction.

I'm not sure it matters. Certainly it doesn't matter to me personally. And having just experienced the success of a book – *Weaveworld* – which broke my own category in the sense that I'd come in as a horror writer and was not writing fantasy, and it turned out to be – has turned out to be so far – my most successful book, I suspect that it matters less to the audience than we think it does.

If an author has got sufficient profile, sufficient identity, then the chances are that the reader will follow him. I don't know whether my readers would follow me into cowboy novels. I suspect maybe they'd have more problem with that; I wouldn't follow myself into cowboy novels. [Laughs.] But into other areas of imaginative fiction, I think, yes, they will follow, and I think the reason people were reading the material in the first place was not simply because it was visceral but because there were imaginative elements which have carried over into the fantasy fiction and will carry over into any other area that I write; whether it be erotic fiction or science fiction or whatever else, it will be the imaginative thrust; the imaginative enthusiasm is a constant.

I want simply to be known as a writer of the imagination and it becomes an adventure to find new ways to express that imagination and worlds, not so much to conquer as chronicle.
MS: Looking back, now that you're a success, how do you see the eight years you spent writing plays while on the dole?
CB: When I first published I thought 'Shit! I should have done this earlier. Why did I spend so much time working in fringe theatre when I really should have got off my arse earlier?'. Now I think that perception was wrong. Now I think what happened in that

period was that I got very certain of what I wanted to do, very focused on what I wanted to do, which meant when the *Books Of Blood* came out, with no fiction published anywhere else before in magazine form or anything, it was a coup. It wasn't planned to be a coup. Maybe my editors at Sphere knew that it would be, I certainly wasn't aware it would. But it turned out to be a more definitive statement than I think I realised it was, and I think that was a direct consequence of my having spent a lot of time working doing stuff like *Frankenstein In Love*, *The History Of The Devil*, *The Secret Life Of Cartoons*, pieces which in very different kinds of ways mapped out the kind of territory that I'm now beginning, in a different medium, to examine and explore.

I spent a lot of time working through the processes of my imagination. Now, in hindsight, I think they were very useful years, and besides there are 11 full-length plays and hundreds of drawings and a whole network of contacts and knowledge which has stood me in great stead where the movies are concerned. I don't think I could have directed *Hellraiser* if I hadn't had a lot of time directing in the theatre. But, maybe more significantly, the whole sense that my sensibility was shaped during those years and, therefore, spewed onto the page pretty much finished when it did.

FIRST BLOOD

MS: Were the *Books Of Blood* the first fiction you had written?
CB: Effectively. There were a few pieces which I have looked at again and which one day I might work up into something. But what happened was, after three years spent studying philosophy and English literature, just dissecting the word on the page at university, my system revolted at the idea of doing what I thought, at the age of 11, I was going to do; and that is to write. I mean, something in me went 'Oh, my God!'; I was up to here with academe. I am not a good reviewer, I am not a good analyst, certainly not a good self-analyst. Any observations I have about the field and the way that it works, and the way that it might work in the future, are essentially rooted in my own perceptions; where I am in the field and so on. I don't have a useful or illuminating overview, so in a sense academe – which is about analysis and overviews and the grand tradition and analysing influences – was, for me, the equivalent of sticking fingers down my throat.

I don't have huge theories about what I do, and don't even look to being lauded down the ages, simply get on and do what I do, and if it works for people . . . now that's great. And obviously I hope it works for posterity, but I sure as shit can't plant that. All I can do is just get on with the day-to-day business of writing.
MS: So you just wrote the first set of short stories, sent them to your agent and got published?
CB: That's pretty much how it happened. My agent sent them to [Victor] Gollancz first and somebody at Gollancz sent them back saying they were the most disgusting things she had ever read, and we sent them to Sphere. There were maybe five short stories at that point, and Sphere said 'We'll publish anything else', and I said 'That's all there are at the moment, but I can work on the rest'. And I got other notions and put together the rest of the material, so eventually I could get 15 or maybe 16 short stories in the first three volumes.

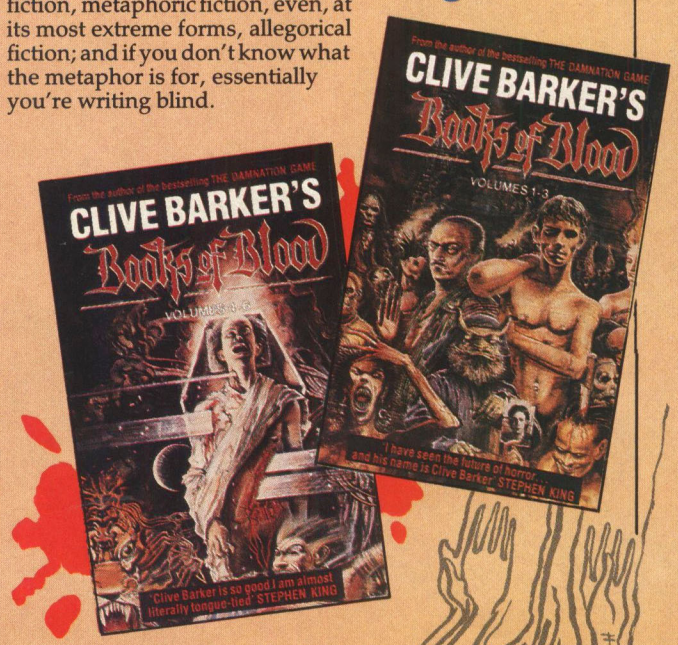
DRAWING ON THE MIND

MS: You once admitted that the short-story form suits your low attention span; does that mean we will be seeing some more?
CB: Yes it does. It's not so much a short attention span in the sense that *Weaveworld* is a bit-novel. Some ideas have short attention spans, they have a place to go and they finish when 30 pages are over. *Weaveworld* was an idea which was rewarded with a further extended creative effort on my part. But an idea like *Ramhead Rex* or *The Age Of Desire*, these are stories which have a natural length of 25 pages. They are not ideas which philosophically or narratively would particularly merit or reward extended play.

I'm so very critical of the tendency to write very big novels with very small ideas, which I think is so much the thing at the moment, that I'm always trying, wherever I can, to match my subject to my form. I've just done *Cabal*, and *Cabal* is a short novel; I mean it will be probably 210 pages. I could have certainly made it into a much much bigger novel – whether it would have been all the better for that I think is a moot point. I think, probably, it's better short and sharp.
MS: Do your ideas still spring from your drawings?
CB: Yes all the time, because it's an association of image and idea. Images mean things and if they linger in your brain for 24 hours or 48 hours, the ideas behind them, the root notion, will usually come clear. If it doesn't, as sometimes happens, I'll note the idea down – very often in drawing form – and then wait until what the idea means comes clear. And sometimes that will take a fuck of a long time. There are some stories I've waited years and years and years to get a sense of what I meant. I don't like to start stories without knowing what the subtext is; having discovered the subtext, you can bury it quite deeply as a puzzle for the reader. But I think it's essential in the first instance to know yourself what you're writing about.

I read a lot of fantastic fiction and I think 'God, this idea is so good, but the writer hasn't taken it to its limit'. Hasn't taken it to its limit because he or she doesn't quite know what the idea signifies. After all, fantastic fiction is symbolic fiction, metaphoric fiction, even, at its most extreme forms, allegorical fiction; and if you don't know what the metaphor is for, essentially you're writing blind.

"I'm very attracted to situations in which the imagination is allowed full range"



It's a literary adventure in which you're striving all the time to press the reader's imagination, as you are pressing your own imagination, to places it hasn't been before. And one of the greatest spurs to that, in me, is to push what the metaphor means. It's really a question of knowing finally where you're coming from.

There are lots of moments in my fiction in which characters confront the problem of belief, confront the problem of the imaginative act, confront the problem of what it is to dream and what it is to live with the consequences of the dream. Those are the questions I suppose all artists are asking all the time. I think maybe fantastical writers have reason to ask that question more loudly, because, after all, we are inventing almost from nothing.

Next issue: Clive Barker tells of *Hellraiser II: Hellbound*, his Film Futures production company and his newest novels.

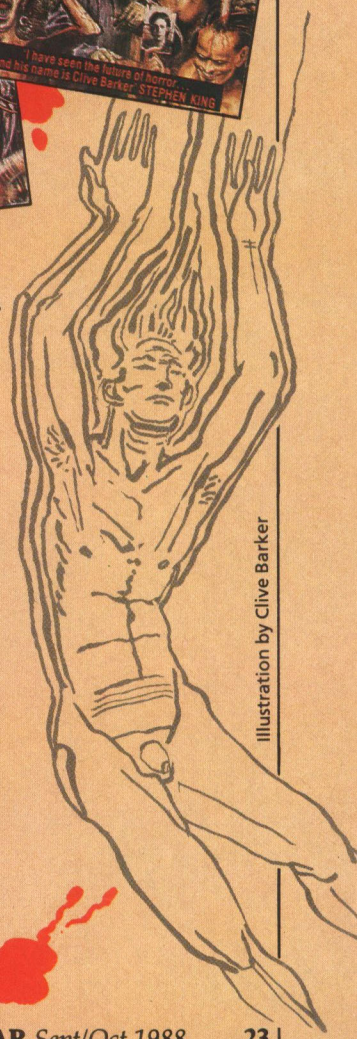


Illustration by Clive Barker

DEAD

With THE BELIEVERS, RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD PART II and THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW, Voodoo and its zombie slaves are once again rampaging through British cinemas. Philip Nutman digs up the grave dirt and proves that for clichés there really is life after death

Voodoo. The word has sinister connotations and conjures up visions of orgies, human sacrifices and zombies: 'the walking dead'. As used by the movies, the West Indian religion, which is still practised primarily in Haiti, has been presented as a form of black magic when it's really a pantheistic religion containing both good and evil.

There's a line in the book *The Serpent And The Rainbow* by ethnobiologist Wade Davis – which is the basis of the new Wes Craven film of the same title – which illustrates this: 'Haiti will teach you Good and Evil are one. We never confuse them, nor do we keep them apart'.

A religion of many gods, Voodoo is a mixture of African tribal cults, Christianity and a smattering of classical and Egyptian mythology. It is, according to Davis 'a very healthy religion'. For the people of Haiti, Voodoo is a reality as Davis explained to **FEAR**'s Stanley Wiater in a recent interview for *Twilight Zone* magazine: 'This religion – this whole way of life, between the spirit realm and the material realm – *works* for them'.

Voodoo and zombies first captured the imagination of cinema audiences when the Halperin brothers made *White Zombie*, starring Bela Lugosi, in 1932. The film made the word 'zombie' popular and laid ground rules for many movies which were to follow.

The idea of the zombie has long been a horror archetype, but over the last decade has moved away from its religious roots through George A Romero's Living Dead trilogy and the attendant Italian rip-offs that followed in their wake. These days you don't have to go to the West Indies to encounter shambling, reanimated corpses – they are here, they are now, they are, in the words of Billy Idol, 'the dead next door'. They could, in fact, be all of us.

In the past year Voodoo has made a cinematic comeback. Alan Parker's *Angel Heart*, John Schlesinger's *The Believers* and Wes Craven's *The Serpent And The Rainbow* all deal with it to some degree – *The Believers*, however, is about a similar magical system called Santeria. Of the three, *Serpent* is one of the few films to look seriously at Voodoo, zombies and their origins.

THE LIGHT AND THE DARK

Like early Christianity, Voodoo developed and was practised clandestinely for fear of persecution. American occultist and anthropologist William Seabrook was one of the first white men to investigate the religion in practical terms. In his book *The Magic Island* he describes the gods. There is Damballa Wedo, the great serpent god who almost certainly had his ancestry in Africa before the days of slavery. Papa Legba is guardian of death and the unknown, and Ogoun Badagaris is 'the bloody warrior'. At the same time Voodooists worship Brother Jesus and the Virgin Mary, renamed as Maitresse Ezilee. The placing of the Christian cross on the altar of a Voodoo place of worship, a *houmfordt*, is not meant to be blasphemous but displays the pantheism of the cult.

On the dark side is the *culte des mortes* – the cult of the dead. No human sacrifice is involved, but the cult is necromantic and uses the dead for fortune-telling. There are similarities with western Spiritualism involving trance-like states and conversation with recently deceased family members.

In the *culte des mortes*, Papa Nebo is the father of death, but Baron Samedi is the spirit of the graveyards and zombies, a grotesque scarecrow figure who is usually represented by a plain wooden cross which wears on its arms an old-fashioned tailcoat and is crowned by a top-hat. If the image seems familiar it should be – the James Bond film *Live And Let Die* used Voodoo as its background and several religious motifs to some effect, the most notable of which was Baron Samedi, who appeared in a handful of scenes.

OR ALIVE?

REVOLTING PLAGUES

Of the numerous motion pictures which have dealt with the subject in one form or another, only two are well known: Val Lewton's classic *I Walked With A Zombie* (1943), and Hammer's *Plague Of The Zombies* (1965), both of which incorporate classic story elements from *White Zombie*.

A slow, creaky old film, considered a gem of a Thirties creature-feature in some quarters, but mediocre at best, *White Zombie* took much of its narrative from Seabrook's *Magic Island* in an attempt to give the story some authenticity. But for obvious reasons it ignored the positive side of Voodoo to concentrate on the zombies and make the most of Lugosi's character, Murder Legendre – subtlety was not the screenwriter's strong point – master of the walking dead. From our perspective the film is leaden and predictable but it was the first of its kind.

In 1936 the Halperins – producer Edward and brother Victor who directed *White Zombie* – made the awful *Revolt Of The Zombies*, starring Dean Jagger. It was a typical potboiler of the time. The story starts during the last days of World War I, with a company of zombie soldiers attacking the enemy. Basically, the story revolves around a formula which creates these walking dead and various characters are chasing after its secret.

Zombies became part and parcel of wartime cinema fare in the number of mediocre, often simple-minded, productions which used genre elements as hooks on which film makers could hang domestic propaganda. Monogram Pictures churned out three such works: *King Of The Zombies*, *Revenge Of The Zombies* and *Voodoo Man* – the latter directed by William Beaudine and starring Bela Lugosi and George Zucco, which was the best of a poor crop. Of the period, only Paramount's *The Ghost Breakers* (1940) and Lewton's *I Walked With A Zombie* stand up to today's standards.

King Of The Zombies, however, is worth a brief look at in terms of B-movie formulae. The story concerns three men who are forced to land their light aircraft on a remote Carribean island where they meet Dr Miklos Sangre and his family, apparently refugees from Austria. The doctor's wife seems to be in a hypnotic trance and the island is mainly populated by zombies controlled by Tahama, the old cook. Sangre denies the existence of the walking dead, there is the usual love interest, and the doctor turns out to be an Axis agent who is holding an American admiral captive with the intention of transferring information from his mind into that of his wife. An absurd story for sure, one that was not helped by uneven direction and negligible production values.

ZOMBIE ANTICS

If *King Of The Zombies* was a new low-point for movies dealing with the living dead, at least *Voodoo Man* was more serious. Lugosi played physician Robert Marlowe who is searching for a woman with the mental abilities to revive his wife. The plot revolves around the disappearance of several girls, with Marlowe's Voodoo rites turning them into zombies when the mental transference fails. Naturally, the good guys save the day and Marlowe is killed. John Carradine played a small part as Job, keeper of the zombies. Ho hum.

The Ghost Breakers was a Bob Hope/Paulette Goddard vehicle directed by George Marshall. Hope ends up on a Carribean island with Goddard, who has inherited a crumbling old castle. Based on a stage play, the film was designed as an opportunity to combine Hope's comic antics with the haunted house scenario, and although much of the picture is a speedy fast-paced farce, Marshall created some creepy moments with atmospheric sets, the best sequence being when the leads are chased by a zombie.

RKO's *I Walked With A Zombie* (directed by Jacques Tourneur) is one of the most effective films dealing with Voodoo and is deservedly a classic. Its producer Val Lewton was originally a studio story editor who was promoted to producer with the superb *Cat People* (1942). Lewton's mode of film-making, as displayed in *Cat People*, was to create stylish, atmospheric low-budget horror movies which worked through suggestion and imagination rather than relying on monster suits and bad makeup jobs. Budgets were small but his intelligence, coupled with the crews he employed, allowed the films to eschew their financial limitations, with a strong emphasis on carefully structured stories and dynamic visuals.

Scripted by genre veteran Curt Siodmak and Ardel Wray, *I Walked With A Zombie* was loosely based on Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. The story begins with nurse Betsy Conell – Francis Dee – accepting employment on the island of San Sebastian in the Carribean. She's to take care of the invalid wife of plantation owner Paul Holland – Tom Conway. The island is a gloomy place of heavy atmosphere with mournful natives and grim reminders of their former days of slavery, a situation not lightened by Holland's comments about death and decay shadowing his home.

Also at the plantation are Paul's half-brother Wesley – James Ellison – their mother, and Paul's wife, Jessica – Christine Gordon – whom Betsy realises is mentally ill. Dr. Maxwell – James Bell – the local physician, unnerves Betsy by referring to Jessica as a 'beautiful zombie', and from this point on

Mould for the living dead to come – *I Walked With A Zombie*

Lewton increases the doom-laden atmosphere with the presence of the mysterious Mrs Rand, the mother, who – it later transpires – is actually the Voodoo high priestess.

The crux of the story comes from Jessica's involvement with Wesley. At one stage they were planning to run away together, and as a result the jealous Mrs Rand placed a curse on her daughter-in-law. The film ends with Wesley carrying the zombified Jessica into the sea with him to drown, the pervasive sense

"I Walked With A Zombie is one of the most effective films, deservedly a classic"

of tragedy which cloaks the island claiming the lives of the tragic lovers.

LIGHT AND DARK

One of *I Walked With A Zombie*'s greatest strengths is its elegant visual style; another is its structure, which critic Joel E Siegel describes as 'fragmented, mosaic-like . . . a series of tiny, precise vignettes which do not so much tell the story as sketch in its borders and possibilities'. It's a highly poetic film, superbly realised by director Tourneur and cinematographer J Roy Hunt.

Two sequences are particularly memorable. The first of these is early in the film when Betsy explores the house at night to investigate a noise. Tourneur plays with the viewer's expectations through clever use of light and shadow, hinting at things unseen. The second occurs when Betsy takes Jessica through the cane fields at night to the Voodoo temple. Seldom has wind and darkness been used to such effect; the suspense is riveting as the women move through the rustling, gloomy fields to encounter the strange, imposing figure of Carrefour – Darby Jones – the zombie guardian of the temple. For these reasons alone the movie is a must-see.

Very little happened with zombie films during the next decade until the end of the Fifties when *Voodoo Island* and *Zombies Of Mora-Tau* were released. Again, neither were exceptional and *Voodoo Island* wasted the talents of Boris Karloff, but the latter film was the first to use the concept of groups of walking dead moving menacingly around with the dark circles-under-their-eyes look which Hammer was to take further with *Plague Of Zombie* in 1965.

This Hammer movie has stood the test of time well and works better than some of the other pictures which the company was producing at the time. Although the idea of transposing zombies to a Cornish village seems incongruous, the taut plot, written by director John Gilling, makes good use of the barren locations and there are some fine claustrophobic moments, especially the surreal dream sequence when one of the characters is attacked by zombies as they claw themselves from their graves. Makeup artist Roy Ashton worked wonders on a small budget to give the dead tin miners the rotting look that has become the standard zombie style.

"Zombies as we know and love them today are Romero's creation"

TO KNOW AND LOVE

Not only did George A Romero change the face of horror films when he made *Night Of The Living Dead* in 1968, he also developed the zombie mythology in such a way that made the creatures more of an immediate, inescapable, threat. The traditional trappings of Carribean peasants, slavery, and Haitian beliefs work to a degree, but the exorcism of that locale removed the threat from every day life. The dead next door were restless – and hungry.

Zombies as we know and love them today are Romero's creation. His Living Dead trilogy continued with *Dawn Of The Dead* in 1979, and was responsible for the bloody tide of Italian gut-crunchers which emulate Romeroisms but with little success, either artistically or financially. Lucio Fulci's *Zombie Flesh Eater* starts with the dead overrunning New York, but soon switches locations, taking the plague back to its rotting roots in the West Indies with crazed doctor Richard Johnson responsible for the gory mayhem. Then you've got the awful *Zombie II*, *Oasis Of The Zombies*, *Zombie Lake*, *City Of The Living Dead* and, surprise, surprise, Fulci has just finished *Zombie III*, which is not a zombie movie in that it's about toxic waste contamination.

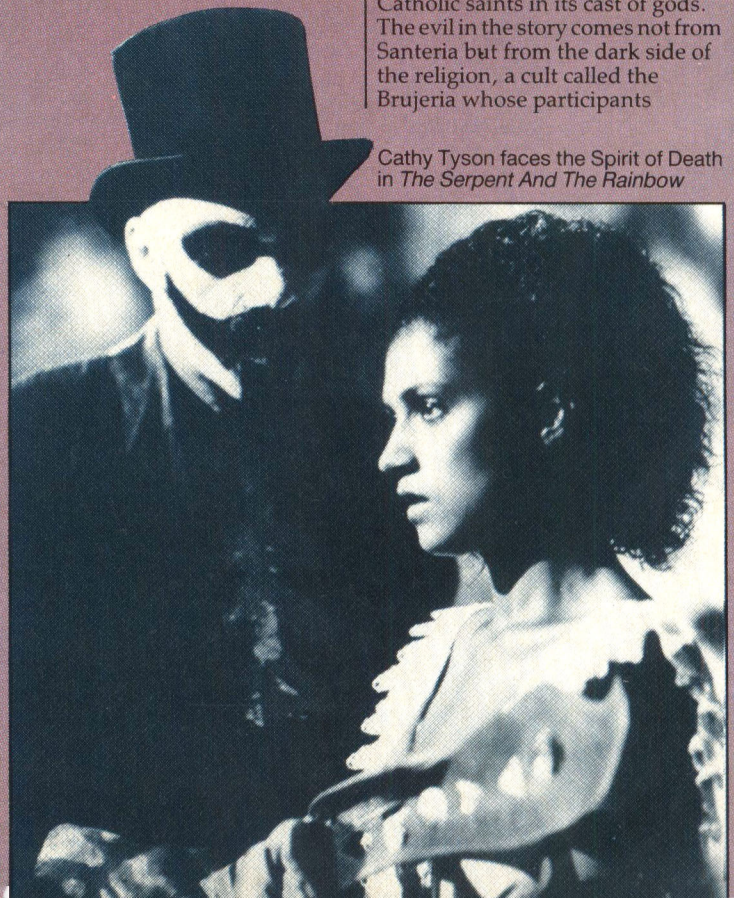
Finally, Dan O'Bannon's comic spoof *Return Of The Living Dead* (1986), was a takeoff of *Night Of The Living Dead*, which successfully combined laughs with gross-out tactics. Yet of the modern zombie films only Romero's trilogy, *Night-*, *Dawn-*, and *Day Of The Dead*, add anything of note to the subgenre. Romero's skill as a film-maker and his allegorical concerns invest the threesome with considerable power.

VOODOO DETECTIVES

Movies, like fiction, appear to rotate in cycles. George Romero doesn't discount the possibility of a fourth Living Dead film – *Day Of The Dead* was not the film he had planned, for budgetry reasons – but it appears that the zombie flick has gone as far as it can without the traditional Voodoo background. Perhaps it was inevitable, therefore, that the religious aspect would return in one form or another, as it did in Alan Parker's *Angel Heart*.

Based on William Hjortsberg's acclaimed 1978 novel, Parker's picture is a fine combination of a hard-boiled *film noir* detective tale with Satanism and the occult, of which Voodoo is an important part. It's a Faustian story dealing with the Devil – played urbanely by Robert De Niro – with which Parker went to considerable lengths to ensure that the supernatural elements were handled correctly, and thoroughly researched his material. The sequence in which grizzled detective Harry Angel – Mickey Rourke – observes *mambo* Epiphany Proudfoot participate in a ritual, dancing under the influence of the spirits that have possessed her whilst sacrificing a chicken, is a case in point. Actual Haitian ceremonial music was played in the background and the dance arrangements, choreographed by Louis Falco, incorporated authentic Voodoo rites. Well shot and cleverly edited, the scene was one of the most memorable in the movie.

Like *Angel Heart*, John Schlesinger's *The Believers* combines a detective story with occult goings on. Santeria, the religion which is an integral part of the picture, is widely practised in New York's Hispanic community. As with Voodoo, it is a pantheistic belief featuring many of the Roman Catholic saints in its cast of gods. The evil in the story comes not from Santeria but from the dark side of the religion, a cult called the Brujeria whose participants



Cathy Tyson faces the Spirit of Death in *The Serpent And The Rainbow*

practise child sacrifice as a means of achieving personal gain.

Widowed police psychologist Cal Jamison – Martin Sheen – becomes involved in the investigation of a number of mysterious deaths when one of the cops he's treating inexplicably dies. When the post-mortem is carried out they discover a snake slithering around inside the poor guy's guts, certainly not a typical occurrence, even in New York. Events take a personal turn for the worse when Brujeria priests try to lure Jamison into their clutches through his young son.

Certainly not a typical voodoo movie in the traditional sense, *The Believers* uses the concept of imitative magic – ie the Voodoo ritual of sticking pins into an effigy of the victim – in various imaginative ways, the most shocking of which occurs when Sheen's love interest, Helen Shaver, develops a large boil on her left cheek. After experiencing a high fever, the boil bursts and a nest of spiders scuttle forth from inside Shaver's skin. Though Schlesinger generally pulls his punches with the violence, this scene really touches a nerve. It sent the New York audience I saw it with diving under their seats in terror. Sadly, the film falls apart at the end with the predictable and unnecessary double ending, a profound disappointment coming from a director of Schlesinger's ability, especially as he avoids some of the usual Voodoo clichés for most of the movie.

FACT NOT FICTION

The most exciting film of the recent crop of Voodoo pictures, however, is Wes Craven's *The Serpent And The Rainbow* which delves deep into Voodoo lore and, from a scientific perspective, looks at the creation of real zombies. What sets the film apart from anything that's gone before is its basis in fact not fiction.

Wade Davis, who has been described as a real-life Indianna Jones, is a Harvard University ethnobiologist who studies the relationships between different ethnic cultures and indigenous plant life. Widely travelled, he went to Haiti in 1982 to investigate the suggested connection between the zombie legend and potions made from natural substances. While there he was introduced to a local doctor who had a patient who apparently died years before but had suddenly returned to his village several years later in some kind of unusual mental state and nearly scared his family to death.

Through his inquiries Davis contacted a local medicine man and persuaded him to show Davis how to make the potion which induces the zombie state. The story of the process and Davis's experiences in the country make fascinating reading – Davis is a good writer who manages to balance out the scientific with a sense of adventure.

His investigations took him into graveyards and deep into inhospitable jungles, but what is most extraordinary is the process involved in the making of the compound which induces the psychological and physical effects on the victim, and requires many complex stages in preparing various plants in precise measurements without the aid of scientific or medical equipment. One of the main ingredients is a poison similar to that found in the highly toxic Japanese Puffer fish, a gastronomic delicacy in that country which causes more than 20 deaths a year amongst enthusiastic diners. Tests are still being carried out at Harvard to determine how the drug works.

It's an exciting story, but not the substance of which Hollywood movies are made, which is why the Craven flick is credited as 'inspired by the book by Wade Davis'. Written by Richard Maxwell and AR Simoun, the events that happened to Davis have been fictionalised to provide an adventure, a love story and a suspense film – according to Craven, who added in a recent interview that he hopes people will consider it an adult political thriller.

So, is it a horror movie? It was certainly marketed that way in America when it opened earlier this year, and it does contain some weird hallucinatory dream sequences which could have come from *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, and which is exactly what you'd expect from Craven.

Shot in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, it tells of Dr Dennis Alan's – Bill Pullman – search for the zombie drug. He gets romantically involved with Marielle – Cathy Tyson – and a local doctor who introduces him to the mystical experiences of Voodoo. To give Alan an adversary, Craven and his writers introduce a black magician, Dargent Peytraud – Zakes Mokae – who is also chief of the menacing Tontons Macoute, Haiti's infamous secret police. Regardless of the melodramatic aspects of the story, Craven, like Alan Parker thoroughly researched his material and participated in some Voodoo rites before shooting started.

The Serpent And The Rainbow will be turning staff at your local cinema into walking dead during December, and we'll be covering it in more depth then. We might even send the editor to Haiti for his hols.

The Believers

TALES OF A LONELY SCRIPTWRITER

Everyone's at it these days, but scriptwriting is still a delicate balance of art and technique. John Gilbert passes on some tips for the budding practitioners of cinematic brain surgery in the second of his series on movie-making

The golden days – and nights – of Hollywood's scriptwriting system are over. Gone are the multiple drafts in their blue, yellow, red, green and white folders, the on-staff movie scriptwriters contracted to the studios, and the plush offices in which they work. We're now in the era of the independent film production company where screenwriting is a joint effort. Few writers are allowed on set during the production process, and those who are lucky get to work in a single hotel room near the studios – are you still interested?

"No director is going to thank you for a description of a massive bedroom if all he can afford is a plywood shack"

Screenwriting technique has also become a lot easier because independent film companies have short lead times and because the script can so often change during production. If, for instance, you compare *The Lost Boys* with most scripts written in the early-Sixties, you'll see that the former has a chatty style and reads almost like a novel, while those in the latter category are highly compartmentalised and contain indecipherable abbreviations.

You can also forget about being the great novelist while writing a script. True, you'll work with dialogue and you'll have to describe scenes, but no director is going to thank you for a beautiful description of a massive bedroom, where the protagonists 'have great sex', if all he can afford is a plywood shack and he's doing a *Friday The 13th* movie. That's the first way to get sacked – or not, in the case of your protagonists.

TECHNIQUE AND SPEECH

For the purposes of this article, I'll concentrate on some general tips on transforming a storyline into a script, but first let's take a look at the general structure of a screenplay.

Each scene is given a number in order to allow the director to specify a shooting order to cast and crew. Before each scene number you usually write **FADE IN** which just means that the camera starts taking notice of the action.

Each scene number is then followed by a description, in capital letters, of the location – **EXT** meaning outdoors and **INT** meaning inside, usually on set. That's followed by the location description, such as **SCHOOL CLASSROOM**, which in turn is followed by a time of day – which might just be **MORNING**, **AFTERNOON**, or **EVENING**. A typical scene header could, therefore, be:

INT. CLASSROOM – AFTERNOON

Underneath that heading you detail the scene description, working in image and movement rather than a novel's structure of image and character thought. Treat the camera as your eyes – pretentious? *Moi?* – and use it to reveal the scene. After some descriptive scene-setting in our sample classroom, you might continue:

CAMERA HOLDS TIGHT FRAME on Mrs Mahoney, the duty teacher, as she pushes through classroom door. There's a bunch of books in her arms which she drops on the floor. Laughter from class **OFF SCREEN. THE CAMERA PULLS BACK** to Mr Patrick, Head-teacher, who's standing in doorway. Kids' jeers stop. **THE CAMERA PULLS BACK AND PANS** to quiet kids at their desks.

At this point Mr Patrick might well say something and you, as scriptwriter, do that by first centring the speaker's name in capital letter, followed underneath by the speech which is indented on the page:

PATRICK
Perhaps you'd allow me now to introduce your new teacher, Mrs Mahoney.

The above piece of speech is simplistic and doesn't show the difference between real-life talk, novel-character talk, and movie-character talk. There is a difference. Novel speech is a condensed form of real-life talk, without the

ums . . . ers and repetition that you find in most conversations. Each speech should also make a point, should convey character and emotion. It can also provide clues to location.

Movie speech is the most difficult to write. Anyone who's read a Jeffrey Archer novel knows that often character speech in book fiction cannot be easily read out loud. The speech in a script must be compact but you must also be able to read it aloud. That's why scriptwriting is often a team effort not only in the ideas operation but also in the logistical, write, read back and, rewrite procedure.

Speech is also important because, in the beginning, that's all the scriptwriter has at his disposal to establish a character for the actor. Scene-setting isn't enough and you'll find very few scripts which list detailed character motivation. There will, of course, be allusions to the type of character involved – for instance, 'he's built like a brick wall but is a bit of a prude and is easily offended' – but these tell nothing of the character's mind and you can't put think bubbles into the script.

FRAMEWORK AND EFFECTS

So, you've set location, character, and dialogue in one scene, but how do you go on from there? If the viewer suddenly realised that your picture is just a collection of scenes then you, the director and – God help him – the editor have all failed. One scene must flow into another and in order for that to happen you've got to imagine what the camera would see before you put it down on paper.

The classroom sequence above uses a few simple camera angles without breaking the action, but say you wanted to pick out a single pupil – the one who's going to throw acid over her headteacher. You would first need to cut in a shot of the class sniggering after teacher dropped the books – where's the laughter coming from? – and after this Establishing Shot you can zero in on one particular class member, who's just been introduced to the viewer.

During the last sequence the camera did a lot of **panning** sideways and **pulling back**. Okay, for the next sequence we need a close up of the girl, but may I suggest we bring in the idea of **long shot (LS)** which would be full length of the girl and her desk, the **medium shot 2(MS)**, which would take in top of desk to the space above her head, and the **close up (CU)**, which would be head and shoulders. You can also add 'medium' to those terms to roughly signify an in-between state.

In our sequence let's cut from the headteacher's dialogue to the girl in long shot.

2. INT CLASSROOM – NOON
MCU on Samantha Hill sitting primly at desk picking nails and playing with a bottle. Begin to **TRACK BACK TO LS** as she opens the bottle and gets up from desk.

At this point we cut in a medium shot of the headmaster who stops speaking and starts to frown, then it's back to a long shot of the girl walking between the desk, acid bottle in hand. She throws acid in teacher's face – and here comes a special effect, which you should just describe in the body of the script. If, however, you want to add a post-production effect, such as the headteacher's face with a green glow or a spinning copy of a newspaper with a 'HEADMASTER IN ACID MAYHEM' headline, you would label the sequence within the scene **EFX and then, beneath the initials, describe your special effect.**

Finally, a word on the way in which one scene follows another – the CUT TO: directive. You've already seen the **FADE IN** where the screen goes from black to action, well, you can also have **FADE OUT** in which the action goes to black and **DISSOLVE** in which one scene fades out as another fades in. The other most used **CUT TO:** is **SUDDEN**, or **SHOCK CUT TO**. It's a quick cut from one dramatic scene to another which defies the easy flow guideline outlined above. It's used to surprise – *ie* a raving psycho jumping out on an unaware victim – and if your viewer doesn't notice it you're doing something wrong.

THE DEEP END

There are many ways of writing a script, each of which depends upon the writer and the needs of the director. The method just described, however, will get your point across through most movie scenes, but before you start writing you've got to plan exactly how the movie will run. If you have a dedicated story line which has been okayed by the director, you simply develop the action and dialogue from that. If, however, the producer throws a book at you and tells you he wants to make a 90-minute film out of it, you might have problems. There are at least 70,000 words waiting between those covers, all that action, all that dialogue.

