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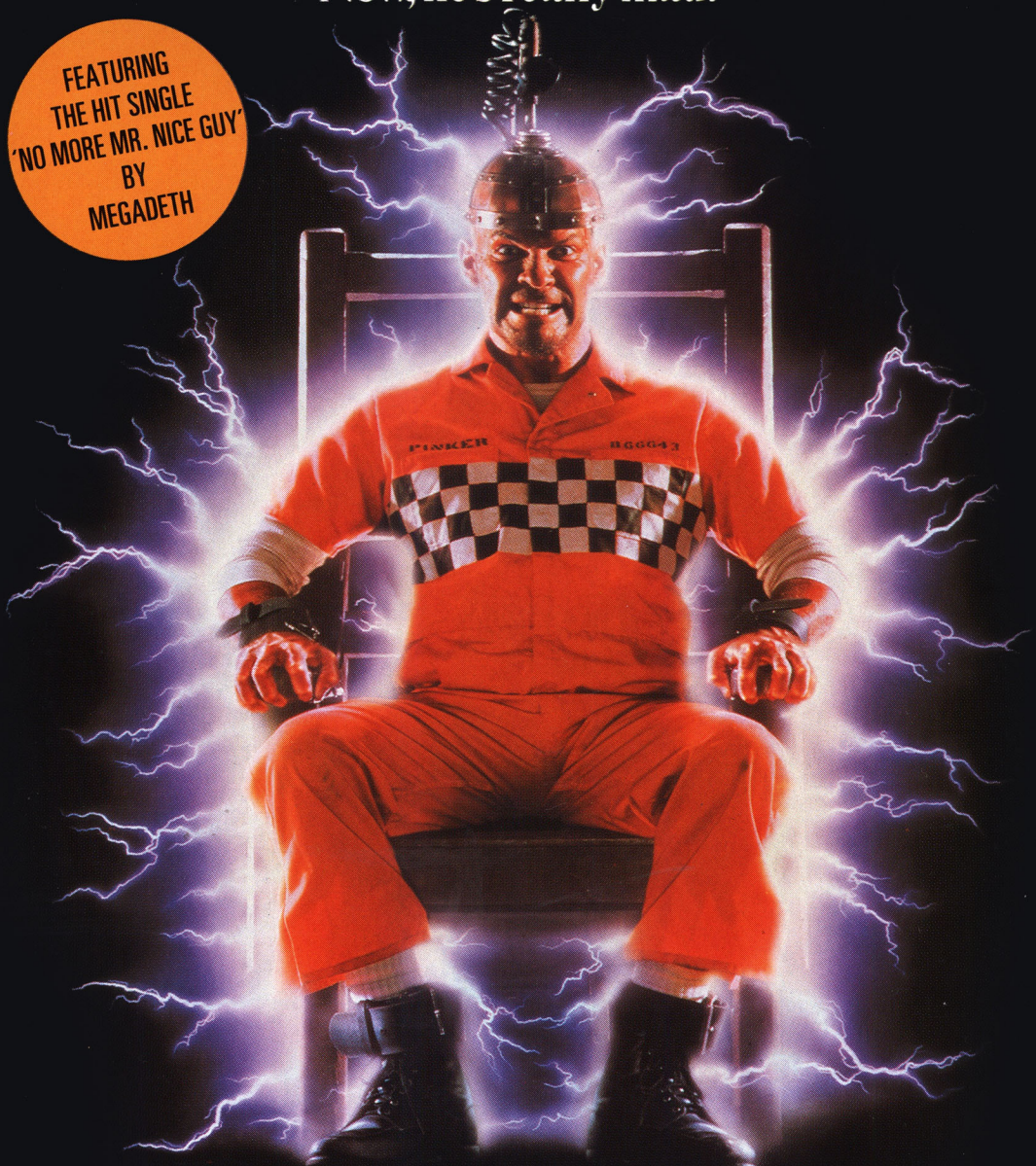

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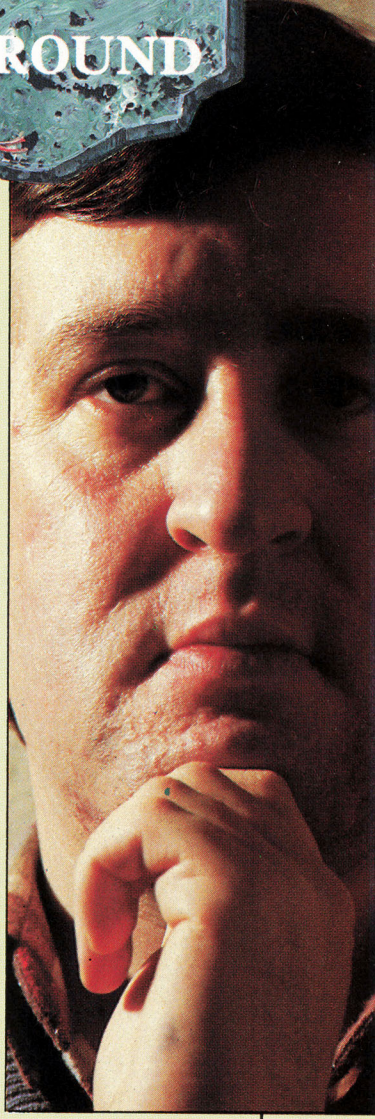
WHERE HAVE ALL THE MONSTERS GONE?



As American television continues to put out high budget, and usually high quality, television anthology shows such as *Tales From The Crypt* and *Monsters*, I can only lament the passing of the great British television show.

Once we ruled the world, with *Dr Who, Quatermass, Supernatural, The Prisoner, The Omega Factor* and *Blake's Seven*; all shows which found their way into American as well as British visual history. But where have they all gone? They've either been buried under steaming hot piles of commercialised manure or booted to auto-destruct by producers, directors and writers who couldn't even produce a baked bean commercial, let alone an innovative SF or fantasy show.

The reason for my sudden bout of depression? Satellite television has been with us for several years now, BSB has just somewhat ingloriously come on line after almost a year's delay... but what do they intend for genre fans? Their reasoning would have it that shows such as *Dr Who* did well, so let's buy all the old episodes and repeat them. After all, constantly repeated episodes of *Star Trek* go down well on American networks, so why shouldn't the same ratty routine work here?

The reason is as plain as the Director General's salary. US networks buy in as much new material as they repeat. The stuff may not boast huge budgets, but at least you get something more than repeats for your money.

Also, the Americans seem to take their tele as seriously as they take moviemaking, and they have an attitude of which the conservative controller of the BBC and ITV networks might take note. Rather than looking at a programme budget as a restraint, and 'ho-hum there's no way we can do this or that', they try different approaches to achieve the same effect. Perhaps if our programme creators did the same we wouldn't end up with the paltry handful of well-managed shows we get on our screens every week.

In two respects, I'll admit that programme-makers have external problems; the censorious attitudes of the television companies and a simple lack of money — partly due to lack of competition within the industry — and ridiculous scheduling, a problem that the Americans share.

Budgetary restraints effect everyone within the television industry — although the fantasy and SF fields appear to suffer more than most — but censorship and scheduling are two bugbears which most particularly effect our genres.

Dr Who is a case in point. How do you kill a popular series? Well, first you move it from a peak time weekend slot and dump it into the early evening of a weekday when most fans are struggling to get home, and another popular programme such as *Coronation Street* is on 'the other side'. Then, when it appears, you starve it of resources so that the programme makers have to cut back on special effects, exteriors and well-known scriptwriters.

Maybe the good Doctor is taking a natural fall in popularity; so tell me why specialist shop Forbidden Planet's Who signing was such an incredibly successful event and why the *Doctor Who* monthlies are some of the most widely read magazines?

Some programmes, however, don't even get a chance. They are shunted into the backwaters of late night television on Channel 4, or appear opposite the Open University at ten o'clock on weekday mornings. Some, like the professional and popular *Red Dwarf*, succeed (on BBC2) but do you see television chiefs agreeing to show it on BBC1 primetime? No, and could that be because television chiefs think we British should be fed on a constant diet of Pot Comedy and Instant Soap?

The American genre shows fare no better. They have budget on their side, but censorship and scheduling get in the way. Who wants to wait up until three o'clock in the morning to watch *Friday The 13th* television series or the spanking new episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, or stay up till midnight to watch this week's episode of the brilliant *Beauty And The Beast*?

Station managers have to be cajoled into buying these shows and then they deny potential fans the opportunity of watching them. Ratings are, naturally, comparatively low at such times, and this enables management to argue that the shows can't be much good so there's no point in scooping up the next series.

The powers that be obviously do not realise that the days of the popular American cop show are over and genre shows such as *Beauty And The Beast* are on the rise. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is destined for our screens in September, but even then the 'more fantasy on television' lobby cannot claim a victory: *Star Trek* is an established, well-liked show, and it has taken two years to get it networked in the UK.

The real test will occur when shows such as *Alien Nation, The Hidden Room* and *Creepshow* are put on the market. How will British networks react then? Positively, I hope.

John Gilbert

"Could it be that television chiefs think we British should be fed on a constant diet of Pot Comedy and Instant Soap?"

Filmmakers Francis Coppola, Joe Dante, Ron Howard and Martin Scorsese all owe their breaks into the movie industry to one Roger Corman. Almost single-handedly Corman has created the brand of high output, low budget horror and fantasy picture that has thrilled three generations of moviegoers. But his methods — and his success — have often enraged critics. As his new movie Roger Corman's Frankenstein Unbound nears release, FEAR's Stanley Wiater asks this legendary writer, director and producer to disentangle fact from fallacy.

BR

If there's a person for whom the term 'living legend' is applicable in the genres of fantasy, horror and science fiction films, it must be Roger Corman.

A one-man movie industry Corman has, since the 1950s, directed fifty feature films, produced more than 200, and distributed who knows how many more. Instead of working for a major studio, Corman has primarily produced his own films, many for American International Pictures in the Fifties and Sixties, then for his own company — New World — in the Seventies. After selling that enterprise, he chose not to sit on his laurels but started yet another company, Concorde. As he mentions in the following interview, Concorde is the last of its kind: the only complete production and distribution company for low budget films in the United States.

"I never really made a B picture. Nobody's made a B picture since 1945 or 1946"

The fact that most Corman films have been referred to — and dismissed — by critics as 'exploitation flicks' doesn't do justice to the man's accomplishments. Not only has Corman been responsible for many of the most enjoyable horror and SF movies of the Fifties and Sixties, he has also brought into the industry several of today's most important filmmakers, including such luminaries as Francis Coppola, Martin Scorsese and Ron Howard.

Although his film classics have titles such as *Not Of This Earth, Attack Of The Crab Monsters, It Conquered The World, The Last Woman On Earth* (written by a then unknown Robert Towne) and *The Pit And The Pendulum*, Corman has always been secure in his ability to entertain. It is one thing to realise that his films are shot on a low budget, often without any name star, and often advertised in a lurid manner: then again, if Stephen King believes his books are the 'literary equivalent of a Big Mac and Fries', it is certain fact that Corman has been satisfying millions of people with his particular recipe for cinematic junk food.

Corman, the Pope of Pop Cinema (above); a poster from Fifties' cult classic, Attack Of The Crab Monsters (right)

Born April 6, 1926 in Detroit, Michigan, Corman shows little sign of slowing down. He recently completed his autobiography — aptly titled *How I Made A Hundred Movies In Hollywood And Never Lost A Dime* — and returned to work behind the cameras as a director. His first project in this capacity in some twenty years is entitled *Roger Corman's Frankenstein Unbound* and stars Raul Julia and Bridget Fonda. The film is scheduled for release this summer.

RANDED!

From the depths of the sea... A TIDAL WAVE OF TERROR!
CK OF THE
CRAB
MONSTERS
AND · PAMELA DUNCAN · RUSSELL JOHNSON
Screenplay by CHARLES B. GRIFFITH · Produced and Directed by ROGER CORMAN · AN ALLIED ARTISTS PICTURE

Bloody Mama (1969, below), The Undead (1957, above left) and Vincent Price, Hazel Court and Peter Lorre in The Raven (1963, above)

"Horror films and science fiction films and fantasy films in general appeal to basic drives and wishes within the human mind"

ALDISS AND MORE

SW: I understand that you recently wrote your autobiography?

RC: Yes, but it's primarily about my work in film. There's very little about my personal life in it. It was done for Random House, and that will probably be coming out sometime this spring.

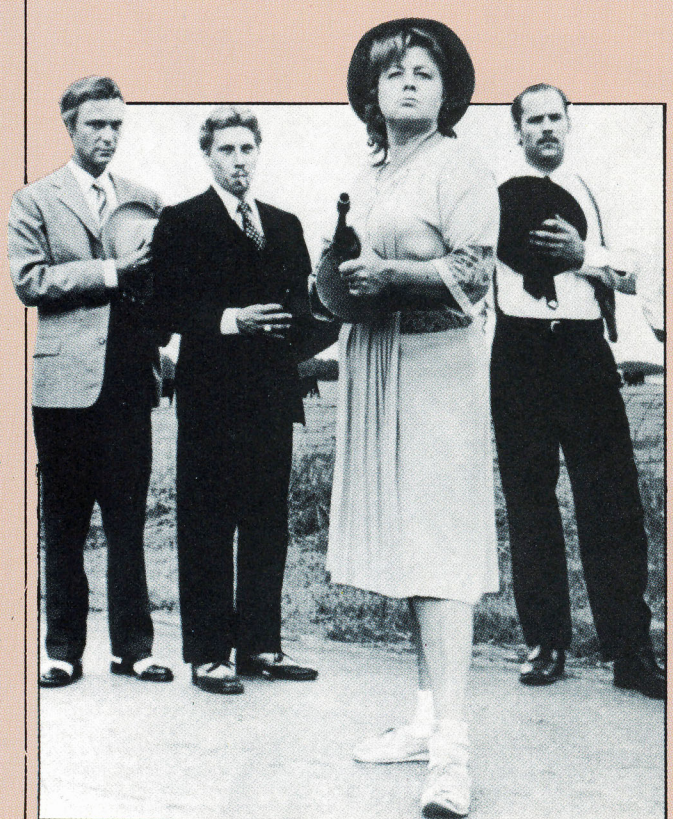
Why did you wait nearly twenty years before going back to directing films?

I had never really planned to stop directing at all. I just felt in 1970, when I finished *Von Richthofen And Brown*, that I had directed so many pictures I wanted to take a little time off. I thought I would just take a year off. What happened was, I started New World Pictures during that time, and the company became successful faster than I thought it would, and I just stayed with the company. Every couple of years I would say, 'Well, maybe I'll direct a film now,' and I just never got around to it until finally, nineteen years later, I did it last year.

Why did you choose *Frankenstein Unbound* as the project with which to make your return to directing?

Strangely enough, it wasn't my choice. A few years ago Universal Pictures had done some market research. As part of that research they tested various title ideas, and they tested the title *Roger Corman's Frankenstein* — and it tested very well. So they called me and asked if I would like to do the picture. And as a matter of fact I said I wasn't particularly interested in doing it. But then Thom Mount, who had been head of production there, left to form his own company, and he called me. I had been thinking about it, and I said that if I could come up with something new... The reason I didn't want to do it is that there had been so *many Frankensteins*, I didn't want to be the hundredth version of *Frankenstein*.

I remembered a little bit later the book that Brian Aldiss had written in the early 1970s called *Frankenstein Unbound*. I thought it was a good basic idea, and I had a couple of ideas of my own that I thought I could lend with Brian's ideas and come up with something that would be quite original. And as a result, the final title is *Roger Corman's Frankenstein Unbound*: so I made the film.



Was that why you wrote the screenplay, to ensure your ideas would reach the screen?

Yes. I never intended to write the final screenplay. What I did was write the first draft of the script, and then F X Feeney and Ed Nemayer came in and did drafts after mine, based upon my version. What I was writing was primarily structure; I was interested most in putting into place the ideas that I wanted. F X and Ed then came in to polish the dialogue.

BACK IN THE SADDLE

Did the old adage 'once you learn how to ride a bicycle, you never forget' apply when you went back to being a director again?

Yes — it applied much more than I thought it would. I was a little concerned about what it would be like to be directing again. But we were shooting outside of Milan, Italy on the first day, and I was really wondering what was going to take place. I arrived on the set, and the set wasn't quite ready. And I said, 'All right, fellas, now let's get these props over here, and these set dressings over here... Place the camera here, let's get those extras ready... ' And I was working again, just as if I had been doing it the previous

week, and never stopped.

Being away from directing for so long, had anything changed that really surprised you as you stepped behind the camera again?

A lot less had changed than I would have thought. The equipment is a lot lighter and more portable, the film stock is faster. Things like that. But these are incremental changes.

What about stylistically, then? How did you handle the horror element, when we all know that 'times have changed' in terms of what audiences expect in order to be scared?

I handled it more akin to what I did in the Poe films, in that I handled it indirectly, but what I did acknowledge — at least in recognising my own line — is that the world *has* changed, and that I would say the violence is a little more graphic than the way I did it in the Poe films, but not as graphic as it is in some other films of today. In other words, I moved a little bit with the times, but not totally.

You're often affectionately referred to as the 'King Of The B Movies'. What does the title mean to you, and do you feel it's an accurate one?

I think it means that somebody doesn't understand the motion picture business. Because the 'B pictures' were a product of the 1930s and most of the 1940s. During the Depression, the major studios had an A list and a B list of productions. The B list would be a supporting feature, the idea being that if you could get people to come to the theatres, you'd give them two pictures for the price of one. So there would be a cheap second feature to go along with the top feature.

I started making films in the 1950s, and by that time this practice had died out. I never really made a B picture. Nobody's made a B picture since 1945 or 1946. As a matter of fact. *Le Matin*, the French newspaper, wrote an article on my coming back as a director, and it started off 'The Pope Of Pop Cinema Returns'. *That* was kind of nice, [chuckles]. So I'll ride with that title.

TREND SETTER

Why do the horror and science fiction genres continue to be so popular, when just about every other kind of genre — from Westerns to 'youth runs wild' movies to gangster films — has all but faded away?

Horror films and science fiction films and fantasy films in general appeal to basic drives and wishes within the human mind, whereas a Western or a picture about the Hell's Angels in the 1960s will appeal to a surface manifestation of a society. And when Hell's Angels are no longer in the news, and people aren't thinking about cowboys any more, and cowboys become the latterday equivalent of knights in shining armour — in other words, they become historical subjects (they're still valid subjects for motion pictures, but only if you can find something universal within them) — so therefore, as a genre, they will fade. Whereas the concept of a horror film... The very first story ever written in the English language was *Beowulf*, which was kind of a science fiction/horror/fantasy tale. It's been with us forever, and it will *always* be with us. So it's what's universal that remains.

Speaking of horror, why are the extremely violent, so-called 'splatter' movies so popular? And why have you never made one, in spite of their obvious commercial success in recent years?

They are just that — slashing, slapping, splatter movies, which depend to a large extent on just filling the screen with gore. I try to be a little more indirect. However, I'm not that much against them — I've never made a splatter film, though my company had a couple of films, such as *Slumberparty Massacre*, which in a way are that type of film, but we hope are a little bit different in that they're told from a slightly feminist point of view — the women always defeat the killer. Those have been successful for us. It's just that I personally would rather work in a more indirect or subtle manner.

I remember seeing a television spoof of low budget filmmakers, where the director said you needed two primary ingredients to succeed: a big chest and a big chase.

It's not that far off the mark [laughs]. It's obviously not a complete or accurate answer, but there is some truth in it. The real answer is much more complex, but certainly those two elements can't hurt.

One of the things for which you're renowned is your ability to figure out what popular trends to exploit, before anyone else is even aware that there is a trend. Where does that ability come from?

I don't feel that I am that much different from the audience, so I would say to myself: 'What type of film would I like to see?' (As a low budget film, knowing that the idea has to be different than if it were a more expensive film.) And if it's an idea that is interesting to me, it will probably therefore be interesting to the audience.

So your gut instinct is to see that the movie will first and foremost appeal to the 'ordinary person'?

I think so.

What keeps you going? Haven't you already done it all, as a filmmaker? What new challenges can there be for you?

There is still some challenge. Some sense of fun, excitement, and creative satisfaction. However, there is a little bit less of that than there was at one

"The very first story ever written in the English language was Beowulf, which was kind of a science fiction/horror/fantasy tale"

Jane Asher and Vincent Price in Masque Of The Red Death (1964,above) and the Paul Bartel-directed Death Race 2000 (1975, below)

"I think excessive violence can have a harmful effect on young people. Whereas at the same time, seeing a woman's breast really isn't going to hurt anybody"

time, and I probably will start to slow a little bit, very possibly this year. I will continue to make films, but I probably won't be making quite as many films as I've done in the past. If I do too many films, it's more like work and less like play. It is still fun.

DIRTY PICTURES?

It's been said that one of the reasons you've worn so many hats in Hollywood is because you never seem to be satisfied with having someone else produce, direct, or write a movie. You always seem to end up dong the project yourself just to make sure it's done the way you originally planned.

That's probably a fault within me. Because it would be better if I could delegate more and, as I say, I am trying to work less and making a conscious effort to delegate a little more authority.

Do you still have the same mental list of favourite films that you've directed? Is it still the Edgar Allan Poe films? *The Intruder*?

It varies from time to time. One day I'll say I like this film, and the next day I'll say I don't like any other film. But in general it stays about the same.

You mentioned *Slumberparty Massacre* as treading the fine line between horror and splatter film. What do you say in response to the critics who think a movie like *Stripped To Kill* is of even less value, or who merely dismiss it as violent pornography?

I think any time you make a film, you're subject to controversy. One person will say, 'I see this in a film,' and another will say, 'I see that in a film'. All I can see is that I did the best I can in a film. It reminds me of the old joke about the guy taking the Rorshach test — you know, the ink blots? So the doctor shows him one splattering of ink and says: 'What does this make you think of?' And the man says: 'It makes me think of sex'. So the doctor shows him another, and asks: 'What does that make you think of?' And the man says: 'It makes me think of sex.' The doctor goes through the whole book, and every single ink blot makes the patient think of nothing but sex. And the doctor says: 'Does every picture here make you think of sex?' And the guy says: 'You're the one showing me dirty pictures'.

A fair rebuttal. Yet some critics say that the constant deluge of violence in the movies is making some people desensitised to violence in real life. People use this as part of an argument in favour of censorship, and why we should have a ratings board for the cinema.

I am opposed *always* to censorship in any form. At the same time, however, and this may be a surprising answer, I do think that violence has gotten somewhat out of hand in the motion picture industry. I don't think there should be any censorship of it, but the comment of the ratings board — in terms of violence — could be a little bit stronger. If a person wants to make a film with a lot of violence, okay. but I think some of those films should get an X rating for violence. I would be in favour of modifying the ratings code slightly, and making the code a little bit tougher on violence, and a little bit more lenient on sex. I think excessive violence can have a harmful effect on young people. Whereas at the same time, seeing a woman's breast really isn't going to hurt anybody.

BIG BREAKS

Would you agree that the recent advent of the videocassette has saved independent filmmakers like yourself from going the way of the disappearing drive-ins where so many of these films were originally destined to be shown?

The videocassette industry has arisen at the right time to help

the independent filmmaker. But at the same time it's arisen to help the independents, it's hurt in a different way because it's hurting their chances to ever play in theatres. The theatres are now slanted toward major studio projects, and the independents are slanted more towards the videocassette market. So you can say, which came first, the chicken or the egg?

Is that the thinking now with the films you produce at Concorde? In other words, it's known from the outset which films are going to get theatrical release, and which are going to be sold directly to video?

Yes. But almost all of our films get a theatrical release. As a matter of fact, *Variety* the other day, in summing up the industry for the year, stated that Concorde is the only production-distribution company in the United States that makes low and medium budget films on a regular basis and then is able to distribute them in the theatres.

If Roger Corman had never gone into the film industry, how would it be different today?

I don't think the film industry would be that much different. I don't really believe I've made that great an impact. What little impact I've had would be in that I've helped development of independent productions. I think independent film productions would have happened without me, but there might be fewer independents without me. I think I've been able to show that it is possible to exist — and even prosper — away from the major studio, following your own path.

Another major contribution you made was in giving so many young directors, such as Martin Scorsese, Paul Bartel, Jonathan Demme, Joe Dante, Francis Coppola, Allan Arkush, Ron Howard, their first big break in the industry.

That might be. But I would think the very best of them, one way or the other, their talent would have come through. It might have taken a few years longer, but I think that the really brilliant filmmakers will eventually be recognised. Always. [Pauses.] Let me change that — almost always.

What is Roger Corman's perspective on the *auteur* theory, where the critics give the lion's share of the credit to the director above anyone else?

On most films, the director *is* the dominant creative force. But it is not always that way. So I would say the *auteur* theory is correct most of the time. But more times than the critics think, the most important person is the producer. Sometimes the most important person is the writer and, occasionally, the most important person will be the star. But, in general, the most dominant creative force is the director.

What do the next ten years hold for Roger Corman?

I haven't thought that specifically about it because I'm so much involved with just working from day to day. But I will say that probably I will continue to make films. I will make fewer films, but I will try and put more of my personal thoughts and beliefs into them, and I will delegate other people to do the production. Hopefully, they will be better films.

And will you ever be directing again?

I will probably direct again, but it won't be immediately.