Don't panic.

The producer won't expect a literal translation of book to screen – if he does he probably wants his head tested or he's making a Charles Dickens series. In most cases it just won't work. Read the book, establish the major characters and the major scenes; those are the ones you're going to script.

Once the major scenes are established, throw away the book and develop your own links from one of the novel's scenes to another. Rewrite dialogue, change locations if they don't fit in with the projected budget, merge characters, drop characters and get as far away from the book's plot as necessary. As long as you stay faithful to the atmosphere of the novel none of the author's fans are going to be offended.

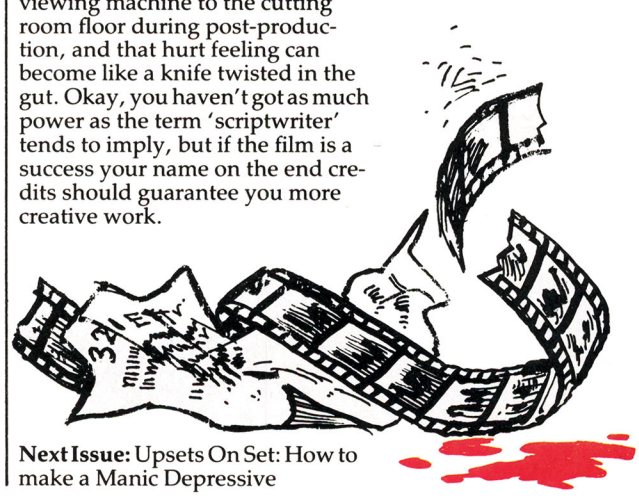
You won't, usually, be on your own during the scripting process. If the movie's budget is big enough you'll have a script supervisor and/or script editor. The former constantly reminds you of deadlines and provides a shoulder to cry on if you suddenly find the script isn't working. The latter, at best, fine tunes your work and, at worst, rewrites. He, or she, may also be on hand to advise the producer and his blue pencil if the script needs cuts to conform with budget.

I don't mean to sound sour, but as if those two weren't enough, you may also have to work with the original book's author acting as script consultant and the director . . . That hotel room mentioned at the start of this article is gonna get pretty crowded, and you thought screenwriting was a lonely profession.

Once the scripting is finished, it's time to let go and see the written theory turned into cinematic practicality. First-time screenwriters soon discover that it hurts: your script is likely to be slashed, in one way or another, once filming starts, and if you're really unlucky you may find that the director has lost some of your best scenes and greatest dialogue by the time the production wraps.

Add to that the bits and pieces of your masterpiece that dive from the editor's Moviola or Steenbeck viewing machine to the cutting room floor during post-production, and that hurt feeling can become like a knife twisted in the gut. Okay, you haven't got as much power as the term 'scriptwriter' tends to imply, but if the film is a success your name on the end credits should guarantee you more creative work.

"The producer won't expect a literal translation of book to screen – if he does he probably wants his head tested"



Next Issue: Upsets On Set: How to make a Manic Depressive

PHANTASM II

Starring: **James Legros, Reggie Bannister, Angus Scrimm, Paula Irvine, Samantha Phillips.** *Producer* **Roberto A Quezada,** *Screenplay/Director* **Don Coscarelli.** *Distributor* **Universal. Cert unconfirmed**

AA the poster says, 'This Summer . . . The Ball is Back!'

Nine years on from the original *Phantasm*, the quirky low-budget movie which featured those weird flying silver spheres that home in on people's heads and burrow into their brains, comes a sequel. *Phantasm* appeared at the start of the late-Seventies horror boom and became a firm favourite with fans because of its off-beat ideas and strange effects. Even if much of it didn't appear to make sense, it had more than the usual share of shocks and surprises which insured its success.

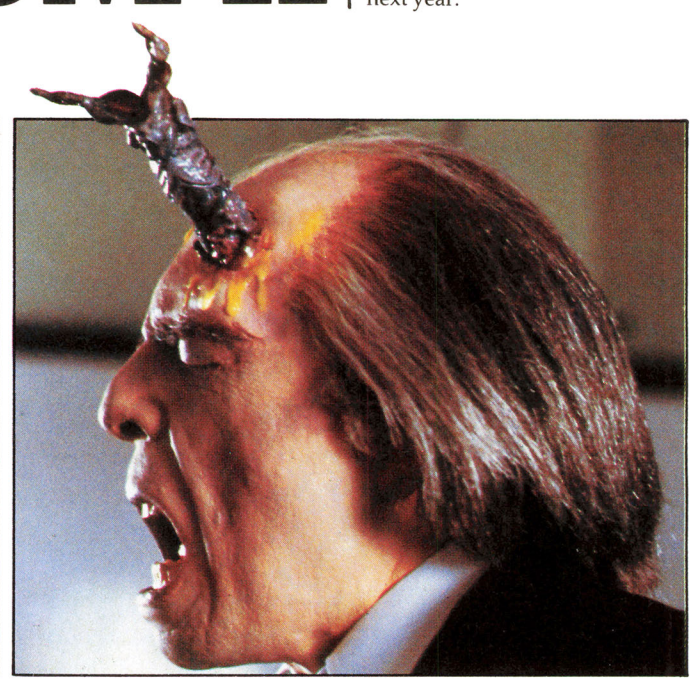
In case you've forgotten, the story told of strange goings on in Morningside Mortuary and witnessed by a teenager called Mike. Sinister, robed dwarves, a menacing tall man, those pesky spheres, a transdimensional stargate – in a word *Phantasm* was . . . well, weird.

In the new picture things have grown worse. The Tall Man – **Angus Scrimm** – is back with his little minions. For Mike and Reggie – **James LeGros** and **Reggie Bannister** – the nightmare that began 10 years ago has returned with a vengeance. The Tall Man's activities have spread across America, a turn of events that sets the guys off on a search and destroy road trip to hunt down their nemesis and erradicate him once and for all, aided by Liz, a girl they pick up along the way.

Phantasm was a movie that didn't follow the lines of typical plot logic, opting instead to overlap dreams with reality in much the same way as *Nightmare On Elm Street*. The sequel promises to do the same, only more so with faster pace and wild state-of-the-art effects by *Evil Dead/From Beyond* veteran **Mark Shostrom**.

Like *Evil Dead II*, the *Phantasm* sequel was an interesting challenge for Shostrom who had many difficult effects to achieve on a small budget – £1.5 million. Of his experience he says: 'Working with Don Coscarelli was like working with Sam Raimi in some respects. Sam was very specific about the style, but he also gave me a lot of freedom to do what I wanted. Don was more vague in describing what he wanted, but knows immediately what it is once you show him something, so it was a process of giving him things he could build upon.'

Expect *Phantasm II* here early next year.



POLTERGEIST III

Starring: **Rom Skerritt, Nancy Allen, Heather O'Rourke, Zelda Rubinstein.** *Producer* **Barry Bernardi,** *Director* **Gary Sherman.** *Distributor* **United International Pictures. Cert 15**

The most frightening factor about *Poltergeist III* is that nothing happens! Lacking in suspense or visible tension, this shot-for-television, badly-directed, badly-acted piece of celuloid schlock is attributed to co-writer/director/executive director **Gary Sherman**. Surprisingly, even **Dick Smith**'s special effects are lacklustre, misrepresenting past credits like *the Exorcist* and *Scanners*.

Heather O'Rourke, who died shortly after finishing the movie, makes her third outing here as little Carol Anne, the diminutive blonde – her face appears bloated – whom poltergeists have a habit of pulling into the walls of her

residences. For reasons never made too clear, she also possesses the ability to allow the demons to escape from their ether-bound hell.

Her parents – played by Craig T Nelson and JoBeth Williams in I and II – pack her off to live with her aunt and uncle – **Nancy Allen** and **Tom Skerritt** – in a newly-built Chicago highrise. Uncle, an okay guy, manages the building, and at first doesn't connect his niece's arrival with freaky phenomena such as cracking mirrors and fast-forming icebergs. He is genuinely fond of Carol Anne, although his badly-dressed wife correctly blames their new woes on her.

Their teenage daughter – **Lara Flynn Boyle** – and her boyfriend – **Kip Wentz** – are wholesome kids. So, it's not their fault when the poltergeists make them disappear down through a pool in the carpark to reemerge as ice blocks in the high rise's swimming pool. A similar gruesome end is in store for Carol Anne's school psychiatrist – **Richard Fire** – in this illogical plot. Sceptical of her past notoriety, he is irritating in his disbelief of her poltergeist connection, until he's shoved down an elevator shaft.

Actor **Nathan Davis** replaces the late Julian Beck as the evil Reverend Kane. As the insane leader of the poltergeists he's as menacing as a mouse. The *Poltergeist* movies are supposed to

be more mystical than blood and gore, but when the chief poltergeist terrorises Carol Anne you would expect some horror – but there is none.

Zelda Rubinstein, repeating her performance as the good psychic, Tangina, however, puts us all out of our misery. Sacrificing herself by taking the evil old Reverend back inside the air conditioning ducts, she informs Carol Anne and Co that 'your nightmare is over'. Reassuring dialogue, remembered from the film's eagerly awaited end.

Frances Lynn

THE RUNNING MAN

Starring: **Arnold Schwarzenegger, Maria Conchita Alonso, Richard Dawson, Yaphet Kotto, Mick Fleetwood, Dweezil Zappa, Professor Toru Tanaka, Erland Van Lidth, Jim Brown, Gus Rethwisch.** *Producers* **Tim Zinnemann, George Linder,** *Director* **Paul Michael Glaser,** *Screenplay* **Steven De Souza.** *Distributor* **Rank. Cert 18**

The Richard Bachman byline failed to fool me and, as I walked into the cinema with hopes held high, I – like millions of other fans – knew that Stephen King was the name of the game and that movies of his books have bombed at the box office.

But Glaser and Co managed to mess up this film without the benefit of King's name on the credits. *The Running Man* works on two levels – just about, first of which is 'social comment' and second 'thriller'. The latter, unfortunately, obscures the former with a never-ending reign of typical **Schwarzenegger** action and groan-instilling jokes.

Ben Richards – Schwarzenegger – starts this futuristic movie as a good cop framed for killing innocent civilians in a police helicopter raid. Imprisoned, he escapes, is recaptured and offered his freedom so long as he agrees to appear on *The Running Man*, a 21st

Century game show hosted by the man with the sleazy smile, Damon Killian – **Richard Dawson** – during which the contestants have to survive run-ins with a team of assassins.

The bad guys are played by real-life American sportsmen without any degree of acting ability – unless you call snarling and whimpering part of drama technique. Each assassin has a special weapon. 'Subzero' – **Toru Tanaka** – makes popsicles out of people, 'Dynamo' – **Van Lidth** – is electric, 'Fireball' – **Jim Brown** – throws flames and 'Buzzsaw' – **Gus Rethwisch** – who's the most chilling to watch – uses a . . . you guessed it.

Of course, Killian and his crew get theirs when Richards and his friends break out of the game, join up with a group of rebels in a wasteland complex and return to destroy the show and bring down the government. Sounds very altruistic but the social comment, together with any real humour, realism, and love interest – between Richards and fellow runner Amber Mendez – **Maria Concho Alonso** – is crushed beneath bad direction, cheap set-building, slapdash special effects and the editor's scissors which seem to have anticipated the censor.

The Running Man – a long short-novel written ages ago by Stephen King under the pseudonym of Richard Bachman and first published in 1982 – has a verve and vitality which is probably derived from the extraordinary speed at which he wrote it – some 72 hours!. The movie does a disservice to this riveting book, which for some reason is being republished to coincide with the movie. Odd, because the two plots have little in common. Admirers of Stephen King would do well to steer clear, but Schwarzenegger fans wanting kill-a-minute thrills could give *The Running Man* a try.

John Gilbert

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD PART II

Starring: **James Karen, Thomas Matthews, Dana Ashbrook, Marsha Dietlein, Suzanne Snyder, Philip Bruns, Michael Kenworthy, Thor Van Lingen, Jason Hogan.** *Producers* **Tom Fox, William S Gilmore,** *Screenplay/Director* **Ken Wiederhorn.** *Distributor* **Guild Cert 18**

Return Of The Living Dead Part II is supposed to be a comedy but, sad to say, it gets most of its laughs from the way in which it's made, while some of the intended humour is lost on the audience.

Ed – **James Karen** – and Josey – **Thomas Mathews** – got zombified in the first *Return* film. So it's a jolly jape that they return as grave robbers who have the misfortune to be in the very graveyard which is brought to life when a barrel containing a zombie, and the gas which created it, falls off an army truck during transportation.

The gas soon spreads, our two grave robbers are once again affected. We wouldn't mind so much but Josey has brought along his girlfriend – **Suzanne Snyder** – to act as lookout at the cemetary. Will she get her brains sucked by one of the crummy twosome? Maybe but I was more concerned for Jesse Wilson – **Michael Kenworthy** – who, apart from his sister Lucy, is the only one in the cast to have both christian and surnames.

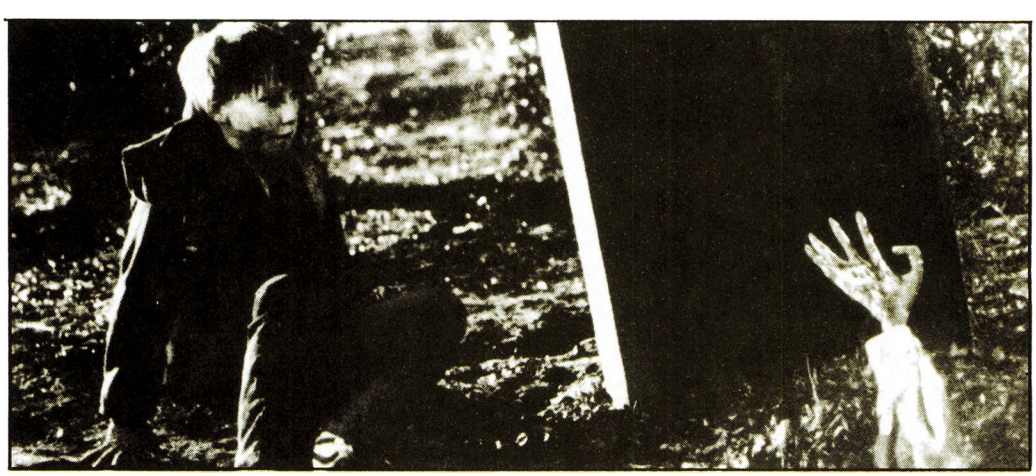
Jesse is partly responsible for the new zombie outbreak. He refuses to help his two bully pals to open the sealed zombie container and runs away to phone the army and tell them where their zombie can be found. Meanwhile the two bullies have opened the seal and are well on the way to zombification. The town is soon sealed up by the army, and everyone's evacuated, except those mentioned above, a telephone repair man who knows a thing or two about electricity and an ever-increasing horde of zombies.

The zombie effects were worse than I'd expected for a low-budget movie. In the first zombie sequence we see a wrinklie zombie's face appear at the mouth of the container. Later we see it, but it's makeup is different. This zombie is bald and looks as if it's been dipped in tar. The walking dead were also a little too spritely for my liking. Very few of them mouldered, although in one fairly funny sequence Josey's girlfriend puts her fist through a zombie's face – literally. Added to that we had the usual collection of wriggling worms, dropped jaws, snapping fingers and one case of legs and trunk dislocation, but on the whole the effects were disappointing.

Same goes for the humour. I had the feeling you were supposed to laugh at the 'haven't we been here before' references by Ed and Josey and that the appearance of a Michael Jackson zombie look-alike was also supposed to induce humour. But no, the audience remained fairly titterless, as did I. Let's hope that *Part III*'s more adventurous or, better still, that there isn't a *Part III*.

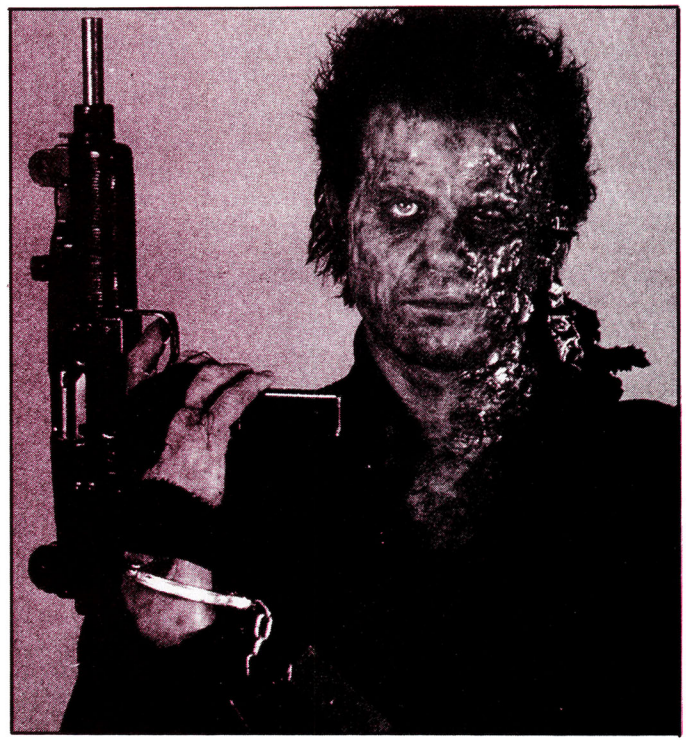
Make a date to see *Return Of The Living Dead Part II* early next year.

John Gilbert



DEAD HEAT

Starring: **Treat Williams, Joe Piscopo, Lindsay Frost, Darren McGavin, Vincent Price.** *Producers* **Michael Meltzer, David Helpern,** *Director* **Mark Goldblatt,** *Screenplay* **Terry Black.** *Distributor* **New World Pictures. Cert uncomfirmed**



You can't keep a good cop dead, at least that's the premise of *Dead Heat*, a comedy/horror/action thriller from New World.

Williams and **Piscopo** are a team of buddy-buddy cops, two of LA's finest who certainly aren't gun-shy. *Saturday Night Live* – the US version – regular Piscopo is the one with the smart mouth and the wisecracks, while Williams is the more down to earth of the two.

The story starts with our heroes gun battling with a bunch of ruthless robbers in a jewelry store. Cue devastation, but the villains aren't dying fast enough. Williams finally crushes one to death with a patrol vehicle: end of shoot out. But later the assistant coroner reveals that the robbers had risen from the grave since she'd cut 'em open a few days before.

Our heroes' investigation leads then into Dr Frankenstein territory at a drugs lab where they have a fight with a mutilated thug – yes, another stiff. Cue more gun play and . . . Williams is killed.

But, this is a horror movie and the assistant coroner works out how to reanimate him; fine, only Williams has just 24 hours in which to solve the case with the aid of his live buddy before he starts to disintegrate. Cue race against time and a big chase, more gun play, destruction and some yummily disgusting effects – including a gross-out body melt down courtesy of **Steve Johnson**'s XFX Inc company.

First-time director **Mark Goldblatt**, a former editor who has worked with Joe Dante and James Cameron, keeps the mayhem thick and fast, making the most of **Terry Black**'s wacked-out script. Black is the brother of screenwriter Shane Black (*Lethal Weapon, The Monster Squad*) and also makes his debut here.

Sadly, since *Dead Heat* stiffed at the US box-office, expect video only here folks.

Philip Nutman

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976-EVIL

Starring: **Stephen Geoffreys, Lezlie Deane, Patrick O'Bryan, Sandy Dennis.** *Producer* **Lisa Hansen,** *Director* **Robert Englund,** *Screenplay* **Rhett Topham.** *Distributor* **Medusa. Cert unconfirmed**

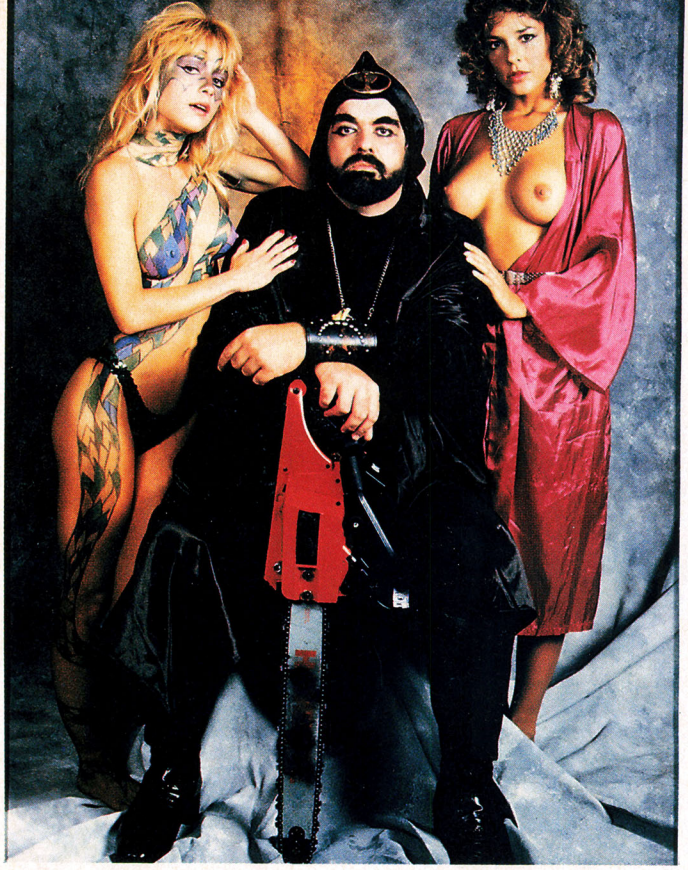
Here are the piccies we've all been waiting for, the results of **Robert** 'Freddy Krueger' **Englund**'s recent stint at direction. As we go to press, he hasn't completed it, but we thought you'd like to have a little look and discover some of the facts about this new movie – which we probably won't see this side of Christmas.

The story's about Hoax, a wimpish boy played by **Stephen Geoffreys** – who seems to land oddly-named parts; you might remember him in vampire guise as 'Evil' in the first *Fright Night* outing. Hoax has just discovered a phone line to hell and can conjure up demons but, at the same time, starts to suffer from a terrible skin problem – this guy's a bit of a flake. He wants revenge on his enemies, who include the local gang, his cousin Spike – **Patrick O'Bryan** – and bible-bashing aunt played by **Sandy Dennis**. He also wants Spike's girlfriend for some horizontal positioning and gets quite narked when he thinks that his cousin is doing better than he is in that department.

More news on what looks to be the most talked about low-budget movie of this year in future issues.

John Gilbert

Stills courtesy of Medusa



Gunnar Hansen's penchant for long, phallic, buzzing objects was obviously not satisfied by *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and has moved to Hollywood – hence the proposed title *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers. Unfortunately that little literary masterpiece was rejected, amongst other things, by the BBFC and Colourbox resubmitted it as Hollywood Hookers.* As you can see, there are hookers in the movie and they get a buzz from their saws – which is more than can be said for their clients. Gunnar plays the weird master of an ancient chainsaw cult who only wants to practise in peace but gets no end of trouble from a private dick.

MANIAC

Starring: **Bruce Campbell, Laurene Landon, Robert D'Zar, Tom Akin, Richard Roundtree, William Smith.** *Producer/Screenplay* **Larry Cohen,** *Director* **William Lustig.** *Distributor* **Medusa. Cert 18**

When I slapped down money for *Maniac Cop*, I was hoping for a new twist on the old slasher theme, but the movie's just the same old formula thinly, unevenly, disguised.

The opening scene is a desolate night on the seedy side of New York City. A young damsel is accosted by a pair of two-bit punks. She flees and screams. No-one responds to her cries for help. Finally in the distance, she spots a police officer, symbol of comfort and security. The good guy, right? Guess again. She runs into his arms. He lifts her off the ground and snaps her neck.

The film's slasher is an ex-Dirty Harry style cop, Cordell – **Robert D'Zar** of *Night Of The Stalker* – who has no tolerance for crime. He's imprisoned by a police commissioner – **Richard Roundtree** – and his cronies for brutality. In prison, he's viciously attacked by the criminals he brutalised, and left for dead. Not long after, a series of almost supernatural slayings start. Eyewitnesses say the killer is a cop.

The police launch an in-house investigation. Enter officer Jack Forrest – **Bruce Campbell**, of *Evil Dead* fame. His wife turns up dead and he's framed and imprisoned for the murders. But, when Cordell attacks the precinct house and slaughters everyone in sight, Forrest has no choice but to escape with his mistress and fellow cop – **Laurene Landon** – and unravel the mystery of the maniac cop and track him down to clear his name.

The most satisfying part of the film is a car chase through the streets of New York. Forrest chases Cordell and the movie switches from horror to action with an emphasis on daring stunts which are more inventive than in many an average film. That's just as well, because **Larry**

17TH PARIS FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION FILM FESTIVAL

Paris's largest cinema, the Grand Prix, is the annual venue for the Fantasy and Science Fiction Film Festival. It runs for ten nights with two or three movies each night. To call it a 'fantasy and science fiction' festival is not entirely accurate. The only thing the audience at the Rex will sit still for is blood and mayhem, hence the popular chants – in French, of course – of 'More blood!' and 'We are going to smash everything!'.

Although I started off down in the relatively sedate stalls on the first night, it was obvious that the action was up in the circle so, with great trepidation, I took my seat among the screaming hordes for the first film, *Maniac Cop*. Director **William Lustig** was on hand to introduce his film and his appearance on stage brought forth wild cheers of appreciation, as did the late-night screening of Lustig's sickening *Maniac*.

Next up that evening was a slasher film produced by **Paul Bartel**, *Out Of The Dark*. It's stylish, scary, and brutal – and unlikely to be seen in its full form in Britain. I loved it, but due to the absence of French subtitles the audience ignored it and threw lots of paper around instead.

The second night's opening film was the zombie cop epic *Dead Heat*. This proved to be extremely popular with the audience probably because it mixed a lot of blood and violence with equal doses of stupidity and childishness.

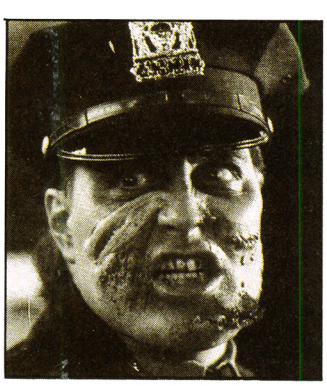
Other films on show during the festival were the long-awaited *Pumpkinhead* aka *Vengeance: The Demon – Bad Dreams*, the remake of *Not Of This Earth* with ex-porno star **Traci Lords**, *Cameron's Closet* based on the **Gary Brandner** novel, *Slugs* – **Shaun Hutson** has a lot to answer for – and **Lucio Fulci**'s *Zombie III*.

Top festival went to **Joe Piscopo** and **Treat Williams** for their lame-brained performances in *Dead Heat*, **Jenny Wright** as Best Actress in *Near Dark*. **Bigas Luna**'s *Anguish* picked up the Public's Choice and *Near Dark* deservedly won the Silver Unicorn as Best Film according to the Grand Jury.

If you would like to attend next year's Paris Fantasy and Science Fiction Festival, telephone **Paris 46.24.04.71** to inquire about dates. Tickets for each night are available at the door.

David Cox

COP



Cohen's script for *Maniac Cop* must have been written around the title. The story's thin and often without reason. Cordell, for instance, kills innocent people for no apparent reason. This guy, at one time, was a highly decorated cop. Why should he murder blameless members of the public?

The film isn't humourless, and there are some effective tongue-in-cheek moments. In one, a man's face is pushed into wet cement by Cordell. He's suffocated. Next day, construction workers are seen jackhammering him out of cement.

The eclectic cast is the film's saving grace. Richard Roundtree – *Q* – is effective as the commissioner who is more concerned with protecting his interests than the good of the department. **William Smith** – *The Losers* – as the hardened police captain is also a standout, while **Sam Raimi**, director of *Evil Dead I* and *II*, makes a cameo appearance as a news reporter.

Overall, the film is thrown together and uninspired. It's idea is attractive, but its execution falls short. It was shot on a $1.5 million budget in New York and Los Angeles. There's a chase scene which starts in NY locations then cuts to several LA locations and then back to NY. the streets of the two cities just don't match.

For all its heavy-handed title, *Maniac Cop* isn't graphically violent. *Friday The 13th* delivers more. The killings could have been more inventive than a quick slash. Of course, Cordell has some unexplained supernatural powers which make him stronger than Arnold Schwarzenegger – he throws people around like rag dolls.

Maniac Cop is at once uneven and disappointing. It doesn't live up to its potential. If you're not too discerning about your horror flicks – all you want is slash and bash – then it is your ticket. Me, I'm still looking for a new twist of the knife.

Brian Pulido

THE LOST BOYS

Starring: **Corey Feldman, Jamie Gertz, Corey Haim, Edward Hermann, Barnard Hughes, Jason Patric, Kiefer Sutherland, Dianne Wiest.** *Producer* **Harvey Bernhard,** *Screenplay* **Janice Fischer, James Jerimias, Jeffrey Boam,** *Director* **Joel Schumacher. Cert 18**

A teen movie about boy vampires. Oh, how original, but this is different, this stars The Lost Boys and, despite the criticism I'm liable to get for saying it, the movie was one of my favourites last year.

Corey Haim and **Jason Patric** play a couple of nerdy brothers who've moved away from the big city and their two-timing father to find peace and tranquility with their mother on the beach from at Santa Carla – Murder Capital of the world. There Haim meets the Frog brothers, Edgar and Allan – **Corey Feldman** and **Jamie Gertz** – as in the Poe variety. Patric, on the other hand meets, Star who with little-boy-lost Laddie, is caught up with a bike gang lead by David – **Kiefer Sutherland**. This is a gang of vampires and it's up to Haim and his two froggie friends to stop them before his brother gets drawn into the pack.

The Frog brothers are supposed to be the big stars of the show, but the vampires steal that particular carrot easily with tough performances from each. The finale is, unfortunately, very predictable, but the off-beat humour, if a little hamfisted at times, plus the generally well-sustained mixture of sensuality and violence, would make me pay good money to rent this tape.
John Gilbert

MAXIMUM

Starring: **Emilio Estevez, Pat Hingle, Laura Harrington.**
Producers **Martha Schumacher, Milton Subotsky,**
Screenplay/Director **Stephen King.**
Distributor **CBS-Fox.**
Cert 18, 97 mins

Yes, at last **Stephen King**'s directorial debut is here, though whether it was worth the wait is another matter entirely.

Briefly, the plot – taken from the King's own story *Trucks* – concerns the effects of asteroid shit (to use a *Creepshow* colloquialism) on the mechanical inhabitants of planet Earth, but in particular those around the Dixie Boy Truck Stop.

The film starts speedily enough as lawn mowers chew up their owners, drink dispensers pop lethal cans of cola and bank cash dispensers annoy very familiar customers. The action soon centres around the truck stop where the occupants, including Bubba Henderson – **Pat Hingle** – and his cook Robinson – **Emilio Estevez** – are caught in a trap orchestrated by a deadly Green Goblin-faced truck. Bubba supplies the weapons and Robinson supplies the know-how as they and the diners make their way through the sewage network to the highway and out of danger. The journey is, however, a time for squishy special effects in which dozens of people get it in the neck, arms, legs and, most importantly, in the head.

It is, however, the scenes which you don't see which are most revealing. Despite his loose directorial style, King introduces some disturbing effects, the most

PRISON

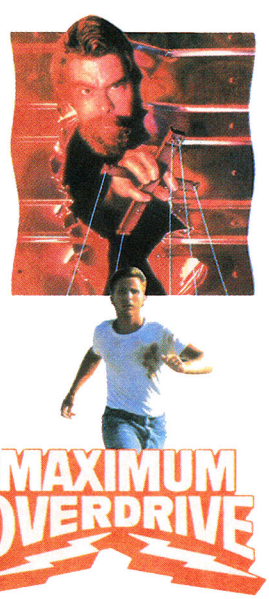
Starring: **Lane Smith, Viggo Mortensen, Chelsea Field, Kane Hodder.**
Screenplay/Producer **Irwin Yablans,**
Director **Renny Marlin.**
Distributor **Entertainment In Video.**
Cert 18, 99 mins

Kane Hodder – is electrocuted for a murder he didn't commit, watched by the only man who knows he's innocent, prison guard Ethan Sharpe played by **Lane Smith**. Forsythe's story appears to end with his death and, a few years later, Creedmore is shut down. But overcrowding in US prisons is just as bad as it is in Britain and Creedmore is reopened with Ethan Sharpe as the new warden. He loves the power he has over the influx of new inmates but becomes alarmed as, one by one, prisoners are slaughtered in the most disgusting ways.

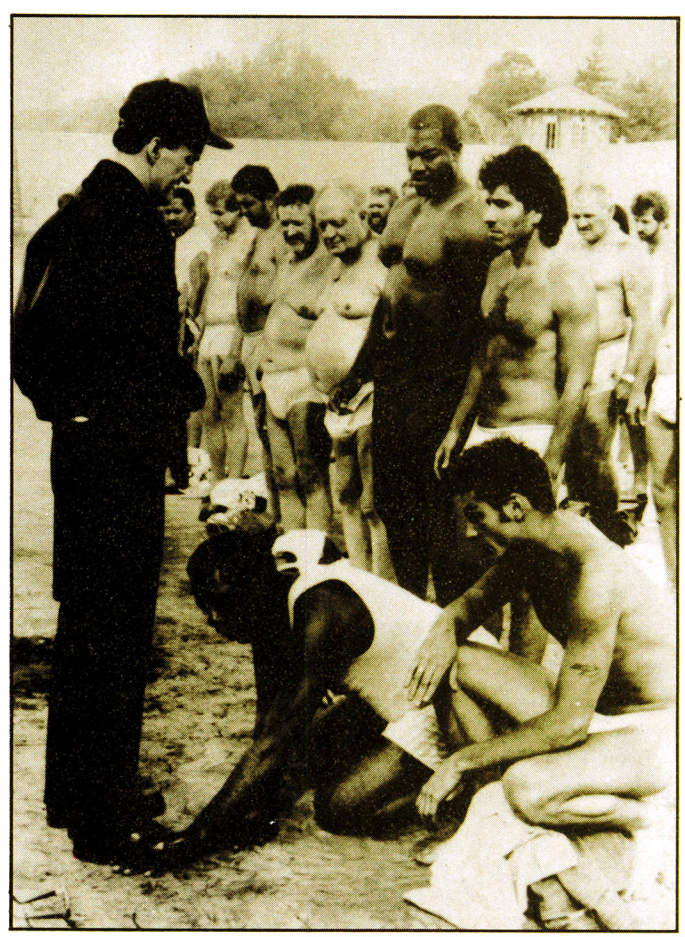
The spirit of Charlie Forsythe has risen for revenge and he'll kill everyone within the prison until Sharpe is brought to justice for his brutality.

Prison may be another low-budget picture but it has some striking similarities with *Hallowe'en*. The atmosphere is claustrophobic, the special effects are over the top – you've got to see Forsythe's resurrection and the barbed-wire death to believe them – and the acting is efficient. Make a date to see it.
John Gilbert

OVERDRIVE



famous of which is a young boy being squashed by a steam roller. I'm afraid they were all cut by the US censor and any notoriety that the film might have had – despite the oft played comment that it's a turkey – ended up in the bin with those pieces of salacious celluloid. By all means King fans should watch it, but don't expect a *tour de force* by the man who still remains the master of modern horror.
John Gilbert



FEAR competition

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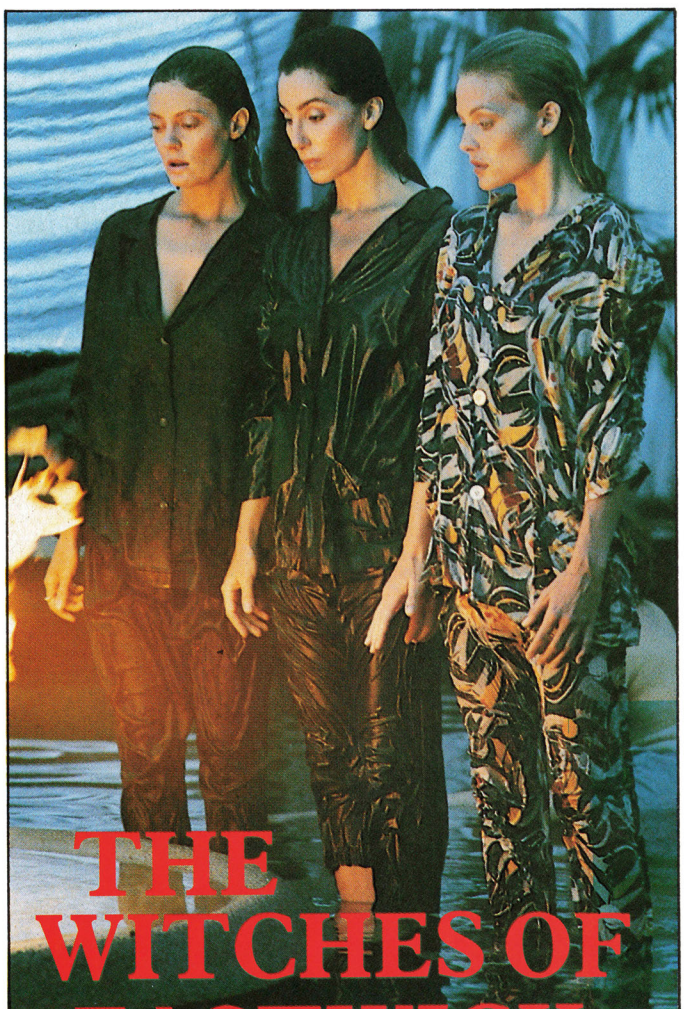


THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

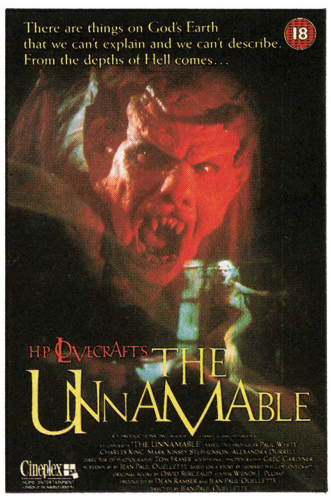
If witches, of the beautiful but wicked kind, are your bag, we've got something that should satisfy even you: five copies of *The Witches Of Eastwick*, starring **Jack Nicholson** as a devil in one hell of a mess. It too has flapped its sulphurous way from Warner Home Video, and a copy could be yours if you can tell us **the real name of the broomstick on which some witches fly**.

To burn in hell, your answer should arrive at **FEAR Witches Video Competition, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB**, no later than September 16. Entrants must be age 18 or over and no employees of Newsfield, **FEAR**, or Warner Home Video may take part.

Don't forget to give your name and address, and whether you want the video on **VHS** or **Beta**.

HP LOVECRAFT'S

Starring: **Charles King, Mark Kinsey Stephenson, Alexandra Durrell.** *Producer* **Dean Ranser,** *Screenplay/ Director* **Jean-Paul Ouellette. Cert 18, 93 mins**



They insisted that I put HP Lovecraft's name in the title but, apart from Randolph Carter and his pal Howard, this movie has little to do with the Lovecraft story of the same name. Instead, at the beginning of the film, we have Carter in a graveyard telling Howard and soon-to-be-deceased buddy Joel about the events in an old house not a million miles away.

Late one night in 1670 the warlock Joshua Winthrop is killed by his daughter. No ordinary daughter this, though, as she's the demonic offspring of his wife who died while giving birth to her. Winthrop lets her out of her attic room once too often during a thunderstorm . . . cue rubbery-heart-torn-from-body effect that had half the preview audience gasping in disgust and the others in gales of laughter.

Joel, of course, refuses to believe the tale of the unnamable monster in the house, spends the night there and has his head bashed in by the creature, of whom – as in the early *Dr Who* series – we only see a point-of-view arm or cloven hoof.

Howard starts to worry about Joel but before we get tangled in his attempts to find out what happened to his friend, two boy-and-girl teams enter the house for a bit of bonking. They're chased around a bit and all – except one of the girls – are murdered by the monstrous Winthrop offspring before Carter and Howard enter the house and, using the infamous *Necronomicon*, evoke the tree sprites to spirit away the evil.

Despite the lack of intricate plot, you *may* want to rent this movie solely for its special effects. Okay, the head-banging and blood-spattering scenes aren't particularly hot, but watch out for one inventive monster. She oozed more character than all the human fodder put together and left me feeling both repulsed by her and sorry for her. If special effects ever swung a movie from bad to mediocre these are they.

John Gilbert

THE UNNAMABLE

THE 13TH FLOOR

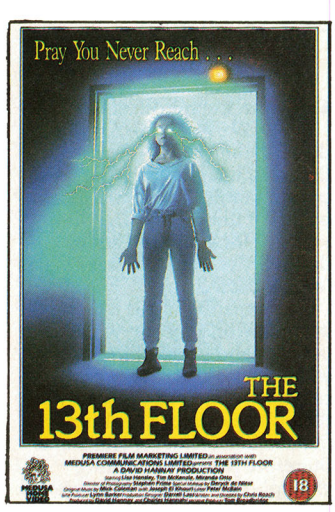
Starring: **Lisa Hensley, Tim McKenzie, Miranda Otto.** *Producer* **David Hannay,** *Director* **Chris Roach.** *Distributor* **Medusa. Cert 18, 86 mins**

Another terrifying tale of possession and supernatural revenge that involves a lift. I'm not against lifts, mind you, but when you've seen one disgusting thing in a lift, or splatty lift accident, you've seen them all.

According to the blurb, a dark and terrible secret lurks on *The 13th Floor* of a swish new city office block. The dark and terrible curse 'lurking' there – the technical term for which is Low-Budget – has visits disaster upon all who rent it. Businesses go bankrupt, office machinery breaks down and the building's electrical wiring has been turned into a deadly lifeforce. And listen to this for a clincher, the tormented soul of a cruelly-murdered boy is responsible and has been lying around for years waiting to wreak its revenge.

As luck would have it, the murderer's runaway daughter is drawn to the building where the possession becomes complete and a strange series of horrific ritual murders takes place. Not a very original concept, but if you missed that fabulous early-Eighties film *The Lift* you might be tempted between the sliding doors of this one.

John Gilbert



FEAR competition

WIN A GREAT VIDEO FROM WARNER!

THE LOST BOYS

Shiver in the depths of autumn as more than damp chills your marrow . . .

Boys will be boys, and if they're teen-vampires to a tooth, you can bet that bad things are going to happen. Warner Home Video is releasing *The Lost Boys* on October 10.

But why Wait?

We have five copies of this raunchy, chill-packed, movie to give away. But, of course, there's a catch: you have answer the questions on our Vampire Hunt form, after all we wanna be sure that you're ready to deal with these hard-rocking, long-fanged animals . . . Write out the answers on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope and send it to: **FEAR Lost Boys Competition, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB** no later than September 16. Entrants must be age 18 or over and no employees of Newsfield, **FEAR**, or Warner Home Video may take part.

Don't forget to give your name and address, and whether you want the video on **VHS** or **Beta**

The Vampire Hunt

1. Count Drac's real christian name is **V** .....
2. Name Anna Rice's **L** .....
3. Name Barlow's human helper in *Salem's Lot* **S** .....

THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

Starring: **Jack Nicholson, Cher, Susan Sarandon, Michelle Peiffer, Veronica Cartwright.** *Producers* **Neil Canton, Peter Guber, Jon Peters,** *Screenplay* **Michael Cristopher,** *Director* **George Miller.** *Distributor* **Warner Home Video. Cert 18, 114 mins**

The plot ain't the one I remember from the John Updike novel but then, this movie has a style all of its own. For a start there's **Jack Nicholson** playing a suave, sophisticated, and very horny warlock – or is that devil? – called Darryl Van Horne. He's joined by a group of witches, headed by the delectable **Cher** who wants his body but can't control his magical powers. Worst of all, however, is his ability to cut right through their pretense of the normal 'apple pie' type of American lifestyle, and the girls eventually find him too hot the handle.

The object I mourned the loss of most in the translation from book to film was the Jacuzzi – which turns up as Van Horne's massive indoor swimming pool in the film. In fact, the whole production is lavish, the magical wind and flying effects – which have no place in the novel – are spectacular and the acting is above par.

Nicholson's latest movie, *Iron Weed*, marks a change in his acting style but for those who want to see him as his old, sardonic, self – or just want to see Cher in a tight, skimpy, leotard – you'll do worse than sit through this moral tale.

John Gilbert

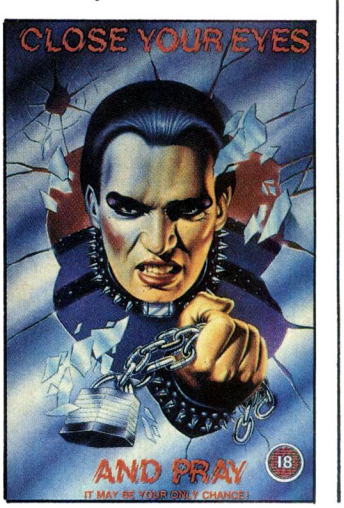
CLOSE YOUR EYES AND PRAY

Starring: **George Thomas, Donna Baltrom, Brittain Frye.** *Director* **Skip Schoolnick.** *Distributor* **Trans Global International. Cert 18, 90 mins**

'From the producers of *Flight Of The Navigator*,' it says on the inlay blurb. Maybe true, but flights of imagination play small part in in this little effort about a bunch of uncute, flabby, pimply kids out for a night of sex in daddy's deserted furniture store (ample beds . . .).

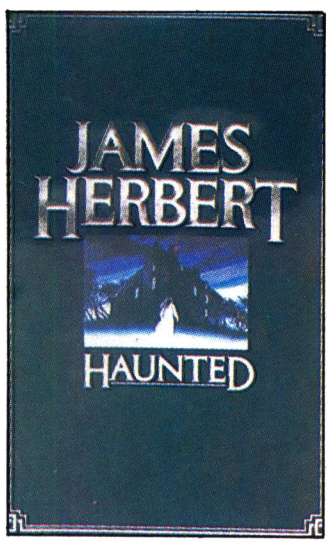
Some maniac is out to get 'em, bless him, and the rest we've seen before – and done properly. A small matter of interest to camcorder users, perhaps, is that this shoddy pile of goods appears to have been shot on video and therefore provides a telling example of what can be achieved in this field over a weekend by an amateur. One piece of advice, though: pick a more *outré* psychopath than this production team thought up over lunch! Close your eyes and preay the silly end doesn't *really* mean a sequel . . .

Oliver Frey



HAUNTED

James Herbert
Publisher **Hodder & Stoughton,** *Format* **Hardback, £10.95**
Category **Horror/ghost story**



Ask yourself, is James Herbert going soft as he approaches middle-age? It's a question to which many critics have addressed themselves since the launch of *Magic Cottage* but, after reading *Haunted* I believe that question is without relevance.

Haunted is different from most other Herbert books. Like *Magic Cottage*, it glows softly, but consistently, with menace rather than blowing all horror valves at once. That, however, is a matter of flexible style rather than a curb on ghoulish happenings – there are plenty of those.

The story starts as a sceptical psychic investigator, David Ash, accepts an assignment to look into the strange happenings at Edbrook, country home of the Marriell family. Ash bears some resemblance to Bishop in *The Dark*, although his character is crippled by a deep-rooted resistance to belief in the supernatural, made worse because he may possess the powers he's always rejected as fake.

His internal struggle is cultivated and explained within the book by two colleagues, one head of the psychic research organisation to which Ash belongs, the other a medium whose powers he rejects but whose friendship he needs. Strong stuff, indeed, and one would think that David Ash had enough of his own psychological problems without taking on those of other people.

Did I say people? I mean the Marriell family, an odd, very Victorian, bunch of people, dictated to by elder brother Robert and coddled in a brusque way by Nanny Tess, who seems to have come straight out of *The Omen*. But the family's centre-point is the young sister, Christina, buried in a morbid fascination with the death of her parents in a road accident and a link with her twin-sister, who was mad and is now dead.

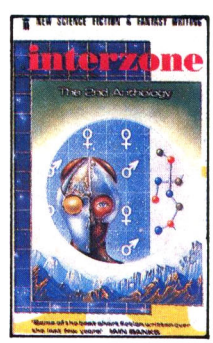
The story is held tightly to a few locations, mainly because it was written first as a television script. The lack of space, however, provides depth and a claustrophobic atmosphere so vital to the best ghost stories. As Ash unfolds this detective story, he weaves his own shroud of madness until he has to confront the supernatural and his own fears. Herbert leaves the degree of Ash's downfall to the reader's imagination, but by the last page you've built up a need for the character to live happily ever after.

It's a need which is not fulfilled and will guarantee *Haunted* a constant place in the minds of James Herbert fans and the wider audience who will come to him when they hear that the book isn't a gore extravaganza.

John Gilbert

INTERZONE – SECOND ANTHOLOGY

Editors **David Pringle, John Clute, Simon Ousley**
Publisher **New English Library,** *Format* **Paperback, £2.95**
Category **Science fiction**



Interzone is a British science fiction magazine with a reputation. I'd wager you can't think of a science fiction author who hasn't had a story published in at least one issue of the journal, so it's good to see that the *Interzone Anthology* of its best short fiction is to become a regular event.

If you're put off by the 'zap gun and technology' image put about by so much SF you'll be pleased to hear that most of the stories in this book concern social, geographic, and psychological plots. Take Neil Ferguson's *The Second Third Of C*, for instance. It's an Orwellian story in which two young lovers use a strange code of silence to escape the eyes and ears of the Big Brother state. No overt references to technology although, despite the desolate concrete rabbit warren in which the story takes place, you get the feeling that the heavy machinery and computers are there, lurking in the background.

You'd expect a spacebound tale from JG Ballard's *The Man Who Walked On The Moon* but, again, you'd be wrong. This brilliant piece of psychological fiction studies every human's need to be somebody, and if they can't be, make a living out of pretending to be someone else. It's amazing, and scary, to read the story and realise it has some relevance to the way in which we live now, and how easily we can be pulled in to another person's fantasies.

Patricia's Profession, by **FEAR** writer Kim Newman, veers in a different direction but still, nevertheless, one which is very much part of our lives now. Patricia is a player in a deadly world of fun where death has no meaning. I would recommend the anthology for the twist in this story alone.

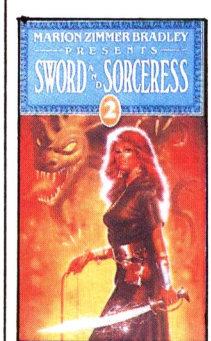
Finally, *The Unfolding*, by John Shirley and Bruce Sterling, plays upon our fears of death, but in a very unique way. It shows that our preoccupation with the idea that we are the highest lifeform with the power of life and death could be shattered by a simple shifting of consciousness, atoms and molecules that could shake the very DNA of the Earth. It sees us as possessed by a lifeforce which may decide to up and leave at any time.

This *Interzone Anthology* is full of surprises, and no matter what sort of fiction you read it will provide some chilling, humorous, and ironic tastes for you to savour. Let's hope there's a third one in store.

John Gilbert

SWORDS AND SORCERESS II

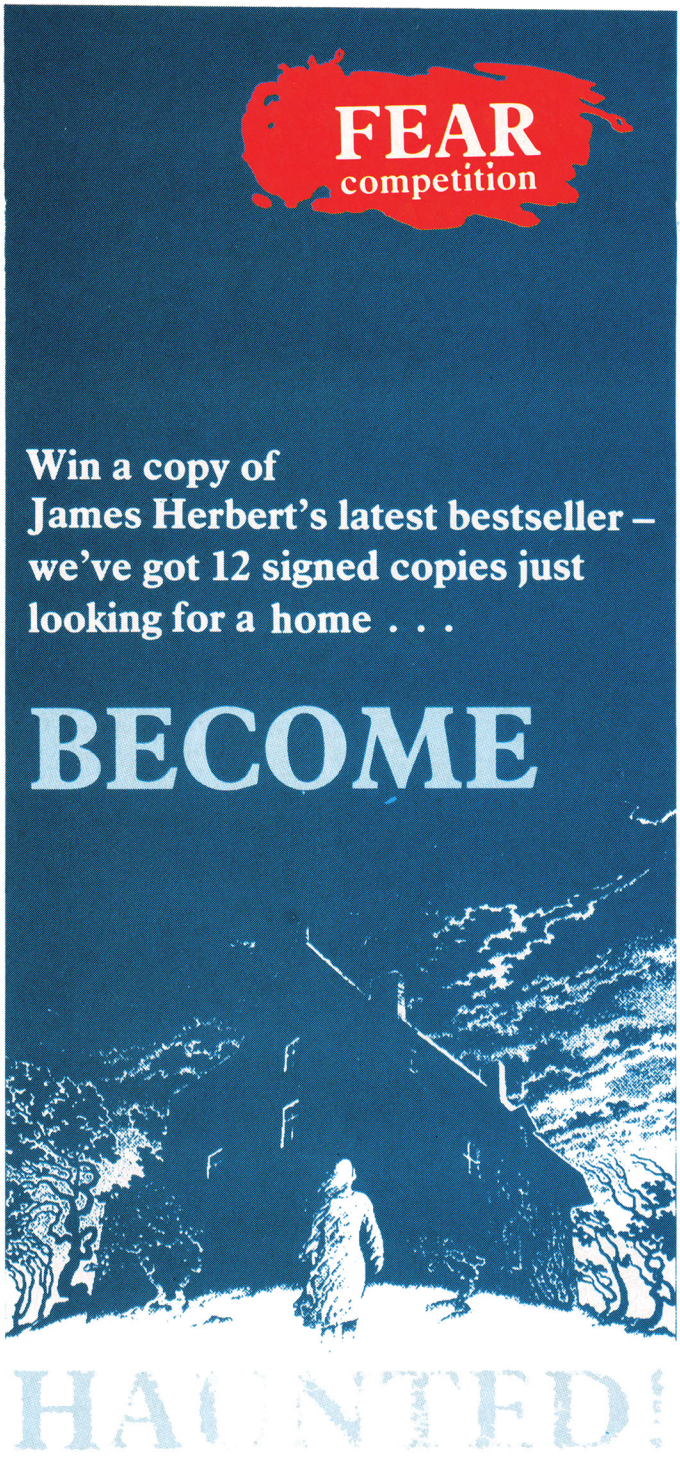
Think of **Marion Zimmer Bradley** and you may immediately call the 'Darkover' series of fantasy novels to mind. She is also, however, a very fine anthology editor and her latest, (Headline, paperback, £2.99) is a prime example. Most good anthologies usually have a principal theme – be it of story or genre – which is explored by different authors throughout the book. The *Swords And Sorceress* books investigate the role of women heroes in fantasy fiction, often reversing the common male/female polarities but also twisting the conventions of fantasy into some strange and frightening – to the hack and slash addicts – shapes. As Bradley admits in her opening gambit and the story



introductions which follow, it's difficult to express which are the best stories in this wonderful collection. They're all good, but I particularly enjoyed *Night At The Two Inns*, by **Phyllis Ann Kerr**, which doubles the 'meeting at the inn' motif and thereby causes trouble in the fantasy universe, and **Rachael Pollack**'s *The Red Guild*, an inventive story in which the assassins' guild must take on not a woman – oh horrors – but a girl – cripes! *The Unshadowed Land* gave me yet another taste of **CJ Cherry**'s brilliant hi-tech fantasy style, while *Fireweb*, by **Deborah Wheeler**, swings a woman who's taken up the sword back to the arts of healing. *Swords And Sorceress II* is an anthology to savour.

LORDS OF THE MIDDLE DARK

The first of the 'Rings Of The Master' books, by **Jack L Chalker**, (New English Library, paperback, £2.95) brings together *Lord Of The Rings* fantasy with *Terrapods* science fiction. In the not-too-distant future the galaxy is ruled over by a computer called The Master System. It provides all that life requires but

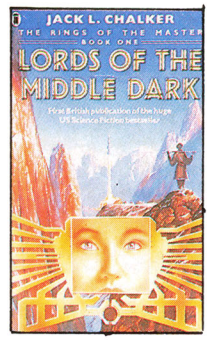


Spooky houses have always been fun for writers and readers alike. And that's just the problem – they're the biggest cliché in a horror author's vocabulary.

Enter James Herbert, a man who enjoys challenges, who can spot a cliché among a thousand shrouds, and who has the talent to turn it into something else. The result: *Haunted*, a tale we guarantee will make ghost-filled houses as popular as skateboards. It has the scares and surprises of Herbert's other novels, but also contains the unnatural glow which you find in all the best Victorian ghost stories.

James Herbert has given **FEAR** 12 copies of the *Haunted* hardback, which he has signed specially for us, to give to the winners of this competition. If you're a fan we know you'll want one, and if you're not. read this book and we guarantee you will be.

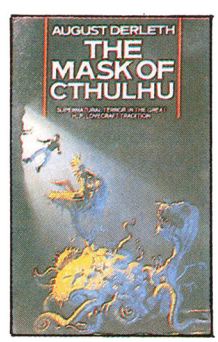
To become haunted, just tell us **who designs James Herbert's book covers**. Send your answer on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to: **Haunted Competition, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB**. Don't forget to put your name and address on as well! All entries must be in by September 15. No employees of Newsfield, **FEAR**, or Hodder & Stoughton may take part.



also insists, with a rigid mechanistic mentality, that it rules the roost and rebels will be annihilated. The problem for human beings, who want to be rid of this Machiavellian machine, is that all knowledge of engineering and computer technology has been forgotten. There is, however, a key to the Master's destruction: Five gold rings, a quest for which a group of adventurers, including a Chinese woman and an American agree to undertake. The scene is set for one blockbuster of a fantasy series. The book has done well in the States and it's likely to sell just as well on this side of the Atlantic.

THE MASK OF CTHULHU
THE TRAIL OF CTHULHU

August Derleth
Publisher **Grafton,** *Format* **Paperback, £2.50 and £2.95 respectively**
Category **Horror**

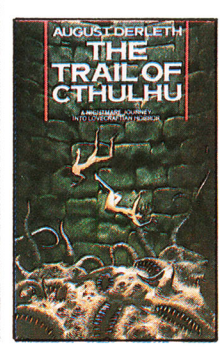


Reprints are usually the bane of any magazine's book pages but lovers of things Lovecraftian should pay heed these books by the late August Derleth – creator of the great Arkham House book publisher.

The Mask Of Cthulhu expands upon the mythos expounded by Lovecraft, in particular with the evil denizens of the four elements – of whom Cthulhu is the most well known. It begins with a sense of unease into which Derleth weaves a tale of *The Return Of Hastur* – one of the great Ancient Ones who was banished to the spaces between the stars – and *The Whippoorwills* in the hills, the birds of death of which Lovecraft was so fond.

By the end of the book we've heard of Cthulhu and many of his attempts to subvert humanity and return from his sleeping imprisonment in the seabound city of R'lyeh. Derleth saves the greatest story – intimations of contact with Cthulhu – till the end in *The Seal Of R'lyeh*. Even then we only get a momentary glimpse of something cosmically horrific as Derleth keeps in with the Lovecraftian tradition of suggestion rather than gross-out. These stories still – literally – give me nightmares and I hope they'll do the same for you.

On to *The Trail Of Cthulhu*, which is a different cauldron of fish. If I was to label it as an anthology I'd probably be screeched down by addicts and publishers alike but, in a way, it has the structure of a fiction collection rather than a novel. It's the story of several attempts to find the lair of Cthulhu and comprises five parts, each of which contains a deposition, manuscript, testament or statement about the never-ending



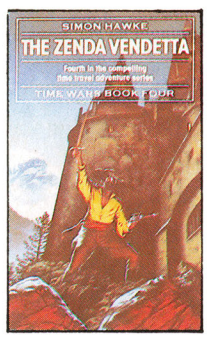
quest for darkness by men like Abel Keane and Andrew Phelan.

If you're one of those people who find the Lovecraftian structure hard going, *Trail* is a harder – more intense – read than *Mask*. If you're new to the Cthulhu mythos, the last chapter of *Mask* will give you some idea of what the various strange names and references mean within the books. Likewise, you'll also be pleased to hear that Grafton is reissuing Ramsey Campbell's superb *New Tales Of The Cthulhu Mythos* this month.

John Gilbert

THE ZENDA VENDETTA

Simon Hawke
Publisher **Headline,** *Format* **Paperback, £2.99**
Category **Science fiction**



The fourth book in the Time Wars series is, apparently, targetted at easy-to-please teenagers with a couple of hours to kill and nothing better to do with them. Familiarity with the other books is not necessary, since both a chronological history and a layman's guide to the Theories of Temporal reality are provided by way of preface.

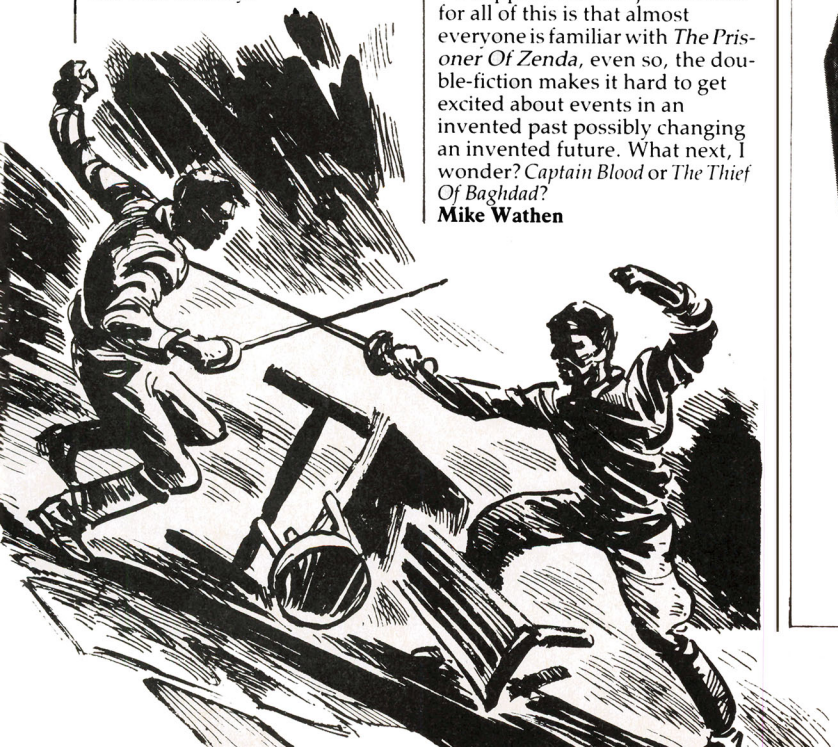
The idea of warring groups – in this case from the 27th century – going back in time and changing events is hardly original, but it is fair game for a series of this kind. What complicates matters is that the series is set in some alternate world, or future, where fictional characters have become historical characters. In this fourth book, not only are the characters fictitious, but the country is as well, and the bit of history that the future good and bad guys are fighting over is the plot to depose King Rudolf IV of Ruritania in the late 19th century.

Why anyone should want to add time-travelling terrorists to such an improbable and complicated exercise in swashbuckling as Anthony Hope's original *Prisoner Of Zenda* I don't know.

A passage from page 75 sums up what you should expect: 'Finn wondered how [Fritz von Tarleheim] would have taken it if he had known that the man whom he first took to be the king returned from Zenda, but who was actually Rudolph Rassendyll was, in fact, not Rudolph Rassendyll at all, but a soldier from the 27th century named Finn Delaney, who just happened to resemble the king'.

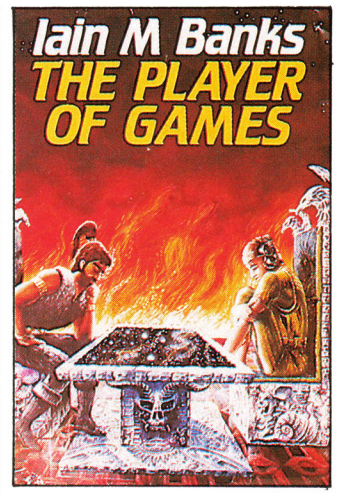
I suppose that the justification for all of this is that almost everyone is familiar with *The Prisoner Of Zenda*, even so, the double-fiction makes it hard to get excited about events in an invented past possibly changing an invented future. What next, I wonder? *Captain Blood* or *The Thief Of Baghdad*?

Mike Wathen



THE PLAYER OF GAMES

Iain M Banks
Publisher **Macmillan,**
Format **Hardback, £11.95**
Category **Science fiction**



An apt title for an author who spends his time looking at the complexity of games and relating them to life, business, culture and geography. Banks' first book, *The Wasp Factory*, was all about psychotic games, followed by *Walking On Glass* – a more obvious play on gaming motifs, *The Bridge*, in which all of life is a ritualistic game, *Espedair Street* – and what's the rock business if it's not a game – and finally *Consider Phlebas*, where the games are played out in space.

The Player Of Games is, in a way, the culmination of these books with the ultimate game in play. Gurgeh, the young, game-playing hero, of an advanced – almost Moorcockian – civilisation is manipulated into playing the ultimate game where the participants determine the future of their civilisation.

The game is so complex that it takes years to learn and even then, for Gurgeh, the more esoteric higher levels of play are seemingly unachievable when he's up against people who've been brought up with its

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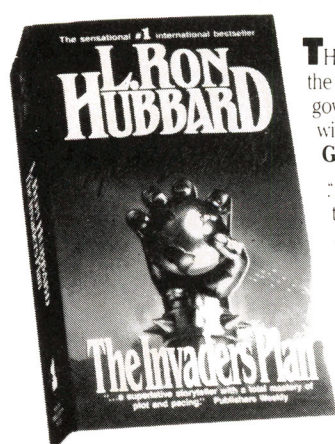

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Mission Earth

RIGHT ON TARGET

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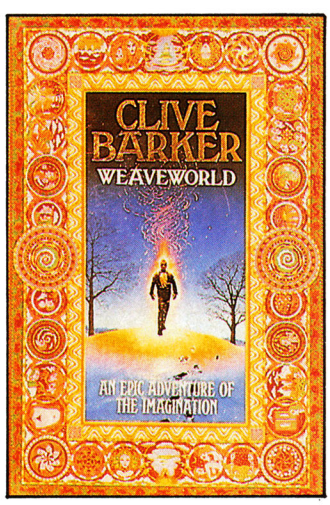
concepts. No one is safe from the game. It controls thoughts, rank, and relationships. Even the Emperor of the game-playing culture can be sacked if he loses to another participant.

As with all Iain Banks' books, the finalé is hidden in the past but, as with any game, it's unlikely that you will discover ending until you get there. The book also shows a change in the author's very mature style which will make the book more accessible than his other novels to the browsing reader. *The Player Of Games* is a book to be savoured – not only for the usual brilliant Banks stylistic methods – but also for the story line. It's a book I'll be reading again, and soon.

John Gilbert

WEAVEWORLD

Clive Barker
Publisher **Collins,** *Format*
Paperback, £2.99
Category **Fantasy/horror**



Carpets, weaving, and looms hold a strong position in European and Asian folklore. Everyone must have heard of the tale of *Sleeping Beauty* and at least one version of *The Arabian Nights*. Clive Barker's *Weaveworld* is another carpet tale and, in keeping with the tone of real fairytales, it's plain nasty.

Weaveworld's once-beautiful carpet isn't much to look at now, and around this central problem the story revolves. As the carpet decays so the magical land of The Weave within it disappears. It comes to human attention when an old woman dies and leaves the carpet to her niece, Suzanna, who's soon joined in her quest to save The Fugue by Cal, a young man who accidentally falls into the carpet and experiences its magic.

To further complicate matters two other parties – evil out for revenge and a bumbling group of carpet residents who want to save their world – are also interested in The Fugue. The evil contingent is comprised of three sisters, two of whom are wraiths, while the other, Immacolata, is still corporeal. Immacolata is the dark goddess, immaculate because of her inhumanity, but able to bear the clone spawn of human males whom she rapes.

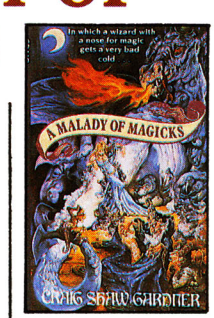
The sisters are aided by a human salesman bedecked in a coat which contains anything the beholder wishes. When someone succumbs to its glamour, they become bound to the sisters' cause: the destruction of The Fugue, whence they were thrown out as exiles. One such happless human is a policeman who intends imposing a dictatorial regime on The Fugue, but doesn't want to destroy it.

Suzanna – a distant relation to The Fugue people and who enjoys some of their powers – teams up with Cal and the strange guerilla force from the carpet and attempts to travel to the Loom at the heart of The Fugue. Once activated, The Loom will reweave the carpet. But even in imaginary lands, miracles don't happen to order.

Weaveworld can be classed as high fantasy, but it's unlike any I've ever seen. Rather than rely on JRR Tolkien's fantasies and those of the clichés Middle Earth spawned, Barker goes back to original, untainted, folklore and fairytale for his story. The images within *Weaveworld* are, therefore, purer than the trash constantly churned out by fantasy publishers. The book is also a remarkable combination of fantasy, horror and a bit of Clive Barker erotica. It hits hard and draws deep. When you pick it up, don't expect lords mounted on steeds or furry creatures and you won't be disappointed.