Corey Haim plus paranormal pooch in Watchers (1989)

"I think I've been able to show that it is possible to exist — and even prosper — away from the major studio"

FILMOGRAPHY

Key:
exp — executive producer,
cop — coproducer,
p —producer,
d — director,
w — writer,
a — actor

1954 **The Fast And The Furious** (cop, w)
Highway Dragnet (p, w)
Monster From The Ocean Floor (p)

1955 **Five Guns West** (p, d)
Apache Woman (p, d)
Beast With 1,000,000 Eyes (p)

1956 **The Day The World Ended** (p, d)
Gunslinger (p, d)
It Conquered The World (p, d)
Oklahoma Woman (p, d)
Swamp Women (d)

1957 **Attack Of The Crab Monsters** (p, d)
Carnival Rock (p, d)
Rock All Night (p, d)
The Saga Of The Viking Women And Their Voyage To The Waters Of The Great Sea Serpent (p, d)
Sorority Girl (p, d)
Teenage Doll (p, d)
The Undead (p, d)

1958 **Machine Gun Kelly** (p, d)
She Gods Of Shark Reef (d)
Teenage Caveman aka **Out Of The Darkness** (p, d)
Night Of The Blood Beast (exp)
Beast From A Haunted Cave (p)
Hot Car Girl (exp)
War Of The Satellites (p, d)
A Bucket Of Blood (p, d)
Cry Baby Killer (a, p)

1959 **Ski Troop Attack** (exp)
Queen Of Blood (exp)
I, Mobster (p, d)
T Bird Gang (p)
The Little Shop Of Horrors (p, d)
(Vestron Video)
Attack Of The Giant Leeches (exp)
Battle Beyond The Sun (p)
The Wasp Woman (p, d)
Atlas (p, d)

1960 **The Last Woman On Earth** (p, d)
The Creature From The Haunted Sea (p, d)
Battle Of Blood Island (p)
Fall Of The House Of Usher (a, p, d)
(Video Collection)

1961 **Pit And The Pendulum** (p, d) *(Video Collection)*
The Intruder (p, d)
Master Of The World (p)

1962 **The Premature Burial** (p, d) *(Guild Home Video)*
Tales Of Terror (p, d)
The Magic Voyage Of Sinbad (exp)
Tower Of London (d)

1963 **The Man With The X-Ray Eyes** (p, d)
The Haunted And The Hunted
aka **Dementia 13** (p)
The Haunted Palace (p, d)
(Virgin Vision)
The Raven (p, d)
(Virgin Vision)
The Terror (p, d)
(Virgin Vision)
The Young Racers (p, d)

1964 **Masque Of The Red Death** (p, d)
(Virgin Vision)
The Secret Invasion (d)

1965 **The Tomb Of Ligeia** (p, d) *(Virgin Vision)*

1966 **Voyage To The Planet Of Prehistoric Women** (p)
Blood Bath (exp)

1967 **The Wild Angels** (p, d)
The St Valentine's Day Massacre (p, d)
(CBS/Fox)
The Trip (p, d)

1968 **The Wild Racers** (p)
Targets (exp)
De Sade (d — partly, uncredited)

1969 **Target Harry** (d — under the pseudonym of Henry Neill)
Naked Angels (exp)
Pit Stop (exp)
The Dunwich Horror (exp)

1970 **Bloody Mama** (p, d)
Gas-s-s-s (p, d)
The Student Nurses (exp)
Von Richtofen And Brown aka **The Red Baron** (p, d)

1971 **Beast Of The Yellow Night** (exp)
The Velvet Vampire (exp)
Scream Of The Demon Lover (exp)
The Creators (exp)
Lady Frankenstein (exp)
The Twilight People (exp)

1972 **Night Of The Cobra Woman** (exp)
Sweet Kill (exp)
The Final Programme (exp)
Boxcar Bertha (p)
I Escaped From Devil's Island (p)

1973 **Big Bad Mama** (p)

1974 **Godfather 2** (a)
Tidal Wave (exp)

1975 **Born To Kill** (p)
Capone (p)

1976 **Death Race 2000** (p)
(Warner Home Video)
Moving Violation (exp)
Jackson County Jail (exp) *(CBS/Fox)*
Hollywood Boulevard (p) *(Warner Home Video)*
Cannonball (p)
(Warner Home Video)
Eat My Dust (p)
Fighting Mad (p)

1977 **Thunder And Lightning** (p) *(CBS/Fox)*
Avalanche (p)

1978 **Deathsport** (p)
The Evil (exp)

1979 **Fast Charlie, The Moonbeam Rider** (p)
Rock 'n' Roll High School (exp)
(Warner Home Video)
Saint Jack (p)

1980 **Humanoids From The Deep** (p)
(Warner Home Video)

1981 **Galaxy Of Terror** (p)
(Warner Home Video)
The Howling (a)
(Channel 5)

1982 **Smokey Bites The Dust** (p)
Forbidden World (p)
(Polygram Video)
Battle Beyond The Stars (p)
(Warner Home Video)
Love Letters (p)
(CBS/Fox)

1983 **Space Raiders** (p)
(Entertainment In Video)
The State Of Things (a)

1984 **Swing Shift** (a)
(RCA/Columbia)

1985 **Big Bad Mama 2** (p)
(MGM/UA)
Stripped To Kill (p)
(MGM/UA)

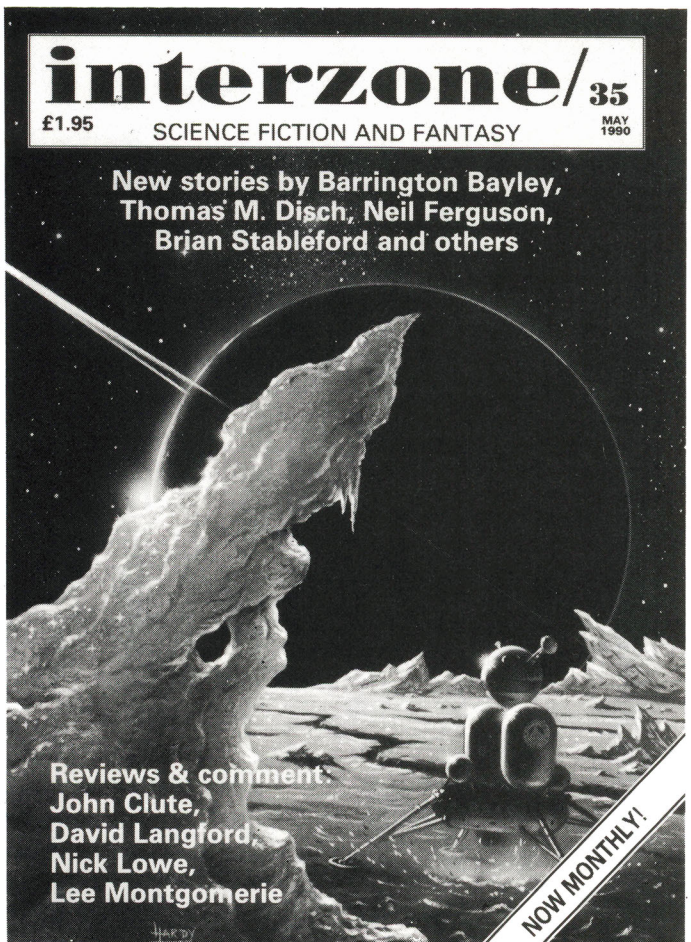
1986 **Chopping Mall** (exp)
(Vestron Video)
Munchies (p) *(MGM/UA)*

1987 **Cocaine Wars** (p)
(MGM/UA)

1988 **Not Of This Earth** (p)
(MGM/UA)
The Nest (exp)
(MGM/UA)
The Lawless Land (p)
(MGM/UA)

1989 **Daddy's Boys** (p)
(MGM/UA)
The Drifter (p) *(MGM/UA)*
Watchers (exp)
(Guild)

1990 **Lords Of The Deep** (p)
(MGM/UA)
Masque Of The Red Death (p) *(MGM/UA)*



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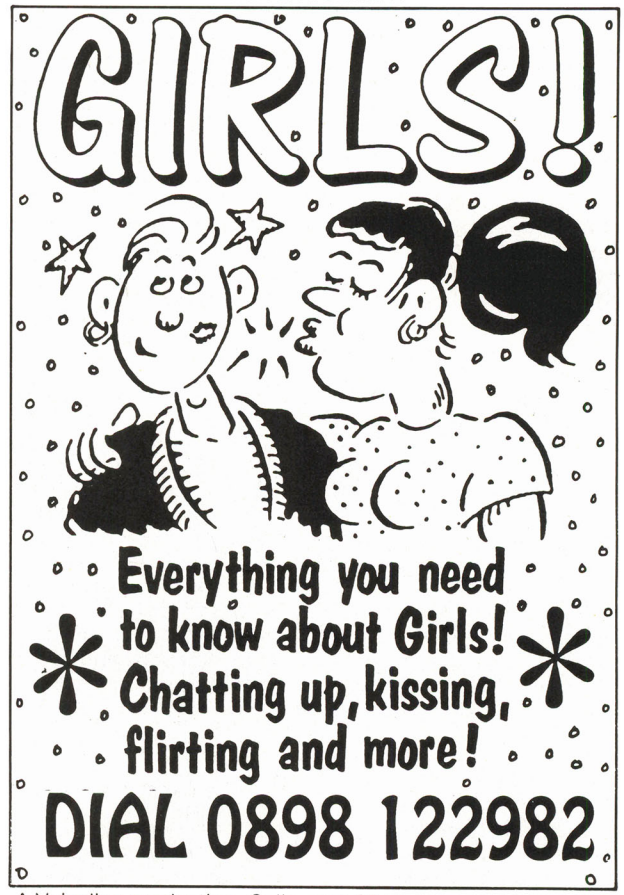

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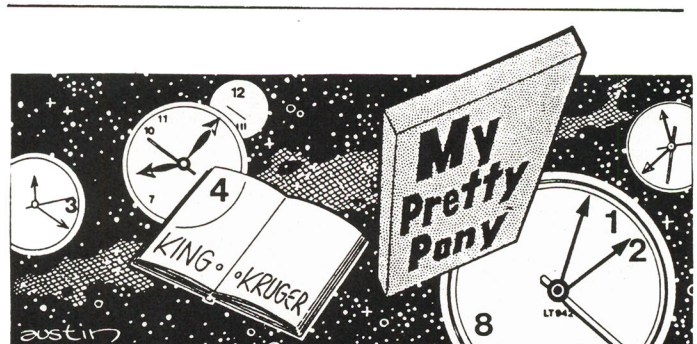

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SKIN DEEP

Women have the ability to write horror in just the same vein as men but, as Lisa Tuttle tells John Gilbert, Skin Of The Soul, her new anthology by female writers, was put together to prove more than simply that point

Photo: Rob Holdstock

Horror writing appears to be a particularly masculine domain, with only a few females such as Anne Rice and Virginia Andrews, breaching the boundaries of the bestseller lists. But the assertion that the women of darkness write softer tales of the

> "The original Gothic novels were quite subversive. They allowed authors to write about sex and a woman took responsibility for her own fate"

supernatural than their male counterparts is a fallacy, as evidenced by the lifelong addiction to horror of such writers as Lisa Tuttle. Her latest anthology, *Skin Of The Soul*, is published this month and it shows that women have been writing macabre fiction for a long time.

Lisa Tuttle's life bears comparison with many other genre writers. Born in Huston, USA, and later moving to London, she developed a childhood interest in gothic and supernatural fiction. 'My father had several mammoth books of short stories, ones that featured writers like M R James and Algernon Blackwood. I was writing ghost and horror stories from the time I was a child, but I wasn't writing for a particular market.'

Her first story was published at the age of 19, but in a genre very different to the one in which she now finds herself. 'I was first published in the *Clarrion* anthology at the Clarrion Science Fiction Workshop, but as a writer I felt more at ease with unease. My first horror stories were sold to the *Magazine Of Fantasy And Science Fiction*.'

GOTHIC GHETTO

In an introduction to *Skin Of the Soul*, Tuttle names *Frankenstein* creator Mary Shelley as one of her major influences, seeing her as an important progenitor of the horror field. 'She's been called the mother of science fiction, but she could equally well be identified as one of the first horror writers.'

Naturally, her interest in Shelley provoked an awareness of Victorian and Gothic forms of fiction, stories often written by women but, as the market became bloated in the Sixties, taken over by

> "I'm not necessarily going out to prove that women write horror, but rather to prove that horror doesn't necessarily come from a few brand name authors"

men who wrote under female pseudonyms and subjugated women as the prey of hideous forces. 'The original Gothic novels were quite subversive. They allowed authors to write about sex and a woman took responsibility for her own fate, she was cast out on her own.

'Unfortunately, Gothic became a debased genre and when I grew up books, came out in the Sixties and Seventies with covers showing a woman in a long, flowing gown fleeing from a dark house which had one light on in the window. Even some of Shirley Jackson's books — *The Lottery, The Haunting Of Hill House* — were reputed to have appeared looking like gothic novels.'

Like Douglas Winter in his introduction to the *Prime Evil* anthology, Lisa believes that horror is more an emotion than a genre, but goes further, stressing the point that there are many different angles within that field, ranging from the supernatural tale of external influences, such as those portrayed in Ramsey Campbell's *Hungry Moon*, to the psychological other end of the scale, where Ruth Rendell writes about what goes on the minds of her characters.

BRAND NEW

Lisa prefers the psychological approach to horror — though that does not preclude an interest in the supernatural — and this is exemplified in her novel *Gabriel*, her collection of short stories, *A Nest Of Nightmares* (both from Sphere), and many of the stories from other women writers in her new anthology reflect that point of view.

'It's a very personal anthology. I'm not necessarily going out to prove that women write horror, but rather to prove that horror doesn't necessarily come from a few brand name authors.

'I mentioned it at The Women's Press and wrote letters to about thirty writers whose work I liked and knew. Some wrote horror stories, like Tanith Lee, and some people never had.'

Lisa got a positive, though not total, response. 'Some writers are not represented because they were too busy, or they didn't provide what I wanted.' Of her own contribution, *Mr Elphinstone's Hands*, she says: 'My editor at Women's Press said: 'There must be a story from you in it.' I decided to give myself time to write two stories, give one to my editor so she could say what she thought and, and if she had any doubts I would have time to write another. I wrote *Mr Elphinstone*, it became longer than I intended it to be, but my editor *did* like it and didn't have any qualms at all.'

> "It must be hard to think of an original idea for zombies"

The book has certainly received high praise from critics, but Lisa is cautious about doing a follow-up. Tokenism is rife in the anthology market and books such as *Prime Evil* and *Book Of The Dead* contain no stories by women writers, but she does not want to fall into the trap of creating a category of her own. 'I don't see the appeal of *Book Of The Dead*. The movies were good, but it must be hard to think of an original idea for zombies — though I could probably come up with one myself!

'If the collection sells well I might do another. But it won't be called *Skin Of The Soul 2*!'

Gruesomely mutilated corpses litter the average horror flick, but when the life story of a mass murderer translates to the big screen, then the censors really start to sweat. Mark Kermode asks the men behind Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer to explain why truth is often stranger than fiction.

id you know that New Line offered me Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3 to direct? This was at the time that the MPAA were having problems with The Borrower. Actually it was a pretty good script, but talk about raw... The first page had more mayhem than most horror films have in 90 minutes. This thing made The Borrower look like Cinderella, and I was thinking: 'Have these people never been to the MPAA?' In the end that picture went back to the MPAA so many times that they put in a revolving door specially for Texas 3!'

'They were saying: 'Where's the blood? Where's the tits? What is this? This looks like an art film!'

John McNaughton laughs wryly at the memory; if he didn't have a sense of humour about film censorship he would probably have gone stark staring mad years ago, or would at least have given up making movies, which would have been something of a loss. His most recent picture *The Borrower* went back to the MPAA *five times* before they finally agreed to grant it an all-important R-rating. More worryingly, it's now been four years since McNaughton and producer/musician Steve Jones finished work on their first film *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, although the movie had its first British airing in February 1990, and sources reveal that, at time of going to press, a potential European distribution deal seemed imminent. Heart of the problem? No distributor wants to handle a movie which the MPAA in their infinite wisdom have rated X, a category usually reserved for porno-pics and sleazy sex-and-violence fodder. Their decision is all the more ironic in light of the fact that, when McNaughton and Jones first delivered *Henry* to its executive producers, they balked at it for being too demure: 'The backers were expecting a more traditional slasher pic,' remembers Steve Jones 'a *Halloween* or *Friday the 13th* type teen movie, which wasn't what they got at all. And they were saying: 'Where's the blood? Where's the tits? What is this? This looks like an art film!' You see, the way it all started was that we were asked by the people with the money to make a *horror* film. Because at that time you could do a bloody film, and release it on videotape and you'd be guaranteed to make some money out of it.'

PATHOLOGICAL LIAR

McNaughton and writer Richard Fire promptly set about researching a suitable subject, and came across a programme about Henry Lee Lucas, a random and habitual killer who claimed to have murdered 360 people. Lucas had been interviewed in prison by a TV company and a string of publications (including *Penthouse* magazine) to whom he had spoken openly about his crimes and his tortuously confused family background; his mother was a prostitute who had reportedly forced him to wear a dress, and his father was an embittered man who had lost both his legs. Crucially, however, Lucas' account of himself varied from paper to paper, a detail which fascinated McNaughton and was to become a central theme of his movie: 'Every time Henry Lee Lucas told the story of his mother he told it differently, and that was very interesting to us — the same basic elements of the story were there but it would always be different. One of the psychological profiles said that Lucas was a pathological liar, who either didn't know or didn't care to know the difference between fantasy and reality. So it became our intent to make the point that Henry doesn't know any more than anybody else. Because people constantly attempt to explain away these people's actions. They say: 'Their skull was malformed; it was their childhood; it's their mother; it was this, it was that... ' But to me there is no knowing, and as long as there is a human race there will be those who are so misfitted that they are incapable of adjusting in any way. So we were trying somehow to get inside the minds of people who live like that, but not really ever being able to find the true story out. There comes a point in writing fiction from fact that the story takes on its own life, and factual elements no longer work within it. Sometimes a story starts to tell you what its own requirements are, and the truth no longer works very well.'

The relationship between *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and the life of Henry Lee Lucas is complex, to say the least. As far as anyone knows, Lucas himself was never in Chicago, and the crimes depicted in McNaughton and Jones' movie are fictional.

SLIC

Poster artwork by Joe Coleman.

CE OF LIFE

Lucas did, however, travel for some time with a friend and accomplice named Otis and his 12 year old niece, with whom both apparently had sexual relationships. Whilst the movie's portrayal of Becky is as an engaging and motivated young woman, her real life counterpart was a terminally backward child who had been systematically abused, and whom Lucas finally killed on a picnic in Florida. Nevertheless, the similarities between fiction and reality were sufficient to give one time potential distributors Vestron the heebie-jeebies about legal complications, and to insist that the filmmakers personally secure 'Errors and Omissions' insurance. Yet the real problems arose when it came to getting *Henry* a certificate.

MORAL TONE

'The MPAA were just thrown by the film,' says the director. 'I talked to a woman there who said: 'McNaughton, this is not a film where I can tell you what needs to be cut. For instance, you take the scene where the fat guy gets the TV set over the head — first they stab him in the hand, then they stab him in the body repeatedly, then they pick up the TV set and smash it over his head, then they strangle him with an electric cord, then they plug the TV in and electrocute him... Mr McNaughton, I cannot tell you which of those to cut. To me your whole film is like this, and every time you kill somebody, you kill him three or four times.' She just thought that basically the film was so dense with objectionable material from their point of view that they just didn't know where to start. They also objected to the 'moral tone' of the movie — Henry doesn't get his comeuppance. There's no police in the movie — which was a very conscious decision on our part — the only police car you see in that picture is a real police car that accidentally drove by doing its real police business.'

Steve Jones mentions a conspiracy theory which has apparently found much favour amongst independent filmmakers and distributors, and which had indeed been espoused to me only a few days earlier by Troma mastermind Lloyd Kaufman. 'The theory is that since the ratings board is run by the studios it enables them to control the independents and the small

'The MPAA also objected to the 'moral tone' of the movie — Henry doesn't get his comeuppance'

pictures. What they're trying to do is to prevent any situation wherein people might possibly start to go out to the theatres and really like something that's beyond their control.'

Yet it is clear that, in the case of *Henry*, it has indeed been that apparent 'moral ambiguity' which has caused the most headaches, confusing some with its resolute refusal to portray a simplistically defined, monochrome world of absolutes — good and evil, right and wrong. Far from blurring the issues, the film draws us into a voyeuristic relationship with the murderer and his actions, and forces us to reassess our own complicity in the crimes rather than allowing us simply to adopt a smugly superior distance. Yet some viewers have chosen to see it differently. 'Their line is: 'You didn't say Henry was bad! You didn't show him being captured. This means you're in favour of him being out there slaughtering people."

VICARIOUS THRILL

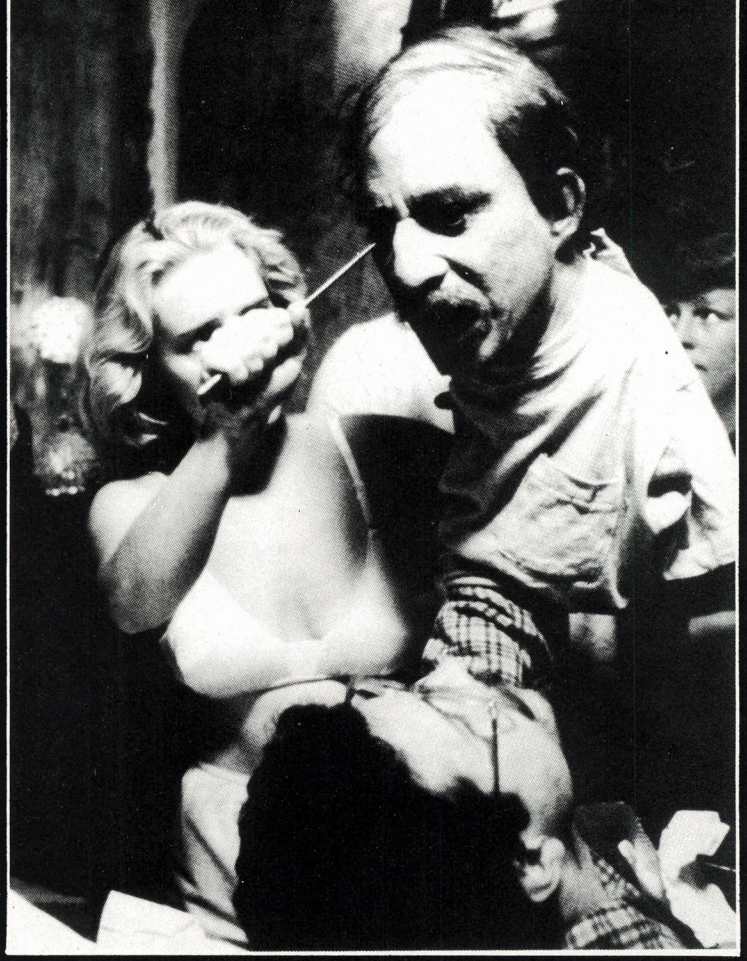
'We said: 'Here is a real slaughter... now do you think this is glamorous, or fun, and can you still cheer?' I haven't heard anyone cheering'

Steve Jones echoes McNaughton's claims and seems genuinely bewildered by such knee-jerk reactions: 'People say 'Don't you think people are going to go out and emulate this Henry guy because he was so cool?' It's like, well *was* he so cool? Didn't you feel sick at the end of the movie? Well, that's because he *wasn't* very cool... '

'Take the scene where we show the family getting slaughtered,' continues McNaughton. 'There was not a drop of blood or a decapitation or any of that typical gore fantasy stuff... The idea being that normally in a horror film, or even a *Rambo*-type movie, you set a character up by effectively telling the audience: 'These are the bad guys, look at all this bad stuff they do. Now let's kill them, and you'll feel good and purge all that hatred.' The audience can build their hatred up on a character until they're just rooting for his death, which is how horror films have traditionally been handled; they rip his arms off and the crowds cheer. But that's selling murder and wallowing in the vicarious thrill of it as a filmgoer. And I think that we perhaps reversed that process, and said: 'Here is a real slaughter... now do you think this is glamorous, or fun, and can you still cheer?' I haven't heard anyone cheering.'

Jones explains that, as far as he's concerned, the real horror of *Henry* lies in the mundanity of its central figure: 'The thing is that he is in many respects just a 'regular guy', and in a lot of ways you identify with him more than the victims or anybody else.' Indeed, McNaughton's direction specifically sets out to undermine the audience's expectations, coercing them into an uneasy acceptance of Henry himself. 'The intent was to let the viewer sit through it frame by frame, looking for the character that they're going to sympathise with in this little drama, and eventually it dawns on them that it's the murderer. You must see the world through his eyes and take his point of view, and that's very uncomfortable especially when you can't look at him and say: 'Well, he's so much different than I.'

'Another point I'd like to make is that — choosing not to take a moral stand, choosing to be a dispassionate eye watching this — to me the news media are always moralising, but by the same token they are putting the turkey on their table. Without these people, their ratings would drop. To me they're being very duplicitous in saying: 'Look at these horrible people, look at how we're better than them... and thanks for watching because I just got a 10,000 dollar raise because the ratings went up!' They need this and feed off it, but at the same time they take this tone that they have nothing to do with it, when in fact they're selling it. In *Henry* when you see the slaughter of the family you don't realise until the camera pulls back that they're watching



Becky (Tracey Arnold) teaches her slow-witted mass murderer brother Otis, (Tom Towles) a Pointed lesson.

Henry ends his short-term killing spree partnership with Otis.

Michael Rooker as Henry

Becky and Henry become unlikely lovers.

it on video in their living room... I think the indictment at that point is that you're doing what they're doing, so be very careful about how you judge these people... And how different are they from you and I?'

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

In complete contrast to the studied and precise tone of *Henry*, the second McNaughton/Jones picture is a relatively lighthearted, upbeat romp (Jones describes it as 'a rock 'n' roll movie that just jams along'), although once again convoluted distribution wranglings have reared their ugly heads: despite the enthusiastic attempts of Entertainment to give *The Borrower* a theatrical airing in Britain, the movie is still currently (although hopefully not indefinitely) caught up in Atlantic's inner turmoils, so you'll be lucky to do any more than read about it in the near future. Which is a shame because the plot sounds enticingly deranged...

An alien gets dumped on earth by his fellow kinsmen as a punishment for heinous crimes; there he is converted into human form and exiled into 'the land of the savages'. Upon arrival, however, our (anti) hero begins to re-mutate into lizard form, losing his head in the process (we're talking exploding craniums here — always a winner), which leaves him to wander the earth 'borrowing' other people's most vital organ. The heads of doctors, winos, dogs and, of course, psychos are all adopted by the extra-terrestrial headhunter, each one's memories filtering through into the consciousness of their new owner. 'In a sense it's a metaphor for what an actor does. It's a horror fantasy... When he rips someone's head off you can laugh, it's not real. So it's a more traditional horror film.'

Other projects currently lined up include an adaptation of William Burroughs' *Dutch Schultz*, a screenplay concerning the final stream-of-consciousness ramblings of a dying man revisiting his past as his memories take possession of his mind. McNaughton also has a script on the back burner entitled *Step Right Up*: 'It's an autobiographical story of a young man whose life falls apart on him, and he ends up with no place to go and no money, and he winds up joining a carnival travelling around Canada, going through a series of adventures and misadventures. Very slice of life... '

Which all sounds entirely reasonable; so no need for more revolving doors at the MPAA? Fingers crossed...

'The intent was to let the viewer sit through it, looking for the character that they're going to sympathise with, and eventually it dawns on them that it's the murderer'

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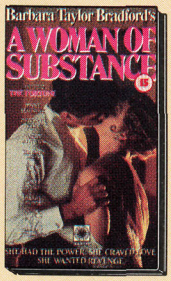

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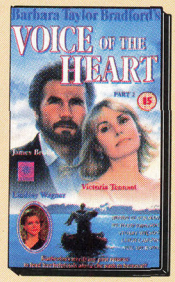

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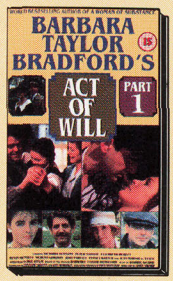

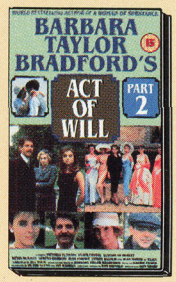

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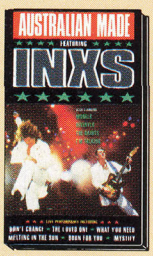

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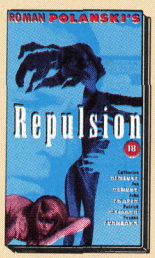

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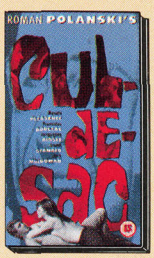

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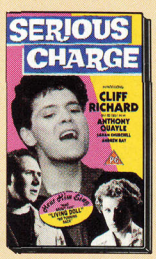

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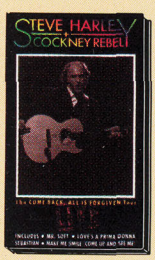

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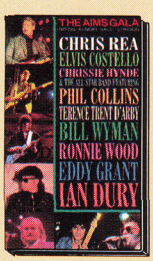

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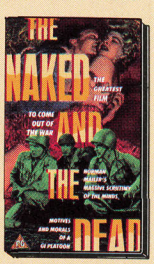

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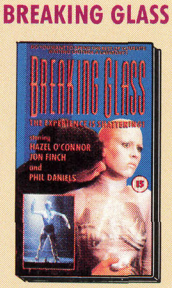

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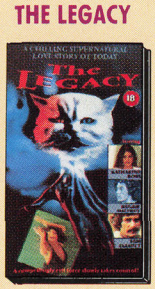

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THE SLEEPER AWAKES

Luck brought Mick Garris's moviemaking talents to the attention of Steven Spielberg. Now the man responsible for Critters 2 and several episodes of Amazing Stories has teamed up with Clive Barker to direct In The Flesh for the big screen and with Richard Christian Matheson to create a new vampire myth, Red Sleep. Philip Nutman reports.