A MALADY OF MAGICKS

Craig Shaw Gardner
Publisher **Headline,** *Format*
Paperback, £2.99
Category **Fantasy/Humour**



Packaged to look like a Terry Pratchett paperback, Gardner's fun-filled saga of magic and mayhem adds a new voice to the file of humorous fantasy, and a strong individual voice it is too, with jokes, riddles, rhymes and a great sense of the ridiculous.

When the greatest Mage of the Western Kingdoms, Ebenezum, calls forth a rhyming demon by mistake, he soon pays for his error. Cursed with the worst fate that could befall a wizard – a dreadful sneezing allergy to all magic – he is forced to call on outside assistance for a cure. He undertakes a journey with his lovelorn apprentice Wuntvort, to reach the far city of Vushta, fabled for its pleasure gardens, forbidden palaces and unknown sins; all of which means nothing beside the fact that a magician might be found there to cure the cruelly-fated Ebenezum.

During their journey they cross paths with Hubert – the all-singing tap-dancing dragon – Hendrek Melifox, the huge warrior who puts a whole vocabulary into the meaning of the word 'doom' and Death as ghoulish quiz-master. Unfortunately, Ebenezum cannot practise sorcery without sneezing and Wuntvort cannot remember the spells.

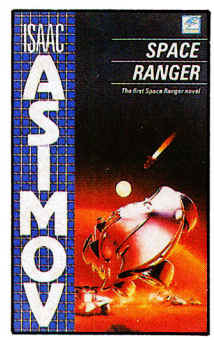
Will they ever reach the fabled city or are they fated to perish under an onslaught of magic and bad jokes? You'll have to wait for Volumes 2 and 3 – forthcoming – to find out, and since the series builds momentum as it moves, becoming slightly more crazed with each volume, you'll have the greatest fun getting there.

Mythological beasts, Cuthbert, the magic sword who can't abide bloodshed, plus the 500 ferrets. Almost all is revealed in the final fiasco, except the monks and the cistern – unfortunately, we are never told the answer to that one. Still, since all is set for a further trilogy, you never know your luck.

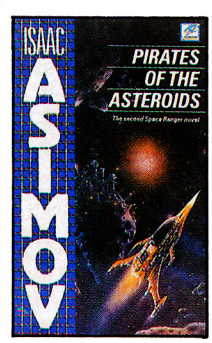
Di Wathen

SPACE RANGER/PIRATES OF THE ASTEROIDS

I've been a fan of **Isaac Asimov** since my early teens, preferring him in some ways to



Arthur C Clarke, so it's good to see that some of his earlier Fifties books are being reprinted. The two books in question (Lightning, paperback, £1.99) are the first in a series of novelettes about space cop David Starr. In the first he has to solve the mystery of deaths which seem to stem from Mars, while in the second he goes on a hunt amongst a group of artificial



asteroids for the space pirates who murdered his parents 25 years previously. The books are slim volumes with bright, Fifties-style, covers and big print. Methinks they're meant for children and teenagers, but adults will equally get a quick, exciting, read from them.

SWAMP THING VOLUME SIX

Alan Moore
Publisher **Titan Books,**
Format **Large softcover, £5.95**
Category **Fantasy comic-book**

Flaying humans alive is not normally considered an appropriate topic for family newspapers, so it is unlikely that the sixth volume of Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing* will be widely viewed as much more than a snuff strip. And what with two flayings-alive, one dog-burning, one distinctly bad trip, one busload of pleased-ta-meet-ya zombies and one bravura mass murderer ('In Portland I heard about a guy who'd done six hundred and fifty!') it certainly offers the blood'n'mud punter more for his £5.95 than, say, the studied inertia of everyday graphic-novel life in *Watchmen*.

The first and longest story of the three here, *Southern Change*, is a gripping and at times horrifying tale of film-makers who, pitching their cameras and coke lines at a deserted slave plantation for a tale of the Old South, find their improvised script segueing into the dark history of the gleaming white pile. The real/not real atmosphere reminded me strongly of the Forties film *Dead Of Night*.

White and black alike, they find themselves replaying the whole grisly flay-by-night saga of the master who punishes his slave . . . until the buried dead of the plantation arise, in a strangely and superbly moving spread of eight vertical frames: 'After the first exuberance of the resurrection had abated, they quietly discussed what they wanted to do most, now that they were alive again. Some wanted a job, and a home, and a right to vote. Some of the women wanted new clothes and some of the men joked about that.'

This is where Swamp Thing, aka Alec Holland, pops in to right the wrongs of the world – burning the mansion and its unrighted wrongs, and leaving the dead to rest.

I YAM WHAT I YAM

The second story, *Windfall*, is a lighter vignette of an unlikeably cynical old hippy who discovers one of Swamp Thing's psychedelic yams and – unwillingly, unwittingly – gives slices to two 'friends'.

One, a woman in her last hours of cancer, is swept into a vividly-drawn classic trip of gleaming geometry. The other, a boastful and selfish man, becomes Alec Holland and relives the Swamp Thing's painful genesis, wandering through the streets seeing himself and others as monsters

Finally, *Bogeymen* is the gruesome tale of a thing that bumps off in the night, a mass murderer who has his come-uppance at the hands of Swamp Thing – and, in a neat tie-in with the volume's opening, has to face his former victims lying uneasy beneath the ground just as the dead slaves of the plantation could not sleep until the depressive green giant had resolved the ills of their past.

Dark side; light side; the book is like one of those yams, full of Moore's familiar touches of contrast (phrases uttered at the end of one scene often form the opening of the next, vastly different, episode), with Swamp Thing himself reminiscent (again) of *Watchmen*'s Dr Manhattan, observing with detached puzzlement the border of humanity and inhumanity.

Flaying a man alive is the worst thing to do, because he ceases to be a man; is a slave still a person?; the yams turn people into different creatures; the mass murderer thrives on death; Swamp Thing himself is no longer a human, yet the dead are. The definition of humanity and life is The Theme, and the all-sweeping potency of life is nowhere more vividly expressed than in Moore's description of the unhappily dead slaves: 'fondly recalling old and cherished horrors'.

Now, who said Charles Shaar Murray was pretentious?

Barnaby Page

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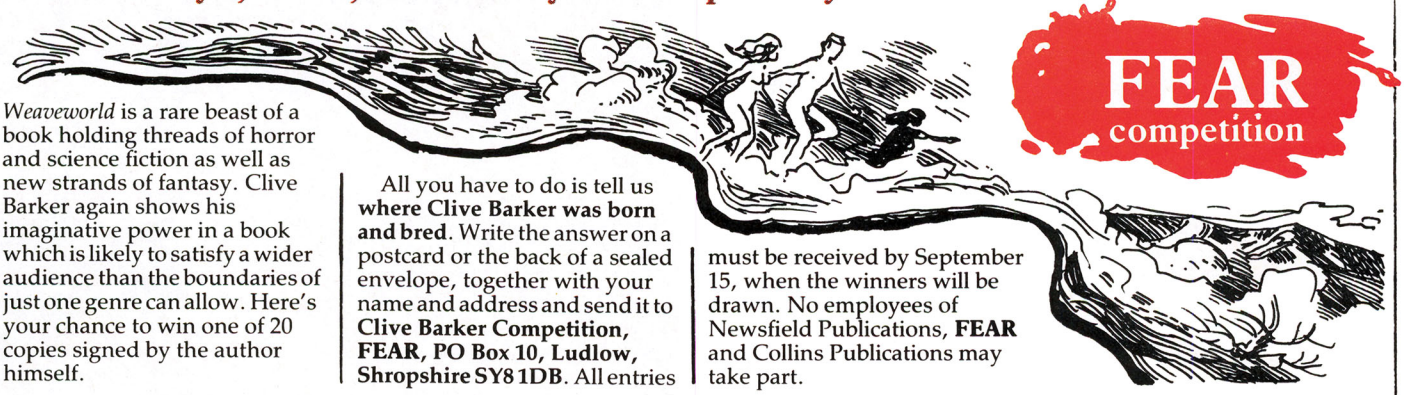


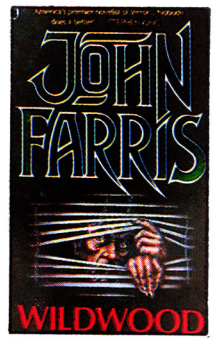
FEAR competition

Weaveworld is a rare beast of a book holding threads of horror and science fiction as well as new strands of fantasy. Clive Barker again shows his imaginative power in a book which is likely to satisfy a wider audience than the boundaries of just one genre can allow. Here's your chance to win one of 20 copies signed by the author himself.

All you have to do is tell us **where Clive Barker was born and bred**. Write the answer on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope, together with your name and address and send it to **Clive Barker Competition, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB**. All entries must be received by September 15, when the winners will be drawn. No employees of Newsfield Publications, **FEAR** and Collins Publications may take part.

WILDWOOD

John Farris
Publisher **New English Library,** *Format* **Paperback, ££3.95**
Category **Fantasy/Science fiction**



In some respects John Farris is like James Herbert – you never know what to expect from his next book. He's only ever written one horror story – *Son Of The Endless Night* – but he's regarded as a horror writer. *Wildwood* will change all that.

It's the story of a wood, subject to weird storms and the appearance of mythical creatures – of which some are hunted down by fearful locals. Enter an ex-army man and his son. They, along with buddy and hunter Arn Rudledge, discover the retreat of a millionaire mad man whose experiments with time and genetics have created some beautiful, and some hideous, mutations.

The family, hunter, and hunter's Indian wife are trapped within the time vortex and at the mercy of a rich man's insane whims.

The book is sensual and sentimental. You quickly get involved with the characters, if not the action, which is somewhat surprising in a 445-page novel. Farris shows that he's a master of character – better in some respects than Stephen King during his early period. Even his beasts of wild fantasy will tag you emotionally, almost making you reject their cruel, but obvious and necessary, fates.

Wildwood makes brutal, but fascinating, reading and will no doubt draw those who have not read Farris before toward this greatly undervalued writer.
Mark Westerby

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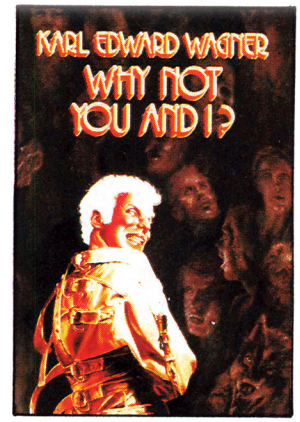


Karl Edward Wagner
Publisher **Dark Harvest,** *Format* **Hardback, £18.95 (Limited Edition £34.95)**
Category **Horror**

Karl Edward Wagner is widely regarded as being among the most underrated writers in the horror field today. This collection of short fiction was first published in paperback by Tor Books in September 1987. Dark Harvest's handsomely illustrated hardback edition adds two stories, one reprint and one original.

Wagner's writing ranges over the poignantly Bradburyesque – in feel, not style – of *The Last Wolf*, the harrowingly matter-of-fact narrative of exploitation and degradation that is *More Sinned Against* and the delicious satire of *Neither Brute Nor Human* – winner of the 1984 British Fantasy Award for best short story.

Thematic cohesion is provided by Wagner's recurrent interest in the ramifications of fiction writing, an intimate concern which he develops to a universal level in a number of directions, exposing, amongst other things, the potential of the imagination to enrich and enslave, of belief to delude and empower. The notion of fiction-as-life/life-as-fiction finds renewed vigour in a complementary pair of supernatural mystery thrillers, *Sign Of The Salamander* and *Blue Lady, Come Back*.

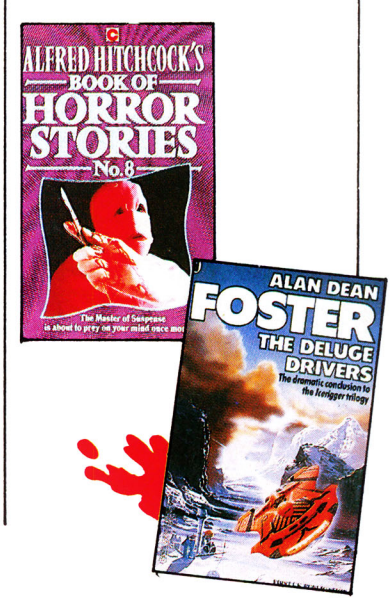
The book's culminating trilogy of tales, *Lacunae*, *Lost Exits* and *Silted In*, show what psychological horror really involves – not an excuse to skimp on invention by substituting mundane for supernatural unpleasantries, but a challenge to the imagination to engineer images and events which make tangible the subrational workings of th human psyche in a fresh and disturbing fashion. Wagner meets this with a zest and finesse which make all his contributions to the genre essential reading, and this collection is no exception.
Simon MacCulloch

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S BOOK OF HORROR STORIES NUMBER 8

A book of horror stories? Who are New English Library kidding? This book (paperback, £2.95) contains only one piece of closet horror fiction, and even that just uses a fairground haunted house – *The Spook House* by **Clark Howard** – to justify its existence in the book. The other stories include a science fiction/crime mystery called *Countdown*, in which a jilted husband gets revenge on his wife's lover by removing all the food from a space rocket, and a psychological murder story called *A Very Cautious Boy*. The rest of the stories are written in the same Sixties format – the book was first published in the Sixties – and from its content you would expected it to be released as a crime/thriller anthology.

THE DELUGE DRIVERS

In the conclusion of **Alan Dean Foster**'s 'Icerigger Trilogy' (New English Library, £2.95) we return to the planet Tran-Ky-Ky where Ethan Fortune, hero of the previous books, is looking forward to returning home. It's an expectation which is short lived, though, as he's told to stay. The scientists at Brass Monkey base have found that the temperature in the icy wastelands is rising at a fatal rate and that the thaw will bring death to all who are on the planet. Fortune soon finds that the temperature is being deliberately tampered with, but the clues as to who would wish total destruction of such a brittle culture as that of Brass Monkey remain a mystery for much longer. *The Deluge Drivers*, like the books before it, reeks of *Star Wars* technology, but they are essentially well-built mysteries which highlight the struggle of a transplanted culture in a constantly hostile environment. Excellent science fiction.



RAISING THE DEAD

Here's a dead letter box. It's up to you to fill it, so contact us, make your views known to the great magazine-buying public, or simply relieve a Sunday afternoon's boredom. Send letters or artwork to RAISING THE DEAD, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB . . .

MARBLE ART

Dear **FEAR**,
I received issue one of **FEAR** yesterday and I can only say congratulations! At last, a well-balanced, well-produced, gorgeous to look at, and interesting mag. The layout is good, as long as you don't do *too* many irritating reverse white-on-black pages – they may look good but they're the devil to read.

The balance of fiction – excellent, of course – reviews, news and articles, is just right; the marble headlines are original and works of art in themselves, and I *love* the beckoning finger!

David Keep's censorship article was revealing and I endorse his views entirely – an excellent article for the first issue of a publication that's, let's face it, bound to draw a few knocks.

Mike Wathen – an eye opener for the critics that I would just love to put on the staff notice board! Fan File is the *real* important bit – how about a list of convention dates?
Jan Perfect, Dorking, Surrey

A librarian, how encouraging. Yes Jan, we will be listing and covering conventions – watch out for our World Fantasy Convention *issue in October.*

KING SIZED

Dear **FEAR**,
I'm a Stephen King fan and I have a few questions to ask:

I've read articles in certain American sci-fi magazines detailing *The Running Man* movie based on King's brilliant horror/sci-fi book and have been waiting ages for it to be released in this country. Is it likely to be released here in cinematic or video form?

I have also read rumours of a possible television series based on King's massive *It* novel, do these rumours have any foundation?

Finally, on the subject of Stephen King book-to-screen translation, I do know most have been pretty dire. *Christine* was far too tame although *Cujo* wasn't bad and the *Creepshow* movies were a great laugh; I just can't understand why the reviewers took those two (*Creepshow*) movies so seriously. I think by far the best attempt is *Stand By Me* which was not really a horror movie.
Praful Patel, Dudley, West Midlands

You're in luck Praful, just look at our preview of The Running Man *in the movie section. You'll also be pleased to hear that Warner Home Video is going to release a range of Stephen King films on its budget label and that* Maximum Overdrive, *the King-directed movie, is to be launched on video by CBS-Fox in September – read the preview in* **FEAR***'s video section. As for the* It *television series, it's unlikely we'll see it on BBC or ITV. You may have more luck with* Return To Salem's Lot, *which will soon be on video in Britain – though has little to do with Stephen King.*

RIGHT BALANCE

Dear **FEAR**
I am a screenwriter who has worked for some time in the horror/fantasy arena, as author of the Ken Russell-directed *Gothic* (book and film), the Tri-Star witchcraft movie *The Kiss* (to be released September 9 in the US) and the new Sam Raimi film for Universal, *The Nanny*. I was also one of the writers on James Herbert's ill-fated BBC TV series *Haunted*. So you can imagine that it was with some eagerness that I snatched up your new magazine's first issue.

I was surprised and delighted to find it a far more intelligent read than most – if not all – other magazines of its type. It's refreshing to find journalisitc quality and a genuine interest in the larger issues intimated by literary and cinematic 'horror', instead of the usual simple fodder for gore-lovers.

In particular, I admired your attitude to censorship. I strongly believe that censorship should, in a perfect world, be left to individuals themselves and not to a body that defines 'good taste' or (that marvellous word) 'decency'. In my experience it is these people who profess Christian and moral values who are in fact the most suspect of all. Theirs is the corrupting influence that should put us on our guard. In their craving for Victorian values they forget child prostitution, boy chimney sweeps and Jack the Ripper. Their attitude is often simply: let's pretend things don't exist.

The Censor you interviewed seems an eminently reasonable man, and more power to his elbow. He fulfils a much-needed position and does it well. I couldn't support him more. Beyond this, I think society largely sets its own rules of conduct and acceptability. But Lord save us from people who tell us what we're going to think. People who tell us that we won't like it if we think. People to whom the worst sin is to be disturbed by a piece of art.

The best art *does* disturb. It is meant to disturb. It *has* to disturb. Grünewald, Dali, Ernst, Goya, Géricault, Bellmer, Polanski, Kubrick, Bunüel. The list is endless – and I hope it will be.

As a reaction against the liberal thinking of the Sixties and Seventies, we are rapidly entering an age of New Puritanism. It is only a matter of time before the crazy fundamentalism in the United States (where, yes, they still talk seriously of Satan, even when it comes to AIDS) throws up another McCarthy, or Matthew Hopkins, and who knows who will be the new 'witches'? The authors? The film-makers? Who will be in the 1990's cast of *The Crucible*? You and me?

I have recently been writing about the history of witchcraft and the territory seems all too familiar. Outside influences put stress on society, society needs a scapegoat – the scapegoat is the outsider. But, as always, the truth is that we have nothing to fear from witches or warlocks, sorcerers of the cinema screen or diabolists of the wordprocessor – instead we have everything to fear from 'the black minds of their white persecutors'.

I wish your magazine very success and encouragement in the battle ahead.
Stephen Volk

HOBBY HORSE

Dear **FEAR**,
I look at the special effects of people like Tom Savini, Mark Shostrum and Rob Bottin with a sense of awe, not disgust. I think it's about time people opened their eyes and realised SFX is an art, not a vile, sick, hobby. The FX industry is only going to grow now that the popularity and demand for horror films is escalating. I think the British Board of Censors is going to have to change its ways and ideas if it wants to keep the British horror fan happy.
Michael Ralph, Moseley, Birmingham

That's Classification, *Michael, not* Censorship, *and who says that the BBFC is concerned with keeping horror fans happy? I would, however, agree with you that SFX is an art form and, after bumping in to Mark Shostrum the other day, I can also say that the practitioners don't treat their work as a hobby.*

OLD FOLK

Dear **FEAR**,
Do keep up with the interviews with our favourite authors, only don't neglect the old timers. I'd quite like to know a bit more about dear old Robert E Howard since his stories introduced me to fantasy and horror fiction in the first place. Mind you, an interview would be difficult!
Mark Tomlinson, Netherton, Merseyside

Quite a talented artist is our Mark, as you can see by the cartoon which illuminate this letters's section. I'd be interested to see who else out there is good with the ink pot, pen or pencil, just as I'm interested in short fiction and letters. We'll also shortly be starting an irregular series of articles about Old Masters, and the first of those will feature HP Lovecraft.

WHERE'S FANTASY AND SF?

Dear **FEAR**,
I anticipated your publication with a great deal of excitement. You seemed to have lived up to expectations apart from a few points.

My major gripe is that on the cover and wherever **FEAR** has been advertised you have proclaimed to serve fans of the fantasy, horror, and science fiction genres. Surely this must be a mistake – all three stories were horror or supernatural, in the book reviews there was only one fantasy novel reviewed and only a few more science fiction books. The Pro-Files and special features were mostly horror, in

fact the only place fantasy and science fiction got a look in was in the competitions.

Now, I accept that there are more horror readers and you must cater for them, but there are those of us who also like fantasy and science fiction. So come on, give us a decent review of *King Of The Murgos*, a Pro-File of Stephen Donaldson and generally include some stuff other than horror. An idea would be to have a short story from each of the three genres. I would have preferred to have seen more of Oliver Frey's artwork – knowing how good it is from the hallowed pages of your sister magazine CRASH.

Contrary to what you must be thinking, I did like **FEAR** – if I didn't I would ignore it and not write in, so keep up the good work.

G Leversuch, Holbury, Hants

How right you are, but I can assure you that we will cover all three genres as the issues spill on to the shelves. This issue we're giving away signed copies of Weaveworld *– a fantasy if ever there was one – we're looking at the new* Legend *fantasy imprint and we're reviewing a lot more science fiction and fantasy. Next issue we're interviewing David Gemmel, and plans are afoot to interview Rachael Pollock and cyberpunk William Gibson – to mention just a few fantasy/science fiction writers. As for* King Of The Murgos, *it's not easy to get book publishers to sit up and take note of a new magazine. The book was never submitted for review.*

FREE FOR ALL

Dear **FEAR**,

Why is it that films in America can be released unrated, but here in Britain have to be cut to achieve an 18 certificate. True horror fans are deeply disappointed when they find out that their favourite film-maker's work has been tampered with. Surely it's time for a new system to be introduced with a special rating for Extreme Horror/Gore.

It's about time we saw films as the makers intended us to. The films that I most want to see have, so I've been told, have all been banned. Could you tell me if this is true. the films are: *Dawn Of The Dead, Last House On The Left, I Spit On Your Grave* and cannibal films such as *Ferox* and Luci Fulci's zombie films. Also, would it be possible to print a list of banned films in a future issue of **FEAR**, and are there any plans to interview George A Romero?

Andrew Gosling, Longridge, Lancs

All the films you mention, bar Last House On The Left were release and have since been banned. Readers may, however, be able to help you to track down a copy of Dawn Of The Dead. Last House . . . *was never released in Britain and has, therefore, never been banned. Print a list of banned films? It would fill an issue, but, with George Romero's* Monkeyshines *in the cinematic wings, we are hoping to have an interview with the director very soon.*

SPOONFUL OF HORROR

Dear **FEAR**,

Apropos of **FEAR**'s invitation to reader to write with their views on whether the current craze for making endless sequels is a good thing: I believe that there is certainly nothing wrong with making a succession of follow-ups to a successful movie, always provided that each sequel contains that added quality of freshness and originality of plot in order to avoid boring the viewer to sleep with stale and repetitious similarities to its preceding film.

It's no good having the same old psycho or monster doing more or less the same thing in film after film, and provoking the certainty that after his usual despatch of a string of sex-mad teenagers with whatever weapon he deems necessary, he will be killed off at the end in the same old grisly fashion, after which the hero strolls off relatively unscathed into the sunset, pathetically arm-in-arm with the girl of his dreams.

Glad to see that **FEAR** is giving readers the chance to air their views on censorship. Quite honestly, I am *fed up* to the teeth with these well-meaning but utterly irritating censors bowdlerising graphic scenes of gore from my favourite horror movies. As James Herbert once said, a person must be pretty warped in the head to begin with to be influenced in any harmful way by lurid scenes of violence and gore. Myself, I've watched hundreds of horror movies and yet I don't go round bumping people off with axe or knife. A good dose of horror never does anyone any harm – provided you can take it.

Alan Toner, Birkenhead, Merseyside

BEST AND REST

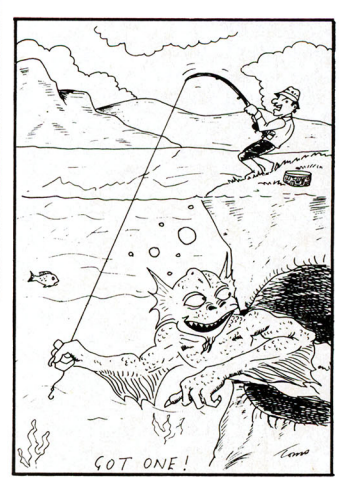
Dear **FEAR**,

I have just purchased (from WH Smith of all places) a copy of **FEAR**, and what an unexpected pleasure it turned out to be. Behind the striking cover lay all manner of evil delights to please even the most critical horror fans.

FEAR takes the best ingredients of *Starburst* and *Fangoria* with a tasty smattering of *Samhain* and *Shock Xpress* thrown in for good measure to produce a tasty terror fan's delight. My favourites of the first issue were the **FEAR** Fiction segments – please print a Clive Barker short story soon! – the John Carpenter interview, the news pages and all the various reviews sections. Each of these were expertly written by people who obviously know and love the horror genre. Please keep up the good work and excellent value.

Paul McEvoy, Longthorpe, Peterborough

Glad you enjoyed the mag. Clive's a bit busy at the moment but I promise to keep twisting his arm until we get some sort of fiction out of him. On the question of value, perhaps I could have readers' views on **FEAR***'s price. In order to be in juicy, glossy, full-colour, the price has to stay where it is, or would you prefer a mag with the colour content of* Starburst?



SCIENCE FICTION

A FRESH LOOK AT SCIENCE FICTION

The **British Science Fiction Association** provides a unique perspective on science fiction and fantasy today.

Vector is one of the leading critical journals in Britian – 'a required title' says ***Anatomy of Wonder!*** Recent issues have included interviews with Guy Gavriel Kay, Bruce Sterling and Frederik Pohl, articles on Bob Shaw, feminism in SF and children's SF, articles by Garry Kilworth and Gwyneth Jones, and extracts from books by Brian Aldiss and Michael Moorcock. Plus the very best in modern critical writing.

Matrix is Britain's leading SF news magazine. Keeps you up to date with what's happening in the world of SF, conventions, fanzines, media reviews and a lively letter column.

Paperback Inferno is a paperback book review magazine that tells you all you need to know about the books on your local bookshop shelves.

Focus is for anyone with an interest in writing, with market up-dates, tips and ideas from the professionals, and workshops on your stories.

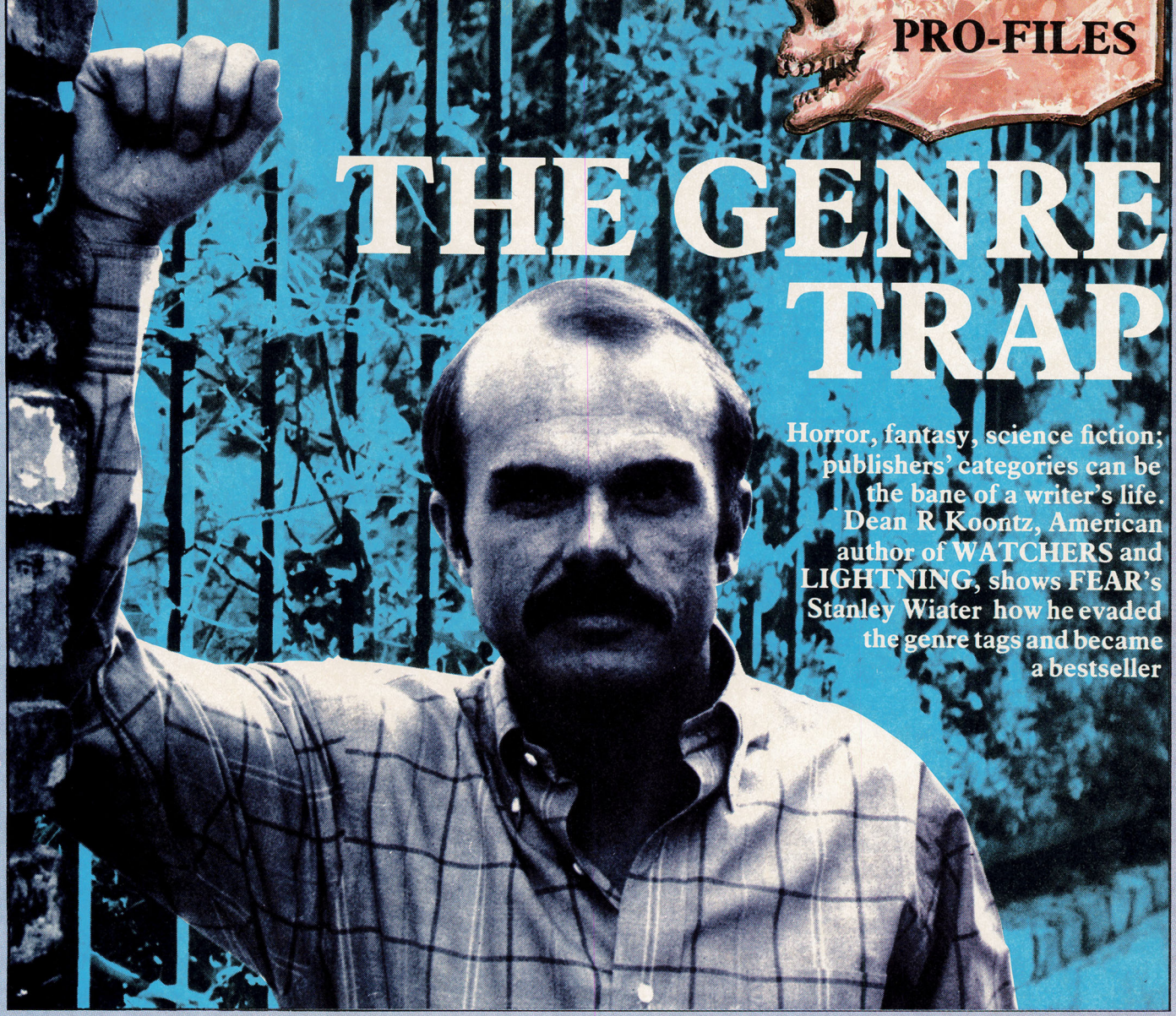
And that's only part of the story. The **BSFA** is the organisation for everyone with an interest in science fiction, from the readers to the writers. And all for just £10 a year.

For all details contact Joanne Raine, BSFA Membership Secretary, 33 Thornville Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS26 8EW.

THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

THE GENRE TRAP

Horror, fantasy, science fiction; publishers' categories can be the bane of a writer's life. Dean R Koontz, American author of WATCHERS and LIGHTNING, shows FEAR's Stanley Wiater how he evaded the genre tags and became a bestseller



In his review of this author's latest American bestseller, *Lightning*, John Gilbert struck a bull's-eye by asking: 'Who, amongst modern writers, can be in fantasy, horror, science fiction, romance and thriller genres all at the same time and yet be in none of them?'

The answer is Dean R Koontz.

Once described as the 'least-known bestselling author in America', Koontz has emerged as one of the most respected and popular writers on the scene – after a 20-year bout with obscurity via paperback originals and by publishing numerous books using names other than his own, such as Leigh Nichols, Owen West, KR Dwyer and Brian Coffey. There are several others, some just recently coming to light, but rest assured that everything Koontz now publishes, including the pseudonymous work he wishes to bring back into print, will be under his own name.

"Of the first three books I had on bestseller lists, two of them were under pen names"

An admitted workhorse, Koontz began his career writing science-fiction stories and novels in the late Sixties. It was not until the early Eighties, however, that he began truly to make his mark with a series of remarkable horror and dark suspense novels which include *Whispers* (1980), *Phantoms* (1983), *Darkfall* (1984), *Strangers* (1986) and last year's *Watchers*. It's been estimated that his sales worldwide will soon reach an astounding 50 million copies, in several hundred translated editions. Motion pictures have been made from two of his books, *Shattered* (1973) and *Demon Seed* (1973), with several more always under option and *Watchers* in production in Canada.

A modest person, Koontz has aided numerous other writers behind the scenes, and became the first president of The Horror Writers Of America in 1987. Beyond the public acclaim he enjoys at the age of 42, he is at last receiving some critical attention, most notably in Bill Munster's essay collection *Sudden Fear: The Horror And Dark Suspense Of Dean R Koontz* (Starmont House). Truly someone who deserves the major success he has achieved, Koontz has also broken free of the genre ghetto primarily because he knows the genres better than just about any other author working today.

WORKAHOLIC ANONYMOUS

SW: There's this vicious rumour that you're going to cut back on your work schedule to just 50 hours a week. Seriously, just how much of your time is devoted to writing?

DK: I just finished a new book. It was an exhausting, debilitating process, and I collapsed and slept for 14 hours straight through when done. And I got up the next day, and was looking forward to a couple of weeks of idleness. But by midafternoon I was thinking about the plotline of the next book. [laughs] so you can't stop yourself; it's an insidious habit. Because of the size of my most recent books, it may appear that I'm writing less. But it's just fewer projects. Writing is what I do, so I'm probably never going to be able to turn it off. I really have never had the *desire* to turn it off.

SW: Few people, especially those who have only read your recent bestsellers, have any idea of just how prolific you've been to come this far. How many books have you published?

DK: There's something like 50

titles, but I don't even know because I haven't done a count recently. Most of those titles were done in the first half of my career, when I was writing science fiction – and everything else – to stay afloat, because nothing was paying me very well. As years went by, the pay got a little better, and I was able to work a little more on each one. I'm at the point now where I do a book every nine or ten months.

SW: With your recent string of international bestsellers, surely you can relax a little in your work habits?

DK: I'm still working the same kind of hours. Perhaps harder, now that I'm writing one book a year rather than three or four. I often work 80-hour weeks, so it's not gotten easier! About a year ago I made a statement in public that I was only going to work 50 to 55 hours a week. And this year, for various reasons, has the worst schedule of all! Happily, things have improved from the days when I looked forward to selling 25,000 paperbacks. I don't find a lot of value in some of the early titles, but certainly they had a value to me in that I learned my way, in a ham-fisted, slow progression. Ultimately, I built up quite a body of craft technique that serves me well now.

SW: Perhaps not everyone is aware of how many literary reputations you had once, and going simultaneously. Isn't it true that you first achieved fame as one of your pseudonyms?

DK: Yes, the first to show up on any bestseller list was under a pseudonym, and it was daunting because you couldn't go out into the stores and stand there and preen. You'd look like a complete idiot dragging people over to the shelves and saying: 'Yes, it's me. I *know* it's not the same name as on my driver's licence, but it's genuinely me!' In fact, of the first three books I had on bestseller lists, two of them were under pen names: the first Leigh Nichols, the second Owen West, and then *Whispers* under my own name. So that was frustrating. I was stuck doing these books under pen names for various reasons, but happily that's over with; they've all been dropped.