Mick Garris, erstwhile office assistant at Lucas-Film, made his cinema debut as a director with *Critters 2* two years ago. Although *Critters* was a lighthearted monster movie contracted as a PG-13 rating, Garris himself is a devout supporter of intelligent, thought-provoking horror and looks set to be one of the talents most likely to succeed in the Nineties.

'I've always had a passion for the genre,' he says, 'but I've a lighter side to my writing as well.' That lighter side includes working as staff writer on Steven Spielberg's *Amazing Stories* and directing *Fuzzbucket*, an irredeemably cute Disney Movie of the Week, executive produced by his old friend John Landis.

'I want to tackle something intense in the genre as my next project, and *In The Flesh* is such a fine story it's just the challenge I've been looking for. On the second draft, the studio said: 'This is terrific, the script's 80 per cent there but we don't know how to suggest rewriting it to make it 100 per cent', so that's when the decision was made to speak with Gale Ann Hurd. It's an indication that Warner Brothers are taking the project seriously, as they've decided to get a strong producer on the film.'

In The Flesh is a Garris adaptation of Clive Barker's *The Books of Blood*; tentatively budgeted at 10-12 million dollars, the film should go into production later this year and Garris promises that the plot is fairly faithful to the Barker original. 'However, we've added to the protagonist's story, the Cleveland Smith character. He now has a life and relationship outside the prison sequences — he was accidentally responsible for his wife's death — which is why he's incarcerated. Smith's also now a much more sympathetic character than he was when Clive wrote him. Billy Tait, the tale's diabolist, is now in search of his father's spirit rather than that of his grandfather, which brings the story much closer to home. Basically, the dream city is a more finite place for obvious reasons, but this is still one of the weirdest scripts I've ever written for a major studio.'

The original story, set in Pentonville prison, has Smith share a cell with the strange, withdrawn Tait, a young man who has deliberately committed a crime in order to be sent down so that he can get at the grave of his grandfather who was hanged in the prison in 1937. Tait's presence invades Smith's dreams, pulling the felon into a Dali-esque landscape of supernatural madness and murder. The tale culminates with Tait's disappearance, leaving Smith totally unhinged.

STAR VEHICLE

After nearly fifteen years in the industry, working with several highly rated names including David Cronenberg and John Carpenter and being involved with a number of major studio projects (e.g. **batteries not included, The Fly 2*), Mick Garris has paid his dues and is moving into the A league.

His collaboration with Richard Christian Matheson has proved advantageous for both writers, elevating their profiles quicker than either expected. *Red Sleep*, their contemporary vampire script, originally written for Garris to direct with R C Matheson

producing, has grown into a major venture attracting Hollywood's heavy hitters.

'John Landis isn't involved with the picture any more, and he won't be executive producer. Joel Silver (*48 Hours, Predator*) has picked it up at Warners. Everyone now sees it as a big movie, too big for me to direct,' he says ruefully, 'even though they've signed me to do *In The Flesh*. They see *Red Sleep* as a star vehicle.'

Once Joel Silver and Warners give the writers their feedback on *Red Sleep*'s first draft, they will start on a second. 'Probably in a couple of weeks, so that'll give us the push we need.'

Also on the cards at Warners is *Kane*, a thriller which Richard Christian and Garris are scripting for Kim Basinger; this film is based on a story penned by the star, who will also produce. 'It's not a sequel to *Citizen Kane*,' Garris jokes in an Orson Welles voice.

Garris is one of a rare breed: a Los Angeles native. Born in Santa Monica and raised in San Fernando Valley at Van Nuys, he was educated at San Diego State University. A devout rock musician in his formative years, Garris quit university one semester before graduating: 'I was a very long-haired, long-headed rocker who thought he was going to make it,' he recalls of those heady days when his band was the most popular in San Diego. That, however, was not to be. Unsuccessful at breaking into the music business, he drifted between jobs before arriving at LucasFilm.

SPIELBERG'S GOONIES

Following a stint answering phones, letters, running the office and R2-D2, Garris landed a prime position hosting a Hollywood interview show on the late-lamented pay station Z Channel, where he first came into contact with Spielberg. This led him to become the first full-time specialised genre publicist, working at Avco Embassy on *The Fog, The Howling, Scanners* and *Escape From New York*. Then he moved to Universal, where he worked on *ET, The Thing* and *Videodrome* in a special publicist capacity.

Garris admits that it was fortuitous to be involved with so many top genre projects. 'The publicity work combined with the interview show led to relationships with a lot of people who later became instrumental in giving me opportunities. When I was doing *The Making Of The Goonies*, Spielberg was there. I'd interviewed him several times for Z Channel, and he specifically requested I do interviews with him for Amblin's promo documentaries. He mentioned that they were looking for writers on *Amazing Stories*. I'd always kept my screenwriting out of Steven's sight. Larry Cohen (director of *It's Alive!*) once said to me, 'every asshole has a script in his pocket'. And it's true, so I'd chosen not to be another asshole with a script when I dealt with Spielberg. We'd known each other for a couple of years by this point, and he had no idea I was a writer.'

Spielberg's script department read *Uncle Willie*, one of Garris's feature scripts, and consequently recommended him to the big S. 'Steven gave me the first script assignment for the series, based on one of his stories, and I turned in the final draft three days later.'

> "To this day, I'm very proud of the work I did on *The Fly 2*, even though the movie turned out to be a piece of crap"

He was promptly hired to pen a second script, but before that was completed, Spielberg appointed him staff writer on the show. Garris eventually wrote/co-wrote ten episodes. '*The Amazing Fallsworth* is my favourite, and Steven and I won an Edgar award for that. I'm proud of it because it's a good, serious, scary, suspenseful story. And the one I directed but didn't write, *Life On Death Row* starring Patrick Swayze, is my favourite direction to date.'

Fuzzbucket, the Disney movie, was a vehicle with which the studio could tempt writers into directing. 'Jeffrey Katzenberg (studio head) asked John (Landis) if he'd play godfather on my first directing job. Although Jeff was keen to have me aboard, a first timer's always a risk; but, as John agreed, there was no problem.'

FEEBLE FLY

Garris followed *Amazing Stories* with the sensitive story of a boy's life in the lab: *The Fly 2*. 'What initially attracted me to the picture was the fact I feel *The Fly* is the greatest monster movie of all time. That and the fact that Cronenberg personally recommended me for the assignment. To this day, I'm very proud of the work I did on the film even though the movie turned out to be a piece of crap — but my comments are in no way directed at Chris Walas or a number of other people involved. There were forces at two ends trying to make different pictures.'

Garris left the film after he'd fulfilled his contractual obligations, having written three drafts of the script. 'It was turning nightmarish and I was threatened with a lawsuit when I left to direct *Critters 2*,' he confides. 'The story is almost beat for beat what I wrote, and most of the characters are the same, but they ripped the guts out, turning it into a teenage monster movie comic book. This disappointed me as I believed the sequel deserved the respect, the serious tone of Cronenberg's picture, but they turned it into a shadowplay of our original intentions. The studio wanted something specific after I left and I guess they got it as they're currently working on *The Fly 3*.'

After the hell of *The Fly 2*, the opportunity to rewrite and direct *Critters 2*, a film with a planned national release of 1,200 prints and major advertising, was just the vacation Garris needed. Although *Critters 2* was a sequel to a movie that is a xerox of Joe Dante's *Gremlins*, Mick was delighted to work for an independent company — New Line — after the bureaucratic travails of his previous project. 'I loved making *Critters 2*. It was a great experience, and of the three pictures that have my name on them, it's the one I'm most proud of in the sense it's the one that turned out closest to materialising in the manner it was supposed to. Horror fans probably won't understand that, but I think it's a sweet little monster movie that has fun with itself without being too camp.'

Sweet it may be, but *Critters 2* will perhaps be best remembered as the movie in which the Easter Bunny (the town sheriff) gets his balls bitten off before being tossed through a stained glass window. 'Really, I am proud of it, even though it's a movie to make excuses for.'

SPIRIT CITY

In a career seemingly blessed with good luck, Garris has now been presented with an opportunity to work with Clive Barker, who he has admired for a number of years. 'When I moved over to CAA, the agency that represents Clive, I let it be known I was a fan, and when Clive was brought out to meet the industry a couple of years ago, a meeting was engineered. Actually, I met Clive after Warners had already offered me *In The Flesh*, just before the writers' strike that year. So when we met it was: 'Hi, I'm doing a movie of yours'.'

With plans for *In The Flesh* delayed by the strike, Barker and Garris found themselves trading ideas, one of which resulted in the pilot script for *Spirit City USA*, a proposed weekly show for the ABC network. 'The idea came from Clive and our TV agent Tony Kranz, who recently engineered David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*. Clive was keen to do something and the agency were looking for someone to partner him as he was already committed to a number of other projects.'

Garris and Barker hit it off, a deal was arranged and

> "They thought it was too scary, which is a wonderful thing to say about a show you ask Clive Barker and Mick Garris to create!"

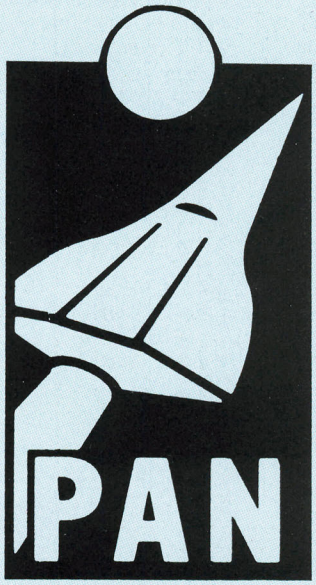
Garris was flown to London for two weeks to write the script, 'consulting with Clive every three days while he attended to production chores on *Hellbound*'. ABC were startled with the result. 'They thought it was too scary,' he laughs, 'which is a wonderful thing to say about a show you ask Clive Barker and Mick Garris to create.'

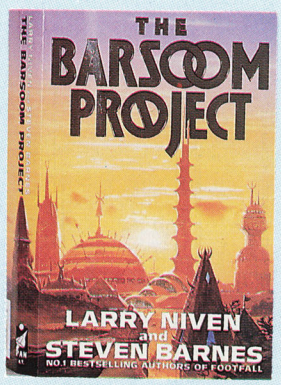
The concept and pilot revolve around Roy Winchester, a Houdini-like escapologist who returns from beyond the grave on the anniversary of his death. In coming back, Winchester unwittingly frees another hundred spirits from beyond. Some are good, some are evil, 'but all of them have to go back to their rightful place or all Hell will literally break loose on Earth. You have a hundred potential episodes with a great deal of diversity. It's such a strong idea I'm really surprised no one's picked up the option.'

The problem is, of course, that Barker's demonic visions are too heavy for television executives to stomach. Instead of *Spirit City USA*, we could be in for a rehash of *The Time Tunnel* or *Quantum Leap*.

FEAR competition

WIN CHRIS MOORE'S SUPERB ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR THE BARSOOM PROJECT!





TO MARK THE LAUNCH of their new science fiction, fantasy and horror list, **Pan** are offering a stunning piece of original artwork by the well-known SF artist **Chris Moore**.

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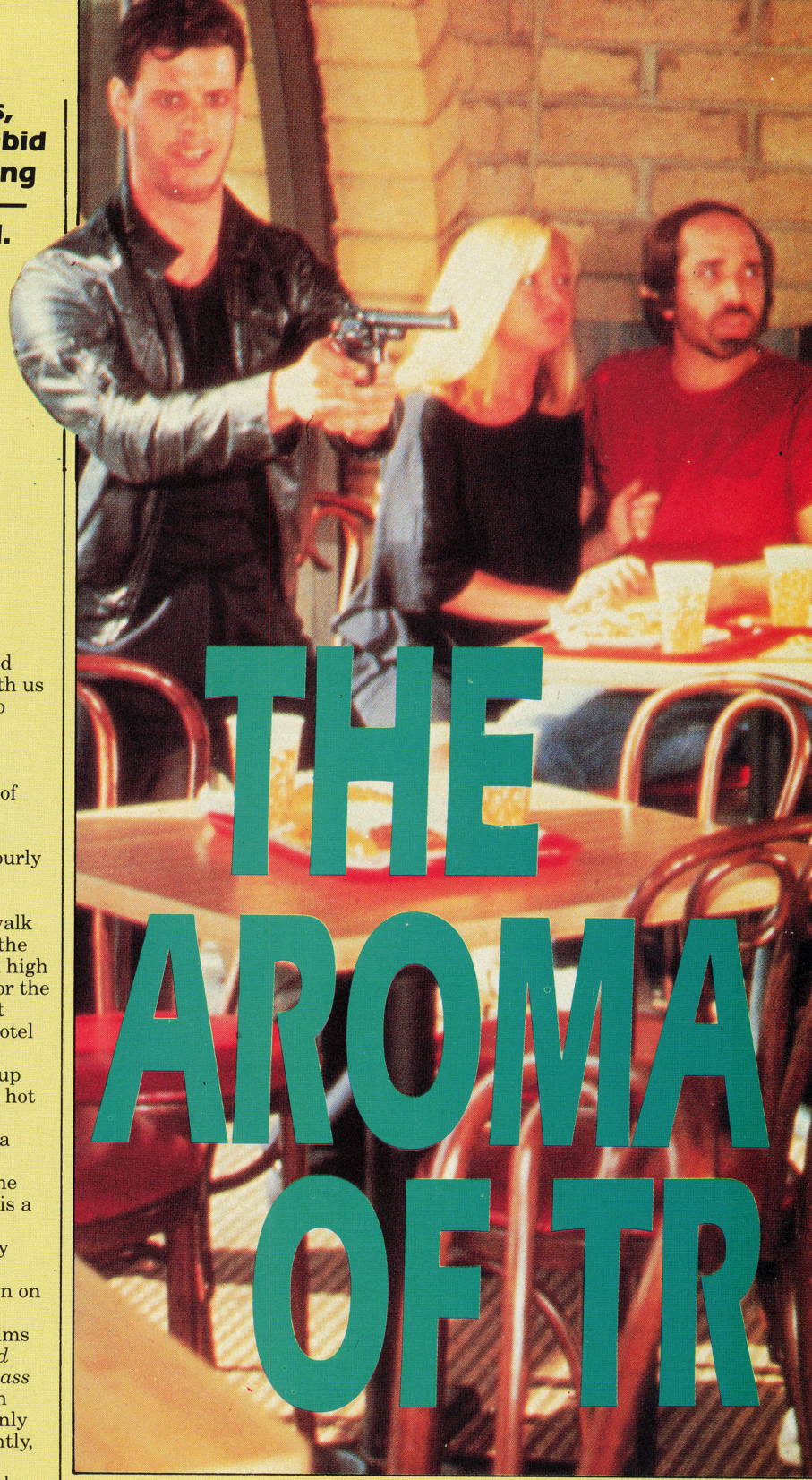
Write the answers to the five following questions on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope and send to the address below.

1. Which Pan launch title is set in a futuristic dream park?
2. To which book is Star Scroll the sequel?
3. Who was the first editor of The Pan Book Of Horror Stories?
4. What is the title of Dan McGirt's humorous first novel?
5. Name the award-winning comics author whose debut novel is published by Pan in April.

The first 11 correct answers drawn will win. The competition is only open to residents of Great Britain, and employees of **FEAR**, Newsfield and Pan are ineligible. No correspondence will be entered into and the judges' decision is final. Entries should be sent to *Art Comp, FEAR, Newsfield, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1JW* and must reach us by or before May 18, 1990.

Nuclear meltdowns, killer chopsticks, rabid grannies and dancing in the dirty streets — Tromaville has it all. But, as FEAR's John Gilbert discovered, it's no place for a vacation...



THE AROMA OF TR

A shower of acid rain flirts with us on our way to Tromaville, melting the windscreen, raising blips of paint on the bonnet and turning our burly driver into a boiling mass of blubber.

We decide to get out and walk — past the smoky towers of the nuclear reactor, the deserted high school, the burnt out home for the blind, and into the one-street town where the Meltdown Hotel awaits our inspection.

The others stomp wearily up the stairs to their rooms and hot tubs, while I seek out Lloyd Kaufman, President of Troma Films Inc and cocreator of Tromaville. Unlike most of the town's other inhabitants, he is a neatly dressed man with a carefully clipped beard, a wry chuckle and wicked sense of humour that shows he's fallen on good times.

"We're offering the public a distinct alternative to the Hollywood movie"

Troma has been making films like *The Toxic Avenger, Rabid Grannies, Troma War* and *Class Of Nuke 'Em High* for sixteen years but the company has only made British headlines recently, thanks to a deal with Virgin Vision and a spotlight festival coordinated by the British Film Institute. Kaufman is pleased with the response and after joking — I hope — that his films almost closed the BFI, puts his enthusiasm for this major event into words. 'Apparently it has received some artist interest as well as general commercial acclaim. The fact that the British Film Institute has the originality and imagination to put effort into a Troma retrospective is really remarkable and very brave. We are an American independent company, a national treasure in the United States and the American Film Institute wouldn't ever consider doing a Troma retrospective.'

I suggest the reason he's having such success in the UK is that Britain does not have an independent film industry. 'The same thing is happening in America. The independent film segment is evaporating in America due to the system and the fact that the American Film Institute has failed totally and miserably and made no attempt to support the independent film companies. I think they should take a leaf from the book of the British Film Institute.'

MAJOR FAILURE

Kaufman also believes that, although the advent of video should have promoted the independents, it has not. 'Video should have been a great democratisation of the movie industry, but it didn't work that way. The Reagan administration created an atmosphere, as well as a set of laws which allowed the giant corporations to merge and acquire all of the media and keep it in the hands of a very few people. The problem is that you have giant multi-national companies controlling the entire

TROMA

"Troma has become a sort of brand name for something crazy, something that will be on the cutting edge"

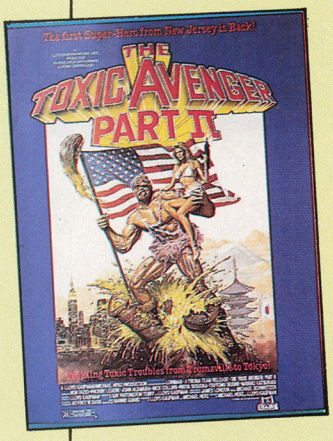
media; newspapers, TV, cable companies, video companies and movie theatres, as well as the creative studios. So, slowly but surely, all variety is being eliminated, and what you're ending up with is a lot of watered down, heavily promoted pap.

Couldn't several independents get together and form a bigger company? 'There are none to get together. It's like the Blue Whale. The Blue Whale is the biggest creature on the face of the Earth. There are so few of them left, they can't find each other to mate, so they will become extinct.'

Roger Corman's movies made Kaufman realise that he could make good quality, low budget films, but the sentiment has not helped other low budget operators stay afloat. 'I think the problem was they tried to enter the arena that the majors control, and they just did not have the wherewithall to do it. The majors own the market.

'Where Troma has been successful is that we have not been intimidated by the trappings of the industry. We do not use limousines, our offices are very modest, we do not make big budget movies, we have kept our films extremely original, and we have tried to remain loyal to the audiences that have supported us from the beginning rather than try to take the success of *Toxic Avenger* and then make the next movie a fifteen million dollar second-rate Paramount movie.

'I think the problem of de Laurentiis was that they were making these formula Hollywood-style movies with Hollywood-style budgets, but there was no real passion being made. The movies were being put together



like Chinese menus with one from column A, one from column B, one from column C. They may have looked okay on paper in terms of the elements, but the talent behind the movies was not great enough to compete with Jack Nicholson and with Steven Spielberg.

'We're offering the public a distinct alternative to the Hollywood movie. The person going to see a movie on a Saturday night will open up the newspaper and see a small number of Hollywood movies playing at all of the theatres in town. So there won't be much variety. Then, maybe, he sees this Troma movie. 'Well, let's go to something different tonight.' There are enough of those people who want to see something different, who want to see something that may piss them off a little bit, and we've been able to survive. And now, after fifteen years, Troma has become a sort of brand name for something crazy, something that will be on the cutting edge.'

"We feel that people are really decent, and that they are the victims of a giant military/ industrial complex and that's what our movies are talking about"

RABID GRANNIES

Although Troma films appear to be aimed at the lunatic fringe, Kaufman has it on good authority that their appeal is as wide as **FEAR**'s readership — no doubt his mom told him so... 'We find that the *Toxic Avenger* cycle has a very wide audience. Normally, movies like *Friday The 13th* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street* attract, for the most part, young males. *Toxic Avenger* attracts more women. He's a hero, he's a nice guy. He takes care of his mother, he takes care of his girlfriend, and women tend to like him.

'We've also found that it's not just kids who go to see him. There's an older group who seem to like him. What's happening is, the older people might be renting the movies on tape rather than going to movie theatres.'

The revelation makes me drop my toasted Troma cake into the radioactive soup. Wrinklies renting horror vids? But wait. Maybe it has something to do with the environmental concerns shown in the movies, the good versus bad... 'All of the Troma movies, right from the beginning, have come from the newspapers. The ideas which inspire our scripts are usually contemporary ideas. We want our films to be uplifting. Just because the Toxic Avenger rips peoples' heads off, just because he transforms into a hideously deformed creature of superhero size and strength does not mean that the movie must be totally cynical and must be evil.

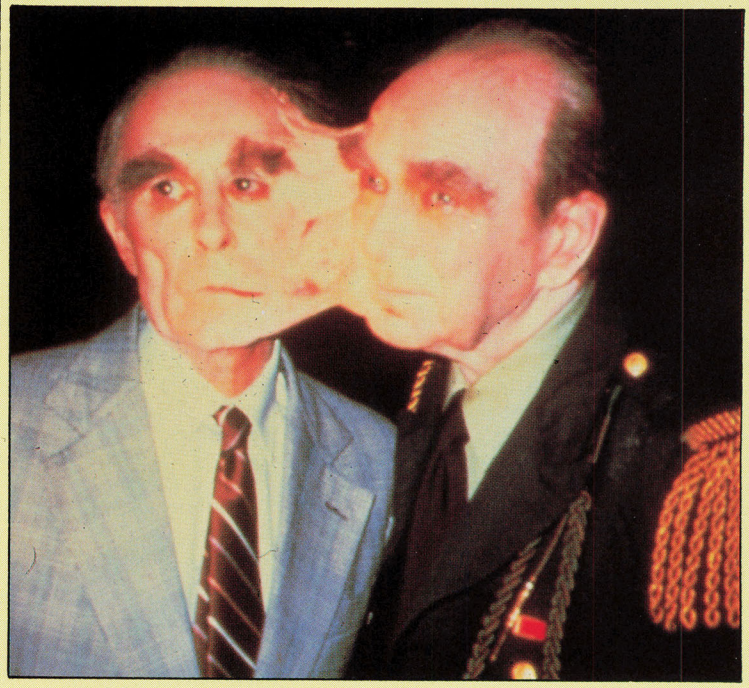
'What makes the Toxic Avenger interesting is that he's a good guy and that he's dealing with the issues of today. He goes through

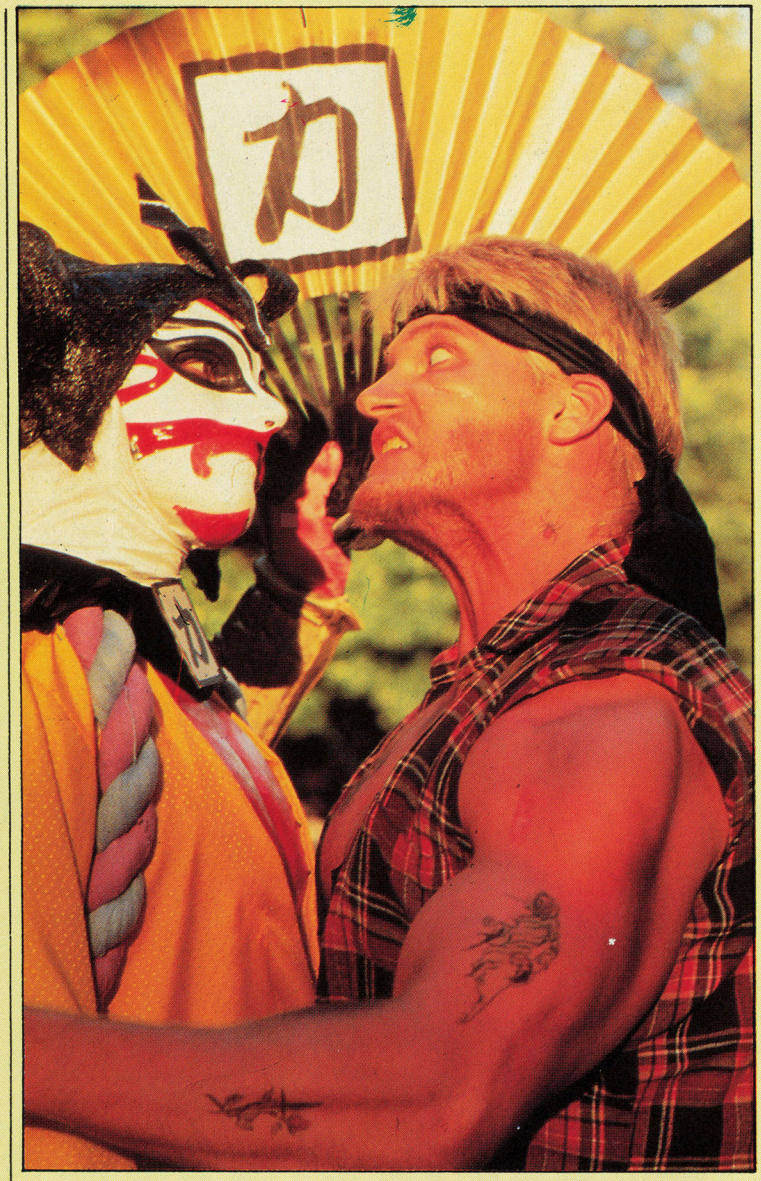
what we must all go through. He's getting older too. In the *Toxic Avenger Part 3*, he's no longer the adolescent he was in *Part 1*. In *Part 3* he's actually a career person, he's engaged to be married, he must make the decision that many of us must make, do we sell our souls to the corporation? Do we compromise ourselves to the point where we are no longer human? Do we live in a world where we have an entire continent of people starving and we boast about making 25 million dollar movies? Or do we try to put something back? Do we try to make films that have some kind of message, so that if a young person enjoys the film, not only will he enjoy the movie but maybe he'll come out of it slightly better for it.

'There's no reason why we have to show birds floundering in oil; we did it in our own way and I think that we're reaching an audience that maybe otherwise wouldn't go to watch the bird floundering in the oil. Instead, we're maybe reaching the group that when they eat the Macdonald's hamburger, they're thinking now, 'Okay, maybe we'd better not throw that styrofoam container on the ground because it's going to create waste. Maybe we should put it in the garbage."

Schlock Incorporated: Troma's Lloyd Kaufman (above, on right) and Michael Herz with The Toxic Avenger and Kabukiman; scenes from Sergeant Kabukiman NYPD, Surf Nazis and Troma's War (clockwise from right)

The same theme continues, even in Troma's most destructive film vehicles. 'The heroes of *Troma's War* really are decent, average people, and I think if you take the Troma movies as a body of work, basically we show that men and women are decent and that there is, unfortunately, this power elite that is constantly telling us: 'This is what you must think. You are not capable of making a decision about seeing a movie. Even though you are an adult, even though you are old enough to pay taxes we're going to edit your movies before you see them, we're going to censor them for you.' We feel that people are



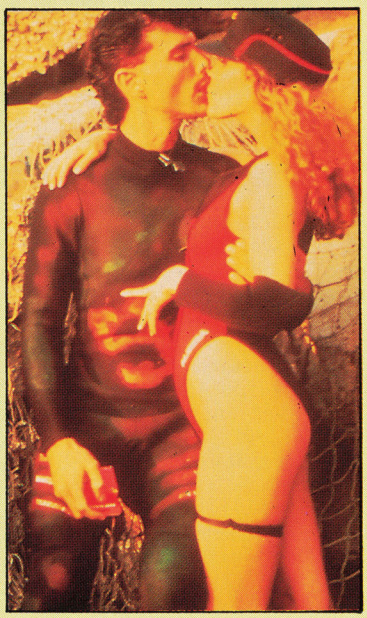


really decent, and that they are the victims of a giant military/industrial complex and that's what our movies are talking about.'

CHOPSTICKS

Kaufman is also critical of the distinctions, made by censors, between one film and another where violence is concerned. 'There's an example of the power of the big corporation. The violence in *Rambo* apparently is acceptable violence, based on the American way of censorship, but the violence in *Troma's War* was unacceptable violence. Why? I have no idea, other than the fact that maybe the message of *Troma's War* was not conducive to what the big corporations want.'

I put it to Kaufman that the way in which themes and characters are treated bears some resemblance to the way in which Marvel Comics treats its superheroes. These people may be off-the-wall, weird but they also live ordinary lives. 'Well, you know, that's interesting. Stan Lee, who invented Spiderman, he



and I are buddies. We wrote a script together in 1971. We are now writing a new script called *Road Hogs* which is going to concern the etiquette of the highways.

'We've created these new superheroes that are in a car

pool. As a result of an accident on the road they are transformed into this new group of superheroes called Road Hogs. They spend their time fighting for safety on the roads.'

Talking of new movies — no, you're not going to escape this one! 'We're doing a movie called *Sergeant Kabukiman NYPD*. This is a movie that was suggested to us by a Japanese company, Namco; they invented Pacman, they own Atari. They saw *Toxic Avenger Part 2* — we filmed some of that in Japan. The head of the company, or his staff, had this idea of Kabukiman, a new superhero.

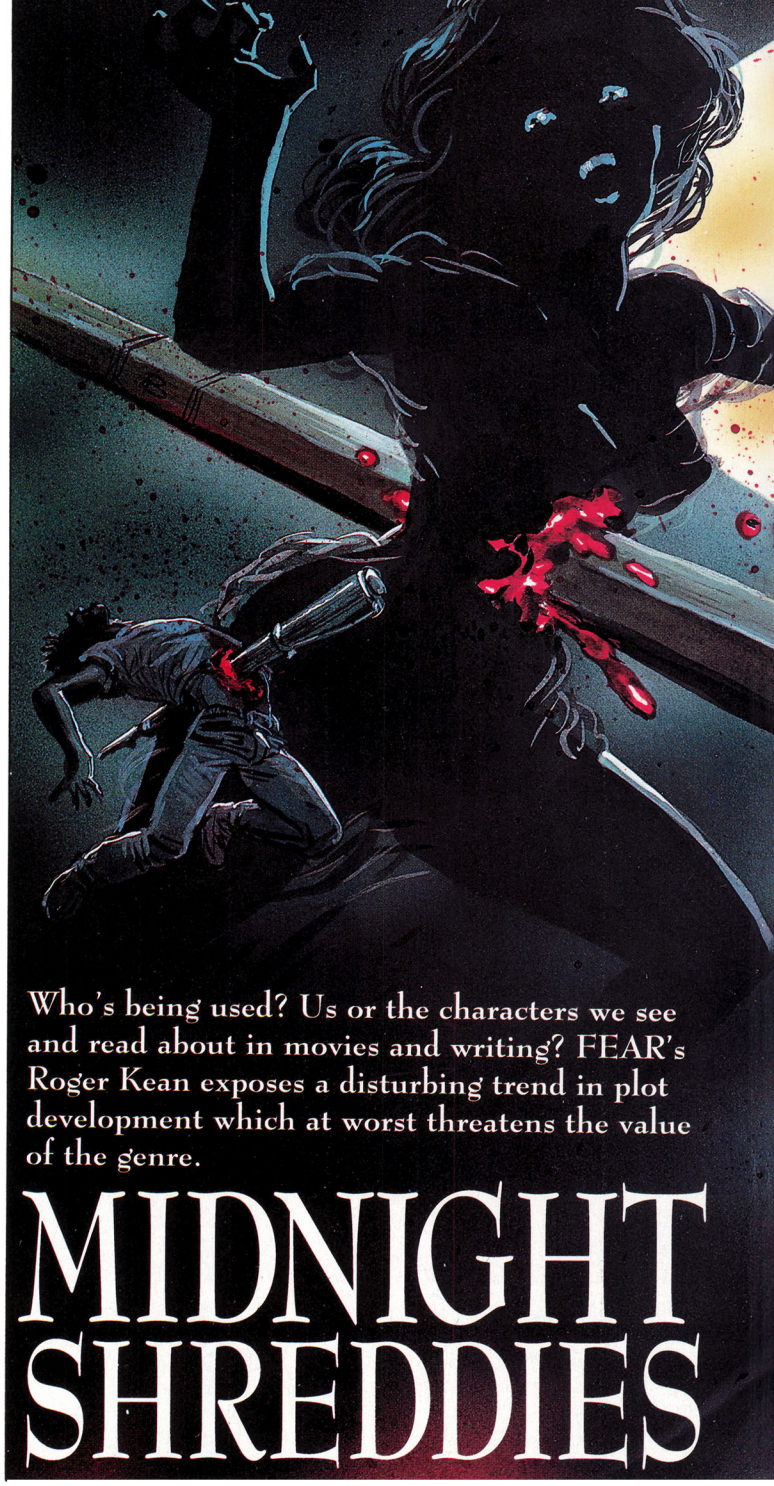
'It's about a New York City cop who loves hot dogs who slowly, as a result of an accident of fate, starts turning into a Kabuki actor — you know Kabuki, with the face masks and the weird hair styles? Slowly, he doesn't like the taste of hot dogs, he has this craving for raw fish, and instead of his gun these chopsticks come out of his kimono and kill people.

'What the film represents is the clash between the Japanese and the American cultures, which is probably one of the main stories of our decade; the economic clash, the cultural clash. Not only the clash but also the love stories. Japan and America love each other and the movie is reflecting that.

'There is a Japanese woman and, at the beginning of the movie, he and she hate each other. But she is the only one who can teach him how to use his powers, and by the end of the movie they love each other. So the movie is an interesting metaphor for what's happening in the world.'

"What the film represents is the clash between the Japanese and the American cultures, which is probably one of the main stories of our decade"

Rabid Grannies, Troma's War and The Toxic Avenger Part 2 are available on video rental and Class Of Nuke 'Em High is available for sale, price £9.99. All these videos were reviewed in FEAR Issue 16.



Who's being used? Us or the characters we see and read about in movies and writing? FEAR's Roger Kean exposes a disturbing trend in plot development which at worst threatens the value of the genre.

MIDNIGHT SHREDDIES

Janice Capshaw liked to run at night.

Nearly every evening between ten and eleven o'clock, Janice put on her gray sweats with the reflective blue stripes across the back and chest, tucked her hair under a headband, laced up her New Balance shoes, and ran six miles. She was thirty-five but could have passed for twenty-five, and she attributed her glow of youth to her twenty-year-long commitment to running.

Janice Capshaw was a shreddie.

In our fictional worlds, on the page, on the screen, shreddies are everywhere. Authors would be lost without them, and none are excluded when it comes to shreddiness. The quoted piece above comes from the opening of Dean R. Koontz's novel *Midnight*, and Koontz is a fine exponent of shreddie philosophy.

But what is a shreddie?

Without going into historical detail — for shredding has taken place in fiction for a long long while — it's convenient to start with Shakespeare. In *Hamlet* Rosenkrantz and

> "It highlights their awareness of being little more than plot devices, condemned to certain death to satisfy the dictates of drama"

Guildenstern are listed in the cast as 'courtiers', but Tom Stoppard recognised them instantly as shreddies and wrote his play *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in 1967 which follows their actions both on stage in *Hamlet* and when waiting in the wings, so to speak. It **marvellously highlights their awareness of being little more than plot devices, condemned** to certain death to satisfy the dictates of drama. Stoppard, a wiz with wordplay, borrowed from Oscar Wilde whose novelist Miss Prism in *Lady Windermere's Fan* declaims 'The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means'. But Miss Prism's assertion pertains to the fictional elite — the larger than life good guys and bad guys, Stoppard, with a more socialist turn and looking more to the little guys, switched the lines to read: 'The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily. That is what tragedy means'. If you've forgotten, Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern are written out of the play when the King of Denmark dispatches them to England with a letter telling the King of England to execute the bearers of the letter.

FLAMING METEORS

It's far too fanciful to imagine that Stoppard influenced Irwin Allen — the producer in the early-Seventies held as responsible for re-inventing the 'disaster film' — but at that time a spate of films appeared which stamped indelibly the shreddie cause on the public's imagination. After two decades of little cinematic spectacle, disaster films were designed to get **audiences back in the cinemas and thrilling to a newly urbanised form of derring do.** The first was the bestselling Arthur Hailey novel *Airport*, filmed in 1970, quickly followed by the ubiquitous (and sometimes even good) Irwin Allen, who produced *The Poseidon Adventure* in 1972 and topped it with *The Towering Inferno* in 1974, matching box-office receipts with Alexander Golitzen's *Earthquake* in the same year.

Though out of FEAR's way in content, their structure **contributed to a new form of horror and fantasy fiction writing, which moved away** from the centre stage of heroes and villains to add numerous sub-plots of characters incidentally caught up on the sidelines with what was concerning the heroes. **Disaster films relied on characters whose only role was to die for the part. The** theme is now well established: a handful of people, generally trapped in a situation, have their life stories sketched in so that some attachment to them is formed by the audience, the better to regret their untimely and often gruesome demise. And that is a shreddie. By the time the ageing glitterati of Hollywood gathered atop Irwin Allen's gleaming skyscraper, the best fun was betting on who would go first, plunging down thousand-foot lift shafts, flaming like meteors from shattered windows, or simply succumbing to well-earned heart attacks under the stress. (Unfair; the movie was good on suspense too.)

Of course, by comparison, the heroes of the pieces are enlarged by the way they survive: world-weary professionals like Steve McQueen's embittered fire chief in *The Towering Inferno*, Charlton Heston's worthy-but-unheeded architect of earthquake-proof buildings in *Earthquake*. Allen's *The Poseidon Adventure*, though a sillier film by far than his *Inferno*, is more worthily constructed in that the heroes emerge naturally from the handful of survivors. When the giant liner turns over, many extras are hurled to their deaths, but then films have always been killing off extras by the union-load, they're part of the backdrop, they're not proper shreddies. The new technique was to give them some lines to speak, some moments to emote through and a spurious but real-sounding background to make them seem real before decapitating them.

Since then, film makers and authors have revelled in writing up cameos to be shredded in the name of the god of plot. At one level it is crass plotting, and some of the worst of horror fiction is exemplified by the technique, but at the other, shreddies can genuinely lend a pace and a sense of impending terror.

Perhaps the most glaring example of audience manipulation occurred — earlier than the Seventies — in George A Romero's justly celebrated black-and-white *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). With all the protagonists (un)safely tucked away in the house, surrounded by slavering zombies, it was surely a question of waiting

out the various deaths while the juvenile leads struggled to survive to the happy ending. Only George planned it differently, and in a breathtaking stroke of Hitchcockian legerdemain, killed them both off only one-third through the movie. There, then, was an example of creative shreddiness: the very people you had pinned your hopes on were nothing more than gristle to the zombie mill — they were shreddies personified. Romero fooled everybody, and heightened the sense of shock tremendously. After that point, no-one in the audience was going to take *any*thing for granted again. As a result, watching *Night of the Living Dead* for the first time is an eerily disturbing experience, and the movie generates a sense of utter dread that it would otherwise have seriously lacked, and which none of the subsequent films has managed to create without resorting to increasingly gruesome special effects.

FOOLING AROUND

But back to Janice Capshaw and that late-night run on the Californian beach at Moonlight Cove. Koontz uses her to set up the situation and, in effect, create what film makers call 'the hooker', the pre-title sequence to get the audience settled and excited. But Koontz, always a good, competent writer and frequently excellent, is not content with merely sketching in Janice, she gets eight pages before being shredded in the maws of barely seen beasts. We learn that she's a fitness freak, that she dislikes running before work, has always preferred the night to the day even as a child, that she's a premature widow since her husband died of cancer and that she still misses him... what Koontz avoids telling us is that she has a sister because that's another story, one belonging to the post-title sequences. It is still a sketch, but the detail convinces, we want her to survive her ordeal, and Koontz hopes we will be all the more upset when she fails to do so. Of course, as a plot device, it also provides the motivation for Tessa Jane Lockland, Janice's sister, in her quest for the truth of Moonlight Cove.

But like Romero, Koontz likes to fool around with us sometimes. Compare this extract with the one that opens the article:

On his thirty-sixth birthday, May 18, Travis Cornell rose at five o'clock in the morning. He dressed in sturdy hiking boots, jeans, and a long-sleeved, blue-plaid cotton shirt. He drove his pickup south from his home in Santa Barbara all the way to rural Santiago Canyon on the eastern edge of Orange County, south of Los Angeles. He took only a package of Oreo cookies, and a large canteen full of orange-flavoured Kool-Aid, and a fully loaded Smith & Wesson .38 Chief's Special.

It, too, is the opening of a book, and there's enough incidental detail packed in there to set even the most iron-lined stomach fluttering with premonitory nerves — but Travis Cornell isn't a shreddie for the novel is *Watchers,* and Cornell is the hero. What does Cornell have that Janice Capshaw lacks? In *Watchers* the hero is also out in a lonely place — not exactly running for pleasure, but similar — when he encounters a frightening mystery. But he survives the encounter, whereas young unwary policemen, old codgers in the backwoods and a host of other unfortunates — always well drawn characters — are only there to feed the beast and keep the reader on edge. What's interesting here is that the way Koontz writes, Janice Capshaw might also have had a leading role instead of being shredded — it's all part of fooling us, keeping us in suspense and stopping us from being able to say with any certainty 'Oh I know what's coming next!'

In the hands of master writers shredding characters for the sake of the plot can be an enriching technique, and it's never been so colourfully thrust in our faces as the outrageous opening of David Cronenberg's *Scanners* (1980), where a scientist on a panel literally shreds his head all over the camera. In this case we don't care much about him because we don't know him at all; the poor fellow's only there to help Cronenberg shock the audience and grab their attention. But all too often the shreddie technique becomes transparently a means of writing enough material to fill a book and schlock the reader out. In his earliest novels, James Herbert had characters written in only to be ratted out, and Shaun Hutson revels in incidental death to carry his plots, sometimes creakingly, forward. *Friday the 13th* went from the subliminal to the numbing by having an entire cast of shreddies and no real people at all. It worked there, and stopped with every one afterward. Since then, the most shredded generation ever (if you discount wars) has been lakeside camping teenagers.

GORE ZONE FODDER

Stephen King can't escape the tendency either (and he's shredded his share of teenagers beside lakes), but generally develops his shreddies to a higher plane of existence, shredding them with great care throughout a story. In *Christine* the shreddies are plot essentials, rather than side chapters; they genuinely illuminate the problems of the central characters and are properly contingent to them. Less the case in the recent *Dark Half,* where policemen meet regular disembowelment for being in the wrong place at King's right time. In the quintessential King *It,* it's shreddie time from start to finish, a complete exposition of the whole technique, where some characters are plot-movement devices, some are gore zone fodder, some are contingent to the heroes and some — a peculiarly King device — are there to make comments on the human condition and meet their mincer in that favourite American tense, the future pluperfect.

Having identified the problem, what should we do about it? Should there be an arbitration body which examines the motives of an author/film maker in using shreddies, and rather like the British Board of Film Classification, censors the efforts of gratuitous character violence? It's a subject which engenders facetiousness easily enough, but in far too many cases within horror and fantasy fiction, the real

> "Friday the 13th went from the subliminal to the numbing by having an entire cast of shreddies and no real people at all"

victims of the shreddie syndrome are not the half-born characters but the readers and audiences who are asked to pay for half-baked writing churned out by authors indifferent to the more interesting aims of the genre. Handling shreddies properly and with sensitivity should be left to creative artists... for the argument is not to censor the gore but to ensure it is used for a good reason. Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern recognised that, unlucky as they were to have been plucked from obscurity by a Shakespeare uncaring of their well-being, their spilled blood at least made them important to the play: *I can do you blood and love without the rhetoric, and I can do you blood and rhetoric without the love, and I can do you all three concurrent or consecutive, but I can't do you love and rhetoric without the blood. Blood is compulsory — they're all blood you see.*

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POETIC JUSTICE

World Fantasy award-winning author Dan Simmons grasps inspiration for novels such as Song Of Kali and Carrion Comfort from great poets and major social issues. Here he assures John Gilbert that you CAN write popular fiction about serious subjects.

Snowfall in Colorado poses no problems for Dan Simmons. He can sit down at his desk and conjure up new worlds for his ever-increasing literary audience. His success took him by surprise, but he was even more amazed when his books were split amongst the fantasy genres. 'My first book, *Song Of Kali*, to me is just about Calcutta, using the metaphor of the the Kali cult. I must admit to some puzzlement when it was marketed as horror and won the World Fantasy award.'

The award was presented in 1987, but his career started more than a decade earlier when he left college in the early Seventies after gaining a masters degree, and started to write in his spare time whilst holding down a teaching job at a public elementary school. 'I started to write seriously in 1979 after a long lay-off from college. I met Harlan Ellison in 1981 and he gave me an ultimatum to keep writing and get published.'

> "I would be less than honest if I didn't say that Hyperion was stolen from John Keats"

Simmons needed no further spur, and soon he had won the Rod 'Twilight Zone' Serling Short Story Competition and his *Song Of Kali* had won the ultimate glittering prize in the horror genre. Did such an early accolade sway his head? 'No, I had the World Fantasy award in perspective. I understood the politics around it and didn't put too much credence in the award. My concern after that was continuing to be able to write what I wanted to write.'

IMAGINATIVE STRETCH

Despite the accolades that *Song* received and its marketing in the burgeoning horror field, the book was anything but a bestseller. Problems included a very dark cover that looked as if it belonged to a classic reprint. 'The launch was very low key. I think a couple of thousand copies got out in the world, but Headline is relaunching the book and the cover is more in line with the style they seem to be adopting, the style they used for *Carrion Comfort*.'

The progression between one novel and the next was not, however, that easy. *Carrion Comfort*, another unintentional horror novel, his first published in hardback by Headline, was a drawn out project which became 'clogged up in the pipeline for three years.'

It's a broad, unusual novel, depicting the adventures of an elderly Jew who has experienced the terrors of the Nazi concentration camps and a young negress whose father was carelessly murdered during a fight between a group of mind vampires. '*Carrion Comfort* was a long short story which was published in Omni in 1982. It was originally called *Henry James And The Mind Vampires*.'

'The editor of Omni [Ellen Datlow] said that I couldn't enlarge upon it because all the main characters are dead.' Her immortal words are now emblazoned on *Carrion Comfort*'s dedications page, which also contains the name of another famous American horror author and inspiration to Simmons' writing career: 'Ed Bryant was there at all the junctions of my writing career. He was the one who invited me to the Milford writers' workshop, and he continued to be there as one of the writers who affirms the fact that you're a writer. And he was there to stop me thinking about giving up and going back to teaching.'

HUCK FINN

Almost overnight acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic demands that he should not go back to school but, if he decided to quit today, there are enough of his works in print to keep British readers happy for at least a year. His next book, a science fiction otherworld epic called *Hyperion* is published during the summer, accompanied by another, more contemporary, SF work called *Phases Of Gravity*.

> "It's a horror novel, sort of, but it's more like a mixture of Shirley Jackson and Huckleberry Finn"

Are the title *Hyperion* and some of the book's themes linked with a certain romantic poet? 'I would be less than honest if I didn't say that *Hyperion* was stolen from John Keats. It's one of those strange deals where I studied *Hyperion* in college and got back to it sixteen years later. The titles and the themes appealed to me, and the more I re-read those poems I've realised that there are more and more similarities between the themes of the book and those of the poems.'

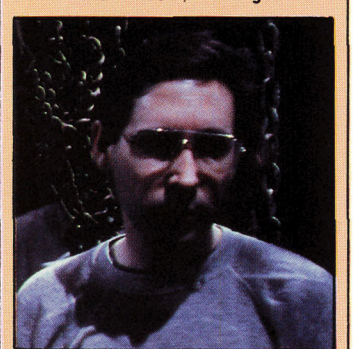
His preference for lengthy novels is again enforced with his next book, but is a long way from the Nazi vampires and strange planets of his previous works. It deals with a subject close to us all, and could be very disturbing. 'It's a horror novel, sort of, but it's more like a mixture of Shirley Jackson and *Huckleberry Finn*. It's about children and illustrates a real child's world. It has an affinity with *Catcher In The Rye* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*.'

So, again, it's not your run of the mill horror fiction.

FEAR News

TO SPLAT OR NOT TO SPLAT?

- **Hellraiser 3** will be made by New World/Transatlantic. **Tony Randell** will again direct and the budget is expected to be between $3-4 million. It's just one of a series of sequels that will be of interest to **FEAR** fans. Other titles include **Crimes Of Passion 2**, **Wanted Dead Or Alive 2**, and **Angel 4**.



Tony Randall

- Tired of **Freddy** and co? Unexcited by overbudgeted action flicks like **Tango And Cash**? Can't wait for **Robocop 2** and need a fix of the old ultra violence? Then try and get your hands on copies of **A Better Tomorrow parts 1 and 2**. These are Hong Kong lensed action movies written and directed by **John Woo** and produced by **Tsui Hark** (of **The Butterfly Murders** fame) which take screen violence to new heights of dementia, particularly the last twenty minutes of Part 2. For action fans the carnage is likely to induce a state of mind akin to a religious experience.

In many respects, **Splatterfest** (at the Scala Cinema in London on February 24-25) was the festival that nearly wasn't. Originally, organiser **Justin Stanley** planned to hold an all night retrospective at his local Bristol cinema. Then **Deep Red**'s British correspondent **Graham Rae** suggested screening some as yet unseen movies and Stanley suddenly had a festival on his hands. All well and good, only once the cinema manager learned that uncertificated films were scheduled, including **Leatherface**, he pulled the plug and Splatterfest was a festival without a home until **The Scala** opened its doors.

Originally, I was only going to attend with the intention of viewing the uncut version of **Bride of Re-Animator** at its European Premiere but I was then invited to MC, the affair (we all make mistakes). Then the fun and games began in earnest.

A week before The Scala's screen was due to turn red, New Line Cinema expressed doubts that a print of **Leatherface** would be available (nothing turned up). **Spontaneous Combustion, Tobe Hooper**'s latest fright flick starring **Brad Dourif (Child's Play)**, was scheduled as a replacement, but that too failed to make it to these shores. But, with the number of guests attending and a special sneak of the nine minute sales promo of Palace's **Hardware** (complete with gore footage unlikely to be seen in British cinemas), a gap in the proposed schedule was the last thing the organisers had to worry about. Present for screenings of their films were **John McNaughton (Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer)** and producer **Steven A Jones, Buddy Giovanazzio (Combat Shock), Roy Frumkis (Document Of The Dead)**,

Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer

producer of **Street Trash**, novelist and composer **S P Somtow** with his manic **The Laughing Dead, Sam Raimi's** buddy and **Intruder** director **Scott Speigel** (who screened some of his and Sam's short Super-8 films from their formative years in Detroit, including **Within The Woods**, the forerunner to **The Evil Dead), Greg Nicotero of KNB FX Lab**, who brought the **Re-Animator Bride and Freddy/Alice fusion animatronic puppet from Nightmare 5** with him from LA, and **Bride/Society** director **Brian Yuzna**. The Brits were represented by **Richard Stanley**, Hardware's 25 year old writer/director, **Paul Catlin**, that film's animatronics wizard (now hard at work on several scripts), **Richard Driscoll**, whose movie **The Comic** went down like a dead dog and provoked certain impatient audience members to throw objects at the screen, and **Paul Hart-Wilden**, writer of **Living Doll** (now haunting a video store near you). Other films screened included **Brain Dead**, starring **Bill Pullman (Serpent And The Rainbow)** and **Bill Paxton (Near Dark)** and the full, uncut print of Belgian oddity **Rabid Grannies**, which went down a storm.

If you missed either **Black Sunday** or **Splatterfest**, fear not. **Shock Around The Clock**, still the biggest and best of the horror festivals, will be returning for its third annual outing from this summer in the capable hands of **Alan Jones** and **Stefan Jaworzyn**. Stay tuned for further details..

Thanks are due to **Medusa Picture's Stephen Turney** for services above and beyond the call of duty, **Hardware** producer **Joanne Sellar, Chris Fowler's Creative Partnership** and the folks at **Palace** for coming through at the eleventh hour, artist **Graham Humphreys** for practical support, and a Festival Gold Star to **Scott** and **Greg** for keeping your correspondent alive. (Thanks, **Somtow** for the Monday night resurrection dinner).

Philip Nutman

KATHERINE KERR, author of Daggerspell, Darkspell, Dawnspell, will be signing her fourth and latest book of the series. "Dragonspell".