"I write what I want to read, what appeals to me, and what excites me at the moment"

OUT OF THE TRAP

SW: You've also been hampered over the years by the way your publishers have packaged you, first strictly as a 'science-fiction writer', then as a 'horror writer'. Your readers know that you use a myriad number of fantastic elements in your novels, but they're not strictly defined by any one genre.

DK: I pushed my paperback publisher, Berkley, for years to get away from the narrow genre look. And they kept on at me for years saying this would be a serious mistake. But at some point they began to listen, and lo and behold, the books sold better than before. It's always been my contention that mainstream readers are going to like what I'm doing – and so are readers of various genres – *if they aren't turned off literally by the package*.

But I like what's happening more and more with my covers and promotion. The cover of my newest book, *Midnight*, coming out in January, is very strong and very stylish – and doesn't descend to the worst impulses of illustration in this market. And I'm sure this book will do better simply because more people will pick it up because the cover doesn't turn them off.

It's awful, but every writer is going to be judged to some degree by his publisher's packaging. A number of people in Britain have told me I have a certain image among a lot of people who haven't even read me simply because I was published initially so much by WH Allen/Star, which is apparently seen as a down-market house. Therefore, a lot of British readers think I'm a particular kind of writer when I'm exactly the *opposite* kind of writer, because of my association with that publishing house. And of course I hated my British packages for years. But now that I've gone to Headline, the books look more like what they really are.

BUYING BACK FREEDOM

SW: You've bought back the rights to your early novels so you wouldn't be classified as a writer of 'sci-fi' who wasn't capable of writing anything else. Apparently you don't wish to be marketed solely as a 'horror' writer because many readers might mistakenly believe you can now write only in that genre, once again incapable of transcending it?

DK: Exactly. There are many reasons why I don't want the label, and that's one of them. I don't want to be limited as to what I can write; I want to be able to write what I want. For example, when I signed a recent three-book deal with Putnam, the most appealing clause in the contract was that they wouldn't know anything about the contents of the books, not even the titles! That's the only way I want to write. I don't try to write for the market. That's *death*. I write what I want to read, what appeals to me, and what excites me at the moment.

A second reason is that I don't exactly like a lot of what is usually personified by the 'horror' label. Because any time there's a boom in a genre, you find yourself mixed in with a lot of writers who are grabbing what's popular at the moment, and who are writing it because there's a market for it, and not out of any true passion. So you end up being tarred with that same brush.

Finally – and this is the least important in your career in terms of how much money you're going to make or how wide your readership is going to be – I never get particularly widely reviewed within the genre. I find most genre reviewers not really perceptive of what I'm doing. And what I'm doing is kind of slipping into the mainstream, mixing genres, and trying to bring techniques to a field which generally doesn't get them. And when I have the label 'horror' on my books, I'm immediately reviewed *less* widely. So if I'm therefore going to be reviewed mostly in the genre where they don't understand what I'm doing, I'm going to find myself mostly with bad reviews.

But as long as we keep the word 'horror' off my work, it gets widely reviewed by every major newspaper and magazine. I get a couple of hundred reviews per book, and they're about 95 per cent positive. Whereas when I'm reviewed within the genre, I get about 50 per cent positive and 50 per cent negative. [Laughs.]

So just for the selfish reason of wanting to see more good reviews, I want to keep labels off my books.

SW: That's understandable. But consider how a writer must be packaged to some degree to sell enough books to make a living, yet once you're identified as a credible horror or spy or mystery writer, you're then damned by the critics for being so good in such a 'bad' field. Why do you think that is?

DK: Many of the mainstream critics begin their reviews of my books by saying 'I began this book not realising what kind of book it was, and I usually don't like novels like this, but I really liked this one'. What they mean is that they didn't realise the novel had an element of the fantastic in it. And whether it's horror, science fiction or fantasy, *that* is the major prejudice in the mainstream media. The critics tend not to take them seriously because of it. Yet if that reviewer can be conned into thinking that he's picked up some sort of straight, mainstream thriller or whatever, he'll find himself liking it once he's committed to reading it through. And then what they'll say – and this irks me for the sake of other writers – is 'Dean Koontz is the one person who can do this stuff well

enough so serious readers can appreciate it'. And I'll say 'No I'm not – there are all these other guys, but you've never given them a chance because of the way their publishers have packaged them! And it wasn't only until my packaging was better than you even began to read *me*!'

But it's irritating on behalf of other writers in the field who don't get that kind of recognition because most critics and potential readers will look at the book's stereotyped cover and say 'Bah – I don't like this!' and never even give it a chance. It's like writing a delicate novel about teenagers and having them put a naked 16-year-old girl on the cover. It just undermines everything you're trying to do as a craftsman and an artist.

THE BROTHERHOOD

SW: It's even more understandable now why you're moving away from being narrowly identified as a horror writer. On the other hand, why did you agree to become president of The Horror Writers Of America if you're so uncomfortable with that very label?

DK: I've always believed that writers are a brotherhood. I've since found out the hard way that at least half of the writers I've encountered, both male and female, don't believe that! [Laughs.] I've found a degree of envy that was frightening, and really dismaying. Fully half of my colleagues resent other people's success – while fully half don't, and realise this is not a competitive business. Because it isn't: you only compete with yourself.

The problem isn't that because somebody buys the next Stephen King, they're not going to buy your book. That's not the case at all – if somebody buys a book that's good, they're simply going to go out and buy more in that genre. Our problem is that there are not enough good books in the genre, not that there are too many writers competing.

HELPING HAND

SW: You won't admit it, but you've done more than your share in helping others avoid some of the pitfalls any beginning writer might make.

DK: I've always believed we owe it to one another to help each other whenever we can. I'm constantly helping writers find agents, or if I find someone I think is ideal for a particular publisher, and I know an editor there, I'll call them and ask them to take a look at this writer. Frequently they do manage to connect, whereas they might never meet otherwise. I think that's the kind of thing you're supposed to do if you have a commitment to making the particular field you work in produce the highest-quality work that it can.

I realise it was kind of odd to work for The Horror Writers Of America when I wasn't allowing my publishers to use the word 'horror' on my own books. But I didn't know for certain I was going to be elected; there was always a chance someone else would have had that honour. Basically, it was situation where I had a year to put into practice all the ideas I believed in – probably I would have done it if The Western Writers Of America had asked me to do the same. It was something I simply had to do. If it's useful to somebody else, then it was worth it.

HUMOURS

SW: One aspect not readily discussed about your work is how there's often an underlying layer of humour – besides the nonstop thrills and chills, of course. How important is it that readers are truly frightened when they're done with one of your novels?

DK: *Watchers* had quite a lot of humour in it, and *Lightning* did as well, and the new book I just completed has a lot of humour in it. One thing people have told me they especially liked about the last couple of books is the humour mixed in with the rest of it. I've always admired that in other writers. Such as Richard Condon, who in *The Manchurian Candidate* and others wrote books which keep you on the edge of your seat, say a lot about the culture which produced these tense situations, yet at the same time are hilarious. That's a fine line to walk.

I'm after a multitude of effects. I know something is finished when I can read through the book and there is a seamlessness to it that incorporates these elements, and doesn't in any way seem forced. I'm not always looking to make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. *Lightning* doesn't do that at all – that was not my intent. In *Midnight*, however, if you don't walk away from some of these scenes with your stomach churning and the hair up on the back of your neck, you need serious psychiatric help!

There's different effects in different books. And I know I don't want to let the book go if it doesn't have multiple *emotional* effects. I don't want to write just to scare, because actually that's too easy for me. I want to evoke laughter sometimes, though in most of the books I want to scare as well. In some books I want to bring readers to tears, and for *Watchers* I've gotten thousands of letters telling me that's the case.

When I get the feeling that now there's nothing here that shatters for me the overall experience of this book – no moment in it that throws the reader out of this mood and world I'm trying to create – and if I achieve all that multiple emotional impact I'm after, then the book is ready to go to the publisher.

EMOTIONAL IMPACT

SW: You mentioned those thousands of fan letters you now receive. What is special about them to you as a writer?

DK: When I get letters or telephone calls from people like the two I'm about to tell you about. Like the guy who called me and said 'Last year I had a leg amputated, and was in the hospital for that and related problems dealing with cancer for a period of several months. In the course of that I lost my business, and my wife left me.' And he told me, with his voice breaking, that 'the only thing that got me through that year, and made me want to go on, were two books of yours, *Strangers* and *Watchers*. Which were scary novels, but were filled with so much hope, and so much faith in human beings, that by reading them repeatedly they got me through times I don't know how I would have otherwise gotten through.'

And that for me is what writing is all about. If you can give someone something in your writing that gives support in their lives, that's more than just entertainment – which is what we writers all struggle to do, to touch people. Entertainment is just a vehicle to reach them on a much deeper level.

Also, a woman wrote me and said 'My father is dying of cancer, and he is the most wonderful father anyone could have had, and he's only in his 50s, and only has six months to live. And I'm not articulate enough to say all the things I want to say about what it means to lose him when I speak at his funeral. And there's a long passage in *Twilight Eyes* about how what we really fear is not our own death, but the deaths of those we love. And would it be possible if I could read that at his funeral service?' Man, you can't answer a letter like that fast enough! Something you've written has clearly touched someone on a deeper, personal level, and means something direct to their lives. *Those* are the moments when you think you're doing something worthwhile.

"I don't want to write just to scare. I want to evoke laughter sometimes"

"A Quarter to Three"

BY KIM NEWMAN

Sometimes the nights get to you, right? When there's no-one pushing coins into it, the juke plays Peggy Lee over and over again. *Fever.* The finger-click backing track gets into your skull. Like a heartbeat, you've got it in there for the rest of your life. And in the off-season, which when you're talking about the 'Mouth is – let's face it – all year round, sometimes you go from midnight till dawn with no takers at all. Who can blame them, we serve paint-stripper *au lait* and reinforced concrete crullers. When I first took the graveyard shift at Cap'n Cod's 24 Hour Diner, I actually liked the idea of being paid (just) to stay up all night with no hassles. Maybe, I'd get to finish *Moby Dick* before Professor Whipple could flunk me. Anyway, that's not the way it worked out.

Two o'clock and not a human face in sight. And in late November, the beachfront picture window rattles in the slightest breeze. The waves shatter noisily on the damn useless shingles. The 'Mouth isn't a tourist spot, it's a town-sized morgue that smells of fish. All I'd got for company was a giant cardboard cutout of the Cap'n, giving a scaly salute and a salty smile. He hasn't got much of a face left, because he used to stand outside and get a good sloshing whenever the surf was up. I don't know who he was in the first place – the current owner is a pop-eyed lardo called Murray Something who pays in smelly cash – but now he's just a cut-out ghost. I'd talk to *him*, only I'd be worried that some night he'd talk right back.

It's a theme diner, just like all the others up and down the coast. Nets on the ceiling, framed dead fish on the walls, formica on the tables, and more sand on the floor than along the seashore. And it's got a

gurgling coffee machine that spits out the foulest brew you've ever tasted, and an array of food under glass that you'd swear doesn't change from one month to the next. I was stuck in a groove again, like Peggy if I forget to nudge the juke in the middle of that verse about Pocahontas. It's that damn chapter *The Whiteness Of The Whale*. I always trip over it, and it's supposed to be the heart of the book.

I didn't notice her until the music changed. Debbie Reynolds, singing *It Must Have Been Moonglow*. Jesus. She must have come in during one of my 20-minute 'blinks'. She was sitting up against the wall, by the juke, examining the counter. Young, maybe pretty, a few strands of blonde hair creeping out from under her scarf, and wearing a coat not designed for a pregnant woman. It had a belt that she probably couldn't fasten. I'm in Eng Lit at MU, not pre-med, but I judged that she was just about ready to drop the kid. Maybe quins.

"Can I help you, ma'am?" I asked. Murray likes me to call the mugs "sir" and "ma'am" not "buddy" and "doll" or "asshole" and "drudge". It's the only instruction he ever dished out.

She looked at me – big hazel eyes with too much red in them – but didn't say anything. She looked tired, which isn't surprising since it was the middle of the night and she was about to give birth to the Incredible Bulk.

"Coffee?" I suggested, "If you're looking for a way to end it all, you could do worse. Cheaper than strychnine. Maybe you want ice cream and pickles?"

"That's crap," she said, and I realised that she really was young. If she weren't pregnant, I'd have accused her of being up after her bedtime. She was perhaps 16 or 17, I guessed. Cheerleader-pretty, but with a few lines in there to show she had more to worry about than who's dating Buddy-Bob Fullback these days or how she'll get through the Home Ec. quiz next Friday. "About cravings, that's crap. You don't want to eat weird stuff. Me, I don't want to eat at all, ever again. But you gotta, or you disintegrate. It's like having a tapeworm. You eat as much as you can, but you still go hungry. The fo-etus gets all the goodies."

Fo-etus. That was how she pronounced it. I kind of liked the sound of it.

"Well, what does your fo-etus fancy this morning?"

"A cheeseburger."

"This is a fish place, ma'am. No burgers. I can melt some cheese on fishcake and give it to you in a bap."

"Sounds like shit. I'll have one, for the mutant . . . "

Julie London was on now, *Cry Me A River*. "Cryyyyy me a river, cuh-ry me a river, I cried a river over you." That has one of the best rhymes in the English language in it, "You told me love was too plebeian, told me you were through with me an' . . . now you say you're lonely . . . ".

I slapped the frozen cake on the hotplate, and dug out some not-too-senile cheese. We don't stock the kind that's better if it's got mould on it.

"Have you got liquor?"

"Have you got ID?"

"Shit, how come you can get knocked up five years before you can have a drink in this state?"

The ice in the cake popped and hissed. Julie sounded broken-hearted in the background. It must be a tough life.

"I don't make the rules."

"I won't get drunk. The fo-etus will."

"He's underage too, ma'am."

"It's an it. They did tests."

"Pardon?"

"Ginger ale . . . "

"Fine."

" . . . and put a shot of something in it."

I gave in, and dug out the Scotch. Not much call for it. The Highlander on the label had faded, a yellowing dribbled down his face turning him leprous. I splashed the bottom of a glass, then added a full measure of soft drink. She had it down quickly, and ordered another. I saw to it, and flipped the cake over. I wish I could say it smelled appetising.

"I'm not married," she said. "I had to leave school. There goes my shot at college. Probably my only chance to get out of the 'Mouth. Oh well, that's another life on the rocks. You must get a lot of that."

"Not really. I don't get much of anyone in here. I think the Cap'n will be dropping the 24 Hour service next year. All his old customers drowned or something. It's entropy. Everything's winding down. You have to expect it."

I melted the cheese, and handed her the cheesefish bap. She didn't seem interested in it. I noticed she had a pile of quarters stacked in a little tower on the bar. She was feeding the juke regularly.

"This is my song," she said. Rosemary Clooney, *You Took Advantage Of Me*. "The bastard certainly did."

She was a talker, I'd spotted that early. After midnight, you only get talkers and brooders. I didn't really have to say anything, but there'd be pauses if I didn't fill in the gaps.

"Your boyfriend?"

"Yeah. Fuckin" amphibian. He's supposed to be here. I'm meeting him."

"What'll happen?"

"Who knows. Some folks ain't human."

She pushed her plate around, and prodded the bap. I had to agree with her. I wouldn't have eaten it, either. Murray never asked me if I could cook.

"Look, the lights . . . " She meant the sea lights. It's a localised phenomenon in the 'Mouth. A greenish glow just out beyond the shallows. Everyone freaks first time they see it. "He'll be here soon. Another ginger ale plus."

I gave her one. She took it slower. Captain Ahab looked insanely up from the broken-spined paperback on the counter, obsessed with his white whale. Crazy bastard. I'd love to see him on a TV talk show with one of those Greenpeace activists.

There was someone coming up from the beach. She shifted on her stool uncomfortably, keeping her pregnancy away from the rim of the counter. She didn't seem interested one way or the other. "It's him."

"He'll be wet."

"Yeah. That he will."

"It don't matter. I don't do the mopping up. That's the kid who gets the daytime haul."

It was Sinatra now. The main man. "It's a quarter to three, there's no-one in the place except you and me . . . " Her smile was cracked, lopsided, greenish. She had plaque.

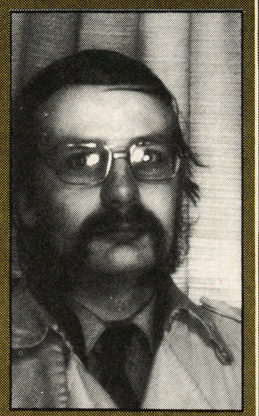
The door was pushed inward, and in he waddled. As you might expect, he didn't look like much. It took him a long time to get across the diner, and he wasn't breathing easily. He moved a bit like Charles Laughton as Quasimodo, dragging wetly. It was easy to see what she had seen in him, it left a thin damp trail between his scuffed footprints. By the time he got to the counter, she had finished her drink.

He got up onto a stool with difficulty, his wet, leather-linked fingers scrabbling for a grip on the edge of the bar. The skin over his cheeks and neck puffed in and out as he tried to smile at her.

" . . . could tell you a lot," sung Frankie, "but you've got to be true to your code . . . "

She put her glass down, and looked me in the eye, smiling.

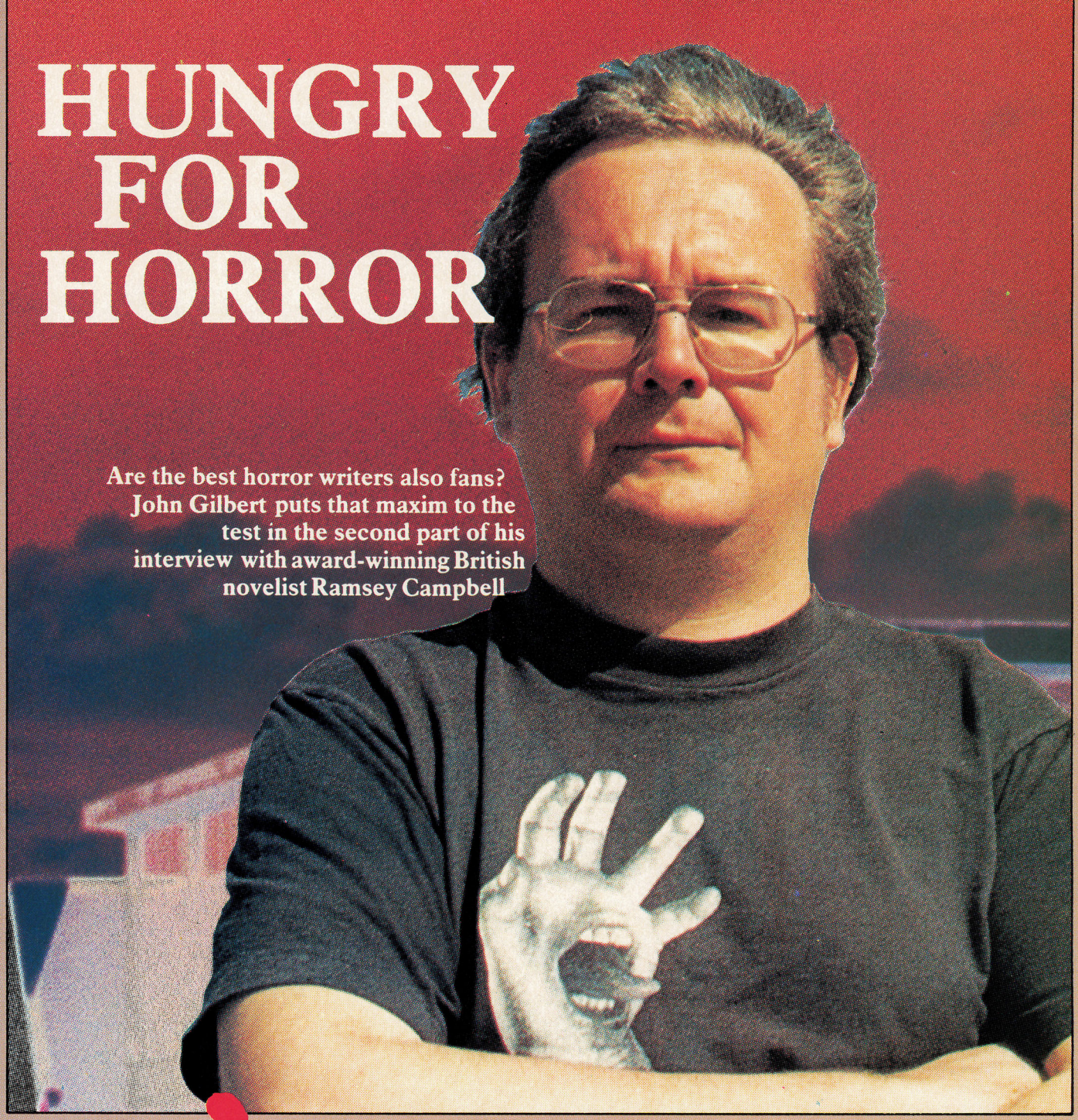
"Make it one for my baby, and one more for the *toad*."



KIM NEWMAN is a prolific film critic for London-based *City Limits*, *Shock Xpress*, and *The Truth*. He has worked for London Weekend Television's *Night Network* and is co-editing a book called *Horror: The 100 Best Books* with Stephen Jones, which will be published by Xanadu. Other literary excursions, with co-writer Neil Gaiman, include *Ghastly Beyond Belief*. His short fiction has appeared in *Fantasy Tales* and *Interzone*, but Kim's fiction output is modest, so lap it up while you can.

There was someone coming up from the beach. She shifted on her stool uncomfort-ably.

HUNGRY FOR HORROR



Are the best horror writers also fans? John Gilbert puts that maxim to the test in the second part of his interview with award-winning British novelist Ramsey Campbell

Described as one of the greatest living influences on modern horror writing, Ramsey Campbell has watched the course of the genre alter, and has himself had a hand in some of its directional changes. In the last issue of FEAR, John Gilbert talked to Ramsey about what first drove him to be a horror writer, about the influence of HP Lovecraft on his earlier work – such as *The Inhabitants Of The Lake* and *Demons By Daylight* – and how he thinks that 'the best horror fiction seems to astonish as well as simply to send you cowering off into a corner'.

Embroiled now in the rewrite stage of his latest novel, *Ancient Images*, Ramsey told John some more about the tricks of his trade.

MACABRE MECHANICS

JG: You started your writing life with short stories. When did you decide to make the change and write a novel?

RC: It was Kirby McCauley [US agent and editor] rather than me who gently but frequently said: 'Look, you have to start writing novels because there aren't that many markets for short horror fiction'. I'd done a couple of attempts at novels, before I'd even started the Lovecraftian things. I didn't finish those so I finally saw that it was a question of going for a novel and finishing it. I think, probably, for quite a lot of 1974 I just let the idea of a novel rattle around at the back of my mind. Ultimately I came up with the idea [for *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*] of the central image of the child who eats its way out of the mother.

I began to gather new material and got round plotting it, and I realised, eventually, that here I'd got an exercise book into which I'd put chapter breakdowns. I stared at this for some time, having got it there, and I still wasn't quite ready to take the leap into the novel.

One morning in January '75 I got the opening line, which is: 'There were no taxis.' That struck me as being sufficiently neutral and undramatic and somehow kind of oddly oblique, and I thought 'Well, it isn't a bad opening line for this'. I sat down that morning, and began to write it, and suddenly there I was writing a novel.

JG: Is there a strict writing regime for you?

RC: Ever since *Incarnate* I don't plot

it in detail in advance; I don't break it down in terms of chapters and what I'm going to put in each one.

The risk you're taking – which isn't just a risk but pretty well a certainty – is that at some point you're going to find yourself out there in the middle of the unknown thinking 'My God, how did I get here and what am I going to do now?'. But the merit I've found is that if you've got a novel and allowed it to grow of its own accord, somewhere earlier in the book is the seed of what you're looking for now. The problem is already solved back there in the book if you want to look. You just trust your instincts. It's like walking a tightrope with a noose around your neck, but it works, I find. I wouldn't ever go back to preplotting. It's very much more exciting and also very much more harrowing to let the thing tell its own story to me.

TIMETABLE

JG: What about the mechanics of writing? I know you own an Apricot word processor . . .
RC: I always write longhand to begin with, just use the right-hand side of the exercise book – the left-hand side's blank so I can revise onto that a bit. But I did find some years ago that I do nearly all the revision onto the keyboard. I get into a totally different mind-set. Having struggled over writing the first draft, I take immense delight in looking at a page which has taken me a day to write and saying 'We don't need this', and deleting it. Maybe that one page is necessary to come up with a couple of images that I want to keep, but I had to do all that other rather turgid stuff in order to be able to float away and find what was actually essential.

I will write nonfiction onto the keyboard, mind you, I do that straight onto the screen. It's partly a way of allowing myself to write nonfiction at the same time as working on a new novel; they are two different processes.
JG: Do you have an approximate timetable for writing a book or a short story?
RC: I seem to have settled down to about a year for a novel, for something like *Incarnate* that would be something like two years, I suspect, or *The Hungry Moon*. But a novel like *The Influence* or *Ancient Images* would be about a year in terms of writing page one and packaging up the printout and sending it to the publisher; though of course there's also the stuff before that: the gathering of material and allowing the thing to germinate, thinking 'My God, what's my next novel going to be about, or the one after that?'. I always like to know at least what the next one's going to be while I'm writing the present one.

I have a lot of material which, I suspect, eventually is going to shape itself into a novel. It doesn't follow that the one I'm thinking about most often now is going to be the next one. Something else may suddenly move itself up into that slot when I didn't expect it. *Incarnate* was going to be the book I wrote after *The Parasite*, then *The Nameless* suddenly came up very strong because our first child had been born, so a different set of emotions came into play. I was going to do *Incarnate* next and then I did *Night Of The Claw*, a pseudonymous book, so *Incarnate* was a long time in the making.

I'm sure there're novels I've been toiling with for years and I suddenly feel that the time is right – or in some way I'm right – for it to be the next book, and off we go.
JG: Are your books being more commercially exploited than they were?
RC: Oh yes. The mechanics of getting the book into the shops are pretty important. I will not name the publisher, but there was one I worked with where the paperback department and the hardcover department appeared not to speak to each other. They were virtually separate. They had a paperback of my previous book coming out and a couple of weeks later they had the hardcover of my most recent novel, and they did nothing at all to use each other in these terms. It's nonsense. Whereas Century and Arrow, or Legend as it's going to be now, are going to be doing a shared promotion on *Ancient Images* and the paperback of *The Influence*, which is the way to do it.

A bad publicity office or art department can sink a writer, however good the book is, or however enthusiastic the editor is. If you've just got a couple of recalcitrant people around then things can get very sticky.

ANCIENT IMAGES

JG: So what about your next mass-market book, *Ancient Images*?
RC: It's about a lost horror film of the Thirties, made in Britain with Karloff and Lugosi, which it turns out would have been better left unrevived: not because of what the film is, but because of a specific image which it contains, which calls up considerably more than anybody, including the film-maker and the people who are looking for the film, or even, in a sense, the people who are dependent on what this image represents, can cope with.

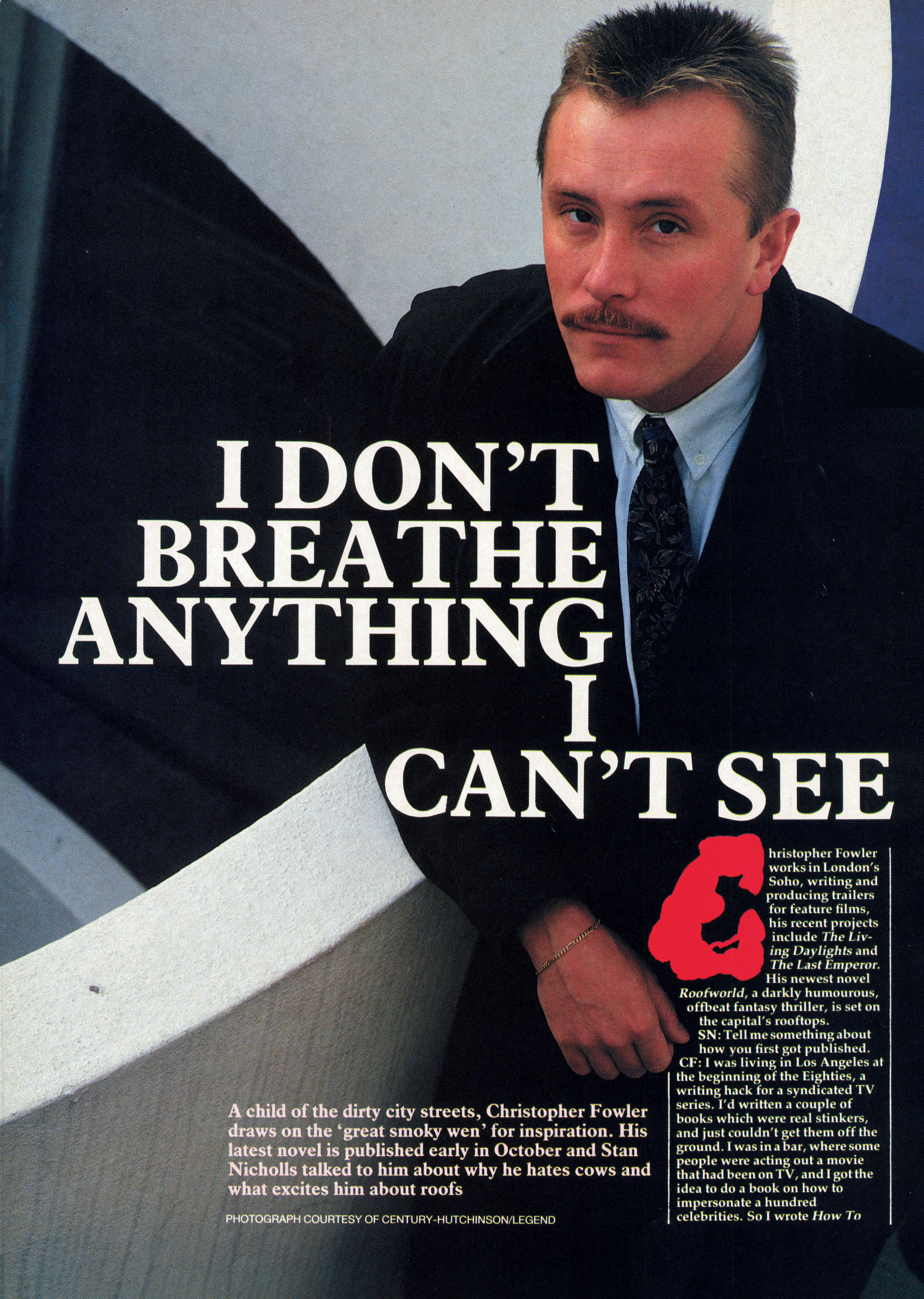
It turns out to be a quest novel. It's about our protagonist doing a search, finding people who have worked on the film, coming up with what the film was about and what it relates to in reality. It also runs through a lot of different kinds of supernatural horror, in fiction, films and plays. While I didn't set out for it to be that, it does seem to be a sort of little epitome of the field, which I quite like. I've had some good times with it, actually, after feeling inevitably that 'my God, I really don't know what I'm doing here and I never knew how to do it in the first place'. But now I'm pretty well into the rewrite. Yeah, I'm getting pretty fond of it.
JG: Have you got a philosophy that ties all these novels together?
RC: [Thinks for a moment.] Well, there's the notion that evil's not out there, a monster which has nothing to do with us. It is a mirror in which we see ourselves, or something that we've got to acknowledge before we can move in any other direction.

I'm interested in writing either about the extraordinary experiences of ordinary people or the ordinary experiences of extraordinary people. You know, *The Face That Must Die* is about how it is every moment to be a psychopath in Cantrill Farm.

Increasingly in some of my stories there seems to be this thing creeping in that ordinary people do have these moments of supernatural experience. There's a strange little moment in *Ancient Images*, which doesn't obviously have anything to do with the plot at all, in which one of the characters recounts how when his little sister was being taken off to hospital he saw, at the end of the bed, she seemed to be made out of light, and that was the last time he ever saw her. It had nothing to do with the plot, but it just felt right. Also, there are things like the stamps that come to life in *Incarnate*, which have nothing obviously to do with the plot, it's just that strange moment when an ordinary person has a moment of cosmic vision and that seems to be creeping in a bit.
JG: Finally, you're not planning to take a holiday, like a five-year holiday perhaps?
RC: What, from the field? I don't believe I can. I've got to do several short stories for all sorts of places and I have to do this next novel which I'm not absolutely decided on yet. I do want to do another big supernatural novel, not like *The Hungry Moon* but in that general area. I also want to do a psychological horror novel into which category *The Face That Must Die* would fall; but, again, not quite like that. So long as I can hold a pen there it will be . . .

RAMSEY CAMPBELL's new hardcover *Ancient Images* is published in February 1989 by Century, when the paperback edition of *The Influence* will also be released. *Scared Stiff*, a US trade paperback of erotic fiction which has not seen UK publication, will be launched by Warner in October.

"I'm interested in writing about extraordinary experiences of ordinary people or the ordinary experiences of extraordinary people"



I DON'T BREATHE ANYTHING I CAN'T SEE

A child of the dirty city streets, Christopher Fowler draws on the 'great smoky wen' for inspiration. His latest novel is published early in October and Stan Nicholls talked to him about why he hates cows and what excites him about roofs

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CENTURY-HUTCHINSON/LEGEND

Christopher Fowler works in London's Soho, writing and producing trailers for feature films, his recent projects include *The Living Daylights* and *The Last Emperor*. His newest novel *Roofworld*, a darkly humourous, offbeat fantasy thriller, is set on the capital's rooftops.

SN: Tell me something about how you first got published.

CF: I was living in Los Angeles at the beginning of the Eighties, a writing hack for a syndicated TV series. I'd written a couple of books which were real stinkers, and just couldn't get them off the ground. I was in a bar, where some people were acting out a movie that had been on TV, and I got the idea to do a book on how to impersonate a hundred celebrities. So I wrote *How To*

Impersonate Famous People. It got me on to lots of TV talk shows, so that was good fun.

Then I did *The Ultimate Party Book*, which was another silly one, about everything that can go wrong at parties. *Famous People* came out in America in a heavily edited version, because it had a parody of *Star Wars* in it, and that's under all kinds of copyright restriction. So anything to do with the film was hacked out. In a way it kind of rendered the book gibberish, because it was woven into all different sections, and they just indiscriminately cut bits out.

The *Party Book* wasn't published in the US because they said partygoing is a very serious matter.

Then I moved back here.

I'd always wanted to write horror stories, so I started putting some together, and they became the first volume of *City Jitters*. Then the editor of *The Pan Book Of Horror Stories* got in touch and I did several stories for that.

SN: You were lucky getting an original collection published, given that they apparently don't sell well.