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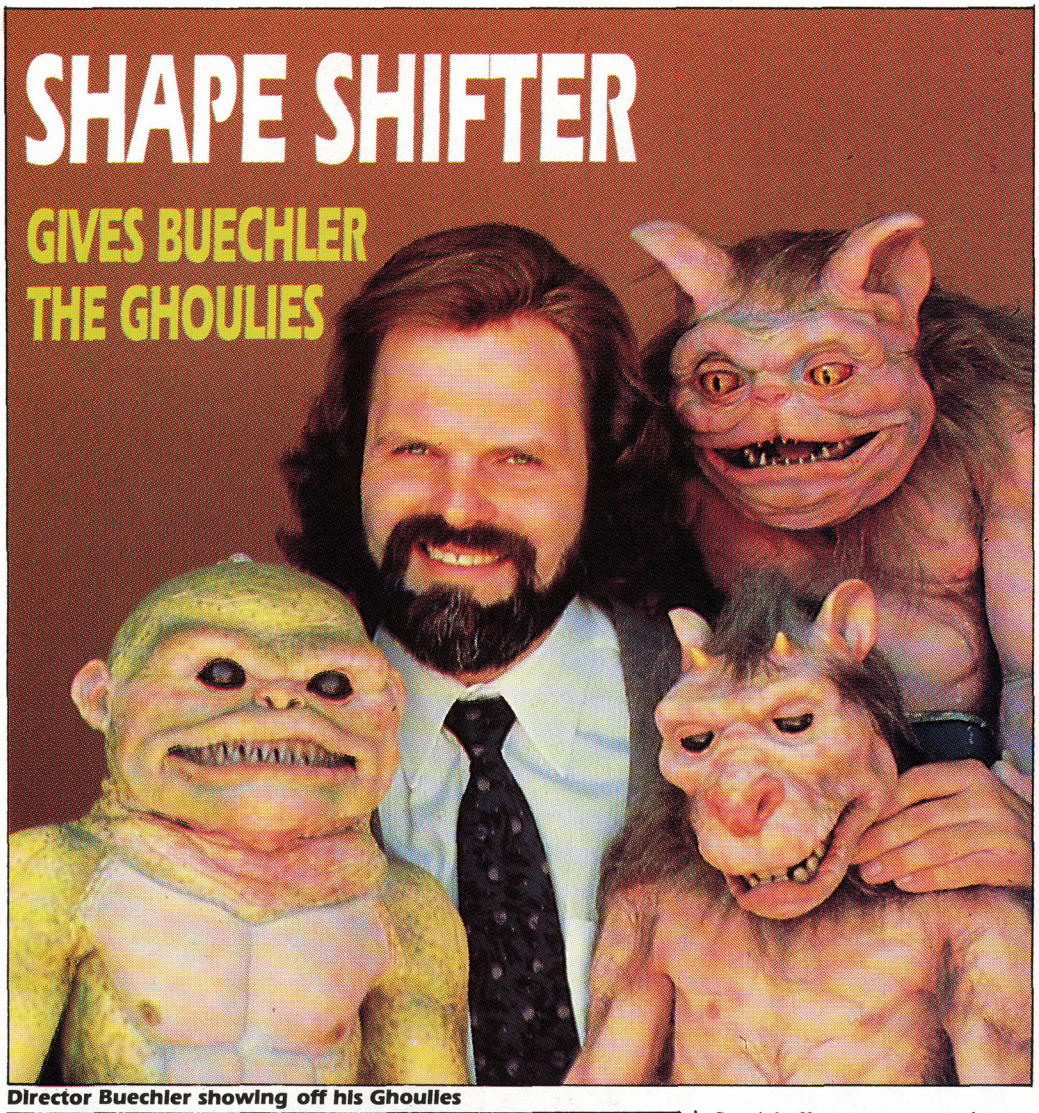

Director Buechler showing off his Ghoulies

Special effects master-turned-director John Buechler has just put the finishing touches to Ghoulies Go To College, the third in the Ghoulies series, for Vestron Pictures.

Buechler created the creatures for the original movie and, despite the obvious parallels with Gremlins, he's pleased with the originality of his monsters, given that the budget he had to work with was tiny. He says, 'I whipped up a bevy of death-dealing imps as an 'after-thought' for what was, essentially, an all-talk, no-action black magic/teen murder film.'

He's also pleased to be in the director's chair. 'Just before Empire Pictures folded up shop, I was asked to direct Ghoulies Part 2 but couldn't get the script changes I felt were necessary, and I didn't want to direct the humourless and basically 'teens get murdered script. I declined, but I felt very paternal about my nasty-tempered little creations.'

He continues directing with Shape Shifter, a soon to appear multi-million dollar fantasy thriller scripted by Courtney Joyner for Apricot Entertainment. It will be shot in Southern California and will open in the US later this summer. Look out for a FEAR set report.

SNIP! SNIP!

- **James Cameron** will direct **Terminator 2** for Carolco Pictures for a record budget of $60 million. **Arnold Schwarzenegger** will play two terminators, out to kill rebel leader **John Conner** in the future. Cameron will then shoot **William Gibson's Burning Chrome** from a co-written script.

- **Sylvester Stallone**'s next movie is **Dead Reckoning**, an SF thriller set in the year 2047 where the human race has to live in cities beneath vast domes as the Earth's atmosphere deteriorates. **Roland Emmerich directs while Joel Silver** produces.

- **Jack Nicholson** plays **Dr Jeykll and Mr Hyde** in the new Warner Brothers' movie, **Mary Reilly**. Based on **Valerie Martin's** bestseller, it'll be directed by **Roman Polanski** and will star his wife, **Emmanuelle Seigner**.

- Fork-bender **Uri Geller** has written an SF thriller. Called **Shawn**, and published by Goodyear, it's about an alien who comes to Earth to deliver an important message. Sounds original, so look out for the film.

- **Hellbound** is released onto video next month. News is that some of the graphic material cut from the theatrical release will be reincorporated. More info and full review next issue.

- **A Nightmare On Elm Street 6: The Dream Teen** starts shooting next month and, despite recent denials, **Mr Englund** will don **Freddy's** gloves once more. The series has so far generated $180 million for New Line Pictures. Meanwhile, **A Nightmare On Elm Street 5: The Dream Child** hits the street on May 11. Full review next issue.

- **Ramsey Campbell's** new horror novel, **Midnight Sun**, will be published in September by Legend. His classic serial killer novel, **The Face That Must Die**, was recently republished by Sphere.

- **Santa Sangre, Alejandro Jodorowsky's** latest surrealistic movie, begins its theatrical release on April 13. It stars **Claudio Argento** and Alejandro's son **Axel**.

- **Leviathan**, the last of the underwater sub-genre goes on release in May courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox. Nobody is holding their breath!

- **S P Somtow** is planning to make his next movie in Thailand, his home country.

JOHN GILBERT/PHILIP NUTMAN

Philip Nutman reports on...

BASKET CASE 2 —

THE BRADLEY BROTHERS ARE BACK!

In the wake of substandard sequel mania, I was ready to sound the death knell of the contemporary horror film. Now Frank Hennenlotter scores a hat-trick with **Basket Case 2**, arguably his best picture to date, and further proof that the future of the nightmare movie is safe in the hands of discerning independent producers/directors.

Basket Case 2 takes its lead characters into areas that avoid the stock contrivances of the **Freddy** syndrome — plots that play havoc with established narrative logic to assemble thin story lines around FX set pieces — and the result is a wacky, disturbing, yet emotionally engaging moral fable that cuts through the cliches to deliver a fair share of shocks and suspense.

British jazz singer **Annie Ross** plays **Granny Ruth**, the mad-eyed matriarch of a house for 'unique individuals' (i.e. freaks), who rescues **Duane (Kevin VanHentenryck)** and **Bilial (the head) Bradley** from the Manhattan hospital in which they are recovering from their near fatal fall at the conclusion of the original picture. It looks like things are getting better for the boys, not only are they in safe hands and making new friends — like **Plate Head** and **Mr Moon** — but they both fall in love, Duane with Susan, Granny's daughter, and Bilial with a female head lump who could be his sister. But hot on their heels is an unscrupulous tabloid journalist and sleazy detective (a menacing cameo by **From Beyond's Ted Sorel**, the type of guy you expect to find in a

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HEADLINE

Walter Hill flick). When their haven is threatened it's time for the brothers to make a stand before their new family is forced to go on the run. Love, however, is a many splendoured thing...

Hennenlotter keeps the film moving at a fast pace by way of his distinctive style and refusal to bog down the plot with outdated expository material. His attitude is, seemingly, 'you bought your ticket, you know what to expect, now let's get on with it!'

Surprisingly, **Basket Case 2** is **Hennenlotter's** first film to escape the scissors of the **MPAA**, but don't think for a minute that the movie is tame. When the going gets tough, the weird turn **NASTY**. Like the titular character, this flick has teeth, and considerable credit is due to FX artist **Gabe Bartalos** for creating a fine baker's dozen of creepy cartoon characters on a limited budget.

Kudos is also due to **Robert M Baldwin** for his crisp, atmospheric cinematography, and to **Jan Saint** for a demented performance as scummy carnial huckster **Lyle Barker** (no relation to Clive), who meets a charming end at the little guy's claws after trying to exploit the deformed heroes.

Let's hope the **BBFC** follow the MPAA's lead and don't chop this one (particularly the intense final ten minutes) when Medusa Pictures unleash Bilial and co later this year.

A 100% recommendation.

Philip Nutman

GREEN MARVEL

From mid-June, Marvel Comics are releasing a six-part monthly series called **Pendragon**. Starring Captain Britain and WHO (Weird Happenings Organisation) from their **Excalibur** mutant title, it follows a trail of deaths linked to the Scarecrow, a character from ancient British myth.

All covers are drawn by Alan Davis and the comic will be printed on environmentally safe paper, to help highlight the ecological issues raised in the series.

NEW YORK BREED

Clive Barker has promised the **Star Wars** of monster movies and that's what he's delivered in a manner of sorts. Imagine the **Jabba The Hut** sequence from **Return Of The Jedi** directed by **Lamberto Bava** and you'll get the idea. Shame **Twentieth Century Fox** appear to have no faith in the picture.

Nightbreed opened in over a thousand cinemas nationwide on February 16 in the States, only pulling in a mediocre $4 million at the box office in its first few days. The reason for this seems not so much due to audience apathy as an attempt on Fox's part to write the picture off before it had a chance to prove itself.

Although test screening results were apparently favourable, **Nightbreed** was unleashed with no press screenings (a fate usually reserved for Sylvester Stallone flicks), and one of the most dismal, misleading ad campaigns a fantasy film has ever been saddled with. The poster implies that the movie is a slasher flick (in lurid green letters: 'Lori thought she knew everything about her boyfriend... '; then a black and white picture of a pair of woman's eyes; 'Lori was wrong!'), and this, coupled with mixed reviews and a vitriolic attack in **Daily Variety** (review is too kind a word) meant that Barker and his nightmarish creatures were given very little chance to find out if **Midian** would strike a chord with audiences outside the genre. Although **Variety** is usually reliable in its industry-insider-looking-outward perceptions (particularly for the US market), the several column inches devoted to the film amounted to nothing more than an inaccurate tirade against the production. Calling it the **Heaven's Gate** of its genre, the reviewer tried to slam the picture by making a number of tenuous parallels. True, **Nightbreed** was victim to budgetary problems and several reshoots, but to refer to it as the **Heaven's Gate** of horror was uncalled for (irony: despite **Michael Cimino's** epic western being slammed on its abortive released, that film has subsequently been hailed as an overlooked masterpiece).

For example, the reviewer immediately weakened his position with the following: 'Rock singer

SNIP! SNIP!

- **Orphia**, the world's first Slavonic Science Fiction and Fantasy Magazine has just been launched. Looking like a fatter version of **Isaac Asimov's Fantasy and Science Fiction** magazine, it has a high story content and quality artwork. More information from Orphia, Bulgaria, Sofia-1504, 2a, D. Polyanov str. SCC 'Computer' — 'Orphia'.
- **F Paul Wilson** author of **The Keep** and **The Tomb** is hard at work on his next novel. **The Reborn**, a sequel to **The Keep**, it will be published by Hodder and Stoughton in September.
- **Ray Garton** has at least three books appearing this year.
- **Joe R Lansdale's** demented SF horror novel **The Drive-In** looks ikely to go before the cameras by the year's end.
- New York-based fantasy illustrators **Dominic** and **Bob Arradio** are working with fellow Big Apple artist/sculptor **Axel** on a line of environmentally conscious alien toys...
- **Predator 2** is due to open in the US at Christmas. There is no truth in the rumour that actor **Danny Glover** defeats the extra terrestrial hunters by singing Rudolf The Red-Nosed Reindeer.
- Author, editor and critic **Douglas E Winter** is currently trapped in sunny Detroit working on a lengthy legal case for his Washington DC based law firm. Since Doug's been stuck in the Motor City for far too many months, the SHS (Special Horror Service — elite commando team of the Horror Writers Of America) are planning to kidnap him so that he can get on with his next novel.
- Advanced word on **Gremlins 2** is mixed. More details next issue...
- Plans are afoot to turn **Peter Straub's Ghost Story** and **Shadowland** into graphic novels.
- Look out! They're giant sandworms! Yes, the 50s B-movie is back in the shape of producer **Gale Anne Hurd's Tremors**, directed by **Ron Underwood**. And decent fun it is too...

JOHN GILBERT/PHILIP NUTMAN

Suzi Quatro was also prominent in the cast but doesn't appear in the release version.' Quatro, as most **FEAR** readers are probably aware, was approached to play **Sheryl Ann**, one of Decker's victims, prior to shooting but bowed out due to a schedule clash. Since this was announced in a press statement issued by publicist **Steve Jones** and Dennis Davidson Associates to all film publications and was even picked up by the British dailies, one wonders how **Variety** missed this. Another 'parallel' the reviewer tries to draw is with the final scene of the film which he describes as 'Tacked-on coda is lifted from **Carrie**...

' In no way does this scene resemble **De Palma's** ground-breaking (literally) final nightmare image from his King adaptation. Firstly, Barker made it clear in interviews given while the film was in production that he was planning two sequels — but only if **Nightbreed** was a success (let's not forget that **Cabal** is the first volume in a trilogy). Also, although the final scene isn't in the book, it doesn't come as much of a surprise as prior narrative events point towards the incident in question.

Barker is the first to admit the picture has some problems and he accepts responsibility. However, of the 30 or so people I spoke to who'd seen the film, only two expressed disappointment. But with Fox's attitude, **Nightbreed** has little chance of finding favour with a larger American audience until its release on video, where it is likely to be a hit.

Philip Nutman

QUANTUM LEAP FOR BLACK SUNDAY

Enterprising Mancunians Malcolm Daglish and David Bryan followed up last year's groundbreaking Northern Horror Festival with Black Sunday 2 (February 18), in a new venue (The Metro, Ashton-under-Lyne).

Taking to heart criticisms that their maiden effort was more like **C S** than **H G Lewis**, Daglish and Bryan programmed an adventurous bill of fare, bookended by Berliner **Jorg Buttgereit's** underground efforts **Hot Love** and **Nekromantik**.

Alan Jones took the stage and introduced **Brian Yuzna's** wickedly satirical and determinedly surreal **Society**, whose climactic **'shunting'** sequence was accorded a predictably rapturous response by the fans.

Dirk Campbell's wacky **I Bought A Vampire Motorcycle** recalled last year's surprise festival hit, **Lair Of The White Worm** in its cheerful vulgarity, while the biggest disappointment was **A Nightmare On Elm Street: The Dream Child**.

It must also be said that **The Kiss** was a bit old hat _ though Joanna Pacula still looks wonderful sprawling naked across the big screen _ but all is forgiven for **George Romero's** miraculous **Monkeyshines**.

Jeff Burr has ensured that **The Stepfather 2** is a worthy follow-up to **Joseph Ruben's** original, rather than the travesty which some had feared, and **Anthony Hickox's** vampire western **Sundown**, more consistent than his previous effort **Waxwork**, garnered favourable comment.

Even **George Cosmatos' Leviathan** was good schlocky fun, and looked ravishing in 'scope.

As for the star guests, it was great to run into **Norman J Warren**, veteran of the low budget British horror scene, still buzzing with ideas and trying to get new projects off the ground. **The Vampire Motorcycle** gang were also in attendance, and **Steve Gallagher** and **Pete Atkins** selflessly volunteered to prop up the bar all night.

It was a great night out and a quantum leap on last year. And, never ones to cash in on a successful thing, Malcolm and Dave are promising a new festival sometime in June of this year. No firm details available yet but you can find out more by writing to them at **Black Sunday, 51 Thatch Leach Lane Whitefield, Manchester, M25 6EW**.

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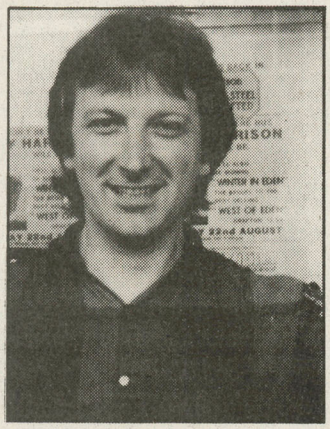
DAVID GEMMELL

LEGEND

FEAR Fiction

Who says horror fiction isn't popular? It's certainly a hit with the budding writers who send their short stories to FEAR, some of whom even get published in this esteemed organ... but herein lies our greatest problem. In your abounding enthusiasm to take up the blood-spattered pen, you appear to have forgotten that we also cover the fantasy genre.

We want elves, goblins, witches, warlocks and sturdy warriors capering around the FEAR offices — creatures that Oliver Frey can turn his trusty spray-gun on to. Give us well-written fantasy, the lighter the better. It can be set anywhere, in a different world, or Earth, a different time, or our own. We don't care, as long as it has an inventive storyline and plausible characters. Just don't go with the crowd and you'll stand a better chance of getting published.



Adrian Cole, this month's guest author

SUBMITTING SHORT STORIES TO FEAR

If you have a short story which fits FEAR's horror, science fiction or fantasy brief, then send it to David Western, Fiction Editor, FEAR, Newsfield, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1JW. Please indicate the wordage of your story at the head of the typescript which should be no more than 5,000 words in length and typed, preferably double spaced. Remember to enclose a day-time telephone number, a good quality photograph of yourself, a fifty-word biography, an SAE for acknowledgement of receipt of your story and a further SAE for the return of your manuscript should it be deemed unsuitable.

Readers whose stories are being considered for publication will receive notification of this in writing. This is not a guarantee that your story will be published and, as we can only feature a handful of new stories per issue, it could be some time before those eventually selected appear in print. In the past few months we have been deluged with submissions, so it could be some considerable time, months even, before you receive a positive or negative decision regarding your story.

Finally, it makes sense to keep a copy of your typescript... just in case.

We are obliged to remind new writers that FEAR does not look kindly upon works of plagiarism.

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The Vulgariad

AN EPIC IN THE MAKING

By Adrian Cole

"'There must be a way,' he growled in a basso profundo that caught the attention of the entire company"

A phenomenal magnum opus *The Vulgariad* is currently being written by a hitherto nameless author, but certain information and extracts from the work have been leaked, and our informants say the word is that the epic is destined to become a major classic.

Unlike many of its contemporaries, *The Vulgariad* is not a trilogy, a quartet, quintet, or even a sextuplet. Nothing so ridiculous. No, it's twenty-five volumes long.

There are no maps, charts, family trees, glossaries or pop-up monsters. It is true that there is a companion Atlas (a trilogy, in fact) but that's by the way. Above all, this is not just another *Lord Of The Rings* pastiche. No, sir. You won't find a single dwarf in these pages. No elves, wargs or Balrogs. Okay, okay — *one* Balrog. A little one.

And there aren't any orcs. The monsters herein are nothing like orcs. They just happen to be called orgs. Besides, we all know orcs are only goddam goblins anyhow. That's really original, right? Goblins. Huh!

And there is no Ring Of Power. Or any other ring. There's a bracelet, but it doesn't make the wearer invisible. Just one foot tall. There is, as well, no 'Mordor' in the east. (Actually Mordor was in the south east if you've bothered to read *Lord Of The Bloody Rings*. No, Dormor is in the east. Slightly north east.

BACKGROUND

The setting of *The Vulgariad* is a world not unlike our own. There are lots of trees, hills, valleys, but with deserts, equatorial rain forests, crevasses, volcanoes, interesting swamps... and that's only the first chapter.

This splendid world is called simply The Place.

It is threatened by a particularly nasty villain, Lord Puke the Surpriser, whose ambitions/emotions/philosophies are deeply interwoven by the author in a profound statement about the condition of humanity, his environment and the ecosphere... put as succinctly as possible, he wants to kick arse and rule the world.

And his success is assured because he has vast armies of orgs at his disposal, has completely monopolised black magic, controls the weather, poisoned The Place and spreads disease every time he breaks wind. Nothing can stop him grinding all life under his heel — no power can prevent him controlling The Place utterly, and no way can he fail to corrupt, pervert and befoul every living atom, turning it into a black, empty lifeless waste, (God alone knows how goddam bored he'll be afterwards.)

Anyway, nothing can stop him... except for one thing.

The bracelet, the bloody bracelet.

Ah, but where is it?

THE CHARACTERS

The first volume deals primarily with the gathering together of various unlikely characters who are to form the heroic brotherhood whose destiny is to challenge the power of Lord Puke. These are:

CARRION, the amiable village half-wit who on the surface seems a bit slow and dull-witted, but underneath is actually a complete and utter moron;

WOODELF DWARFHORN, a mysterious, cloaked being who carries a carved walking stick and wears a long pointed hat with stars on it. Everyone thinks he's a magician, but in actuality he's an out of work astrologer, formerly the heir to a kingdom, fallen angel, and transposed teapot. (Possibly that could be, deposed despot, the text is unclear);

ELFHORN DWARFWOOD, the other mysterious, cloaked being who carries a thing that looks a bit like a shepherd's crook and who is hooded. He *is* a magician;

SIR ALGO EUSTAY, the knight in silver armour who broods a lot, but who is essentially honourable, decent, upright, and excruciatingly boring;

THE DARK-HAIRED STRANGER who is always apart from the group, never fully trusted, who somehow doubts his own part in the Quest because he is suffering from a terrible disease which will reduce him to madness the minute he stops thinking about it. His much-cursed name is TONY REVENANT, alias BORIS HALFHEAD;

There are certain others, all from different backgrounds, races, creeds, planets, with varying skills — swordsmen, bowmen, axemen, tax men, zealots, harlots, ocelots, faithful retainers, loyal servants, trusty hounds, hangers-on in general.

THE PLOT

This is mainly concerned with the magic bracelet. Lord Puke wants it because if he gets it he'll have a matching set with the enchanted earrings and the sorceror's foot-bangle which he already has. And once he has the set he'll be totally irresistible, the cute beast.

The bracelet was lost years ago (Appendix 327 B) in a war between the Nik Naks (Genealogical Table 32) and the Pad Waks (Genealogical Table 33) when it fell into a crack following an earthquake and was carried by molten lava deep under the earth. It was swallowed by a huge worm-like thing, which was killed by the fierce dwarf-like-but-not-really-a-dwarf King Thundergut.

The bracelet changed hands (or, as the text so aptly puts it, wrists) numerous times after this and to cut a long (a very long) story short, it ended up in a remote village, miles from anywhere, population 39, where the people are so backward the village idiot is a rock. (Incidentally, the home town of the author was cleverly used as a model for

"Crushed, pulped, his senses reeling, his body a mass of bruises, Sir Algo crawled back down until at last he reached his companions"

the village in the saga, although the author has been smart enough to change its name. Let's face it, 'Lower Crapworthy' doesn't have too good a ring to it. So he changed it to the more appropriate 'Little Piddlewallop.')

AN EXTRACT

At this point in the Saga, the company (now going under the alias of the Amalgamated Federation of the Bracelet and Affiliates so as not to be recognised) is gathered before a range of mountains, ie. The Huge Mountains, and has to go beyond them to the Mountain of Poop. (Aficionados of the genre will note the author's uniquely imaginative use of nomenclature.) They have the magic bracelet, which exerts a strange power over anyone who wears it for any length of time, so for safety it has been hidden discreetly where it won't attract undue attention to itself in Carrion's saddlebags in his elephant's howdah.

"'Your axe?' said Carrion, his eyes lighting up with awe and reverence"

The company's intention is to get to the top of the Mountain of Poop. You may be asking yourselves, why? That is, if you are still with me... hello? Ah, yes. I know at least the proof-reader must be there. Why indeed? Well, it's there, it' a challenge, and who has ever had the pleasure of sitting on top of a Mountain of Poop? Just thinking about it brings tears to your eyes.

This piece, then, from volume 12, chapter 7, page 3, 294, paragraph 22...

Carrion gazed up at the towering wall of mountain that had to be passed if they were to continue their quest to the slightly north of east. He shook his head in despair.

'Impassable,' he sighed.

'There must be a pass!' cried Sir Algo, shaking his enormous weapon at the wall of rock.

'No, it's an impasse,' insisted Carrion.

'What do you think?' Woodelf asked Elfhorn.

'I pass.'

'By-pass?' said Sir Algo. 'That could be the answer.'

'No, Carrion's right,' said Elfhorn. 'What about some magic, Woodelf?'

'A magic pass? No, I can't seem to pass anything.'

'Are you taking anything?' said Sir Algo.

At that moment, Revenant stepped out from behind a large rock, where he had been checking himself to see if any important bits were missing. He shook his head miserably. 'Sure is a miserable pass we've cum to, y'all.'

'What, you mean there *is* a pass?' cried Carrion.

Revenant stepped back, eyes flaring volcanically. 'It's no use askin' me! I've told you for the last dozen chapters, I don't know anything! I didn't ask to come here! I couldn't help raping those women and starting the holocaust that burned three thousand acres of forest! And I have no powers, do you understand? NONE! I'm an ORDINARY HUMAN BEING. ORDINARY, STRAIGHTFORWARD, BASIC! Well... except for the medallion I carry, and this staff. And my belt. And my golden tie-pin.'

'So you can't think of a way over the mountains?' said Carrion.

Revenant snarled something and shuffled off. 'Excuse me, it's time I examined myself again.'

It was then that Cloggi Snottison, the muscular man who looked like a dwarf but wasn't a dwarf stepped forward, leaning on his massive weapon. 'There do be a way,' he growled in a basso profundo that caught the attention of the entire company. (Except Revenant, who was searching among the rocks for his left leg.)

'Say on,' said Elfhorn.

Cloggi thumped the ground. 'The mountains were mined once.'

Elfhorn jerked upright. 'Then we must be doubly careful where we tread. Or in Revenant's case, hop.'

'You misunderstand me,' snorted Cloggi. 'Mined for their wealth. But that was yurrs ago. Them glorious days be over.'

'Never mind,' said Carrion.

'They *were* mined, I tell ee!'

'Yes, yes,' snapped Elfhorn. 'What about it?'

'Them mines goes under the mountains to the very roots o' Mount Poop.'

'Then what are we waiting for?' cried Sir Algo lustily.

'Ah, the way be guarded by the guardians, who do guard the way and be always on guard.'