CF: I tied them together with a theme: urban paranoia. Which was easy because I'm such a city person anyway. I don't breathe anything I can't see. I've always lived in town – countryside has an agoraphobic effect on me. It's horrible. It's full of cows and things. I suppose it's alright at weekends if you don't get out the car.

SN: How do you find time to write and run a business?

CF: I work here four days a week and write every evening till ten. That works out quite well. It's a juggling act. If I don't write I'm a bear with a sore head. The discipline is here, at work; I come in and know I've got to write scripts. I'm working on the new Eddie Murphy film, *Coming To America*, at the moment, and I've got to write six radio spots by five o'clock today. So when you've got to do that kind of thing it keeps you on your toes.

THE SECRET ROOFSCAPE

SN: *Roofworld* has a very novel premise. Where did the idea come from?

CF: I'm sure it's a by-product of working in these streets and just wanting to get above it occasionally. Also, I used to work in Regent Street, and everybody would sunbathe on the roof, and when you're up there you can see the whole curve of that Nash terrace. I got to thinking you could get down there, if you wanted to, from one building to the next. We were burgled here through the roof, and the guy robbed every building in Greek Street, because they're all attached.

SN: How long did it take to write?

CF: About nine months. But I did a lot of research that didn't get into the book, particularly in respect of occult societies. There are over 60 societies still existing in Britain today and a lot of them I couldn't use any information from, because they have a closed membership.

SN: I thought the book read rather like a film. Did you have this possibility in mind?

CF: Well, it was in the back of my mind . . . In fact the book's out with an American agent at the moment; it's at a studio. But I think very visually anyway because I've always worked in films; and love them, to the point of being a film bore, particularly about horror and fantasy movies. This is one of the problems of people in the industry. A friend rang me a few weeks ago and said, 'Oh my God, I think I've become a film bore! I ruined a dinner party last night by going on about this great new movie.'

HUMOUR OR HORROR?

SN: In some ways *Roofworld* is very 'English' . . .

CF: Yes, and that's how I wanted it. A couple of people originally suggested relocating it in New York. When it was in first draft form it was offered to several publishers, and they were willing to take it on if it was set in New York. I said that was pointless because London is somewhere I know inside out and that's why I didn't set it anywhere else. There was no point in setting it in New York.

SN: But the sequel could be.

CF: I've no firm plans for a sequel. I'll see what the response is. Actually my biggest problem is I don't stick to genre, I keep crossing. Various criticisms of the book included 'Take the humour out; it shouldn't have funny bits', or 'It's a bit too bloody in places'. That sort of thing. So, I don't stick to one mode, as someone like Shaun Hutson does. And that's what I like.

SN: Again, you were fortunate with *Roofworld*, bearing in mind how publishers like to hang a specific category on books.

CF: In my naivete I didn't realise they categorised so heavily, and it was a real problem, because they kept saying, 'What would you call it?' And I said, well, it's like a horror thriller with fantasy aspects. And black humour! In fact the American edition, from Ballantine, is substantially different – it's being marketed as a hard thriller there. When *Roofworld* comes out in the States it coincides with *More City Jitters*, a book which hasn't come out here. In this country it'll be published in a completely different form, with only a few of the stories in the American edition. I've added new material, and in the UK it's to be called *The Bureau Of Lost Souls*.

SN: I get the impression the real star of *Roofworld* is London itself.

CF: I like London very, very much. It's a really underused setting. When you get American movies that use London locations – like those terrible TV miniseries – they do Wimbledon, Big Ben, the Tower of London . . . such obvious places. Of course

"I've always lived in town – countryside has an agoraphobic effect on me. It's horrible. It's full of cows and things"

London's much more interesting than that. Why doesn't anyone use Brixton market for a chase scene? Or the underground remains of the river Fleet? New York, for instance is a 120-year-old city. Where you can go into pubs in London that have been here since 1540.

CONSPIRACIES IN THE AIR

SN: You did a good job of suspending disbelief. It wasn't until I put the book down that I thought, 'Oh, come on!'

CF: I think the biggest problem these days is to suspend disbelief about anything. It's hard because people are so cynical now. So many collections of short stories and horror books, to me, don't wash. I'm not going to read another book about a magic tree, a haunted lake, weird cottage . . . Not that I'm criticising anybody like James Herbert or Clive Barker. But unleashing evil spirits doesn't work for me unless it's done amazingly. There are fears which are much more realistic.

"I'm not going to read another book about a magic tree, a haunted lake, weird cottage . . . unleashing evil spirits doesn't work for me unless it's done amazingly"

With *Roofworld* the whole fear and mystical side had to be based very much on something I could believe in. Something I could go to the library and look up. And indeed the stuff in the book does exist – the occult aspect of the book is very real; the society it's based on is now back up and running, albeit started again by Los Angeles airheads. There's a reference book that lists all the existing members. dead handy that was.

SN: Did all this research into secret societies reflect an existing interest?

CF: Oh yes. I think the idea of secret societies is fab. Conspiracy theory is very interesting. It's probably more fanciful than real, but it would be nice to think that there's a connection to all these things.

Something I found when researching the book was that a lot more things were connected than I realised. Of course you can get caught up in this kind of thing and become obsessed. Not to mention paranoid. My interest in things like the occult and secret societies has always been on the level of turning things into plausible ideas, scripts, books. I come at it from that point of view. It's getting harder all the time to come up with new angles when you know links of communication are building so fast. There are no dark corners any more.

SN: Maybe the new technology itself could form a basis for future horror stories.

CF: A lot of people have been trying to make computers work as the background for horror stories. Joe Haldeman did one, and I understand William Gibson's doing similar things. So maybe we can find something in technology to work in our favour from a horror point of view.

I'm planning a book along those lines. It's based loosely on *Casting The Runes*, the MR James story. But, whereas before you could only pass the runes on a slip of paper, in my concept I imagine using the communications systems. So trying to avoid having the curse placed on you would mean not being able to watch TV, or use a computer, answer the phone . . . It could be anything, so you'd have to 'blind' yourself.

VIRUS STORIES

SN: Can you identify any particular influences on your writing?

CF: Comic books to some extent. I thought *Watchman* was the most extraordinary achievement, and *The Killing Joke*. Fabulous. Really nasty, and it reads like a movie. That sort of stuff is wonderful, but I didn't really want to do the book like caped crusaders on the rooftops. But the Sax Rohmer-type stuff, the Twenties feel, was something I wanted. And an awful lot of film-makers have influenced me. Hitchcock, obviously. From a real hardcore horror point of view, all the schlocky stuff. Wes Craven, David Cronenberg . . .

SN: Cronenberg's obsession with disease might indicate a new direction in horror.

CF: Disease is one of the new dark corners, thanks to AIDS and other cross-breeds. The idea of viruses are very disturbing and powerful. Somebody once said all horror stories are virus stories. You get one victim, two victims – people become infected, and it's not until the hero or heroine locates the root of the virus that it can be destroyed. Dracula's the perfect example. Which might be why it's proving more durable than Frankenstein. Certainly Shelley's book was much less readable. It seems that every year two or three movies, and x number of books, retell the Dracula story. Vampirism is somehow much more enduring. It gets under your skin.

SN: Would you like to write a straightforward gothic horror?

CF: I'd love to. One of my greatest influences was the *Gormenghast* trilogy, because they were incredibly powerful, black, and funny. I'd like to write a book set in, say, the 1860s. I saw this brilliant, gripping play about Jack the Ripper at the Hampstead Theatre Club, called *Mr Hyde* – which had nothing to do with Jekyll and Hyde. It was about a secret society of wealthy Victorian men, who got together to watch erotic shows to do with death and sex, and one of them was Jack the Ripper.

Very disturbing. Again, something based on fact. When you've got a good solid basis for grounding the fear in, it's more effective. That's why for me the nameless-evil-spirit-that-kills-people stuff doesn't cut it.

Horror films seem to be so heavily censored now, whereas horror novels are quite gruesome – particularly *The Slime* and *The Slugs* type. Yet if you tried to do the equivalent in a film you wouldn't get away with it these days. I saw *Prison* last week, which I thought was a great horror movie, and I was outnumbered by the usherettes in the cinema. It's almost like it's unfashionable to want to see these things now.

THE WRONG PING

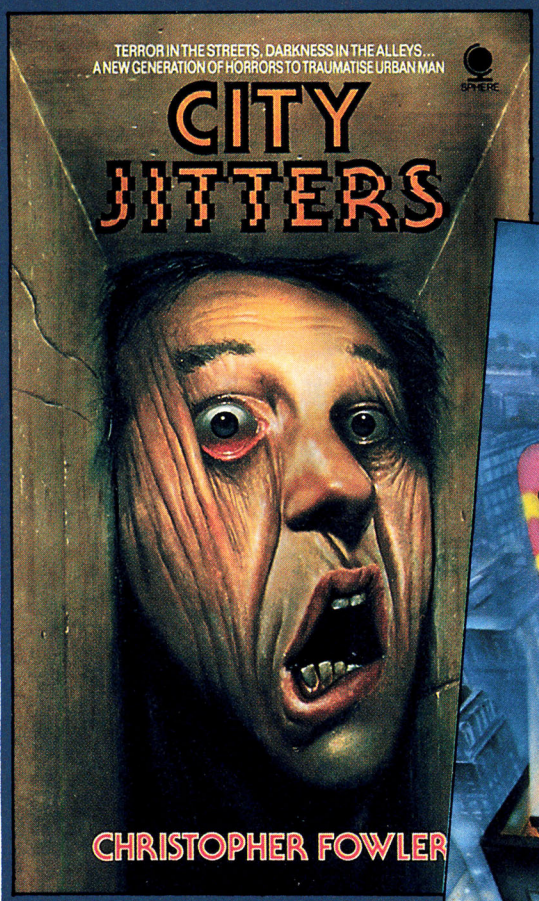
SN: We're living in very intolerant times.

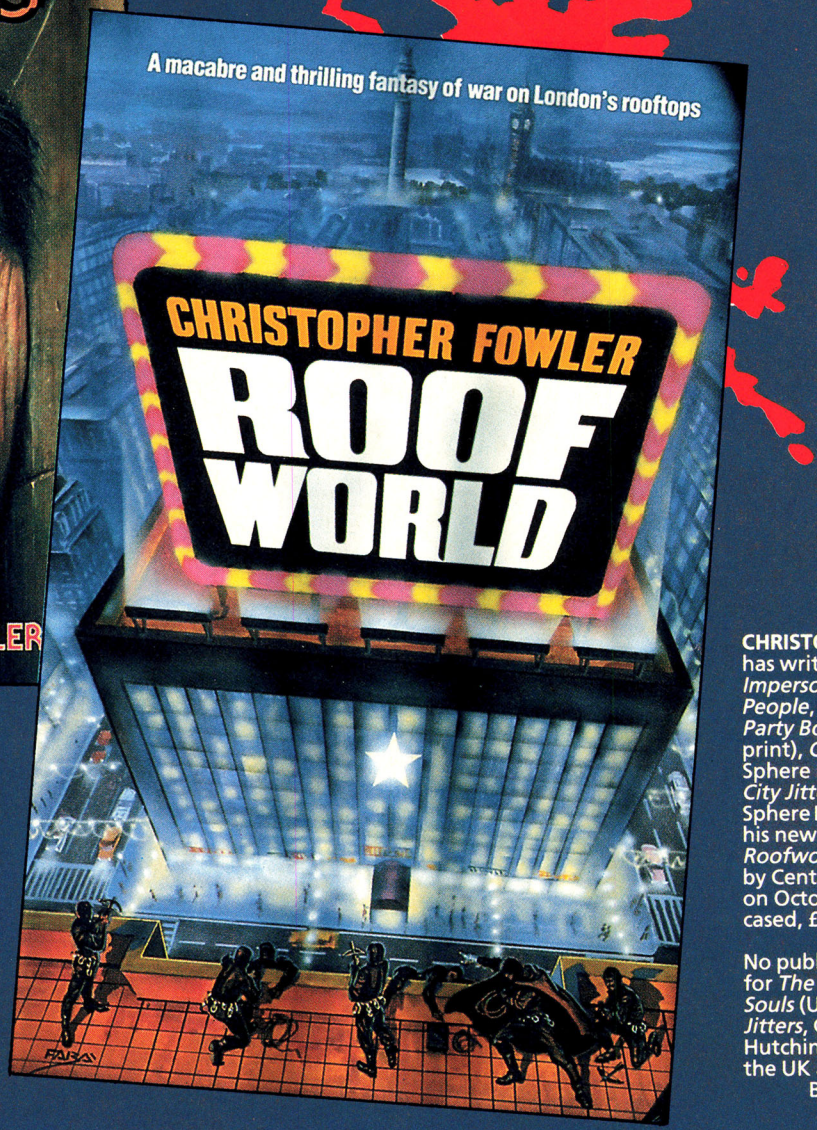
CF: We're having so much trouble here with censorship. We have to deal with the BBFC on a daily basis, and where specific scenes used to be a problem, now overall content and tone is objected to. But they're having more trouble with horror movies in America than we're having here. I know that Palace's *Dream Demon* is having trouble getting a certificate there.

TV is getting very weird too. When they showed Carpenter's *The Thing* here, they kept in all the gore, and cut the word 'fuck'. So when the spider-head comes running toward a character he says, 'I don't PING believe it!' The idea seems to be that, in the case of videos for instance, a six-year-old kid might find something objectionable around the house. But you can say that about anything. *The Telegraph* had an hilarious article recently about video nasties, and it showed a display of titles which aren't available in this country anyway. It took the line: 'This is the kind of filth that's corrupting our nation's young minds', and the films they showed were things like *Driller Killer* and *Last House On The Left*. Videos which have never been available in regular distribution.

SN: There seems to be a political undertone in *Roofworld*.

CF: Yes, very much so. This idea of getting away from a tightening moral climate, escaping to an alternative society, was very appealing. I actually thought that by the time the book came out we might have seen a swing away from the present situation, but in fact things have got worse. The





idea that you're an outcast if you don't do a day's work, and that people have their social security benefits cut in order to force them on to the streets and make them work, is so patently inoperable.

That people have to sleep in cardboard boxes under Hungerford bridge – and their numbers have shot up in the last nine years – just goes to show that forcing people out to work isn't on. There are still people falling between the cracks. I can feasibly see someone actually creating an alternative society somewhere. The problem in the book is that it's set up on a utopian ideal which equally doesn't work the way they wanted it to. The society they set up on the rooftops slowly gets infected by the same creeping greed we've got down here.

BLACK HUMOUR

SN: What kind of audience are you aiming at?

CF: I write pretty much to please myself. Because, running this company, I've never had to rely on writing for money. God help me if I had to! I don't know how writers, beyond Jeffrey Archer, manage to make ends meet. It's very much for my own pleasure. Writing the humour books was just to get it going, to gain some kind of reputation, no matter how small, and then go on to write what I wanted. Luckily the humour books sold quite well. Short story collections nobody buys. *Night Visions*, the book Clive Barker did with Ramsey Campbell and Lisa Tuttle, sold 600 copies. And that's got the original *Hellbound Heart*. Although I'm sure it'll do better in mass-market paperback.

It's amazing. I buy short stories, but I guess the general public doesn't like them. I think sometimes, when I work on a short story, that it could become a novel. However I don't like the idea of expanding things – I'm really economical. I underwrite all the time, although I'm always being told to pad things. I prefer to write short and sharp.

SN: One of the most appealing things about *Roofworld* is its black humour.

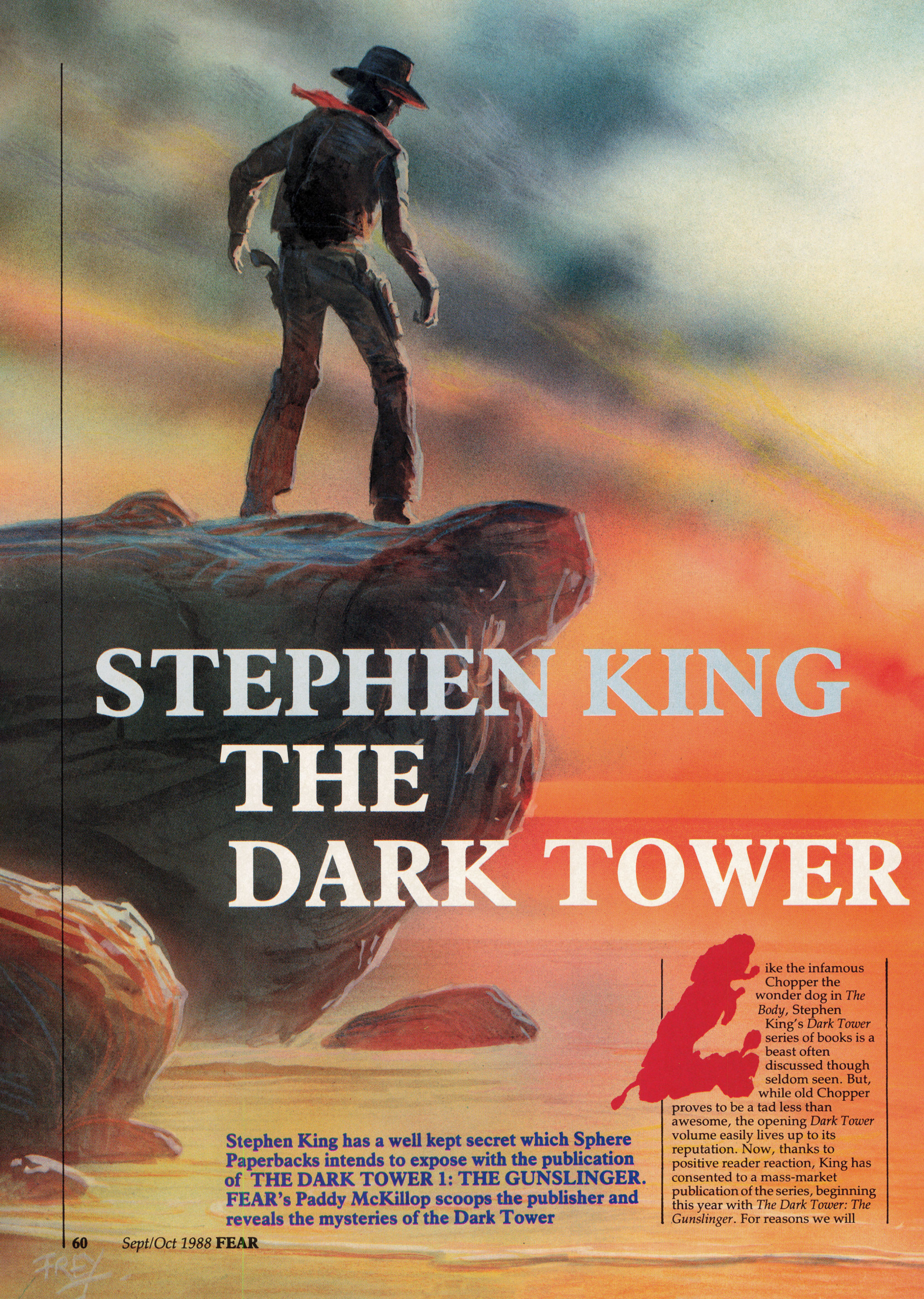
CF: As I said, I resisted pressure to remove that – although I have to say Century-Hutchinson were wonderful – but other publishers originally wanted the humour out. I was adamant that I wanted to keep it in. Black humour immensely appeals to me, and I couldn't conceive of writing anything that didn't have that element. I like the idea of grotesque things going on above our heads, and a massacre happening down the side of Harrods, with its lit-up windows saying 'Enter another world'. That's what I meant about London not being used well in fictional settings. There are so many incongruous, at odds, buildings and situations you can use. I think I've only scraped the surface of what you could do with London. Everything else I'll write will probably be set here too, although having lived in LA for a while, some of my short stories have been located there as well.

SN: You couldn't have set *Roofworld* there.

CF: No. You'd need bloody long ropes.

"I like the idea of grotesque things going on above our heads, and a massacre happening down the side of Harrods"

CHRISTOPHER FOWLER has written *How To Impersonate Famous People*, *The Ultimate Party Book* (both out of print), *City Jitters* (1986) Sphere Books, £2.50, *City Jitters 2* (1986) Sphere Books, £2.50 and his newest novel, *Roofworld* is published by Century-Hutchinson on October 6, £11.95 cased, £5.95 trade paper. No publication date yet for *The Bureau Of Lost Souls* (US: *More City Jitters*, Century-Hutchinson/Legend in the UK and Ballantine Books in the USA.



STEPHEN KING THE DARK TOWER

Stephen King has a well kept secret which Sphere Paperbacks intends to expose with the publication of THE DARK TOWER 1: THE GUNSLINGER. FEAR's Paddy McKillop scoops the publisher and reveals the mysteries of the Dark Tower

Like the infamous Chopper the wonder dog in *The Body*, Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series of books is a beast often discussed though seldom seen. But, while old Chopper proves to be a tad less than awesome, the opening *Dark Tower* volume easily lives up to its reputation. Now, thanks to positive reader reaction, King has consented to a mass-market publication of the series, beginning this year with *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger*. For reasons we will

MYTHOLOGY

come to shortly, we are fortunate to have a mass-market edition. First, though, we should go back to 1969, when King was in his final year at college, to witness the birth of the tale.

GREEN MAGIC

Already writing short stories and a regular column for the campus newspaper, King felt the urge to tackle a more ambitious work. There was a magnum opus in him, struggling to get out. He was toying with the idea of writing an epic based loosely on Robert Browning's poem, *The Childe Roland*. But the wheels were finally set in motion when Fate presented King with a box of paper . . . *magic* paper, boys and girls! It was bright green, thick as cardboard, and measured about seven inches by ten.

Maybe it wasn't *real* magic paper, but it certainly had a magical effect on Stephen King. It was 'fraught with possibility' and spurred him to begin what would become known as *The Dark Tower*. King loaded his typewriter with a sheet of enchanted paper, wrote 'The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed', and a story, two decades on still years from completion, was born.

After college, and during the next 12 years, the five segments that constitute the first part of the story were completed. Naturally curious about how this atypical work would be received, King offered it to the *Magazine Of Fantasy And Science Fiction*, where it was accepted and published over a three-year-period. The first segment, *The Gunslinger*, appeared in the magazine's October 1978 issue and the second, *The Way Station*, which was nominated for a Nebula Award for best novelette in 1980, was published in March 1980. The next segment, *The Oracle And The Mountains*, went to press in February 1981, *The Slow Mutants* appeared in July 1981 and, finally, *The Gunslinger And The Dark Man* was published in November 1981.

LIMITED FANTASIES

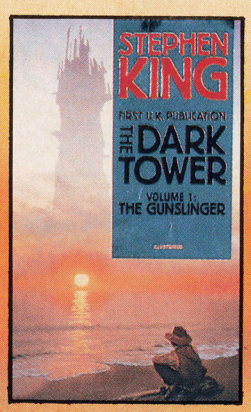
To King's surprise, response was positive. Among the admirers was Donald Grant, a small-press publisher from Rhode Island, who approached King with a view to collecting the five stories in a single volume. The idea found favour with King for three reasons: he believed the stories made more sense when read together; reaction to the magazine appearances encouraged wider publication; and King wanted to use the book as a thank you to the fantasy genre which had inspired him as a child and started him off on his writing career. Everyone was happy to publish. The problems didn't arise until the question of *how* to release the book was addressed.

In 1982 King's name guaranteed a book's sales – or rather SALES! – but Grant and King decided that was not enough. *The Dark Tower* was not a typical King tale and, while it contained a cursory nod at the horror genre, the story was primarily a fantasy.

King feared his mass-market readers might be disappointed with a story of sorcerers, magic and other worlds, and at the lack of resolution in what is 'the first stanza in a much longer work'. There was also the danger that the market was already saturated with King titles. If mass marketing was a nonstarter what could a writer do?

Leaving the book unpublished was never a viable consideration for King, who believed that 'to *not* publish is to see the book as a creation wilfully crippled'. The only other option remaining was a limited edition.

So King asked Donald Grant to publish a trade edition of 10,000 copies, with a deluxe edition of 500 copies to be numbered and signed by King and by Michael Whelan, the artist who supplied the illustrations for the book. There would also be a 26-copy signed lettered edition. Approximately 1,500 trade copies were misbound, reducing further the number which would be in circulation. Not surprisingly, *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger* quickly sold out, and it didn't take long for a brisk and lucrative trade in *Dark Tower*



King feared his mass-market readers might be disappointed with a story of sorcerers, magic and other worlds

collectables to spring up – a trade which still flourishes today.

TOO MUCH SUCCESS?

If King hoped all his troubles were over with the book in print, his hopes were in vain. *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger* was a massive success, more so than King had predicted: 'I was frankly very startled by the reception of the first one because people actually *liked* it, and I didn't think they would.'

Good news travels fast and soon grass-roots King fans got wind of the 'secret' book. Letters of inquiry began to arrive on the desks of King, Grant and King's regular, mass-market, publisher. But it was when King included the book on the 'other works' page in the American edition of *Pet Sematary* – out of 'naivety' rather than malice – that the world buried him, and everyone concerned with the limited-edition project, under a mountain of mail.

King tried to calm things down by authorising the printing of a second edition of 10,000 copies, some of which were set aside for readers who took the trouble to write to him. The whole batch sold out in a matter of days and demand was barely dented. 'It was,' as he describes it, 'a little like pissing on a forest fire in an attempt to put it out.'

More and more reprints would have placed the book in just the situation King wanted to avoid – bestsellerdom. So the only alternative was to don asbestos jockey shorts and hope the forest fire would burn itself out.

It didn't.

WORLD'S END

The first book of *The Dark Tower* chronicles the beginning of a quest by Roland, the last of a select breed of men who are trained to use firearms. For reasons not entirely known to Roland, he's been selected to find the Dark Tower and discover the secrets which lie within. The one thing of which Roland is certain is the importance of his mission.

Roland's world is moving on, maybe for the final time, and it is on his success or failure that its ultimate fate may rest. His first obstacle on the road to the Tower is the man in black, a magician of sorts, whom Roland must catch if he is to learn more about the Tower and how he might reach it. The man in black flees across a barren, seemingly endless desert, with Roland in pursuit. Many hazards lie in the gunslinger's way and the passage is far from easy.

Eventually, he comes to an abandoned way station where he finds a boy, Jake, originally from our world but now stranded in another. Roland is obliged to take the boy with him as he will play an important role in the gunslinger's near future.

Running parallel to this narrative is Roland's own account of scenes from his past. He relates stories of his training to be a gunslinger under the strict direction of Cort, his tutor; of his graduation from student to qualified gunslinger; of his recent confrontation in Tull. And there are hints at the corruption and intrigue at court that prompted Roland to assert his readiness to don the gunslinger's mantle and embark on his quest.

The final chapter of the book brings the chase across the desert to a conclusion, and explains something of the true significance of the Tower in relation to Roland's world. And we get some idea of the daunting nature of the task facing him. But what of the man in black? Don't ask me, they won't let me tell you!

DRAWING MORE READERS

While the publishing world grumbled about the availability of *The Gunslinger*, King was busy on the second volume in the series, *The Drawing Of The Three*. It's written as a single piece and doesn't have the disjointed feel of the first volume. It was a more complete novel and King was far happier with it.

The book advances the story of Roland and the Tower, concentrating on the gathering together – the drawing – of specific people without whom Roland cannot continue his quest. Those people come from our world and much of the action takes place in familiar, American, territory. We learn little new about the world which Roland inhabits, other than the nature of its lobsters, and there is scant elaboration of Roland's past.

The Dark Tower was initially published by Donald Grant in a limited edition, in keeping with the print history of *The Gunslinger* – 30,000 trade copies, with 800 deluxe copies signed by King and artist Phil Hale. Forewarned is forearmed and the King fans who missed the first volume were not slow to strike when the second came out in 1987.

The success of *Drawing Of The Three* was vital to the future of the series. If sales had been bad the books would have remained a small-press operation. Positive reaction, however, encouraged King to mass-market.

King was now convinced that *The Dark Tower* would not disappoint readers, and the success of *The Talisman* and *Eyes Of The Dragon*, both of which contain material similar to that of *The Dark Tower*, prepared the way for its acceptance.

THE FUTURE

King promises us more background on Roland and the events which have brought his world to its delicate state. The third and fourth volumes already have titles – *The Waste Land* and *Wizard And Glass* – and with the series now publicly known it will not fizzle out. The complete tale may run to 3,000 pages, or 25 interlocking short stories, or, perhaps, six or seven volumes. King's tendency to never make do with one word when you can get away with three may keep the series alive for decades – that can't be bad.

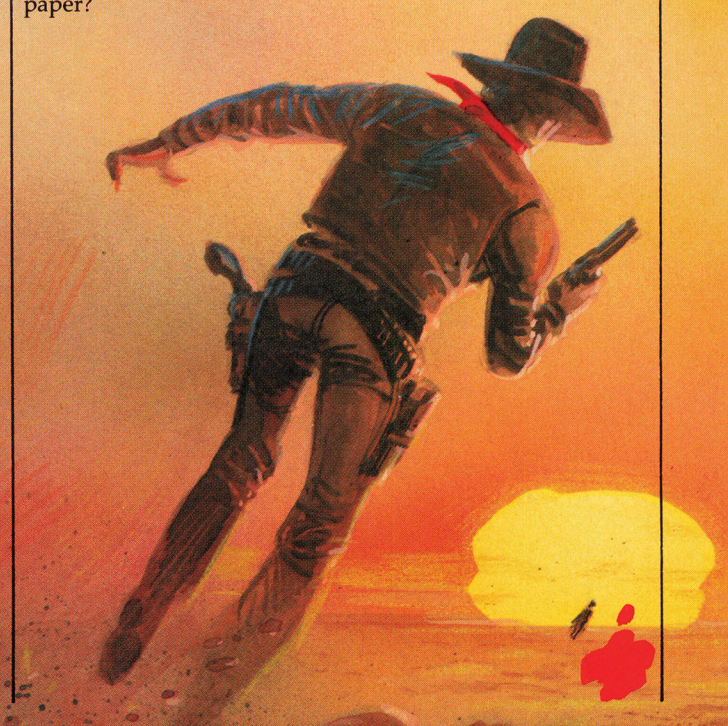
Finally, a note for the filthy rich. King collectables are pricey and the original *Dark Tower* editions are no exception. Prices start at £25 for a regular *Drawing Of The Three* from Donald Grant and run up to £2,000-plus for the rarest editions of *The Gunslinger*. Copies are available, mostly on the US book market.

New American Library has released an unabridged audio version of *The Gunslinger*, narrated by Stephen King – £14.99 for six hours and 15 minutes – and volume two is under way. Whether you read the book or listen to it, *The Dark Tower* will show you another side of Stephen King's writing. Nineteen years is a long time to wait, but you better believe it's been worth it.

Now, does anyone know where I can get me some green magic paper?

Sources: Donald M Grant Publishers Inc, West Kingston, Rhode Island, USA.
Editor's note: Information on sightings of *Dark Tower* books, available for sale or not, would be greatly appreciated by **FEAR**. Let us and your fellow readers know.

"The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed"



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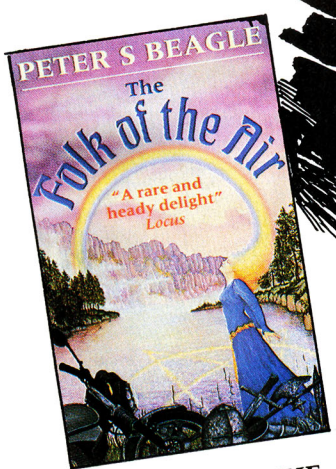

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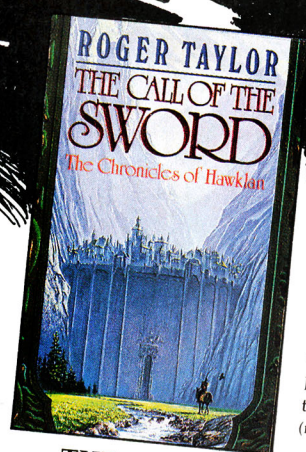

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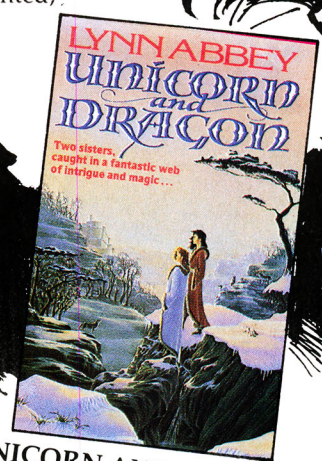

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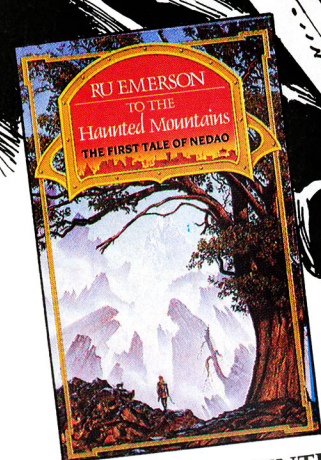

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IMAGE OF THE STORYTELLER

A golden vision of hope? Science fantasy authoress Sheri Tepper believes that pessimism within some of today's fantasy and horror can lead to dire consequences for the young. She talks to John Gilbert about the upbeat philosophy behind her books

Sheri S Tepper is one of a fading generation of traditional story-tellers. Her tales – like those of JRR Tolkien – reflect the traditional fairy tale: strong, uncompromisingly dark, but with heavy moral responsibility and hope at the end of the last paragraph.

Her life is an intriguing tale in itself. Born and raised in Colorado, USA, she has worked for a number of nonprofit-making relief agencies, such as CARE and Planned Parenthood, the US family planning organisation. Before settling down to write adult fantasy novels on her family ranch in Larkspur, Colorado, she had a full-time job as head of administration for 30 medical clinics in Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico. Her ranch contains a husband, two children – the son a scientist with the National Laboratories at Los Alamos, the daughter a writer – a pack of Norwegian elkhounds to keep the coyotes away from her herd of cattle, and a family of short-haired tabby cats.

She wrote children's stories in her spare time and wrote her first adult book, *The True Game*, during 1982. It saw publication in 1983 and since then this prolific lady has published a range of high-quality, high fantasy novels which include *The True Game*, *The Revenants*, *The Awakeners* and the soon to be published *Jinian Star-Eye*.

Sheri has also published two horror novels, *Blood Heritage* and *The Bones*, but largely at the behest of her publisher rather than by her own inclination. 'I was not interested in the horror side at all. I never intended *Blood Heritage* to be a horror story. I wrote a story called *Darinbaugh's Demon*. It was not too gory a piece. I got a letter from the publishers with the announcement that they were going to make it a horror story and that I should rewrite some sections of it to make them more horrid. We chopped because they're publishers, they know the business . . . '

Her attitude to horror sums up her attitude to fantasy and to writing. 'I don't relish horror. I understand why people do, and the writers that I respect the most among the group that I know do write excellent horror.'