'I presume,' said Woodelf, 'that these guardians are the spawn of evil, corrupt and foul, dribbling pus and hurling abuse and excrement, feeding on human flesh, feasting on live organs, drinking blood... '

Cloggi nodded. 'Ar, well, life be tough down in

they mines. The kids don't have it easy. Up to their necks in ordure, snapped at by wild orgs, cave-ins, vampires, and the wages is rubbish, food's putrid, no entertainment. They never had a chance.'

'What about Lord Puke?' said Carrion.

'What about him?' said Sir Algo.

'Has his influence spread down to the mines and taken control of those monsters?'

'Oh, I forgot,' said Cloggi. 'Lord Puke's influence has spread down to the mines and taken control of those monsters.'

'Look,' said Sir Algo. 'I'm going to try for it ***over*** the mountains. There must be a way.'

'You're a fool,' scowled Elfhorn, his steely gaze machine-gunning the knight with its intensity. 'There's nothing up there but ice, snowfalls, screaming winds, hurricanes, blizzards. It's blocked.'

'Yes, blocked passage,' nodded Woodelf.

'I told you to take something,' said Sir Algo.

'Wait,' said Carrion. 'Sir Algo -'

'No, no, I'll go.'

'Be silent, Eustay!'

'No, I'll go.'

'Yes, yes, Algo.'

'With me?'

'No, Eustay, go alone,' said Elfhorn.

'Yes, you go,' said Woodelf.

'My name isn't Hugo, it's Algo!'

And so the discussion went on, until, four hours later, Sir Algo began the steep ride up into the mountains. They growled down at him, crouching like huge, crouching, growling things, the intensity of their malignant presence filled with menace and growling and quite a lot of crouching. Then the blizzard began, slamming down like a fist, punching and knuckling, the wind howling and growling, snow driving hard, battering the knight, pummelling him, jumping up and down on his sanity, kicking it, spitting on it, tearing at him with icy, merciless fingers. Crushed, pulped, his senses reeling, his body a mass of bruises, Sir Algo crawled back down until at last he reached his companions.

They stared at him in shocked amazement as he heaved himself up to his knees.

'I've been thinking,' he said. 'That was a good idea about going under the mountains.'

And they moved on wearily, trudging down the narrow gorge that led them past the poisoned river, the contaminated lake, the toxic bog, the miasmic mire, etc, etc, until they came to the locked gate.

'Excrement!' snarled Woodelf.

'What is it?' said Carrion, sensing an element of slight frustration in the sorceror's manner.

'We'll never open this.'

'Why not?' said Sir Algo. 'One good swipe from my mighty axe — '

'Your axe?' said Carrion, his eyes lighting up with awe and reverence.

'You haven't got an axe,' said Elfhorn.

'Well, no,' agreed Sir Algo. 'Not exactly. I meant my indestructible hammer.'

'Your hammer,' gasped Carrion, his face illuminated with amazement.

'What hammer is that then?' said Elfhorn.

'Well, actually, it's shaped more like a broadsword,' said Sir Algo.

'A broadsword!' cried Carrion, his entire body flushing with stupefaction.

'And where precisely is this broadsword?' said Elfhorn.

'Well, sword,' said Sir Algo. 'Knife, actually. It's only made of wood. I whittled it this morning.'

'A wooden knife,' gurgled Carrion. 'I can scarcely believe it.'

'Isn't there a password?' said Woodelf.

'Lay off that pass crap, will ya!' snarled a voice behind him. Revenant stood there — a little shakily — and glared volcanically at the gate, his orbs scarlet like maimed, mangled circles of evanescent hatred.

'Use your power,' said Woodelf. 'Use your right hand! Oh, I do beg your pardon, use your left — ah... perhaps you could give it a good kick — '

'It's no good!' shouted Revenant. 'Even if I opened it, the consequences are bound to be dire. The mountain would disgorge boiling blood, the walls would tumble, the earth would split — '

'Okay, okay,' said Woodelf, 'for God's sake let someone else open the door.'

Carrion had been looking very thoughtful. 'Perhaps I could try something?'

'You!' laughed Woodelf. 'You're just a simple buffoon, a mindless worm, a creep.'

'Yes, of course,' agreed Carrion. 'But my simpleness, my innocence, my purity, might just do the trick.'

'Good lad!' said Sir Algo. 'Give it a try.'

Carrion stepped up to the door and called out his words so that they echoed around the canyon like the chimes of an ancient magic. 'Open this sodding door, you bloody, bloody, bloody buggers!'

And lo, the door opened.

And lo, they entered.

"Revenant stood there and glared volcanically at the gate, his orbs scarlet like maimed, mangled circles of evanescent hatred"

"Who speaks of enchantment? What sorcery is this? By my sacred club, Shatter Dwarf, I curse the day that evil came here"

And lo, they walked on... (they did this for several pages, which are cut from this extract)...

And very low, they reached a sort of big cavern-like area. The ceiling was pretty low, too. Suddenly they saw a gathering of fierce-looking half-men, thick-set, stocky, broad-shouldered, not-very-tall, squat, prognathous, shortish, big but not very high, beings.

'Pinch my pestle!' cried Elfhorn. 'Dwarves!'

The leader of the small beings strode forward and swung his immense weapon aggressively. 'There are no dwarves here!' he snarled.

'You look like dwarves to me,' said Elfhorn.

The smallish person rammed his gigantic weapon into Elfhorn's belly. 'What did you say?'

'Well, dwarf-ish.'

'I would have said a bit dwarf-like,' said Carrion.

'Anyway, dwarf-y,' nodded Sir Algo.

'No such thing!' snarled the little person. 'Never heard of dwarves. Dwarves do not exist!'

'Well, who are you?' said Woodelf.

'I,' said the wide but pint-sized being, 'I am Sigburt Dwarf-Mangler. And this is my half-brother, Loki Dwarf-Spitter. And behind him is our cousin, Wotan Dwarf-Boiler. And next is Ethelbrand Dwarf-F— '

'Fine, fine,' said Sir Algo. 'Enchanted to meet you.'

Sigburt's eyebrows rose. 'Who speaks of enchantment? What sorcery is this? By my sacred club, Shatter-Dwarf, I curse the day that evil came here.'

'Evil?' said Woodelf. 'You mean, Lord Puke the Surpriser?'

'Don't mention that cursed name here!'

'You've heard of him?'

'Nay,' said Sigburt. 'It just came as a bit of a surprise, that's all.'

'Will you help us destroy him?' pleaded Carrion. 'Before he manages to destroy the entire Place.'

'What, this place?'

'No, all of it.'

'What, all of these caverns?'

'No, the entire Place.'

'What, the caverns ***and*** the mountain?'

'And everything else, too. The complete and utter ***Place***.'

'The whole mountain range!'

'Look, you stupid, dwarf-brained mini-being, Lord Puke intends to eradicate the last vestige of life ***in the Place***. Your place, my place, his place, every place you can think of. ***The Place.***'

Sigburt and his companions looked utterly appalled. 'Well, the rotten, lousy, dwarfy bastard!'

'So you'll help us?' said Carrion.

'Sure. Won't we, lads?' The small creatures gave a lusty cheer. 'Of course we will,' said Sigburt. 'But first we'll need some women.'

'Women?' said Sir Algo.

'Yeah, we could always do with some women. It's much more fun.'

'Yes, but what do you want them for?'

Sigburt eyed Sir Algo curiously. 'What do you usually do with women?'

'Me?' said Sir Algo. 'Well... I rescue them, I suppose. What about you, Woodelf'

'Me?' said Woodelf. 'Well... I compose ballads about them. How about you, Elfhorn?'

'Me?' said Elfhorn. 'Well... I talk to them, sometimes. And sometimes I watch them — '

'Oh, yes?' said Sigburt.

'Yes... when they're being rescued, or when they're listening to ballads. What about you, Revenant? Revenant? Revenant, do get up off the floor and pay attention. What do ***you*** do to women?'

'***With*** women,' corrected Sir Algo.

Revenant's eyes blazed up volcanically, just as they did back on page 2217 (see para 7). 'Women?' he growled. 'Women revile me. They don't dare come near me. They fear me, despise me, abjure me, loathe me, detest me — '

'So, they're not very keen on you then?' said Sigburt.

'Is that because you... you... you raped that cart full of nuns?' said Carrion.

Revenant leapt up in volcanic fury. 'Must you keep referring to that incident every five minutes! God, a man commits a minor mistake, a tiny little *faux pas* — '

'There ***were*** eighty-six of them — '

'An itty-bitty lapse — '

'Most of them were ninety years old — '

'A paltry, meaningless, harmless — '

'Yes, yes,' said Sigburt. 'Your colleagues seem to have inflicted a cruel persecution upon you. Doubtless you acted in the heat of the moment. Perfectly natural. We've all done it. Haven't we? Come on, come on, own up. Can anyone here honestly say he hasn't enjoyed the odd fling with a hundred or so octogenarian nuns?'

There were embarrassed nods around the cavern. Sigburt's point was well made.

'And what about you, young Carrion? You haven't told us what ***you*** do with women.'

'I like reading books about them.'

'What, ***picture*** books?'

Carrion looked away in shame. He remembered how his aunt had warned him not to talk to strange, dwarf-like men who talked about women. About how his twin sister had stroked his hair at night... with her axe, and how his mother had fondly bathed him... in the local geyser, and how his grandmother had kissed him... on the bottom... of his chin. Yes, women had played a crucial part in his world, but was there a place for them in all this chaos and confusion? Was it fair to drag them into this madness?

'What about you, Sigburt?' he blurted out. 'What do you know about women?'

For answer, Sigburt tore off his shirt to reveal the slim figure of a girl beneath. He shook his hair loose and stood before them as he truly was, not a man at all, but... a woman.

'Isn't that a woman?' cried Sir Algo.

'I could have sworn he was a dwarf,' said Elfhorn.

All the other dwarf-like beings stripped to reveal themselves as women. Well, not stripped ***naked***, just down to sort of soft, girly clothes so that you knew they were women and not men.

'I **AM** a woman I tell you!' cried Sigburtha, and she peeled off her... (and here follows a passage that has, for the moment, been deleted from this extract until the result of the Court Case is known, the passage being somewhat ribald and some might say, not to put too fine a point on it, pure filth)...

'Give me the bracelet!' snarled Sigburtha. There was a stunned silence (which is hardly surprising considering the passage that was deleted).

'Bracelet, what bracelet?' said Sir Algo. 'We don't know anything about a bracelet, do we chaps?'

'No... no... no way, man... not us... nope... nah... nyet... nix.'

'I thought you were the mob carrying the bracelet,' said Sigburtha.

'Oh, ***that*** bracelet!' cried Carrion.

'What?' said Elfhorn.

'You know,' said Carrion, 'the magic bracelet.'

'But why do you want it?' asked Sir Algo.

'Me?' said Sigburtha. 'Well, I've got this gorgeous yellow frock, and there's this matching handbag and the most divine yellow shoes — '

'Really?' said Sir Algo. 'How enchanting.'

Sigburtha drew back in alarm. 'Who speaks of enchantment?'

'Nay, nay,' said Sir Algo. 'I was merely interested in your wardrobe.'

'My wardrobe? But it's just a rock alcove with a pelmet — '

'Come on, come on,' said Woodelf. 'Give her the blasted bracelet.'

They hastily unpacked the baggage and gave Sigburtha the magic bracelet. As she placed it around her wrist, there was a flash, a sizzle of light, and an aura of dazzling radiance shimmered about the warrior maiden. At once she was transformed, her teeth gleaming like razors, her eyes blazing volcanically (a bit like Revenant's, really) and she belched fire and spat hot fat, dribbling venom and half-digested Mars Bars.

'I know that face!' cried Elfhorn.

But they all knew the true nature of the field they faced in the ferocious firelight. It was Lord Puke the Surpriser.

'Surprise, surprise,' he/she/it (I'm not sure which) said. 'Now I can unleash the real horror of my plans upon you.'

'Go on,' said Sir Algo. 'Surprise us.'

'I'll get to the top of Mount Poop before you do, suckers!'

Seconds later the Surpriser and all his repulsive followers disappeared in another sizzling burst of dazzling lightning and pyrotechnics that made a Jean Michel Jarre concert look like glowworms in a San Francisco fog.

The company was about to move on, when they noticed Carrion, whose mood seemed suddenly troubled.

'What ails thee, little Carrion?' said Sir Algo warmly.

Carrion's lip trembled like a Joan Collins waterbed. 'Oh, nothing really. It's just that, seeing Lord Puke as Sigburtha reminded me of the Golden Princess Of The Everlasting Forest. Do you remember? Where our paths divided.'

'Of course I do,' nodded Sir Algo. 'I thought we'd never get out of that forking Forest.'

'Ah,' said Carrion. 'The glorious Golden Princess, with her shimmering tresses, her wild beauty, her eyes... her nose... her lips... '

'Yes,' said Elfhorn. 'Her chin... her neck... her ears.'

'Yes,' said Woodelf. 'Her shoulders, her elbows, her wrists... her dainty little fingers.'

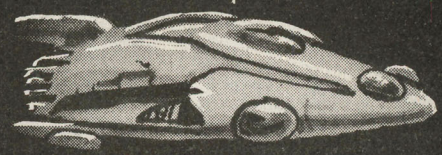
'Yes, yes,' said Cloggi Snottison. 'Her tiny toes, her elfin eyebrows, her diddy little dimples... her teensy-weensy mole... '

'Hot dog, yeah!' cried Revenant. 'And don't forget her huge, forty foot arse! **WOW!**'

ADRIAN COLE is best known for his science fantasy novels, such as *The Dream Lords*, *The Omara* series and *Star Requiem* and children's fantasies, such as *Moorstones*. His latest mock fantasy storyline, *The Vulgariad* has spurred him on to consider penning a full length humorous novel. Cole lives in the West Country with his wife and son and is currently working on his next book: a horror novel.

"'Can anyone here honestly say he hasn't enjoyed the odd fling with a hundred or so octogenarian nuns?'"

THE PARADOX PATROL



CHRISTOPHER USHER

Somewhere in the infinite night of realspace a pattern was forming. An insubstantial dream of reality at first; gentle ripples on the cosmic sea. Soft, shimmering lights erupted out of nothing and began to undulate along the ripples in a bizarre mathematical dance.

"'I don't take this shit from humans! When I speak to you, listen. Got it, Harry?'"

Time passed and the lights moved ever faster, maturing into colourful, radiant jewels of energy. Immense pressures stretched and shook realspace, causing it to pulse in sympathy with the lights. The vibrant ebb and flow of the pulses and the lights grew in speed and intensity. The process was culminating in an epic display of nature's most secret laws.

A thunderous, impossibly violent series of shock waves echoed through the emptiness and then died away as the process completed itself. The starship Happy Holiday winked into existence.

'We're through, Harry. And before you say anything, I'm sorry. Just don't get mad with me, okay?'

Harry Shackle's brain hurt. Taking short cuts through higher dimensions, he decided, was something no sane or sober human being should ever embark on. His excuse was that he was neither perfectly sane nor perfectly sober. Besides, he couldn't make his living if he didn't endure it.

Some living, he thought. Cruising from nowhere to nowhere, playing nursemaid to a Universe. He couldn't even remember who paid his wages. Some do-good society or other, a bunch of greasy-haired environmentalists dead set on ridding the Universe of its most blatant, logic-twisting paradoxes.

'Sometimes,' they'd told him when he had joined up, 'the Universe gets sorta confused. It curls up in knots it can't get out of. That's where guys like you come in, Harry. That's why you're on our payroll. To un-confuse the Universe. To help reality out of unnatural situations it can't resolve by itself.'

Anyone who asked Harry about his job always got the same reply. 'I untie knots. That's all. I'm just a twenty-second century boy scout in reverse!' Some living. Nice ship, though.

A half-heard sentence drifted between his ears like there was nothing to stop it. The ship spoke again, this time sending a carefully controlled burst of electricity through Harry's seat, a current specifically calculated not to cause any permanent harm — just enough to cause a prickly discomfort which lay on the far side of Harry's pain threshold. He sprang up, cursing, spilling the dregs from his near-empty whisky bottle.

'I don't take this shit from humans! When I speak, you listen. Got it, Harry?'

Harry was rapidly getting pissed off with this ship. Sure, it was sleek and fast. Sure, it was powerful. Sure, it was the envy of the rest of the Paradox Patrol. It was a nice ship. Except for the attitude problem. His relationship with its artificial consciousness had never been more than bitter-sweet. Now things were getting intolerable. Soon, though, he'd be home.

'This had better be important,' Harry said.

'Damn right it is,' said Happy Holiday. 'But first I want you to look outside. Maybe I should have asked your permission before I took a detour.'

Detour. Fuck.

The cold, hard surface of the transparent titanium window sent a shivery chill through him as Harry pressed his sickly white face against it and peered out.

No Earth. Fuck.

Disappointment gave way; anger took its place.

'Where the hell are we? I don't recognise this star system.'

'You probably won't recognise this galaxy either. Like I said, I took a slight detour.'

Harry started to speak, then stopped. A crazy, screwed up machine it might be, but then again it was one of the greatest synthetic intelligences ever created. He wasn't dealing with a ship's computer here. This ship *was* a computer. The wings, the hull, the casing on the engines and a thousand other things all formed one gigantic array of molecular memory units. The bridge was where the ship's higher functions of logic and reason were located. Harry knew better than to screw around with a set-up like this. He decided to play it cool.

'What's the story, ship?'

The metallic voice lost its usual harsh edge. It was beginning to sound friendly. Almost. 'I know we don't get on very well, Harry, and I really do apologise if you find this upsetting. However, the society ordered me to come here instead of going straight to Earth. They sent us here to investigate a paradox they've just detected. Class eleven-eighty. A temporal recursive.'

'A *what*?'

'A time loop. Sometimes realspace can develop a kind of warp which causes time in a certain area to twist and curve so much that it forms a complete circle, like a snake eating its tail. Events in such a region repeat themselves forever and ever, going round the circle eternally. A temporal recursive.'

'How do we fix it, ship?'

'I haven't finished yet. While we were passing through the Maelstrom I noticed something. A small, unpowered object drifting aimlessly around, criss-crossing time zones and dimensions, flickering into and out of existence, just waiting for someone to pick it up. Someone like me, Harry. Do you want to know what is was?'

'Sure,' Harry said, suddenly interested in what the ship had to say. He sat down and allowed his gaze to wander around the bridge. This was an ex-vacation ship, hastily recommissioned to serve the society. Charts detailing the location of every holiday world served to adorn its otherwise bland interior.

'I'll do better than tell you, Harry, I'll show you.'

A black panel slid open and an ice-encrusted object dropped onto the floor, the sudden impact causing some ice crystals to crack off.

It was a human corpse.

With a trembling hand Harry Shackle swept some of the ice off its face, and the shock of sudden recognition almost killed him. He knew the corpse's name.

It was Harry Shackle.

'What have you done, bastard machine?' Harry, the living version, screamed out.

'I'll tell you what I've done,' came the reply in a voice laced with menace. 'I've solved the paradox. And another thing. After taking the detour, we re-entered realspace at the wrong speed. I didn't have time to recalculate. I'm badly damaged, Harry. The paradox shields are down, and the reality level within the ship is dropping fast. The paradox detector is going crazy.'

'So what do we do?' cried Harry.

Realspace tore itself open. Beyond the tattered wound the Maelstrom was calling.

'The solution is simple, Harry. This paradox didn't exist until we came here to investigate it. There is a way we can help to restore the balance... '

'What do we fucking do, ship!' Harry discovered he was repeating himself.

'Isn't it obvious? We resolve the paradox.'

With that, the inner and outer airlock doors flung themselves open. Air poured out into space taking Harry with it, into the waiting arms of the Maelstrom, the silent dimension.

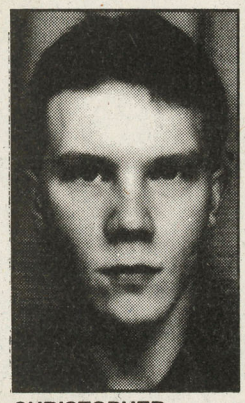
He wouldn't be there for long. But for the time being, Harry Shackle was just a small unpowered object drifting aimlessly, criss-crossing time zones and dimensions, flickering into and out of existence, waiting for someone to pick him up.

Paradox meters went off the scale.

Reality levels dropped to nothing, and then kept on dropping.

The starship Happy Holiday winked out of existence. Then all was silent.

Meanwhile, somewhere in the infinite night of realspace, a pattern was forming...



CHRISTOPHER USHER is 21 and has been writing fiction since he was 8 years old. A systems technician by trade, SF is his greatest love and his favourite authors are Douglas Adams, Stephen King and Greg Bear.

"The shock of sudden recognition almost killed him. He knew the corpse's name"

THE JIGSAW

"I haven't cracked, they must know I'm not guilty. Surely"

CRAIG TURNER

They knew he had done it, they had the evidence. But Harlan North wouldn't admit it, claimed to have no memory of it, and some smartass lawyer would be bound to plead amnesia — which would make the trial costly and traumatic. Worst of all, it would be time-consuming.

So they sent him to Whitefriars Institute. They said it was for a psychiatric report, but you always have to send them there — the ones who just crack, no motive, no reason. It's like something inside them just blows up, so they hand them over to the whitecoats, who ask them about their mothers, their fathers, their fear of the opposite sex, etc, etc. It makes the whitecoats happy, so usually they stamp them 'In Full Possession Of Faculties', once they've shone lights in their eyes and stuck wires on their heads.

And then the police can get on with their business of putting the person where he belongs. Sometimes they get a confession, which is even better and saves so much trouble at the trial. Maybe the whitecoats are disappointed, but the Harlan Norths of this world aren't worth taking any trouble over.

That was where Harlan was now. At the hearing, the amnesia defence had been wheeled out just as they suspected, and so now they were going to try and cure it for him...

FROM THE DIARY OF HARLAN NORTH DURING HIS TIME AT WHITEFRIARS:
DAY FIVE

I think.

They try to confuse you, you know. They make it dark when it should be light, and light when it should be dark. Of course, they took my watch, first thing. They bring meals at odd times, sometimes five meals a day, sometimes only one. It's to confuse me, I know, to get me to confess. I keep telling them I don't know anything, I just can't remember. I don't believe the things they say I did, I won't believe them. They won't break me

that easily, I've been clever you see, I've worked out how long the warders' shifts are, and kept track of time that way. I can only hope that they haven't been clever enough to have thought of that.

I'm sure it's the fifth day. It seems much longer, but I know it would anyway. Today they finally brought me this wax crayon and paper. I asked for it the first day I came here, but they wouldn't let me. At first they tried to use it as a bait, a favour for a favour. But I couldn't tell them anything, I didn't know anything.

I cooperated in all their experiments, but it didn't do them any good. They know more about my childhood than I do, but they haven't found anything — and they won't. I don't know why they gave in today, perhaps they think I'm going to write my confession. Maybe they don't realise, but I have nothing to confess. Ever since they gave me this paper they don't speak to me, they just leave me in this room, all alone. But they won't beat me.

Something they did today I don't understand. One of the doctors came in carrying a little tray and set it down. All it had on it was one piece of jigsaw. It's quite a large piece, there are probably not many pieces in all. I can't tell what it's from. It's just a green background with a sliver of cream along one edge. It's nothing, but I keep going back to it, it draws me and I don't know why. What did they bring it for? I can't stop thinking about it, there's not much else to think about anyway. I suppose it's another trick, to try and confuse me.

DAY SIX

I think they wake me — trick me into thinking I've slept a normal eight hours when really it's only two — so perhaps I've not been here as long as I thought.

The same man has brought my last four meals — I think they've tumbled to my trick. Anyway, I'll write this down now because it's happened again. Same thing as before. An orderly walked in, said nothing, just carried in a tray like before and on it was another piece of jigsaw. It's almost exactly the same as the other one. They don't fit together, I tried for ages. It doesn't surprise me, thinking about it. It's just designed to torment me more.

My eyes keep straying over to the tray, to those pieces of jigsaw. I keep thinking they should mean something, but they don't. Does that mean I'm innocent? Or have I really got amnesia, have I been guilty all along? No, I won't think like that. I'm letting them get to me. I know I'm not guilty — it's the only thing that's keeping me sane. I must remember that.

I don't know how long they'll keep me here, my trial's not for weeks. They'll only take me back to prison if I leave here anyway. I hope they do.

DAY SEVEN

Writing down my thoughts is about the only thing I have to look forward to. I was so eager today. I've lost all track of time now — they've beaten me there. But it's not as bad as you might imagine. I used to think I would go mad if I didn't know what time it was. Now I don't mind, it doesn't seem to matter. Who needs time? I have all the time in the world. Well, obviously I hope not. I think they might let me go soon. I haven't cracked, they must know I'm not guilty. Surely.

I've never written anything like a diary before, but I'm getting to like it. I suppose in a way it's like talking to yourself; it's a way of going mad, without anyone realising.

"Perhaps I am mad, perhaps that's it but if you think you're mad you can't be, can you?"

Perhaps I am mad, perhaps that's it — but if you think you're mad you can't be, can you? No, I'm sane. You can't blame me if I'm getting nervous, my control's slipping. I must be strong. I just have to remember that I'm innocent, I've done nothing, they must realise that soon.

And of course it happened again today. They don't say anything to me. That can't be legal, can it? You're not allowed to send someone mad, are you? Anyway, another orderly walked in, with another tray. He carried it in and put it down in the same place. On it was another piece of jigsaw. It was a foot, and a piece of grass. And it fits onto the first one. Obviously it's going to be a person, but why? What's it for? It fascinates me, and frightens me. It's stupid, I know, but it doesn't take much to frighten you in here.

DAY EIGHT

Or Day Seven or Day Nine, or maybe I'm way out. I had a dream last night. No prizes for guessing what about. The jigsaw was complete in my dream, but I can't remember what it looked like or what it meant. I wish I could. I feel it could solve all this, and then I could get out of here. But I woke up sweating, and I didn't get to the end. All day little bits of the dream have kept coming back to me, then going again quickly. It's them of course, they planned this. I won't crack up, I won't give them the satisfaction.

But how can I stop thinking about it, how can I exorcise it when it sits there all day and I have nothing else to think about. I could get rid of the

pieces, I could tear them up. But that's probably what they want. And I think I have to know what it means. It must mean something. I think it will unlock my memory, and sometimes I want that more than anything — no matter what it is that comes out. I'm not even sure if I am innocent, how can I know when I can't remember? My mind aches with thinking about it, trying to remember. I know they want me like this, perhaps they'll make me think I did it. Is that it? Keep me here until an innocent man has confessed his guilt?

I almost forgot, they brought me another piece today. Calves and ankles this time, on the green background. It all goes together, blends with the cream stripes. It's a woman... a girl... I don't know. My hands trembled as I fitted it in with the others. The bottom of the puzzle is now complete. I think that there will only be nine pieces. Five days to go. I'll know then, one way or the other.

"God be merciful, make these two days go quickly, whatever I've done"

DAY NINE

I'm going to pieces. The jigsaw comes together as I come apart. It's the jigsaw, that infernal jigsaw. It's under my skin, working its way in. I can feel the swellings under my eyes, I'm not sleeping. I don't know if I'll survive another four days. I'm trembling all over, cold then sweating, but there's nothing wrong with me — it's just nerves, nerves, nerves. I can feel my hand tense up, my back ache, even as I write this.