DOWNERS

'I've come across an interesting idea. When there are wars people don't write horror. There was no horror written during World War II, when we were really deeply involved in war. Horror is only written in peacetime. I wonder, is this our substitute for war? Is it our substitute for gore and death and fear and tragedy? I think there may be a deep – one hates to say human – need (maybe an inhuman need) in all of us for this depth of tragedy and the only way we can achieve it outside of wartime is by writing about it in this way. Now, maybe that's true, I don't know if that's true or not.

'I wonder if it's harmless, if increasing suicide rates among young people, for example, and the writing of a lot of horror, the showing of a lot of horror films have something to do with one another.

'There is a kind of horror which I used to love. It was the kind of horror which, at the end of the thing – it's the old traditional vampire tale – when the wooden

stake goes into the heart the people are safe. And they have been very brave, and they've done these very courageous things and they've saved themselves.

'Now, remember, I've read this stuff since I was 10 and I'm almost 60 so that's 50 years of reading it. I have seen over those years the hopeless ending in the horror novel creeping in where it's *The Night Of The Living Dead* and it's going to go on being *The Night Of The Living Dead* forever. There is no hope, there is no finish, and the characters are doomed. It's *that* kind of obstinate pessimism. Now, I think that's sad. I come from an age which wanted the human spirit to be triumphant, and I still want that. I don't care if it's bloodless, I want there to be some hope there at the end. I want there to be some triumphant human spirit which says, 'No, dammit, I'm not going to die'.

'People can take downers and they can get so depressed that they kill themselves and I think they can take written downers as well. If you ask me what kind of writing I always wanted to do, I didn't want to do downers. I did a novella for a thing that's published in the United States called *Night Visions*, the latest *Night Visions*, and it's as close as I can come to being one of the downer kind of things. It's got one protagonist and he dies at the end. I hope I did a good workmanlike job, but I can't say I really enjoyed it.

'The novel I want to write is the novel of character. I want somebody to say 'Well, even though things are pretty rotten, even though there may be elements of horror in it, we can still win out at the end'. I don't know, maybe it's the tether in me, maybe it's the grandma in me, maybe it's the mother in me, I just don't think you get anywhere by hopelessness.'

DEFINING LINES

Sheri's next novel, published in October, is a case in point. 'You haven't finished the *True Game* series yet, the book about Jinian Star-Eye. Even at the end of that, when everything gets knocked all to hell in this world that they're in, there's still that element of pick up your socks . . . ' I suggested.

'I don't think there's a clear line between fantasy and horror or between fantasy and science fiction. A good novel is a good novel. A good novel has characters you care about, they're responsive to situations that are understandable. If it's a good novel you care intensely what happens to those people.

'In a horror novel you kill them all off. You grieve the reader. They care about these people and it's like a movie where you go and you come out weeping.

'In a fantasy novel you take those same characters and you put them in a wonderful world and the world becomes one of the characters in the book. And you may care intensely about that world too. Then, if you're going to do a fantasy horror novel then you take that world and those people and you kill 'em off, gradually and painfully and fearfully.'

Sheri also believes that there is no clear dividing line between fantasy and science fiction. 'I had written all of the *True Game* books as fantasy. Orson Scott said that he read the last one and said 'My God, this was science fiction'. All we have to do to make it science fiction is explain how it got there.

'The difference between fantasy and science fiction is just magic. If it's magic it's fantasy, if it's explicable it's science fiction. Purists will say 'Well I only read science fiction', but that only means that they're picking from that side of the continuum; that doesn't mean that it doesn't all flow together.'

LITTLE BIG

Having written within and then passed on from the horror genre, Sheri does have her sights on other genres, and other areas of literature. 'Every year I do one big book [like *The Awakeners*] and one or two little books [like *Blood Heritage* and *The Bones*]. It would be nice if those little books could be something else [other than horror] and if they do become something else, I think those would become a mystery, because that's about the size of a mystery and they're something I enjoy.'

The move wouldn't be surprising. Sheri's books are full of mystery, not just of the mystical and unknown worlds variety, but of character and motive. 'There seems to be a lot [of mystery] in most of my books. The *True Game* series turns out to be mystery at the end. Nobody knew what was really going on in this world until the last book.'

One of Sheri's next big books, due out in 1989, is *The Gate To Woman's Country*, a novel which came about when she grew restless after finishing *The Awakeners*. 'When I finished *The Awakeners* I had originally intended there would be a third book which was to explore the theme left open at the end of *The Awakeners*. I decided I had done enough of that world. It wasn't that I was tired of it exactly, it was that that book really ended at that point and I wasn't sure that I could effectively develop that idea in that same world and with those same characters.

'I took that theme and wrote *The Gate To Woman's Country*. This then is the sequel; even though it's not in that world, it's not those characters, it's set in this world and it's a very natural world; I mean it's not a fantasy. This is a straight novel about real people in this world after this world has been destroyed.

'The science-fictioners will say this is a science-fiction novel because it's set in the future, I don't think the fantasists will claim it, and it's not a horror novel, even though some very horrible things happen in it.'

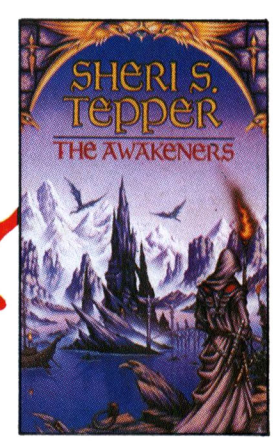
The Gate To Woman's Country came about when Sheri was caught by a particularly intriguing image, a spark which has started so many of her books. 'I saw a television show: it was a documentary. Long camera shot; raining; and a woman with a hooded cloak walking down a cobbled street. The light falling under the clouds. Just a 30-second shot. It just moved something very deep in me and I decided to use it.

'And so I sat down and wrote the first three pages of *The Gate To Woman's Country*. The very act of writing draws everything in. So there you've got a piece and it goes on from there. In this case it was the first chapter instead of the middle.

'I haven't been writing for very long. My first book was published in 1982-83. I'm still learning about it. So, some of the things I try I know I won't have the skill to do – yet. I haven't learnt how to do it and I have to figure them out and sometimes it takes me a while. I sit there sometimes for two or three weeks while I figure out how the heck I go about doing what I want to do and I haven't the least idea. So far I've always been able to.

'I've always worked, I've never just been a housewife, and so I work at my writing just the way I would work in an office. I sit down at my machine in the morning and I write for eight hours a day, every day. But, it's worth it. You don't get out of the habit, you don't make excuses for yourself, like 'Well, I don't feel like it today', or 'I can't do it today'. You just go ahead and do it.'

"The difference between fantasy and science fiction is just magic. If it's magic it's fantasy, if it's explicable it's science fiction"



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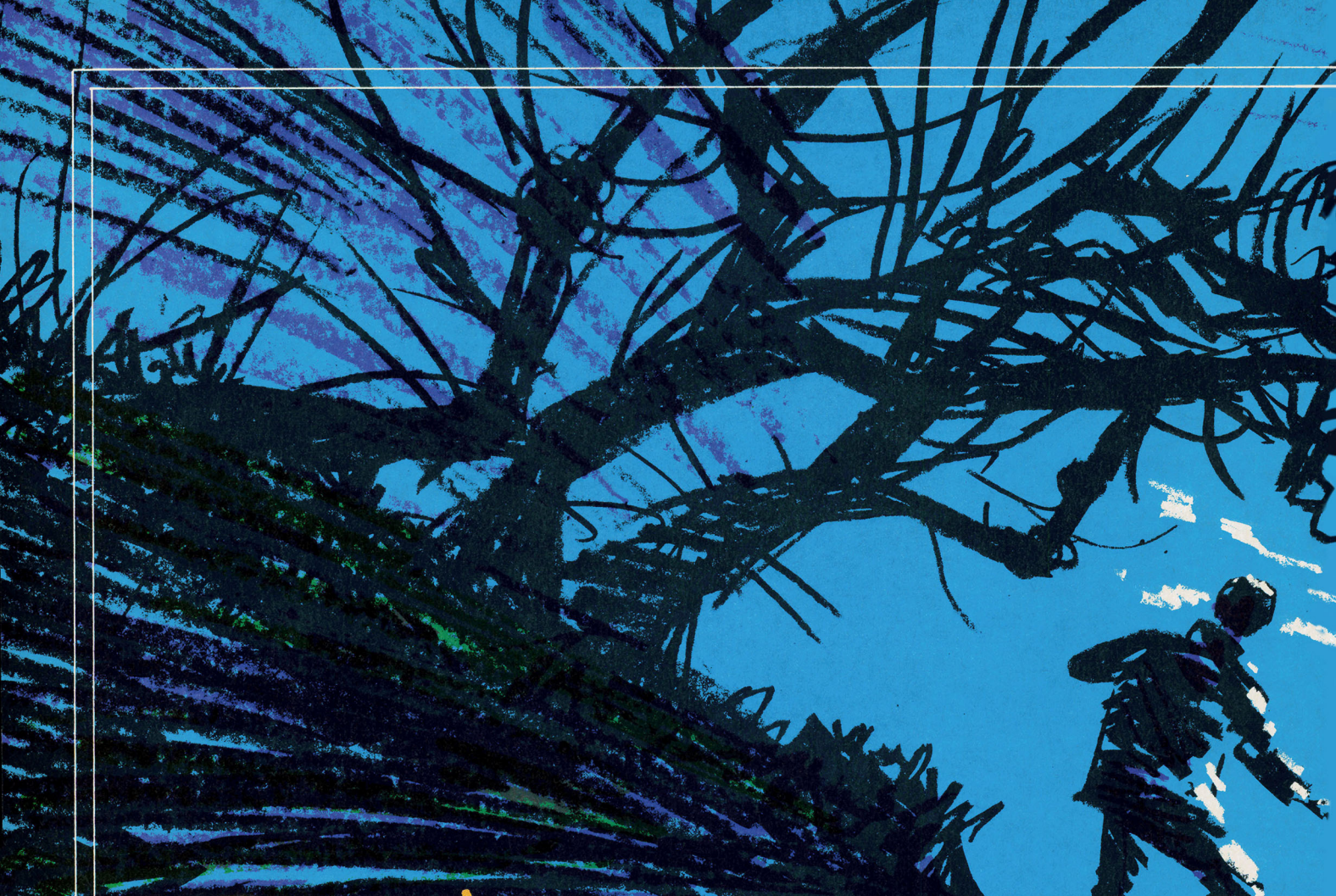

Guilty Party

BY STEPHEN LAWS

"I've been a wild rover for many a year/ And I've spent all me money on whisky and beer/ But now I've returned with gold in great store/ I won't play the wild rover. No never. No more."

The last chorus of the old song reverberated from the swaying occupants of the battered bus as it sped down yet another country lane. As if on cue, a sudden turn in the road sent the chorus leader, who had been standing in the aisle, crashing across two of the seats.

There was a roar of drunken laughter.

It had been a good night. The usual office Christmas party with hired bus and a pub far out in the wilds. Stamfordham was usually a quiet little spot. Not really too remote, but 'countrified' enough to appeal to the most hardened of city types and to arouse the irritation of local residents when the townies arrived en masse to take over the only two pubs in the area.

Stuart heaved himself from the seat and struggled past Mark towards the back of the bus. Mark by this time had begun to lead the others in another typical 'Oirish' folk song – *The Wild Colonial Boy* – and the strains of the boozy singers echoed in Stuart's whisky-befuddled brain as he slumped next to Steve, who was near to falling asleep, partly because of the rocking of the bus, but mainly because of the ten rum-and-cokes which had passed through his system.

Moonlight occasionally flashed through the ragged trees which reared and loomed past the windows as the bus rattled on its way, city-bound.

"Hello, my good man," said Steve slurrily. "What brings you down here then?"

"Just had an idea," said Stuart, "an idea for a story."

Both men were fanatical dreamers and film buffs. Ideas for screenplays were often shouted across the office in between writing reports and drafting committee minutes.

"Just supposing," Stuart went on after a slight pause, "that there's been an office party just like this one, and we're on our way home. Just like this. Then, suddenly, one of the people on the bus sees something . . . *something* . . . outside in the trees, by the glare of the headlights."

Steve pursed his lips thoughtfully and screwed up

STEPHEN LAWS started his career with *The Ghost Train*, the advertisements for which were banned from British Rail hoardings. His second novel, *Spectre*, confirmed him as one of Britain's bestselling horror writers and his latest work, *The Wyrm*, shows a marked increase in his imaginative powers. Look out for his debut as a **FEAR** correspondent.

his eyebrows. Then, after another pause he looked at Stuart.

"You mean . . . something vague. Something . . . not quite *right*."

"Yeah. That's right. Something pretty weird. So that he's not sure whether it's the booze or not."

"It would be a good starting point for . . ."

". . . a horror film. Yeah."

They continued to bounce ideas off each other. Clichés abounded. Stock situations seemed to spring readily to mind. Completely absorbed, they'd forgotten everything else. Suddenly, a chorus of voices brought Stuart back to reality.

"Stuart! Hi, man! You don't want to sleep on the bus tonight, do you? It's your stop!"

"It is?"

Stuart bundled to his feet and pulled his coat on.

"Don't forget, Steve! This is one we can take up on Monday! See you!"

As he bustled to the front of the bus, a flurry of arms slapped him amiably across the shoulders.

"Get a move on, Stu! We've got to get home as well, you know!"

The hiss of the pneumatic bus door. The bite of the cold winter air. With breath turning to steam, Stuart turned on the step and waved his arm in a mock dramatic gesture of farewell.

As he stepped down from the bus and into the night, the cries of farewell were snuffed out as the door snapped shut. With a coughing roar of the engine, a shifting of gears and a crunch of gravel, the bus sped off rattling into the blackness of the country lane.

Country lane?

What the hell am I doing in a country lane? thought Stuart, spinning none too steadily on one heel and surveying the bluer blackness of his surroundings. In the cold moonlight he could just make out the row of hedges bristling on each side of the road.

Clutches of trees like gnarled giants crouched along the roadway, their spiny fingers dancing in the freezing air as if conducting the weird melody which the wind was playing amongst them.

"The stupid idiots have dropped me off in a country bloody road! Miles from anywhere."

It was a little while before he realised that he was standing directly under a rusted signpost and when he squinted up at the weatherbeaten lettering, he realised what had happened.

"Don't forget," he had said in the Bay Horse Pub, "I've got to be dropped off at Crawpost when we head back. My mate's picking me up there and taking me on home."

The signpost had only two place names on it . . . Newcastle 13 miles: Crowfast farm 2 miles. Maybe Crawpost *had* sounded like Crowfast after ten whiskies but it didn't make Stuart feel any better disposed towards his fellow man as he started to walk down the lane. Turning up his collar, he looked for a telephone box or the telltale flashing headlights of an approaching car. Nothing. Not even the distant glowing from a farmhouse window.

Nothing.

He began to curse under his breath that the party had been organised so far away from Newcastle. Why couldn't it have been held in the town? Or at least near to a bus route. Here he was, miles from anywhere on a lonely country road. Anything could happen. He could fall into a ditch and break a leg or something. Unnoticed for weeks, maybe. That was a good idea for a story . . . Stories later. The first priority was a phone box or a farmhouse with a telephone.

It seemed that only ten minutes had passed before a gradual feeling of unease began to creep over him. Continually, he found himself glancing over at the other side of the road as the hedges hissed and swayed with the wind. Stuart wasn't a nervous man. Admittedly, being stranded out in the wilds was an irritating experience to say the least, but no reason to suppose that someone was . . . Damn it, someone *was* following him. Creeping along behind the hedge on the other side of the road. Stuart stopped. This was bloody stupid. There wasn't anyone there.

This is what comes of getting ideas for horror films, he thought. He continued to walk, the lonely sound of his footsteps on the road somehow challenging the darkness. But he still couldn't lose the feeling that something was moving over there. *Must be a cow.*

Another five minutes or so passed as he walked. For an instant, he thought he saw something slinking past a gap in the hedgerow. Again, he stopped and stared at the hedge. There wasn't anybody there, surely? Funny thing though, standing there in the moonlight staring at the hedgerow as he was, Stuart had to admit that by a trick of the light it *did* look as if something was just visible on the other side. Something that crouched and watched.

Stuart laughed and kept on walking. He conjured up pictures of Cary Grant in a similar situation. Alighting from a bus in the film *North By Northwest*, he had found himself out in the open. Isolated and vulnerable. And then he'd been attacked by a crop-dusting aeroplane.

But that was in the daytime. No homicidal plane pilot in sight here. Just a rustling in the hedgerow

which seemed to be keeping pace with him as he walked.

Unconsciously, he found himself walking slightly into the road, away from the gravel at the roadside which had been crunching underfoot. Was he afraid of giving away his position? Could that be his own shadow somehow reflecting in the shrubbery? No . . . his own shadow was right there in the middle of the road. The foolishness of the situation stopped him from crossing the lane and peering over the hedge.

A scudding cloud covered the moon like a giant veil and the countryside was plunged into an even greater darkness.

Stuart had read the clichés about fear jolting a person's nervous system like an electric shock. He had heard how a person's blood could 'turn to ice' and of how his heart could 'leap into his mouth'. But he was totally unprepared for it to happen to him.

As if waiting for the moon to disappear, something large crashed through the hedge and was bounding across the road. What happened next was a series of impressions . . . of 'frozen frames' in a film. Everything happened so quickly. Something dashed at him through the dark. Something which panted heavily and loudly as it approached. Stuart was frozen in his tracks. Something wanted to catch him very desperately. Something bestial, hungry and decidedly unpleasant. A glint in the dark from what seemed to be an eye or a tooth made him realise that his assailant was almost on top of him. Almost at his ear there came an animal snarl as he ducked down instinctively onto his haunches. A brush of hair on his cheek. An extremely savage blow on his back. The ripping of cloth. The crash of undergrowth as his attacker burst through the other hedge behind him.

Stuart wheeled around as the moon reappeared, throwing out everything around him in crystal-clear vision. A gaping hole had been torn into the hedge, the inner fringes of which still twisted and writhed from the passage of . . . whatever it had been.

Stuart felt his heart pounding in his chest. His throat was dry and constricted. He was no longer drunk.

An impression remained in his mind of a man-like shape. But not a man.

"No . . . " Stuart muttered under his breath, his eyes flickering the length of the hedgerow, "not a a werewolf either. More like some stupid bugger dressed in a ridiculous werewolf costume from a very bad horror B-feature."

It all seemed perfectly clear. Somebody was dressed up and trying to scare the hell out of him. Well . . . he'd done a pretty good job so far. If Stuart hadn't left Steve on the bus, he would have sworn that this would be the sort of trick *he* would pull after their conversation on film plots.

Stuart started to run, still scanning the bushes at his left, not sure whether the sound of his own gasping was covering the horrific panting and growling of something keeping abreast with him on the other side of the hedge. Hardly even altering his speed, he stooped and grabbed half of a housebrick from the grass verge.

Still running, he weighed the brick in his hand. The very fact that it was a housebrick and not just some rock was a comfort. A brick made by a builder from a house. For people. Out in the wilds, it was a comfort to know that his grab for a weapon had given him something which was man-made. Now, even the lonely stretch of road didn't seem quite so cut off from civilisation as before, and the feeling that there was nothing more supernatural than a lunatic in a Hallowe'en costume following him made Stuart's fear rechannel itself into something approaching rage. Just one more glimpse of the bastard, and he'd have to contend with a skull fracture.

Stuart's anger reached a peak. Veering in towards a gap in the hedge where anyone on the other side would have to pass, he suddenly halted, whirled and raised the brick ready to throw.

Just show yourself for one second . . .

Sucking in lungfuls of air, he tensed . . . waiting for his assailant. His own heartbeats thudded like the footsteps of an approaching giant.

Nothing.

Clouds of breath streamed around his face.

Nothing.

The branches of a nearby tree shook and rattled in the wind.

Nothing.

Slowly, Stuart began to move along the road again, still with the brick half-raised in his hand, ever watchful for any sign of movement. A flicker of light between the trees suddenly caught his eye.

A farm! Crowfast farm!

He realised that he'd run almost two miles. Normally, running for a bus would have completely winded him. But the circumstances here were entirely different. If the farm had a telephone – which it surely must – he could phone for a taxi and be on his way home in no time at all. On instinct, Stuart turned quickly as he ran. About 25 yards behind him something suddenly dashed across the road from right to left and vanished into a copse of trees. Something which crouched as it ran, but with extremely broad shoulders and long arms. And . . . pointed ears? And . . . pointed ears?

Stuart began to run even faster than before. The road twisted to the right and, just at the turn, to his left, he saw a twisted, roughly hewn gate bearing a hand-etched inscription . . .

Crowfast Farm.

Deep in the trees he could see the glow which had first caught his eye. Reaching the gate, Stuart braced one hand on its topmost bar and took a running leap. Years of sitting behind a desk and insufficient exercise suddenly caught up with him as his foot caught against the bar and sent him cartwheeling into the deep grass on the other side of the gate. Spitting out soil, he pulled himself to his feet. His stretched leg felt six inches longer than the other. The thought of being hemmed in by trees was suddenly unnerving. At least on the open road he could see if anyone was lurking nearby – almost.

But with all those trees . . .

Crashing into the copse, Stuart dodged in and out around the tree trunks with his eyes fixed steadfastly on the glowing light up ahead. No less than ten yards into the trees he heard something blundering into the gate behind him.

Bastard!

Stuart spun around. He had once dreamed that someone was standing in the shadows at the foot of the bed. Frozen by some strange force, he had watched as the figure silently moved around the bed and approached him. It was only when the figure had thrust itself forward into the moonlight that he was able to scream and pull the bedclothes over his head. The same immobility now came over him as he saw the slavering jaws, the balefully glowing red eyes, and the hideously pointed wolf's ears. This was no lunatic in a Hallowe'en costume . . .

The stooped figure paused at the broken gate and swung its head backwards and forwards, looking for him. The clawed arms swung restlessly like those of some horrific ape.

The figure became rigid and Stuart realised that it had seen him. As the horror, with terrible strength, loped over the gate and lunged into the trees toward him, the spell broke and Stuart heaved the brick with more strength than he thought he had. At once, he knew that he had thrown wide of the mark. He watched as the projectile twisted through the air, as if

Stuart started to run...

in slow motion. The man-beast thrashed between the trees and it seemed as if the missile would hit one of the tree boles. Unaware of the projectile, the beast stepped straight into its path.

The brick struck the animal full on the temple with a crunch of bone and sent it reeling into the undergrowth. As Stuart turned and dashed through the trees a chilling howl of rage and pain echoed behind him. He had never heard a real wolf-howl before. Only on film. Never in life. Again, the thought came back to him that he had been caught in the fantasy world of a B-film character.

But for no more than an instant. This nightmare was real. The iced air tore at his lungs as he charged through the undergrowth. The tangled grass and weeds seemed to deliberately clutch at his legs, slowing him down.

The farmhouse *must* be up ahead somewhere. The light flashed clearly through the trees, only 20 yards away. From somewhere behind him came the sound of crashing vegetation. Only ten yards to go. A thicket obscured the light. Clawing fingers. Twigs tearing at his clothes. Thrusting through the shrubbery, Stuart came into a small clearing and saw the source of the light.

"What the bloody hell . . . ?"

A lantern hung from the low limb of an ash tree, throwing out the surrounding trees in bright relief. A lantern, but no farmhouse.

Jesus. There had to be a farmhouse somewhere.

The thing behind him rapidly approached him. Panic clutched at his throat as he realised that the copse held no sanctuary. There *must* be a farmhouse nearby.

Stuart dashed around, desperately searching for some sign of human habitation. Who had put the light in the clearing? And why?

The farmhouse was up ahead, surrounded on all sides by thick undergrowth and twisted trees. Stuart had a flitting glimpse of dilapidated buildings, a crumbling wall and rusting farm equipment as he launched himself towards the main thatched building. A dull light shone through one of its windows. The solid oak door seemed to swing towards him at a crazy angle as he pounded into a small paved yard, leapt over the rusting plough and crashed against the panelling. Grasping the large gargoyle doorknocker, he pounded on the door.

"Let me in!"

He pounded on the door, though he realised that the creature could easily find him by the noise he was making.

A crash from somewhere behind, and the yellow glow of the lantern was extinguished.

"Let me in!"

Suddenly, there came the judder and rattle of a large bolt being thrown on the other side of the door, and Stuart practically fell inside as the heavy door swung inwards. A hand grasped his arm and held him steady as he staggered across a musty room and into a chair. The door slammed shut and the bolt was hammered back into position. Gasping for breath, Stuart looked up and saw a small and very wrinkled old man with an extremely benign face and faded-blue eyes standing at the door, holding a small lantern above his stooped head. Its guttering light made shadows loom and sway throughout the room

The old man smiled.

"Happy birthday, son. We've been expecting you."

Stuart pointed at the window, unable to speak, as he sucked in lungfuls of stale air. The old man slowly followed his pointing finger, smiled again, and crossed to the far side of the room to the battered door. In the gloom, Stuart could just make out the room's ancient furniture. A gigantic cobweb stretched from an old spinning wheel in the corner to a dust-covered sideboard.

The old man opened the door and without taking his eyes from his visitor, called to someone beyond.

"Violet. He's come."

Stuart stood up, his chest heaving, and moved to the fly-stained window. The faint light from within the room cast a feeble reflection out into the yard but the blackness beyond hid anything that might . . . that *was* lurking outside.

"Listen!" Stuart said and turned again to the old man, who had shut the door and moved to the table in the centre of the room. "Have you got a phone?"

The old man smiled.

"A phone? Have you got a phone?" Stuart demanded angrily. "There's a dangerous animal out there. Somebody's got to phone the police."

"You know we haven't got a phone, Matthew," said the old man.

The door behind him opened with a slight creak and an old woman appeared, stooped and shambling. Stuart could see that her face held the same indulgent smile as that of the old man. Her eyes lit up as she looked at Stuart from under a furrowed brow.

"Matthew," she said, "we knew you'd come back to us. Happy birthday, son."

Stuart braced himself and looked at the couple, anger beginning to swell inside.

"I'm not Matthew, whoever he is. And if we don't do something . . ."

Another figure entered the room. A younger man with a checked shirt and a notably extravagant expression of grim determination. The most notable thing about him, however, was the 12-bore shotgun which he pointed at Stuart's chest.

The old man placed a hand on Stuart's shoulder.

"Sit down, my boy."

As he sat, the younger man shut the door with his his foot and hissed at the old woman: "Is it him?"

The old lady smiled, nodded and pulled up a chair at the table across from Stuart and the old man.

This is crazy, thought Stuart.

"Ten years to the day, Matthew," croaked the old man, "and here you are, just as you said you would be. You always were true to your word. Punctuality. Punct-u-ality."

Stuart began to stand again. The younger man waved the shotgun in a gesture which made Stuart realise that not only was there great danger outside, but also a real danger inside.

"Would you mind telling me just what's going on?" he asked.

"You *know*, Matthew. It's been a long time now since we last saw you. And I suppose we should really explain a few things. You have every right to be angry with us for what we did, but it was all for the best. All for the best." Stuart sat down again and the old man crossed his arms on the table before continuing. "If you hadn't been such a wild rover in the first place, Matthew, nothing would have come of it. But . . . well, when you returned to your mother and I after all those years abroad we *were* glad to see you again." The old man pointed at the younger man with the gun. "Arnold always missed his brother, didn't you, Arnold? And as for all that money you brought back with you . . . it's still here, you know. We've never touched a bit of it. Locked up in the cellar for ten years, it's been. 'Matthew's money' – that's what your mother calls it. We've been keeping it for you."

Stuart shifted uncomfortably in his seat and glanced at the window.

The old man continued: "So we've never stolen anything, son. You've got to understand that we didn't kill you for your money."

Stuart looked at the old man again. He *must* be mad. "We really didn't want to kill you in the first place. But you know how it was when you came back to us. You were changed. And when the killings started, we did shelter you, didn't we? We would never have given you away, would we, mother? We suffered for a long time, Matthew. The old gypsy lady told us what was happening and what we should do. When the little boy was killed, we had no alternative . . ."

The old lady leaned forward. "We were never cruel parents, Matthew. Were we, father?"

"No of course we weren't." The old man shook his head slowly and earnestly. "But anyway . . . you're here now, just like you said you would be. And you're not angry with us any more for what we did."

Stuart turned to the younger man. "Listen, mate. There's an animal out there. It looks like a . . . well, it's . . . You've got to get a message to the police. Have you got a car?"

The young man remained impassive, shotgun still pointed at Stuart.

"We can't have a birthday without a birthday party, can we, Violet?" said the old man.

Smiling like a small child who has just thought of a new game to play, the old woman scurried past the shotgun-wielding Arnold and into the darkness beyond.

"I'm not your son," protested Stuart, "you should know that. My name's . . ."

"Of course you are, Matthew," replied the old man indulgently.

"Look, I don't even . . . Have you got a picture? A picture of your son?"

Arnold stood slightly to one side and motioned with the shotgun at a picture hanging over the spinning wheel.

"I can't see it clearly."

Stretching across, Arnold took down the picture and gingerly placed it in front of Stuart, the barrels of the shotgun coming uncomfortably close to his face. Wiping the dust from the glass frame, Stuart saw that the face was of a very ordinary looking young man in his mid-20s. Glassy eyes. Dark hair. The likeness to the threatening young man with the gun was unmistakable.

"Brother?" Stuart asked.

For the first time, Arnold spoke. In a voice that quivered with fear.

"Yes."

"Listen, old man," said Stuart. "This picture doesn't even remotely look like me."

The old man wagged a reproachful finger at Stuart. "The gypsy lady said that you would be changed when you came back. Being able to change was always one of your tricks, you know."

The woman returned from her mission carrying a wooden tray. On the tray rested a cake. A huge birthday cake covered in candles, many of which were cracked and broken. A wickedly sharp cakeknife lay alongside it. Stuart could see that the cake was old. Very old. Cobwebs fluttered on its surface. Through the mould, he could just make out the legend, 'Happy Birthday Matthew'.

The old man gestured to Arnold to sit down with them at the table. As he sat, the woman handed him a paper party hat and then, reaching across the table, gave another to Stuart and one to the old man, who smoothed it onto his balding pate; a green hat with long spikes that rustled in the still air like a strange crown.

"Come on, Matthew. Join in the fun."

Stuart again rose to his feet, pushing the chair back across the floor.

"If you think . . ."

Arnold leapt to his feet and raised the shotgun.

"Sit down, Matthew."

The old man gripped Stuart's coatsleeve. "Sit . . . *down* and join in the fun," he hissed vehemently through clenched teeth, the air of gentility completely gone from his voice. Stuart sat, slowly and reluctantly.

"It has to be done this way," hissed the old man, "The old lady said so. When you promised to come back to us, Matt . . . as you were dying . . . you were very angry. You would have killed us. The old lady said that you would come back on your birthday. Today. And that if we didn't arrange things properly,

He must be mad...

there wouldn't be . . . wouldn't be any stopping you. You do see that, don't you, son?" The tone of the old man's voice had changed again. Now he was imploring Stuart, explaining, trying to make him understand.

"You've got to have a special cake ready for him when he returns. That's what the old lady said. A special cake. And you've got to make him welcome. That's important. You must always keep a special lantern burning out there in the clearing where the deed was done. And you can see, can't you, son? We *have* made you welcome. You'll always be our boy. Nothing can change that."

Stuart banged his fist down hard on the table in anger, making the guttering candles on the cake shake, creating new shadows which leapt threateningly from the corners of the room. The old woman cried out in alarm, and the old man seized him by the wrist.

"Matthew! We've done everything that the gypsy woman said. But I should warn you. Arnold has put pieces of silver into the cartridges of his shotgun. Violet. Cut the cake!"

This is absolutely bloody crazy, thought Stuart. And then the nightmare and its logic suddenly fitted together perfectly. the whole insane sequence of events began to make sense.

Quietly, Stuart leaned across to the old man.

"I'm not Matthew. But he *is* out there – somewhere in the dark. I know he's a werewolf. He attacked me out there on the road and followed me up to the farm. He's come back alright and he's out there prowling around the house. I don't know whether this . . . this . . . ritual is supposed to placate him, but *believe* me . . . you've got the wrong person."

The old woman shoved a plate across the table with a wedge of cake on it. It came to rest with a rattle, right in front of Stuart. Two warped candles flickered madly from the concrete-hard icing.

"Eat!"

"What?" gasped Stuart incredulously, "You must be joking . . . " A grey worm, cut in half by the cake knife, writhed and squirmed its way free from the cake mixture onto the plate.

"Eat!"

A gossamer thread of cobweb was caught in the flame of one of the candles and hissed as it dissolved. Stuart's stomach heaved as he picked up the piece of cake and looked at the trio sitting around the table. Sitting there, in their paper hats, the shadows from the candles creeping and fluttering on their faces. For all the world it looked as if they were engaged in some weird grimacing competition.

"Eat!"

The room vibrated to the undulating howl of a savage wolf.

Stuart dropped the cake and leapt backwards in his chair – an action which probably save his life. As he fell to the floor, there was an ear-shattering roar as the shotgun spat bright yellow flame and sparks across the table. Huge slivers of wood exploded from the wall where Stuart had been sitting. The recoil from the weapon sent Arnold hurtling backwards.

Hell had suddenly erupted in the cottage.

The fly-blown window beside the oak door suddenly burst into a thousand glittering fragments and, as Stuart rolled on the floor, a long-clawed arm thrust through the window.

The old woman screamed again as a howling wind blasted through the gaping aperture and blew out all the candles on the cake. The lantern crashed to the floor and fizzled out. Above the noise of the howling wind, and the reverberating echo of the shotgun blast, Stuart could hear the old man's voice sobbing in the darkness.

"Matthew! Matthew! We *did* love you."

The large oak door shuddered violently under a massive weight. Hammering. Scratching. Ripping. The bolt of the the door clattered noisily. The door hinges screeched in protest as the oak burst inwards. Lying on the floor, Stuart tried to avoid the oak panelling as it crashed downward. But a length of wood struck him on the shoulder as he tried to rise, and knocked him to the ground yet again. For an instant, the doorframe was blackened by a monstrous fragment of darkness. And then Stuart could see the moon shining brightly in the sky as the figure passed.

Something had entered the room.

But as it passed, Stuart heard a voice. Not a human voice. More like an inhuman snarling from behind a mask. Muzzled. Spoken through lips that were never meant to speak.

Stuart kicked the oak panelling to one side and leapt through the shattered doorway. Trees swam at him crazily as he blundered, panic-stricken, through the undergrowth, expecting the nightmare padding sound of clawed feet and inhuman panting which would mean that the thing was pursuing him again. Out on the main road again, he never looked back for fear of seeing the abominable shape crashing through the bushes after him.