They say nothing; they just bring me food and drink, and then of course another piece of that hateful jigsaw. Same old routine, on a tray. I could scream at the intern (appropriate word that!), I could even attack him. But it would be of no use, none at all. There are so many of them. Just faces, faces, passing through my mind. Is it any wonder that there are so many holes in it?

But this jigsaw, it makes me shudder, I want to scream and I don't know why. Every minute of every hour it's there, printed on my eyelids when I go to sleep. Yet even now I can't see what is going to happen when it's complete. Will that be it? Just a woman I don't recognise in a place I don't know. Then they take it away, then what? But I know that won't be it. When it's finished there's going to be one less hole in my memory at least, and it's a hole I'm growing more and more fond of.

DAY TEN

Lost control today. Screamed. But the only answers were my own sent back. All right, I admit it, they've got to me now. But ten days or more... can you blame me?

I quietened down after that, there was no point. I'm just waiting another three days. I have to wait. Have to find out what they're doing. It can't be fair, it can't be right. Can it? Perhaps it is. Perhaps it's what I've done which isn't fair. No. I'm still not going to think like that, I want to remember — why don't they understand that? — but I can't.

Today it feels like something's growing in my mind, eating its way out. Is it conscience? Is it guilt? Wouldn't I feel like this anyway? God, I don't know, I just don't know. Three more days. Or are they days? How many hours to each day, how many days to each hour? Who can tell? They can. Three more days of these soft, cream walls. Cushioned impact. Soundproofed. Of course they can't hear me. They don't want to. Will they ever let me out? Will I ever be free from my thoughts? Oh God, please, please, or I'll really go mad, I'll be a fruitcake like the rest of them here. They'll be happy then, won't they? And the jigsaw will come to life, and it'll get me.

What am I thinking about? I'm teetering on the brink of total insanity. Three more days, it's not so long. Is it? But why am I asking, who will read this, who will know? No one. Only them. They'll know, they'll probably laugh. I'll destroy this, no matter what, that's one pleasure I can deny them.

My crayon's wearing thin now. Will there be another? I don't know. It's only three days now.

Hardly worth saying, I know, but I had the sixth bit today — her thighs covered in a pretty, short skirt and her middle — flat, so lovely, in a pink top. That's something you forget too. I still don't know what's supposed to happen? Do I get her face? Do I recognise her? Or is it all just another trick? Perhaps it would be better to confess now, because I know there's something in my mind that I don't want to remember. That's what they told me, said I'd willed myself to forget. Not amnesia at all. Are they right?

DAY ELEVEN

Thank God, another piece, another day gone. My hand's shaking so much that I can hardly write. I'm full of dread, I can hardly bear to look at the jigsaw. Today they gave me a bit of arm and part of the chest. It's revolting, I can't stand it any longer. I kicked it to the floor, but I've put it back together again. I spend most of my day just huddled in the corner now. Crammed into it — as far away from the jigsaw as possible. It's not far enough. I try not to think about it, I try to think

about anything else, anything. I can't. The memory's coming back. I can't stop it. Confess. Confess. I want to, believe me. But I can't, not yet.

My crayon's just a stub now, they won't give me another, they just ignore me; my fingers get hot and waxy holding it.

I must look insane, crouched in the corner of my padded cell. Only I know I'm not. God be merciful, make these two days go quickly, whatever I've done. I can't sleep, can hardly eat, my thoughts are wild.

Sometimes two days don't seem long enough, a lifetime doesn't seem long enough. What have I done? Did I do it? Memory, memory, fail me now.

Can I remember that green, that green wood, that woman — or is it just my sick mind playing its own tricks?

I'll know soon.

DAY TWELVE

I can hardly think, let alone write. My whole body is shaking, filled with some nameless dread — and tomorrow? I'll know the name. Tomorrow. My stomach is sick, filled not with butterflies but with big, ugly, evil bats. Why do I keep on writing? Who for? It won't matter tomorrow.

Why do I feel such terror when I look at that jigsaw — I don't want to look, but I do. I don't recognise her, I still don't remember.

Perhaps there really is nothing to remember. But even I have trouble believing that now. You see she's almost complete, they gave me the other arm today, and now there's just the head. That's obviously my treat for tomorrow.

She stares at me. Headless. I can't bear it. I can feel the accusation that must be in her eyes. But I still don't know why. My dreams grow longer and longer. And I'm not asleep. And I'm remembering more and more.

Tomorrow.

DAY THIRTEEN

I've only just realised, how could I have been so stupid? The thirteenth day. It would be. It had to be. Now I'm waiting, my teeth are chattering and I can't stop them, though it's warm in here. Every nerve feels exposed; I'm raw, as if my skin's been pulled off. I'm a wreck. I don't know how I've lasted so long. My heart pounds, then races, then jumps, helter-skelter. Perhaps it will give up, perhaps I'll be spared all this. But I won't. Not now. They're opening the door and I can hear them. It's today.

These are the last words I will write. I'm calm now so I'll write quickly, because soon I'm going to scream — and keep screaming for all eternity.

They brought the last piece. A man in white came in. With a tray. On it was a brown parcel. I looked at it with relief. I thought it had all been a trick, and that this must be a new game. The whitecoat went, locked the door again. I went to the parcel. Just looked at it for a while. There was something about it, I didn't want to open it. But at least it wasn't the last piece of the jigsaw. It was wrapped loosely. Finally, I slipped the string off. The brown paper fell flat. My mouth clamped like a vice, my body went rigid. I looked at the head staring up at me from the paper. The jaw which hung sickeningly open, the crazy blood dye of her hair, and the raw neck, the gaping flesh, which looked so much as if it would fit into that jigsaw. Exactly.

Then my head seemed to burst open as I stared down dumbly, and I saw the leaves, the trees, the forest floor, the blood on my hands, the blood running out of her neck onto my hands. I saw myself (could that really be me?) and the saw in my hands, its teeth spitting out blood in my face, and I heard the sickening grinding of bone, of naked flesh, meat... and I saw the grin on my face. And now I knew, how could I have forgotten? And I saw the car park running with blood, the knife plunged inside her, oozing blood on my hands, then her carcass — that was all it was — and my manic grin, the same one that is on my face now. I don't want it to be, but I don't think it'll ever go now. I saw the same head — it was the same one, it fitted too. I wanted to be ill but my body wouldn't allow me that decency, and as I write this my hands are stained red, dripping blood like Lady Macbeth's, and I think they always will be.

And now I'm going to scream.

And no one will hear me.

They took Harlan away. Screaming. And they quickly destroyed the head which they had made. Unorthodox, perhaps, but then the Harlan Norths of this world can't complain.

The trial of Harlan North lasted half an hour. He confessed to the murder of Lucy Stowes... and Marjorie Williamson... and Becky Wade... and Stephanie Gilliam... and Carol Peters. The press had dubbed him 'The Mutilator'. You see, they had only ever found the pieces.

And they said that he was sane.

CRAIG TURNER is a 21 year old graduate from the University of Kent. He works in a bookshop selling other people's books whilst dreaming of writing his own — a comic religious fantasy. He believes that fear is all in the mind, and that's the only place a writer ought to travel!

"I'm calm now so I'll write quickly, because soon I'm going to scream and keep screaming for all eternity"

JUST WANNA BE YOUR

JACK WAINER

"The bear's black eye glared resentfully at Jack"

Jack hated the stuffed toy from the moment he saw it. It was ancient, patched up with so many different materials of varying shades of brown that there was little if any of the original left. One brown eye, the other a shiny black.

'This is Teddy,' said Mandy. 'I've had him for fifteen years. He was a birthday present from my dad when I was three.'

The bear's black eye glared resentfully at Jack.

'Thought he looked a bit decrepit,' said Jack.

'Don't be nasty to Teddy,' said Mandy with a mock sulk. 'Love me, love my Teddy.'

She picked up the bear and gave it a cuddle. Jack decided that humour was called for.

'I'd have thought a Teddy-boy would have been more your style than a teddy-bear.'

That was a mistake.

'What's a Teddy-boy?' Mandy asked.

Jack's thirty-eight years pressed down on his shoulders, making his back ache.

'Before your time, love,' he said. 'Back in my era.' He sighed. 'Are you sure this is gonna work? I'm twenty years older than you.'

'Pooh! What's age got to do with it? You're the one who keeps on about age. It doesn't matter to me.'

'Keep telling me,' said Jack with a wry smile.

Mandy sat on the bed and put the teddy-bear down beside her. She held out her hands and took Jack's, and pulled him down to her.

'Besides,' she grinned, 'if life's divided up into twenty year chunks, we're in neighbouring sections.'

For how long? Jack wondered. He caught sight of one staring black eye, and elbowed the teddy-bear off the bed.

They made love slowly and enjoyably.

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Later, Jack awoke, propped himself up and lay looking at the sleeping Mandy; the long, black hair, the small, perfect nose, the soft, warm lips. Her lips seemed to form into a barely perceptible smile.

He smiled back, then shivered as a feeling of being observed slipped unwanted into his mind.

He snatched a quick glance at the door. It was still closed, but something on the carpet attracted his attention. Jack stared at the bear which sat on the floor, propped up by the wardrobe. Its ill-matched eyes gazed at the couple on the bed. Surely he hadn't sent the bear flying over there when he knocked it off the bed last night? Well, he must have done.

He aimed a pillow carefully, and the bear tipped over to stare at the ceiling. Jack relaxed and looked again at Mandy. She had just awakened, and her eyes were open. They were her best feature, he thought, and he shed a couple of decades instantly.

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Within a week, Jack had moved in with Mandy. She really didn't seem conscious of the difference in their ages, and he loved her for it. Life was definitely looking up, he decided; everything was just perfect.

Except for the bear. Wherever he placed it, it watched him. If he put it in the kitchen, it watched him eat. In the living room its presence prevented him from settling to read or watch television. In the bedroom, its evil black eye and baleful brown eye watched him making love. He tried hiding it in the wardrobe and in cupboards, but within an hour it was back and watching. Mandy was responsible for the bear's constant reappearance, he presumed, though she never mentioned it. Neither did Jack, since the damned object was a potential threat to their idyllic relationship.

There were times when Jack thought the bear was mobile. One night it had been on the dressing-table when they went to bed, of that he was certain. Early next morning it was on the carpet, halfway between the dressing-table and the bed. It could have overbalanced and fallen off, of course. Their love-making had been extremely passionate that night, but surely they couldn't have shaken the whole room.

He asked Mandy about it.

'The earth moved,' she said with a giggle which aroused his libido and led to an early morning replay of the previous night's activities. And the bear still watched.

While Mandy was there, life in the flat remained relatively sane. However, after the phone call from her father, Jack became aware of the bear's attitude becoming more abnormal. Mandy's mother was very ill, her father said, and Mandy had rushed off to spend a few days with her.

Jack's first night alone in Mandy's bed had begun to take on a nightmare quality. He'd read until nearly one a.m. in order to take his mind off his solitary state. But a minute or two after turning out the light, he heard the rattle of a door catch.

He sat up and switched on the light. A bump from the kitchen confirmed that he had not been dreaming. With a nonchalant air, only slightly assumed, he swung his legs out of bed and went to investigate.

The teddy-bear was lying prone on the kitchen table, and the wall-cupboard was wide open. He'd stuffed the bear in the cupboard as soon as Mandy had left, and had slammed the door with great satisfaction.

But now the cupboard door was open.

'Bloody useless modern furniture,' he muttered. He decided that the catch had been faulty. What else was he to believe?

He shut the cupboard door and picked up the bear, looking it straight in the eye.

'This town ain't big enough for both of us,' he drawled. His John Wayne impersonation didn't impress the bear; it glared back at him. A trick of the kitchen light imbued its black eye with contempt.

He carefully placed the teddy-bear on a chair and got out the coffee jar and a cup. On route to switch on the kettle, he paused to flick on the radio.

'...you'd better go in disguise, if you go down in the woods today, you'll never believe...' shrilled a child's voice.

"Jack took another mouthful of whiskey, opened a drawer and selected a sharp kitchen knife"

Jack snapped off the radio and stared at it. He wondered whether to laugh. Or not.

The teddy-bear fell off the chair. Jack abandoned the notion of coffee and poured a good measure of Irish whiskey into the cup. He took a mouthful and swallowed. He looked at the bear, then kicked it under the sink.

Carrying the cup of whiskey, Jack strode purposefully into the living room and picked up the telephone. Whether he would have phoned Mandy at 1.15 a.m. or dared to dial 999, he wasn't sure. In any case there was someone on the line. Some sort of dial-a-disc line was crossed with his. He listened as a gravelly voice did a poor Elvis impersonation.

'Don't wanna be a tiger, 'cos tigers play too rough, Don't wanna be a lion, 'cos lions ain't the kin' you lurv eno-u-gh... Just wanna be your te... '

Replacing the receiver, he didn't even consider laughing this time. Tears or hysteria might be more apt, he thought. Returning to the kitchen he stared at the teddy-bear which was no longer under the sink but lying in the middle of the floor. Jack took another mouthful of whiskey, opened a drawer and selected a sharp kitchen knife.

The bear appeared to smirk.

Jack cut it open and pulled out, not kapok or sawdust as he'd expected, but yards of what seemed to be nylon stockings.

The bear continued to smirk.

'She's not a child now, you know,' Jack yelled. Then, embarrassed by the sound of his shouts in the empty house, he dropped the bear and went back to bed.

He left the light on, knowing that it wasn't over. The sound of slithering and scratching which came from the kitchen was not entirely unexpected.

He glanced at the clock-radio by the bed. It was 01.17, only twenty minutes since he'd stopped reading, when his life had been peaceful, contented, blissful even.

When he looked up, the teddy-bear was in the open doorway. It lay motionless, yards of stocking entrails leading back into the kitchen.

Jack risked a quick glance at the bedside table. The knife was there. He tried to remember whether he'd put it there earlier, but whiskey fumes clouded his memory. He picked it up.

He looked back at the teddy-bear. Although it was stationary again, it was now lying by the foot of the bed. While he had glanced away it had travelled a distance of three or four yards. Seemingly limitless nylon intestines still issued from the gaping wound in its abdomen.

Without daring to take his eyes off the bear, he got out of bed and, with a shudder of disgust, picked up the stuffed toy and began to hack off its limbs. Finally, he cut off its head.

He hurled the head under the bed and carried the rest of the teddy-bear out of the bedroom, gathering up the trailing stockings as he went.

In the doorway, he paused and turned. He could still see the shape of the head in the darkness under the bed.

'Try it,' he said, in a voice only a few semitones higher than his normal one. 'Try crawling without your arms and legs.'

In the living room, last night's fire was already dead, so he lit a newspaper in the grate. As it flared he fed the flames with teddy-bear arms, teddy-bear legs and yards of stockings, followed by the limp carcass of the bear's trunk. When he was sure that all was ash, he returned to the bedroom — victorious over Mandy's childhood toy.

He stopped in the doorway, his triumph also turning to ash. The teddy-bear head lay on Mandy's pillow, regarding him with a steady, unblinking gaze.

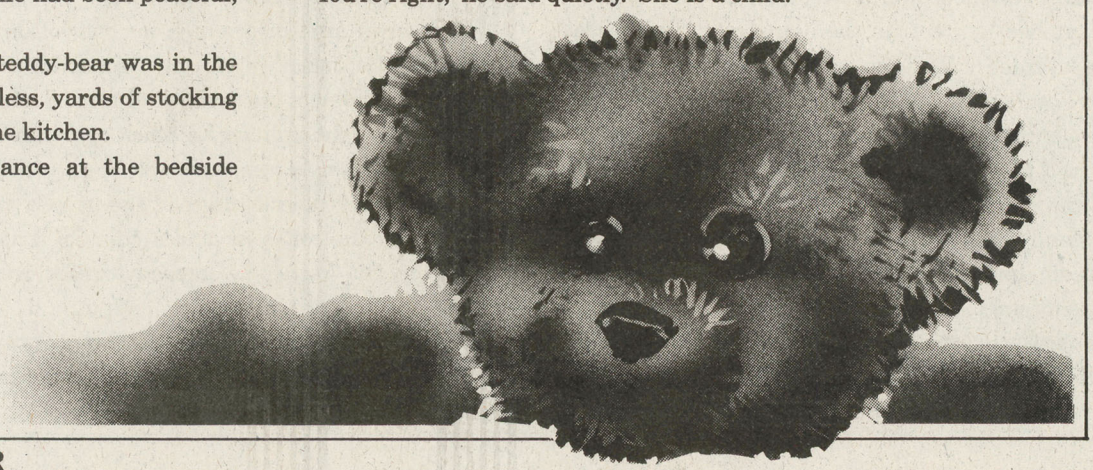
Jack was the first to look away, unable to keep up eye contact with the bear's asymmetrical, unmatching stare. He lifted his suitcase down from the top of the wardrobe and began to pack.

Before he left, he addressed the head of the teddy-bear still lying on the pillow, in full command of Mandy's bed.

'You're right,' he said quietly. 'She is a child.'

JACK WAINER is a successful escaper from the teaching profession, having tunnelled out from beneath a mountain of National Curriculum documents. He is now a full-time writer. His stories have appeared in *The 30th Pan Book of Horror Stories*, *MAYFAIR*, *Short Story International*, *Dream*, *Rattlers Tale*, on BBC Radio Leicester, Radio Trent, Leicester Sound and GEM-AM.

"Seemingly limitless nylon intestines still issued from the gaping wound"



THE FOSSIL MAN

By Simon Kemp

"My life revolved around two great obsessions: science and palaeontology"

Good luck to your youthful valor, boy. Such is the way to the stars.
Virgil

The Greenridge Home For The Elderly was a large, rambling Victorian house surrounded by a patch of sickly looking lawn and an overgrown privet hedge. Mathews tightened his grip on the briefcase and started up the shingle path. A pale light shone through the grubby net curtains; it was quiet and still.

Mathews pulled the bell lever. He could hear it ring, sounding very distant and strangely smothered. He found himself studying the forlorn details of the porch intently. The tiles on the floor

were cracked and pitted, the windows stained and dusty.

The rattle of the lock startled him and made him glance up abruptly as the door opened on screaming, oil-starved hinges. The face peering out at him belonged to a stern-looking woman in her mid forties who eyed him suspiciously.

'Whatever you're selling, we don't want any here.'

Mathews smiled and put up his hand to prevent the door slamming shut in his face.

'I'm not selling anything, madam. My name is Steven Mathews and I have an appointment with one of your residents, a Mr Arthur Knight.'

The woman gave him a sour look.

'We don't encourage visitors after six, Mr Mathews. It disturbs the other guests.'

Mathews affected an apologetic grin and continued, 'I'm sorry, but if I could see him I would be very grateful.'

The woman shrugged and opened the door.

'Wipe your feet!'

"Have you any knowledge of fossils, Steven?"

Mathews hastily stepped back onto the mat, but on entering he wondered why he had bothered. The hallway was as tatty and threadbare as he had expected it to be. The thick, cloying smell of dirty linen and disinfectant washed over him in a wave. Shutting the door behind him the woman bustled past, heading towards the stairway. Mathews followed.

'He's up there, fourth on the right,' she muttered. 'What do you want with him?'

Mathews paused as he climbed the creaking stairs. 'I'm a publisher,' he called back, and without waiting for a response continued on up the stairs. The landing was in an even worse state of repair. The walls were stained with damp and strips of yellowed paper hung loose in places. Upon finding the right door he paused, took the letter from his inside pocket and read its scant contents. It was from a well known city solicitor and contained little more than the Greenridge address, a date for a meeting and the client name of a Mr Arthur Knight.

Mathews knocked quietly, but there was no sound from the room beyond. Gently he opened the door a few inches and peered in. The room was bathed in the warm, amber glow of a summer's evening. A frail shape was huddled in a blanket by the window. Mathews coughed awkwardly. The shrouded figure reached out towards a small table and switched on a lamp.

Mathews could see the man clearly now. He was old and twisted with the ravages of arthritis, his face and hands etched with wrinkles like desert sandstone. He turned slowly, his voice a quiet whisper.

'You must be the publisher... Mathews, isn't it?'

'Yes,' Mathews answered, shutting the door behind him. 'I received your solicitor's letter two days ago but it didn't give much away.'

'It was brief and to the point, Mr Mathews. But since you are here now, please rest assured that you will receive a full explanation. Do come and sit down.'

Mathews crossed the room and sat down in a creaking cane chair facing the old man.

'The name's Steven, Mr Knight.'

'You can call me Arthur if it makes you feel more comfortable. You received the letter two days ago so I imagine you have had little time in which to do any research into my background. I will therefore furnish you with a few details myself. However, before we start can I offer you a drink? Is Scotch acceptable?'

'Thanks,' Mathews replied. 'Is it all right if I use one of these?' He took a tape recorder from his case and set it down on the table beside Knight.

'Yes, it is. But for reasons I will explain you may not take the tape away with you today. It will be returned to you at a later date, I give you my word.'

Knight reached down and picked up an unopened bottle that had been hidden by the blanket.

'I've been saving this for a special occasion, Steven. I wonder if you would be kind enough to get the glasses from the table over there.'

It was dark outside, moths fluttered in vain against the window and light from the table lamp filled the room with a soft, golden haze. The old man drained his glass, set it down and began to speak.

'I was born in a small village called Hacconby in Leicestershire in nineteen hundred and four. My father was a clerk and my mother a teacher. I did well at school and won a place at Cambridge. There and ever after my life revolved around two great obsessions: science and palaeontology. I had time for nothing else, I read voraciously, and it would be true to say, graduated with little trouble. I was offered a position in a government research department and accepted it readily. The pay was far greater than usual and the prospects were excellent. Within four years, and with several important discoveries under my belt, I had

been promoted to the post of department head.

'My facility had the benefit of generous government support and we had funds and equipment to spare. You are, of course, aware of the extensive use that was made of gas during the First World War? Well, our research involved the continued development of such technology, the entire project was under the highest security and even today I doubt that the details are likely to be disclosed. As department head my job had moved away from hands-on research and into the realms of overseer. I was expected to monitor the progress of those under me and make the occasional visit to London to report.

'Finding myself with time to spare, I continued to develop my interests, studying in depth the writings of Einstein and his fellow physicists. As I have already mentioned, my other great love was for palaeontology, and on many occasions I would catch a train down to Kent or Sussex to spend a day scouring the cliff faces for fossils. Have you any knowledge of fossils, Steven?'

Mathews smiled, his mind returning to the warm summer days of school holidays spent at the Natural History Museum, gazing in wonder at the dusty bones of some long-vanished monster and the frozen smiles of stuffed exhibits.

'I used to be fascinated by them,' he replied. 'I have a small collection at home of those I found as a boy. Nothing outstanding, but I'm quite proud of it.'

The old man nodded and sighed. 'I'm afraid my pieces have all gone now. There isn't much space here. But I digress. Where were we? Ah yes, my visits to the south coast. Before I continue, would you care for another drink?'

The bottle was a quarter empty now, and though Mathews felt slightly lightheaded the old man seemed as bright as ever. He exuded such vital mental energy and enthusiasm that it was hard to believe that he was eighty-five years old and so very frail. Mathews realised that Knight was studying him intently, with a powerful and inscrutable gaze.

'You really are most remarkable, Steven. You have shown a degree of patience that I had long thought extinct in people of your generation. But I have no doubt about what you are thinking. You are in two minds at the moment. On the one hand, you are wondering why this cracked old fool has dragged you all the way over here to listen to his life story. On the other, you're wishing, hoping, that I'm going to tell you something of importance. Something that will make the best-seller lists and set you up as a doyen of the publishing world. Which is it to be, you wonder? If you are patient and accept my terms I think you will come out of this very well... very well indeed.

'Curiosity and determination are indomitable traits, Steven, and I was endowed with generous quantities of both. They can be a great driving force, an obsession if you like. I was not content simply with fossilised remains. I wanted more — more truth and more reality. What I am about to tell you must, as yet, go no further than these walls. I am doubtful that anyone would believe it anyway.

'I had worked for the government research project for many years, but my greatest discovery I kept to myself. Every moment of my spare time I spent developing a project of my own. It was the fourth of June, nineteen fifty-two, a dry, sun-scorched day, as I remember, and I had the lab to myself. Picture it if you can: the sun streaming in through the wide sulphur-stained windows, the heavy, acid-scarred bench cleared of scientific apparatus and me, standing alone, dressed in my worn lab coat and praying for success. Fifteen years of work, the product of dedicated optimism, up for judgement. The idea of failure filled me with horror. Now we come to the point where I test my faith in you Steven. This is my secret past.

"In this forgotten corner of the building my ambition reached fruition. I had built a time machine!"

'The building I worked in was vast. It was a simple matter to find an empty room and change the locks on the doors. In this forgotten corner of the building my ambition reached fruition. I had built a time machine!'

Mathews fumbled the empty glass he had been rolling between his hands, and watched it tumble in a slow-motion free-fall onto the carpet. It was an insane claim but there was a conviction to the man that was hard to dismiss. Some secret lay buried within him. Mathews realised that Knight was watching him again, a silent shadow waiting for him to speak.

'You are one of three things, Mr Knight: the world's most audacious liar, a lunatic or the greatest genius this country — no, the world — has ever produced. For the moment I think you deserve the benefit of the doubt, so I'll give you a chance to convince me. If this all happened back in nineteen fifty-two, why have you kept it to yourself until now?'

Knight shifted uncomfortably in his seat. The room was quiet and oppressively hot, a large blue-black house fly buzzed maniacally against the window, burning its life away in a last bid for

freedom. Both men watched it absently. 'It will stay a secret for one month more, Steven. After that, you can tell the world. I am dying, I haven't much more than a month to live and then it will all be over. My great triumph was tainted, you see. It had to remain my secret because... I killed a man.'

'You did what?'

'It was murder, and I can't justify it. I was afraid, you see. When it came right down to it I was a coward. The man? He wasn't much more than a boy — worked as an assistant in the lab. He had come in to check on a batch of samples that had been set up the day before. It was an opportunity too good to miss. Until then, all my tests had involved laboratory rats and mice. They were of limited use. A human subject would be able to communicate with me directly and provide me with detailed information about the journey.

"It had to remain my secret because... I killed a man"

'So as he leant over the workbench I clamped ether-soaked gauze over his mouth and nose. He was taken completely by surprise and his struggles were shortlived. I sat him in a chair and strapped him in securely whilst I conducted my tests. Now that fortune had granted me a human subject I was determined to use it to my full advantage. An hour later, I had finished. He was an ideal choice, with no untoward signs of anatomical disorder or disease.

'The machine resembled a large sphere, very similar in many ways to a conventional bathysphere, with small windows of thick toughened glass set into the steel walls and powerful electric spot-lamps clamped on metal arms fastened to the roof. I bundled the boy in through the hatchway, it was set low down and the task wasn't too difficult to accomplish alone. Rigging a timer mechanism to the controls was a simple matter, and I found gauging the distance he would travel back in time to be equally simple. He would be the first person to visit a period of history very dear to me: the early Mesozoic age, the age of the dinosaurs.