Of his flight back into civilisation, he could never really remember very much – and would never have thought it possible that he could run 12 miles back into the town. But he did.

In the months to come, Crowhurst Farm's absence from any map didn't really surprise him. And when, three years later, he passed that bend in the road again where he had crashed over the gate, he wasn't surprised to find that there was no gate in evidence. he didn't even bother to look for the signpost which pointed to Crowhurst Farm, two miles up the road. He knew it wouldn't be there.

He would have doubted his own sanity if it hadn't been for one thing. The warped birthday candle which he had found in his pocket. But the voice which Stuart had heard in the doorway would stay with him forever. Inhuman it many have been, the words distorted and fragmented. But the message was clear enough.

Matthew had returned home to even the score.

"Many happy returns."

Cut the Cake!

THE KILLING STROKE

Has Shaun Hutson, Gore Guru and Grand Master of Graphic Violence, changed his style? John Gilbert met him at the London locations of his new novel, ASSASSIN, and discovered an enigma within a block of concrete.

Controversy is the name of the game with Emperor Of Excess Shaun Hutson. At 29 he's Britain's youngest horror writer, with a massive following which has made him the country's third most popular in the genre. But sales figures tell little about Shaun, who has been in the horror business for six years, is a heavy-metal fanatic, drummer, and the man who gives Jonathan Ross as good as he gets on *The Last Resort*. His latest book, *Assassin*, is out in hardback in October and is simultaneously joined on the shelves by the paperback of *Victims*.

JG: How would you describe your books?
SH: I don't write horror, I write comedy. Somebody did actually once call my books 'the ultimate in black comedy'. When I sat down to write *Victims* I wanted to write the ultimate black comedy. Also, it's a way of covering myself because if somebody reads it and says 'that was so bad it was funny' I can say 'well of course it was, it was meant to be a black comedy'.

I don't sit down and think 'I'm going to write *a* horror story'. I do sit down, obviously, with the intention of scaring the shit out of people, but I suppose we come back to the argument that novels shouldn't be classified. They should all be books; they shouldn't be thrillers, love stories, they should all be novels. But I don't object to being called a horror writer.
JG: What about censorship on books and films?
SH: I do believe there should be censorship in some form, maybe in films, not in books. With books you need a certain amount of intelligence to appreciate them, which you don't for a film or TV because it's there in front of you, and that interpretation is there whether you like it or not.
JG: What about the people who say that horror influences real life, like, say, the Hungerford massacre?
SH: It was terrible what happened, but I just do not know how they can say 'it was because he watched *Rambo* or because he was obsessed with a gun'. A glaring example of things supposedly shaping you from your childhood is Ian Brady [the Moors Murderer], where three of the reasons given for the way that he is now are because, as a kid, he read *Mein Kampf*, he went to see *Judgment At Nuremburg*, and he liked horror films. I mean, I did all of those things!

It's the reasons they give for why these nutters do the things they do. You can't hang it on films and you certainly can't hang it on books. You need a certain amount of intelligence to read a book and most murderers are not particularly intelligent people. What happened in Hungerford and Bristol were terrible things, but they just look for the thinnest excuses . . .

At the moment we're talking about dangerous books, dangerous films. Well I reckon some of the most dangerous books ever written are stuff by John Le Carré and Frederick Forsyth – who wrote *The Fourth Protocol* which shows that an atom bomb can be smuggled into this country. To me that's a lot more scary to people, knowing that that can happen. To me that's far more frightening than anything I could ever think up.

JG: Is there anything you wouldn't write?
SH: As long as it was within the context of the story and it was necessary, I would do it. I would not hold back from describing it once it was there.

The novel I've nearly finished doing at the moment is called *Assassin*. It's more like a London underworld thing. There's a lot of violence in it, there's very little horror but there's the horror of physical pain. There's a knee-capping scene where a guy gets his knees drilled which to me is more horrific than somebody being eaten by slugs.

Just because I do it doesn't mean that I wouldn't find it distasteful. There's a black mass scene in *Relics* which I found disgusting when I was writing it. It was very heavily cut in the end, but it was necessary.

BREEDING GROUNDS

JG: Your latest books, such as *Victims*, contain more characterisation than when you started writing, with *Deathday* and *Slugs*. Were the fast, gross-out, novels just written to make an impression, to get you noticed, to make lots of money?
SH: No, it was basically that the subject matter did not lend itself to huge character development. I wasn't given any guidelines at all, it [*Slugs*] was suggested to me in the first place, I didn't want to do it mainly because of things like *The Rats*. People at the beginning said 'he's ripping off James Herbert'.*The Rats* was published in '74 and *Slugs* was published in '82. The one's who ripped off James Herbert were people like Guy N Smith with *Night Of The Crabs* and Nick Sharman with *The Cats* and *Eat Them Alive*. There was a huge gap between *The Rats* and *Slugs*.

Getting back to your question, in *Breeding Ground* and *Slugs* – and to a certain extent in *Erebus* – there wasn't a need for in-depth characterisation. People, basically, were cannon fodder – or slug fodder. They were just a series of little vignettes which were there to keep the readers interested; and with *Breeding Ground* it was to see how far I could go. That is the funniest book I've ever done and one of the most enjoyable I've ever done.

But, with something like *Spawn* I did feel that the characterisation was a little bit deeper than it was in *Slugs*, and also in *Shadows*. To a certain extent, you can almost disregard *Slugs*, *Erebus* and *Breeding Ground*. The others are more like whodunnits.

Slugs wasn't written to make an impression. I knew so little about the book business. I wouldn't have known how to make an impression. I didn't set out to write the nastiest book that it was possible to buy. I was just very, very, lucky that the public wanted that sort of thing at that time, and it seemed to start a new upsurge in literary nasties again.

CHAINSAW TERROR

JG: I know a couple of your pseudonyms, but you tend to keep them secret.
SH: To the public I'm a horror author, that's it, I'm an author who's written seven novels. Nobody knows I've done about 15 war novels, two or three thrillers, some nonfiction, a couple of Westerns – the public don't know that.

One of them, I won't give it away, was almost as successful as *Spawn*. That's quite a shock, a pleasant surprise. The one that I never mind giving away is Nick Blake – which gives us *Chainsaw Terror*, which is getting back to the censorship thing.

Chainsaw Terror – originally I was asked to do the novelisation of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. They couldn't afford to pay for the rights so the editor said 'do us a novel about a nutter with a chainsaw' and he said 'make it as over the top as possible'. Two weeks later the manuscript went in. I got a phone call about a week after and they said 'gonna have to make a few cuts in this Shaun. We didn't think anybody could be quite as over the top as you've gone'. Bookwise – apart from WH Smith (they're the biggest wholesale distributors in the country) – they banned it outright just because it had 'chainsaw' in the title. It's since been reprinted and rejacketed under *Come The Night*.

Originally *Chainsaw Terror* should have been the first in a trilogy of *Chainsaw* novels which would have been *Chainsaw Terror*, *Chainsaw Bloodbath* and *Chainsaw Slaughter* . . .
[. . . Shaun picks interviewer off the carpet and slaps him on the back . . .]
. . . And they originally wanted me to sit down and do the three straight after each other, bang, bang, bang. If they'd have come out six months earlier I reckon they'd have cleaned up.
JG: Working practices?
SH: Nine o'clock till four o'clock five days a week. It doesn't take me long to write a book. *Slugs* was done in 25 days, *Breeding Ground* was done in 18. The novelisation of *Terminator* was done in 10. The longest I've ever spent on a book was 48 days and that was on *Shadows* and that included the rewrite.

I only ever do two drafts at the most. The one draft is done in a very short time. That goes off to my agent and editor. Basically then all I do is say 'send me a list of what's wrong', they do that and I put it right. That's it, that's all that happens. I can't work any other way. I work at such a high emotional pitch that I can't sustain interest in anything for more than two months at a time.
JG: [laughs hysterically] What about plot . . . ?
SH: To hear me say that you'd probably think, gosh, pulp author and all that. You see, it doesn't take me long to sit behind a typewriter and type it, but it might take a month or two to prepare the plot, the notes. I even do a cast list: beside every character I've got 'brown hair, scar under left eye, blue eyes', things like that; so I don't forget. Basically, all it is is a month or two of research, all-out note making and getting the plot absolutely right. Then, the notes are there, the plot's there, the cast list's there and it's just a case of steaming through it – which is why I can do it so quick.

People seem to think I wander into the office in the morning and think 'right, an idea', brrrrr . . .

"I do sit down, obviously, with the intention of scaring the shit out of people"

and a week later there's a book there. Christ, I wish it was that easy. I actually tried doing it, stupidly with *Victims*, I walked into the office one day and said 'Right, I'm goin' to think of a story', and I had more trouble with *Victims* than any novel I've ever done. What I did to cure that was do bugger all for about three months – not towards that. I worked on something else, I just didn't go near the typewriter and the ideas flooded in. That's what happened over Christmas. I did bugger all for about a month and I had more ideas during that time, when I had nothing to do with books, than I've ever had in me life.

JG: Do you take holidays?

SH: If I wanted to, I could work solid without a break from now until this time next year. I do occasionally take holidays, odd days and that; you know, I count this as a holiday.

DAY OF THE SLUGS

JG: Lots of work now, but where did you start? Did you always want to go into horror?

SH: I never wanted to be *a* writer, and then I didn't want to be *a* horror writer. But I didn't sit down and think 'I'm not going anywhere near horror because it's an appalling genre, it's cheap and nasty', because I love it. I love cheap and nasty things.

The type of stuff that I started doing was the type of stuff I'm perhaps swinging towards now, urban thrillers, if you like, because I enjoy that sort of film. I do not enjoy horror films. I would much rather go and see something like *Extreme Prejudice* or *Taxi Driver*. *The Wild Bunch* is one of my favourites. Things like that I would rather go and see – *The Long Good Friday* – shoot-'em-up type things.

The stuff I was doing at the beginning was boring and autobiographical, which is probably why it was never, ever, published. The first full-length horror novel I wrote was a thing called *The Skull* which Hamlyn Paperback [now Arrow Paperback] published in 1982, just before *Slugs* came out. Then I did *Deathday* and just after I'd finished it, Hamlyn wrote and said they weren't buying any more horror. *Deathday* disappeared until WH Allen published it.

JG: *Slugs* the movie will soon be out on video; you've said that if it takes off, the producers are going to film *Breeding Ground* on the same sets. Will there then be a *Slugs III* book?

SH: I don't feel that I need to go back to *Slugs*. *Breeding Ground* marked the end of the first period of my career as a writer. *Relics*, *Victims*, *Assassin* and the one that follows that is something different. I've had it with fuckin' slugs.

JG: How much influence did you have in the *Slugs* film?

SH: Absolutely none. It was a case of here's the money, here's the script, fuck off. If it's crap I can stand back and say 'it's nothing to do with me' and if it's brilliant I can say 'of course it is, it's based on my novel'. They actually want me to be involved in writing the script of *Breeding Ground*, but I don't think I would. If somebody decided to film something like *Shadows*, *Spawn*, *Relics*, *Victims*, something like that, I would.

STIFFS

JG: *Victims* is released in paperback in October with simultaneous release of your next hardback, *Assassin*. You say they're a change of pace for you. In what way?

SH: The violence in me novels, in *Victims*, *Assassin* and *Nemesis* – which is out next year – is not so much physical violence, it's become more psychological, emotional violence. All the characters are really nasty bastards to each other. Everybody in *Victims* is a victim of some type of mental disturbance.

JG: Including the doctor?

SH: No, he's a victim of being run over the head with a car. Every character in it is a victim of their own psyche. *Assassin* is a totally different kettle of fish. It's probably the fastest novel, the quickest-paced novel. It's like a 125 that's out of control and there's a brick wall in front of you. There's no way of stopping it. I was knackered when I finished writing it.

I've always wanted to do a gangster novel, ever since I did the novelisation of *Terminator*. I loved doing all the car chases in it, gun battles, I thought, 'this is great, I'll do a gangster novel'. Bring in the old dead gangsters, which is the twist because one of the gangs has been dead for two years. They get resuscitated by various means and go hunting the bloke who had 'em murdered in the first place. It's got probably the sickest scene I've had in print. It includes a dead gangster, a prostitute and a lot of maggots. I'm quite proud of that one . . . No, you'll never work it out John, you'll never work it out . . .

They've been encased in concrete for two years, because they're buried in the foundations of a building. I had to work out how badly decomposed a body would be if it was stuck in concrete for two years, and it wouldn't be that bad. A body takes a year to decompose in cold water. In concrete, if there's no air getting to it, it should be alright. They stink, but they're just a little bit mouldy. Their features are pretty fucked up so they have to find down-and-outs like rent boys, prostitutes and things, flay the skin off their faces and use them like masks so they can mingle with ordinary members of the public, so they can get closer to this guy who's the king of London's underworld.

It's a novel of torture, I think I'm going to get a lot of comeback from women on it. It'll be interesting to see what my regular women readers think of it. Apart from that it really is a slam-bang – all the way through it; about 0 to 60 in half a page. It's got the highest body count of any novel I've ever done. I'm certainly not copping out, but it's moving a little bit toward mainstream – apart from the bit with the maggots.

I s'pose the thing that also makes it so fast – you know my affinity for rock music – well, the hit man in *Assassin* always puts a Walkman on before he does a hit. Needless to say he's got rock music on 'cause it's the only thing he can hear over the top of the AK-33. The killings are intercut with lines from songs. The first one he's got Guns and Roses's *Welcome To The Jungle*, when he does the second one he's got a Megadeth track, and when he does the third one he's quite appropriately got Black Sabbath's *Die Young*.

JG: It sounds like a good movie.

SH: That's what I'm hoping. *Victims*, *Assassin*, and particularly *Nemesis*, the one I've just finished, are the only ones I've done that if a company comes along and says 'we want to film these' I would say 'yeah, but only on the proviso that I write the script'.

JG: What about the future, about *Nemesis*?

SH: It's the only book I've ever written I can't joke about, and that really worries me. I can't even talk about it. When I finished it, it was the only one that's ever got through on first draft. Everybody that's read it at WH Allen says it's the best thing I've ever done. I knew from that last full stop that it was the greatest thing I'd ever done or the biggest pile of shit that I'd ever done, I didn't know which.

It's very autobiographical – and I hasten to add I am not the two-headed one in it. As soon as the editor had finished reading it I got him to send a memo around the office saying 'no copies of this are to be circulated around the building, no-one is to see this other than the editor and the board of directors'. Everyone at WH Allen was runnin' around like chickens with their heads cut off thinking 'bloody hell, what's in it, what's in it . . . '

I will not do a tour to promote *Nemesis*, because I can't talk about it, I won't talk about it. There's stuff in there that I did not enjoy writing.

"ASSASSIN's got the sickest scene I've had in print. It includes a dead gangster, a prostitute and a lot of maggots"

THE SPOOK

Introducing our lady diary columnist. And what a lady. She hides her horny visage in the flare of the flashguns but gets all the juiciest gems of gossip be they from Hell, Beetlejuice or just plain old Earth. Would you introduce this lady to your party? Maybe not, but she's also Lady Ligger, the Mistress of Gatecrashers.

Maggots, beetles, members of the living dead, parasites and the dregs of society. No, I'm not talking about John Carpenter's *Prince Of Darkness*, I'm talking about the party at London's **Limelight Club** which promoted it. The basement had been transformed into a crypt, quite an apt choice when you consider the number of stiffs who attended. Video screens played an endless series of clips from the movie, so much so that by the end of the party I knew how to lip read. The waiters and waitresses, made up like the living dead, minced around with trays of food infinitely more horrifying than anything Carpenter could serve up. I'd never eaten anything like it before. Stepped in it once or twice, but never eaten it . . .

Freeloading journalists, looking for a story, mingled with such micro-celebs as **Kirsten Cooke**, from TV's *'Allo 'Allo*, and did I spot **Bazzer Norman** for just a second? Also spotted were writers **Shaun Hutson** – who still can't afford a shirt with sleeves, or a haircut – and **Clive Barker** – who found the hairdresser but shouldn't have bothered.

Both celebs and poseurs alike had to fight their way past the Limelight's bunch of evolutionary throwbacks – the Bouncers. Watching these neanderthals in dress-suits at work at least solved one abiding riddle for me. The reason the garments they wear around their throats are called 'Dickie-bows' is simple. It's because they're wrapped around pricks . . .

FANTASTIC TASTE

The following day found me in one of London's great bookshops where I spotted a quaintly-titled series of fantasy books by **Freda Warrington** variously named *A Blackbird In Silver* and *A Blackbird In Darkness*, no doubt shortly to be followed by *A Blackbird In Aspic*, perhaps . . . The world's first edible fantasy novel. Well, why not? It seems that novels these days can be put to a variety of uses, a case in point being New English Library's paperback edition of *It* – the first book I've ever seen printed on Izal toilet paper. *(That's the last unpaid for advert in a* **FEAR** *feature* **–ED.)** What next, I ask myself? Extracts from *Weaveworld* in the Axminster catalogue? Chapters of *Slugs* in *Gardener's Monthly*? *(Yes, and that's the last unpaid for advert in this column* **– ED.)**.

The rage at the moment seems to be for talking books. Now I must say I've stood in bookshops for hours shouting at the horror section and I've never got a word of sense out of any of them. Therefore, it was no surprise to see that **James Herbert**'s *The Fog* is out on cassette. There's also a new range of **Guy N Smith** talking books. You pick up the paperback and a voice says, 'Don't waste your money . . . '

FORBIDDEN FANCIES

Ever the ligger – and if you don't know what that means, look it up in **Shaun Hutson**'s diary – I cadged a chauffeur-driven lift to the opening of *Forbidden Planet*'s latest mega-store in London, courtesy of *mon ed-i-tor* **John Gilbert**. And he accuses me of ligging? You should have seen his fat, furry face downing gallons of gut-rot at the bar, and the way in which he hung on to his greasy glass when a shortage of nectar amber containers hit the drinking area. I should, however, mention – if only for the sake of my job – that John was only one of the editors, publishers and writers bopping around the bar in a frenzy of glass-finding.

Apart from the great glass shortage, the evening was a gala affair. The only old-timers who appeared not to be there were **Peter Cushing** and and **Chris Lee**. Never mind, **Adam 'Batman' West** more than made up for the disappointment with his impression of Robin – and an even better one of Batgirl.

I also bumped into the terrible twins **Willy Rushton** and *Disc World* author **Terry Pratchett**. I say 'terrible twins' because, although neither are gentlemen connected, they were both dressed in a disturbingly similar manner.

Talking of disturbing, I caught **Geoff Portass** – well-known for his work on *Hellraiser* – talking to a skinned corpse outside the Forbidden party, who was sipping a cocktail through a long straw. Geoff had obviously just been thrown out, which is not surprising given his obvious lack of ability in making friends and influencing people . . .

Lady Ligger

Next Issue: Scandal at the Scala

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PEN PALS

Male writer (20) seeks penfriend. Dislikes modern trend for gore and guts. Likes old school, poetry and classic literature. Worships Godlike Morrissey. Rhys Williams, 'Mynachty', 16 Alexandra Road, Aberystwyth, Cards. SY23 1LN.

Long-letter writers wanted for female aged 25, addicted to Horror and Fantasy. Other interests include music, alternative comedy, theatre, politics, photography, and psychology, and I adore animals, especially cats. Write soon! Caroline Harvey, 1 Brunswick Close, Pinner, Middx. HA5 5AU.

Fun loving male (15) seeking females who are nuts on films, cinema, videos and books. Most letters answered. Write to Maverick Kelly at 7 Tean Hurst Close, Lower Tean, Staffs. ST10 4NN.

Lone Wolf seeks similar spirits for discussion of mists and snow, graveyards and forests, of magic and the moon. Pallid pre-Raphaelite maidens especially welcomed. Write to John, 30 Guild Rd, Erith, Kent.

18-year-old male horror fan seeks other fans of similar age into horror fiction especially King, Barker, and horror movies especially 'Elm Street', 'Hellraiser', Cronenberg etc. Write to: David, 7 Corbett Road, Hollywood, Birmingham.

I've been trying to locate some weirdos, of assorted genders, but it's harder than putting on your undies without using your hands! Write to - Darren Wills, 19 St Bevans Road, Skircoat Green, Halifax HX3 0RT

Male 20, wants penpals, male or female, into fantasy, SF, horror, PBM, RPG etc. Sense of humour essential. Write to Rik Wilson, 30 Buttermere Drive, Dalton-in-Furness, Cumbria LA15 8QW

I challenge anyone out there to be weird enough to reply to this pen pal ad. I'm a 16-year-old male who's into horror: Tony Fyler, 8 Gwendoline Street, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan CF47 9AD

A 17-year-old male fan of Fangoria, Gorezone, Romero's 'Dead' series, Clive Barker, Freddy and Horror films. Looking for Pen-Pals the world over. Write to 18 Severn St, Longridge nr Preston, Lancs. PR3 3ND, England.

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FANZINES

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A quiet summer day 200 years hence and the last man relates the arrival of Simulacra, the death game – Jeff 'The Yak' Minter writes in issue 1 of NIGHTLESS CITY. Coming soon.

SKELETON CREW – The magazine of modern horror literature. Issue II: James Herbert Special, featuring articles, info and brand new interview. 'SKELETON CREW is bright and informative' – James Herbert. 95p. Dave Hughes, 104 Highcliffe Road, Wickford, Essex.

CLOSE TO THE EDGE: SF, Fantasy and Horror Fiction/Artwork. Issue One available now at only 90p including P&P. Send cheque or PO to: John Winder, 170 St Osyth Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 3HD.

William Hope Hodgeson: Voyages and Visions. Limited edition 300 copy 72 page booklet of material by and about this noted early horror author £5.00 post paid from Ian Bell, 5 The Meadows, Watlington, Oxford. OX9 5JN

TALES AFTER DARK: Weird and macabre fiction, nonfiction, poetry and art by Ramsey Campbell, Brian Lumley, Roger Johnson, Allen Koszowski, Peter Jeffrey and more. For further details contact Garrie Hall, 54 Abberton Way, Loughborough, Leics.

OUT OF THE WOODWORK. Dark fantasy fanzine. Issue One £1.00, issue Two £1.00, post free. Cheques to Fantastic Literature, 25 Avondale Rd, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 8NJ.

EVENTS DIARY

Where am I? In the village for the Six Of One 1988 PRISONER Convention at Portmeirion, North Wales, over the weekend of 2/3 September. See our main classified ad details. I am not a number!

MISCELLANEOUS

The guy who asked me where I got my FEAR magazine from at WH Smith in Macclesfield on 28 June. Please contact me for correspondance, Darren Boakes, PO Box 430, Kadina 5554, South Australia.

ROSS IN THE RAW

Cult television personality Jonathan Ross gives Philip Nutman the dosh on his fears, his love of horror fiction, and his ever-expanding comic book collection.

"I get scared on rollercoasters, I get scared on ghost trains"

So, Jonathan, tell us, what scares you?

JR: In real life? I get scared on rollercoasters, I get scared on ghost trains. In fact, I recently punched someone on a ghost train.

My girlfriend and I were in France and went on one. I love the idea of them, like in that great Tobe Hooper movie *The Funhouse*, but I shut my eyes once I'm on one. I suppose I don't like the dark much. I'm not actually scared but I get excitable. They had a guy dressed up in a luminous suit on this one who came out lurching at you, leaning forward and groaning. I knew we were coming back round to him, so for fun I was shouting, 'Oh no, the spooky man's going to come out!'. When he did appear I got so carried away I stood up and punched him! He was understandably upset and chased us out of the bloody funfair!

I used to be scared of the dark when I was a kid. I used to hate it when there were power cuts and suddenly it was complete blackness, because even outside there would be no street lights. But at the same time of being scared there was also a sense of excitement.

I honestly can't think of any big fears, not real-life ones. I don't spend time thinking about it. I'm not fond of spiders, but I can pick them up to remove them from the bathroom, so I'm not phobic about them. They don't frighten me on screen. Graphic violence does, especially the thought of it in real life.

Some films have really frightened me. I got scared watching the George Romero zombie movies. I don't know whether it's because they're so mundane, because you can see the parallel with neighbours coming to get you. The sense that there's no way out. yes, the feeling of confinement. Yes, that's what scares me, and I've had a few zombie-related dreams after I've watched them. It's that whole thing that once you've got away from them, wham, there they are again. It doesn't matter where you go. Like the thing in the helicopter in the second movie, *Dawn Of The Dead*: it didn't matter where they flew to, the problem was still the same, inescapable. It's the big fear of never being able to escape.

I thought *Nightmare On Elm Street* worked really well because it had its own inner logic, the logic of nightmares, which means you leave something behind you and then there it is again in front of you. I find that idea quite frightening.

PRICE OF FAME

Life isn't my own anymore to the extent it was. I can't go out and wander freely. If people approach me in the street I try not to be nasty or unpleasant to them, but it does get to be a pain in the arse sometimes, especially when you can't walk 30 feet in a crowded spot without someone saying something, or asking for an autograph.

The other weekend I went to my nephew's school fête, which is a harmless thing to do and I wasn't there in any official capacity, I just wanted to spend some time with him. Of course I couldn't go anywhere without being asked for an autograph.

Sometimes you wonder what could happen if it got out of hand – like a George Romero movie.

A few weeks back I was around Picadilly Circus when some pissed football fans were there, looking like they were going to cause trouble. They didn't as it turned out, but if they had decided to I would have been more of a target than just anyone passing by because I'm on TV. Fortunately they didn't recognise me. For a moment, though, I was worried. You're much more vulnerable when you're known.

I'm working hard, I'm nearly always in a hurry to get from A to B, so I try to walk quickly and keep my eyes straight ahead because you don't want to be stopped.

The Last Resort is an uptempo show so I have to have a lively attitude, but people think you're like that all the time. I'm only human and there are days when I feel pissed off at the world, or I've had a bad night, or I've got a headache. People don't stop to think about this. Yet I try to be nice however I'm feeling, as it's not really fair otherwise.

ANGELES OF DEATH

I was in a car accident in Los Angeles recently when I was filming the *Incredibly Strange Film* series.

I'd only just passed my test before I went out there, but hired a car anyway. I'd just gone through a set of lights and signalled right to pull over to check where we were. The car was in the extreme left lane. As I pulled over an airport shuttle – the guy was obviously speeding wildly as he was on his last pick up and wanted to get home – kicked me right up the arse. I started to go into the car in front of me, so I swerved and went up on the pavement.

Fortunately, I accidentally stamped on the accelerator instead of the brake, because otherwise I

don't think we'd have made it, we would have been pulped between two vehicles. Thank God it was a wide pavement and empty at the time, as I was really moving at this point and just managed to stop before hitting a wall. My girlfriend would have been badly smashed up if it hadn't happened like that.

Now that's scary.

MOVIES AND COMICS

I got interested in horror movies through comics, which I collect. The first ones I bought were *Unexpected*, *The Witching Hour*, *The Phantom Stranger* and the rest of the DC supernatural line. I was immediately drawn to that stuff. It was a great period to be collecting those comics. *Unexpected* used to come up with some great stories, beautiful artwork. This was the early Seventies; there was some tremendous anthology material around then.

I never really read horror fiction at that time. I quite like it now, but it's only about an eighth of what I read, which is a shame as I do enjoy it. I've got a pile of Shaun Hutson books to read; I probably won't have time to get through them all, but I enjoyed *Relics*.

I wasn't usually allowed to watch horror movies as a kid. I do remember seeing *Psycho* when I was young, and was scared by that, but someone told me it was Norman Bates who was doing the killings, so it wasn't as effective as it should have been. The early Hammer movies were great. Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked With A Zombie* made a big impression on me.

That scared the fuck out of me when I was a kid. I remember thinking, 'God, I've got to be so careful no-one slips me a piece of paper with the runes on it', you know, you think like that when you're a kid. Great movie.

I've bought some of the boxed sets of the old EC horror comics, but I'm not too impressed with them. I wish the reprints were in colour. Some of the stories are excellent, but I think the reason why I'm not terribly excited by them is because of buying them in bulk. I think if I'd been able to collect them issue by issue it would have been fun. I liked the movies they made out of them, the ones Amicus did. I love *Tales From The Crypt*, that was great. *Vault Of Horror* wasn't so good, though.

Comics-wise, I quite like what Rick Vietch has done with *Swamp Thing* since Alan Moore left the series. My big disappointment recently was the John Constantine *Hellblazer* spin-off. It's a bit dull, the artwork's okay, but overall a massive disappointment. Constantine was much better as a supporting character in *Swamp Thing* as Alan Moore created such a bizarre universe. *Hellblazer*'s so obvious, two-dimensional, there's no excitement whatsoever. The strength of Moore's work was that you never felt it was a continuing series, but with Constantine you know DC are going to milk the character for all he's worth.

RECENT READING

I'm just getting around to reading books by some of the big names I missed when they first came out. I've just started reading Ramsey Campbell's work, which is tremendous, and I read Stephen King's *Pet Semetary* recently, which is wonderfully bleak and scary.

That's why I love the idea of **FEAR**. I don't know who else is out there, which is why I intend to continue reading the magazine. It's indispensable as my time's limited and I only want to read the best.

I've been an HP Lovecraft fan for years, which is why I like Ramsey's stuff so much; there's a real Lovecraft feel to them. Clive Barker's *Books Of Blood* are very enjoyable, but I haven't read any of his novels. Shaun Hutson's a lot of fun; his good books are great tongue-in-cheek stuff. It was a pleasure having him on the show.

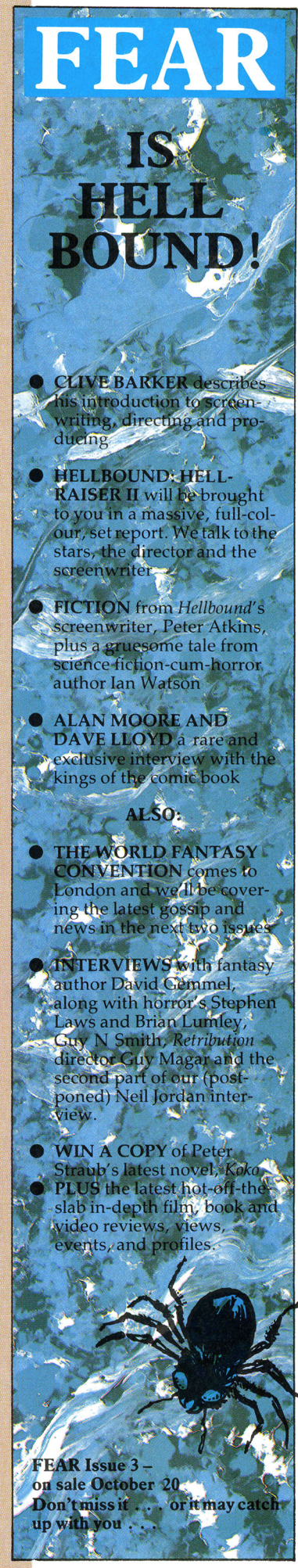
It's difficult to say who else I might have on the show. It's light entertainment and there's only so much you can do with horror authors. You have to ask the old question: 'Why do you write this awful stuff?' because we have a mainstream audience who either don't know, or understand, horror fiction. Directors are easier, because even if viewers haven't seen the films, they are more likely to have heard about them, and you can show a clip.

Literature is more confined. Take James Herbert, for example. He's obviously well known to **FEAR** readers and a certain section of the general public, but there's likely to be a large section of the audience who haven't heard of him. On the other hand, Wes Craven – as an example – if people haven't heard of him, they will have heard of *Nightmare On Elm Street*.

There aren't many horror writers we could have on the show because they aren't well known or they just wouldn't work that well. Clive and Shaun are fine because they're young and hip; Shaun in particular is great because he's funny, relaxed – perfect for the show. James Herbert would probably be too dry for our audience. I hear he's very serious. But who knows? If we do any more writers we've got to find a different angle. In the meantime I'll just keep reading **FEAR** to find out if there's anyone who we should have on the show.

"Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked With A Zombie* scared me when I was a kid"

NEXT ISSUE



TACTICAL EVALUATION

GAMES WORKSHOP™

Innocence proves nothing

++Personal Report of Brother LOU WONG +++Coded transmission - Priority Channel +++

Since accidentally entering the Timescape I have come across a number of varied and interesting places, but none more so than my present location, a GAMES WORKSHOP store on Ancient Earth. These shops are filled with incredible amounts of astounding gaming material, including ALL the brand new Games Workshop products. More than that, each shop has, on average, over 30,000 Citadel Miniatures, from Snotlings to Marine Dreadnought Armour!

Even better, the managers and staff of these shops are all friendly and eager to help (without me having to shoot any of them too), so I strongly recommend a return visit at a later date. GAMES WORKSHOP stores are without doubt the answer to any Imperial Marine's gaming needs... Message ends...STOP++

GAMES WORKSHOP stores can provide you with all your gaming needs, from board, roleplaying and family games to **CITADEL MINIATURES** and **WHITE DWARF** Magazine. We now have a total of eleven shops in the UK as well as one in the US, all of which provide an excellent service with friendly staff and managers. Please also note that some of our shops are now closed one day a week. You can find our shops in the following places:

★ **SOUTHAMPTON:** 23 East Street, Tel: 0703 331962 ★ **LONDON:** Plaza Centre, Oxford Street, London NW1. Tel: 01 436 0839 (Manager: Phil Brough) ★ **LONDON:** 1 Dalling Road, Hammersmith W6. Tel: 01 741 3445 (Manager: Pete Armstrong) ★ **BIRMINGHAM:** 37, West Terrace, The Pallasades. Tel: 021 632 4804 (Manager: Dave Howard) ★ **LEEDS:** 12/16 Central Road. Tel: 0532 420834 (Manager: Val Eyles-Owen) Closed: Tuesdays. ★ **MANCHESTER:** Unit 162, Marsden Way, Arndale Centre. Tel: 061 832 6863 (Manager: Karl Hulme) ★ **NEWCASTLE:** 63 Clayton Street. Tel: 0912 322418 (Manager: Ian Henzell) Closed: Wednesdays. ★ **NOTTINGHAM:** 41A Broadwalk, Broadmarsh Centre. Tel: 0602 585744 (Manager: Colin Morris) ★ **SHEFFIELD:** 95 The Moor. Tel: 0742 750114. Closed Wednesdays (Manager: Paul Castleton) ★ **YORK:** 26 Goodramgate. Tel: 0904 653575 (Manager: Evan Moss) Closed: Wednesdays ★ **DERBY:** 42 Sadler Gate. Tel: 0332 371657 (Manager: Colin Morris) Closed: Wednesdays ★ **LIVERPOOL:** 23 Bold Street. Tel: 051 708 6087. Closed Wednesdays. (Manager: Karl Hulme)

And in the USA: ★ **BALTIMORE/WASHINGTON AREA:** Unit F3, Laurel Centre Mall, Laurel, Maryland 20707. (Manager: Tim Olsen)

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