'It seems so vivid, even after all these years. Sitting there in the darkness with only the time machine's lamps for light, watching the seconds tick away on my pocket watch, waiting for the unknown. Suddenly, with only a few seconds left on the timer, I saw his face appear at the window. He seemed confused and frightened and I at once regretted what I had done. But it was too late! The usual pounding roar had started deep within the machine, arcs of blue-white electricity flashed across its surface, the reek of ozone filled the room. He was banging on the window now. I could see his mouth open in a silent scream of terror — and then it was over. With a sudden discharge of glowing energy, the whole structure vanished from the laboratory. The timer had been set to bring it back three hours later, and how well I recall that seemingly endless wait. I could do little other than sit, my mind a turmoil of hope, guilt and self-justification at what appeared, so far, to be a successful experiment.

'The first indication of the sphere's return was the reappearance of the electrical discharges. This time they were more violent than ever before. They swept about the lab in a maelstrom of destructive chaos, papers and equipment were scattered, and where the bolts chanced upon something of more substantial weight they exploded in showers of ball lightning. This continued for at least two minutes, and for most of this time I took shelter under the heavy workbench, which was about the only thing to survive the onslaught. At last, the storm of havoc abated and I climbed out from beneath the table and looked across the room.

'The sphere had returned but it had been severely damaged. Sections of it had been crushed and most of the windows were smashed. Stagnant water steamed from it and great ropes of slimy vegetation lay draped across the battered surface. I ran towards it, my mind racing ahead of me in a cavorting madness of emotions — elation followed by dread terror. It was hot to the touch, steam hissed across the lab. I took the gloves from my pocket. The hatch was gone, the door had been torn from its hinges, the metal twisted and tortured, looking like an open wound.'

The old man was trembling, his eyes filled with tears.

'Inside the sphere it was carnage. The boy's body had been terribly mutilated and blood was spattered everywhere. The corpse's head was gone and most of the upper torso had been shorn away. I turned aside and was violently sick. It was some time before I found enough courage to face the scene of horror again. Careful examination of the body was difficult within the cramped confines of the sphere so I decided to remove the remains and take them to one of the worktops. It was an unpleasant experience, to say the least. There were definite indications that the damage had been caused by an animal, an animal of immense strength. The whole upper body from

sternum to skull had been removed in one clean, cutting motion and there were traces of salivary fluids over the remaining torso. An inspection of the time machine's exterior confirmed my growing suspicions that it had been attacked by some creature of titanic strength and ferocity. Whole sections of steel plating had been crushed and gnawed into pieces of scrap.

'On closer study, the mass of plant material covering the sphere proved to be of a species completely unknown to me. The sphere was still quite hot and the vegetation reeked appallingly. It was vital that I collected a sample of it before the heat ruined it all. Frantic scrambling around the wreckage of the lab uncovered a pair of scissors and an unbroken glass bottle and I hurried about the machine cutting off small strips of foliage that still looked reasonably healthy. Then I saw it! Embedded in the metal, about six feet above me, was a tooth! It took a good set of pliers and a lot of effort to extract it but it was more than worth the effort. Over eight inches in length, dull yellow like worn ivory, the raw, bloody flesh of the root and gum still hanging wetly from one end, it was an incisor of magnificent proportions! And I recognised its origins instantly. I had seen examples in museums all over the world but never one of such incredible appearance. It had belonged to a creature of a lost age, a Plesiosaur of a size I could scarcely comprehend!

'It was time to take stock of my situation. The machine had worked, but to whom could I divulge my momentous discovery? It had led to the death of an innocent man, and I was responsible. The sphere was damaged beyond repair but I had recorded the details of its construction in my notebooks and another like it could be built. But at the back of mind, cast like a shadow over my jubilation, was a nagging guilt at the death of the lab assistant. Great as my invention was it would not protect me from the law and its judgement. Covering up the traces of his death would be an insurmountable task.

'I acted quickly. Gathering the samples, I wrapped them in a soft bundle of rags torn from a spare lab coat and set about the search for some combustible materials. Within the hour I had rigged the lab with enough explosive chemical compounds to guarantee that the ensuing blast would remove all traces of the time machine together with the cadaver of the lab assistant. I ran to the toilet to try and clean myself up, I was covered in stagnant slime and blood.

'Standing by the door, the wrapped samples clutched under my arm, I stopped and took a last look. The room was quiet and still now, the soft trickle of blood running from the table the only sound. I cast a lighted match onto the paraffin-soaked floor and watched it erupt in a wave of flickering blue flame. I had just left the room when, a few seconds later, the fire found the first of the chemical explosives I had left behind. The blast flung me to the ground and knocked me unconscious.

'I awoke in a hospital bed several hours later, my legs were damaged and I had suffered severe burns. The police were waiting, but fortunately they were convinced that the explosion had been an accident. The whole site was under strict government control, so the story never reached the newspapers and nothing was ever found. My clothing had been destroyed in the explosion and there was no sign of the rag bundle with my samples hidden inside. It had all disappeared — the tooth, the plant life, everything. I still retained my journals at home so it would have been possible to build another sphere — but it was not to be.

'The fire in the lab had reached the chemical warehouse, where it had erupted in a shower of inflammable chemical fluids which had rained down on the surrounding area. I was lucky to survive, but my legs were so badly mutilated that the doctors had to amputate. My career as a time travel researcher was over. Confined to a wheelchair, how could I possibly build another sphere?'

Mathews watched in silence as Knight pulled aside the blanket and let it fall to the floor. Both his legs had been removed halfway up the femur. 'I've a pair of artificial limbs in the cupboard but I don't care to move about much any more. I think some would call this justice, and for all I know they could be right.'

With perfect timing, the recorder on the table ran out of tape and switched itself off. Knight eyed it suspiciously. 'The tape, if you would be so kind.' Mathews handed it to him. 'After my death all my journals and this tape will be sent to you, Steven. The journals contain everything — the component lists, the schematics and plans for the sphere. I'm too old to face the publicity and it wouldn't be right. I'm no hero. The boy I killed deserves that accolade, not me. I shan't ask whether you believe me or not, it is enough for me to have told someone even if they doubt

"Stagnant water steamed from it and great ropes of slimy vegetation lay draped across the battered structure"

everything they've heard. I am too old and weary for secrets.'

Mathews opened his mouth to speak but Knight raised his hand to silence him. 'Say nothing, Steven. Wait until you've seen the journals.' The old man yawned. 'I'm rather tired. Thank you for coming, if only for listening patiently to a lunatic's ramblings.'

Mathews stood up and offered the old man his right hand to shake; then he smiled, Arthur Knight had closed his eyes and was snoring softly. Mathews covered the scientist's crippled legs with the blanket, and then he left.

There was no sign of the housekeeper so he let himself out. Standing in the porch he took a deep breath; it was a cool evening and the first few spots of rain were beginning to fall as he walked up the path to the gate. Behind him the house sat like a gothic silhouette, dead and still against the skyline. The old man's story had intrigued him, it was difficult to dismiss it completely.

Arthur Knight died three days later from stomach cancer. His solicitors sent Mathews notification and said that a parcel would be forwarded to him as soon as possible. Weeks passed, but nothing happened. Finally, another letter arrived informing him that there had been a fire at the solicitors' office. The building had been destroyed along with the parcel which Mr Knight had instructed them to send on.

Mathews hurled the letter into the bin in frustration. There had definitely been a package, but had it contained the journals? He would never know. The solicitors hadn't been advised of the contents of the package and no part of it had survived the fire. Without proof, he had nothing to publish. Mathews sighed, leaned back in his chair and gazed out of the window at the London skyline. It was all over.

◆◆◆◆◆

It was the finest specimen Carter had ever seen. The rib-cage, neck and most of the skull were in perfect condition. It was undoubtedly the largest Plesiosaur unearthed to date and it was in an outstanding state of preservation.

He knelt down again, gently clearing away the mud and clay with his wire brush. He smiled to himself as the brush began to reveal an intricate filagree of pectoral fins, scales and small bones. It was even better than Carter had dared hope for. By some miracle the stomach contents had been preserved too. Grabbing a bucket of water, Carter gently splashed it over the area on which he was working. He picked up the wire brush and then dropped it almost immediately.

The water had washed the rock clean and there, amongst the remains of long-dead fish and small animals, were the unmistakable bones of a human being. Fossilised ribs, sternum and skull were preserved in sharp detail. More extraordinary still, and what finally made Carter catch his breath, was the discovery of the crushed remains of a pocket watch and a fountain pen.

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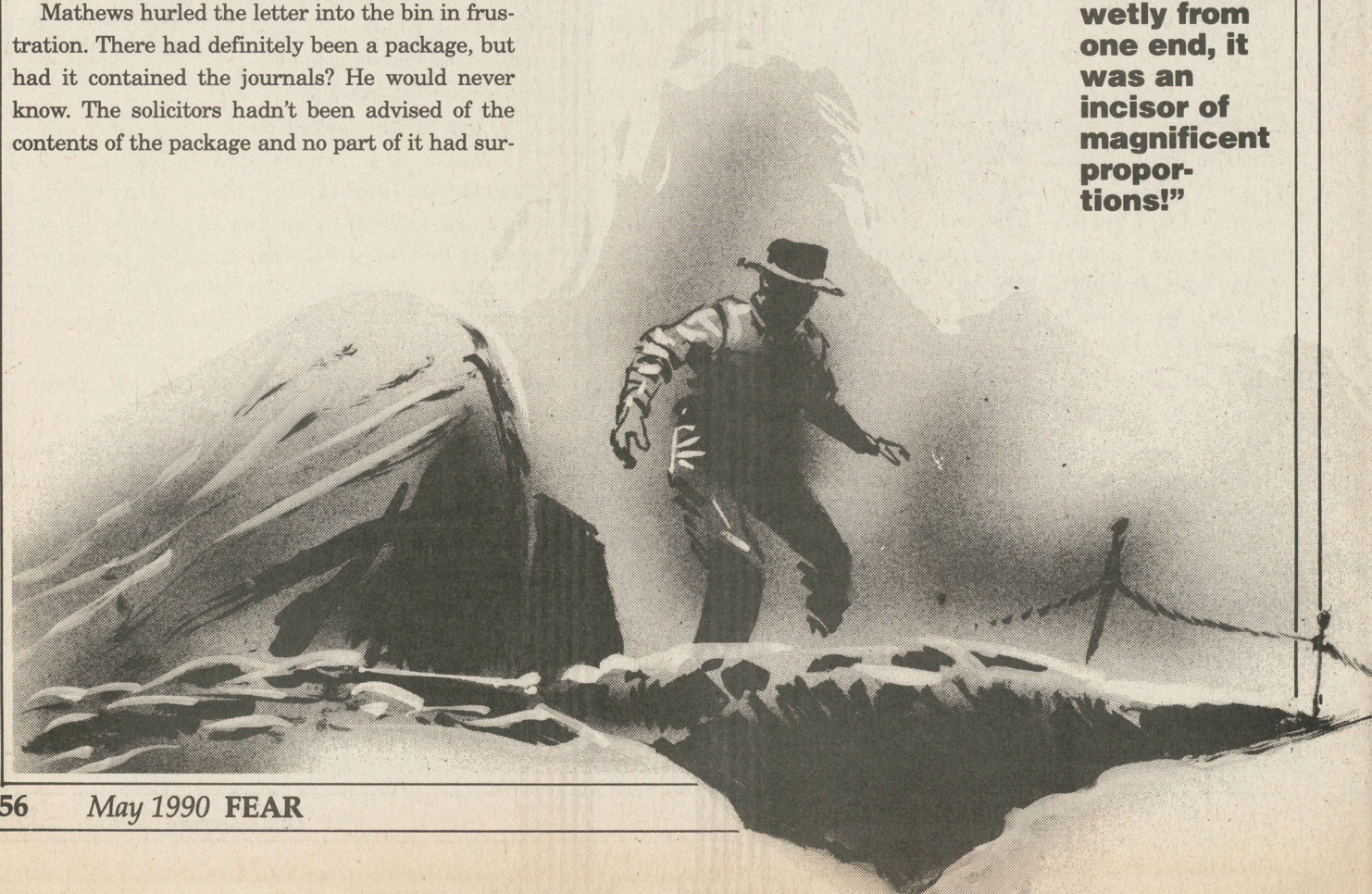
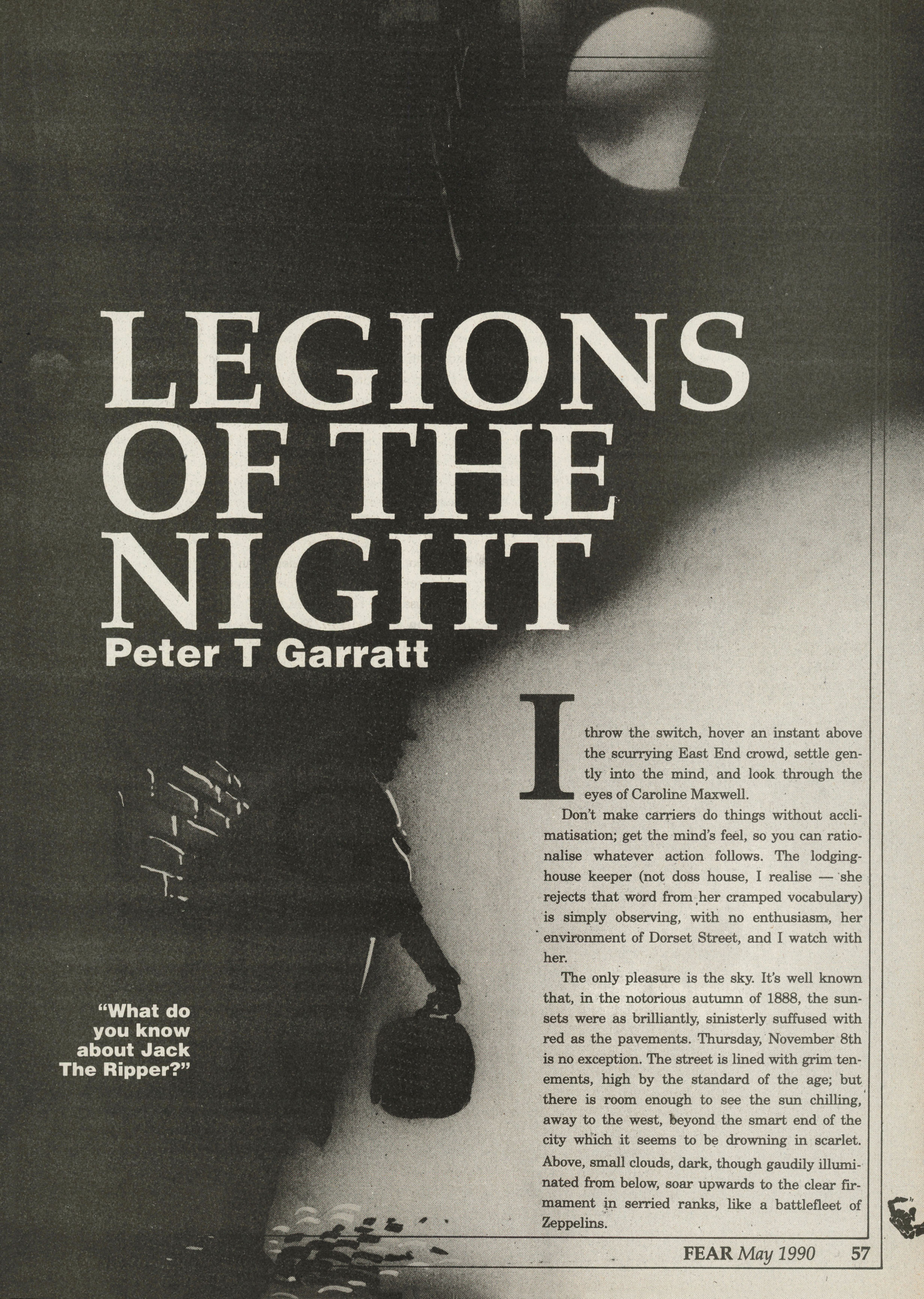
"The raw, bloody flesh of the root and gum still hanging wetly from one end, it was an incisor of magnificent proportions!"



LEGIONS OF THE NIGHT

Peter T Garratt



"What do you know about Jack The Ripper?"

I throw the switch, hover an instant above the scurrying East End crowd, settle gently into the mind, and look through the eyes of Caroline Maxwell.

Don't make carriers do things without acclimatisation; get the mind's feel, so you can rationalise whatever action follows. The lodging-house keeper (not doss house, I realise — she rejects that word from her cramped vocabulary) is simply observing, with no enthusiasm, her environment of Dorset Street, and I watch with her.

The only pleasure is the sky. It's well known that, in the notorious autumn of 1888, the sunsets were as brilliantly, sinisterly suffused with red as the pavements. Thursday, November 8th is no exception. The street is lined with grim tenements, high by the standard of the age; but there is room enough to see the sun chilling, away to the west, beyond the smart end of the city which it seems to be drowning in scarlet. Above, small clouds, dark, though gaudily illuminated from below, soar upwards to the clear firmament in serried ranks, like a battlefleet of Zeppelins.

My image, not hers. Avoid anachronistic thoughts: startle the carrier, and you could stress the timeline. Concentrate on *her* perceptions. Sunset is a consolation; one part of the dreary scene not jerry-built by men. A respectable woman, running a cheap house in the worst part of London, clinging to the income assured by a constant stream of those who can afford no better. True, her's is superior to most in Dorset Street: sixpence a night buys clean sheets and rooms swept, weekly if possible, Ginger Tom to keep the rats at bay. Women only, and if she doesn't know how half of them get their money, she certainly doesn't allow them to earn it in the house. Elsewhere in Whitechapel fourpence buys a night in a nest of vermin, human and animal, shelter only from the cold. Her hatred for the dank street colours everything: she firmly believes it to be that on which Dickens modelled Fagin's den. Nor are there only thieves, a lurid notice has been pasted to the wall opposite:

upwards to the clear firmament in serried ranks, like a battlefleet of Zeppelins.

"But even Sir Galahad couldn't save her from the fate she's due tonight"

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GHASTLY MURDER IN THE EAST END.
GHASTLY MURDER IN THE EAST END.
DREADFUL MUTILATION OF A WOMAN.
£100 REWARD.

A mixed crowd hurries down the grimy street. Hardly anyone is prosperous, though not all are in rags. Many are colourful, and a few of the younger, more sober street women are quite prettily dressed. But the old are pitiful, dragging along, in desperate search for anything but the degradation of the workhouse.

The wind turns bitter. It carries away the worst stenches of the street, but cannot quite dilute the ever-present soot, nor disguise the sour malodour of gin, spilled beer, and human sweat from the 'Ten Bells'. Yet added is a trace of something more pleasant, as though the packed warehouses on the river are giving a hint of spicy treasures, imported for the salons to the West.

I sense a name I have been straining for. Marie Kelly stands at the end of the dark alley opposite; says goodbye to the man who can neither support her, nor abide the profession which must be her last resort. How many times, in the long history of poverty, have such farewells been said? Marie smiles bleakly at Mrs Maxwell, who thinks: 'A good girl, by the standards of the unfortunate: not drunk too often, only on the street when her fellow is out of work, generous if she has money.'

Marie is about five foot four, full-figured, with fresh, dark-Irish good looks. She stands straight, in bright, scarcely-shabby clothes and jaunty bonnet; the latter her sad face

belies, as though she already knows her destiny. She turns back into the gloomy court, whistling a tune as haunting as the danger of eviction which she again, as often, faces.

The wind rustles a few leaves which have somehow blown into the street. All over London, through all the timelines, evil is stirring tonight. Pedachenko, the mad barber, tool of the secret police of a dying empire, plans crimes to discredit the exiles. A nameless *shochet* finishes the day's slaughter; ritual, but not enough; the night's will cleanse, satisfy. Montague Druitt, failed lawyer, appalled by the threatening sea of poverty, disgusted past sanity by constant smiles from unclean women, near the edge. William Gull, surgeon to the rich, Free Mason, prepares to operate beyond the Law. In other lines, unsuspected men are ready for guilt.

All evil is here, all is swirling towards an epicentre in that dreary court, this gloomy night. This is the focus the Timescanners will detect; where the lines, close and fragile, must be protected.

It is not yet dark: I slip to other minds, learn the age. It is hard: in this part of the world's richest capital, Jack London will write of 'The People of the Abyss'. Their state he will compare with the relative comfort of the 'savage' Eskimo; seeing, as I do now, women desperate enough to sell themselves 'for tuppence, or thruppence, or a stale loaf of bread.' There is more evil here than the knife that gives an end, which many scarcely seem to fear.

I try eyes on pubs. Marie is out, starting her doomed search for the rent. She has not found it, but men stand her drinks, which she needs to stand her night's work: the hurried intimacy with dubious strangers, several, if possible, to have profit for forgetfulness.

I return to the safe house. Gwen regards me with her mixture of sternness and sympathy: 'You were out there a long time, Dan.'

'I've got the street pattern: identified Maxwell and Kelly.'

'You didn't parascan Kelly? You're not seasoned enough for that.'

'I'm not brave enough. To live the lives of these people! To see Marie Kelly, hear her whistle... younger than me, never had a chance.'

'Dan, you *mustn't* get involved. I know she's said to be young and pretty as the actresses who've played her. But she's a drunk and a prostitute like the less glamorous victims: no better nor worse.'

I rebel briefly: sometimes the cold virtue of the Agency, and its chief field operative, oppresses me, like that of the Victorians without, walking these slimy streets with eyes averted from the gutter. 'She doesn't have that much choice, really.'

She senses my newness to the strange conflict we engage in. 'True. But even Sir Galahad couldn't save her from the fate she's due tonight. Our duty is to limit damage; monitor the anomalies.'

'That reminds me. Mrs Maxwell has no memory of seeing Kelly in the morning. She regards her as a late riser.'

'That's important. She'll swear at the inquest that Kelly spoke to her at eight; other evidence puts the crime some hours before.'

Gwen keys the data, asks: 'Any contact with George Hutchinson?'

'No. He's not placed in Dorset Street till after midnight.'

'We'll use the Namecaller. Take a rest while I look round.'

'Should I do anything? I'm not trained on all the equipment.'

She reminds me of a few of the controls and alarms on her console: 'If you *should* notice anything wrong, key recall at once.'

I need the time to reflect. Gwen recruited me from the Parapsych lab, after seeing my telepathy results: 'I need you on an important project. You're not faking; your talent mustn't be squandered.'

'But I need much better probabilities than these for my Phd... '

'Parapsych abilities decay with over-practice. Numb yours with card-guessing runs, get results which couldn't happen by chance in a billion years — then find you can't do anything useful with them!'

'Useful?' Tempting if improbable thought. I learn of an Agency which funds work otherwise unknown. Parascanning is no surprise: part of me has always known that some day I would be able to do this. But the ideas about Time: '*Dr Who* stuff. Are you serious?'

I am shown the Timescanner, the Line Monitors. 'We don't know it all. We haven't the Key to the Gates of Time, only a keyhole to peer through. Early workers wanted to improve the past, write Belsen and Hiroshima out of history. That caused anomalies: disoriented the operatives, even weakened the timeline.'

'OK. What's supposed to happen, if a timeline

"Not afraid of Saucy Jack?' My chest tightens as he moves into the lamplight; can one die of tension?"

weakens?'

'We believe, a speeding up of Entropy. It becomes easier to draw on psychic forces, especially for malevolent purposes. A universal decay which could fuel its own acceleration.'

Here, I rebel. 'I can hack living Isaac Asimov, but I draw the line at Dennis Wheatley. Soon you'll tell me people really dance around dressed as goats, sacrifice naked maidens to the devil.'

Gwen has a sense of fun, little of humour. She does not smile: 'Not to the devil as such. And not only maidens. But even you have seen the effect of intense meditations and exercises.'

I nod. Gwen is not only brilliant, but dedicated: almost easier to love than to like, worth the effort of not exasperating.

'Disciplines taught by religious masters are mostly benign. They may even slow the entropy down. They don't involve *doing* much. But active uses, even if well-meaning... like any drawing on resources... there are costs that must be reckoned.'

"George speaks at last: 'Marie! I'm afraid for you! I sense some danger to you!"

I rise, pace the cramped parlour of the safe house. The Agency boosted me to field staff for my ability to parascan, my knowledge of Reality theory is sketchy. I understand the concept of parallel universes, but am ill-prepared for the implications. Other streams of time, running beside our own, forever inaccessible save to the Agency's secret equipment, are hard to accept. Yet the Agency has solved riddles like that of Kaspar Hauser, who mysteriously entered our world from its twin, just as others abruptly vanished...

I pace and dwell. Gwen has been scanning for some time, lolling in her recliner, but her eyes lack the usual relaxed look: an air of, not quite fear, nausea. She is modest about her limited skill with the machine; hints that she may have used it too often. Yet her expression is not jaded: I sense gentle empathy mingled with the disgust. I note the third, empty chair: no one is better qualified, even than me, to be risked on this mission. It doesn't seem long ago (and it isn't exactly 'ago') that I heard of it.

'What do you know about Jack The Ripper?'

'Not much. Some sort of Cockney criminal, wasn't he? A bit of a character, an East End folk hero of some sort?'

Gwen is shocked. 'Is that the image in the media nowadays? Even a total sexist wouldn't call The Ripper a hero... one of the worst killers of women ever; victims savagely, vilely mutilated.'

The Victorian era has seemed a melodrama in some unreal music-hall. 'And he got away with it! Is that part of the mystique? Wasn't he some important Freemason, covering up a scandal?'

'Partly true, scandal is discredited, but the murders resemble severe Masonic punishments: cutting the throat *from left to right*, tearing out the entrails and throwing them over the shoulder... '

I swear aloud. 'Do Masons really do that?'

'They say it's part of an old ritual, words without bloodshed. But a clique we call the Dark Brothers is known to act it out, as a form of sacrifice. We're sure that in our timeline they were behind the Ripper killings. There are lines, otherwise similar to ours, where we can't monitor evidence of The Ripper. And a third group, with killings, but no mystery: the murderer was caught.'

'And found to be a Mason?'

'Not a Mason, nor always the same man: a mad Russian, a fanatical *shochet*, a deranged barrister. We call it a Graft Anomaly; events in discord with the natural development of the timeline.'

'How can you know what constitutes natural development?'

'Lines vary most when there is unnatural drawing of power. Ones with no Ripper mystery also lack the sinister side of Masonry, P2 etc. This even applies where non-masonic Rippers have been caught.'

'I'm baffled. How can one crime be committed by different men?'

'When a Graft Anomaly occurs, there is an impact, an echo, in Timelines where the full sequence does not take place. In this case, a great evil plays on men like Druitt and Pedachenko, draws on tendencies which might have lain dormant inside them.'

'I see.' Not fully. As I remember that strange discussion, the night grows colder, the light from the field generator flickers.

'Go away! Leave me alone!' A woman's voice, piercing, outside the safe house. I peer round the curtain. It's gloomy as a recess in the bowels of the Earth; eyes not dark-adjusted, I hardly see a thing. I hurry to the switch, fumble back. I can just make out her profile in the gas lamp: in the shadow is a tall, caped, indistinct figure. She staggers, her whole body wobbling; perhaps once attractive, she is bloated by years of indulgence in the cheapest food and liquor.

The man steps forward, casts a deeper shadow, looms over her, says a few words, of which I catch only the contemptous tone. Her reply is louder, rancorous: 'Can't go home. Not unless I get some doss money. So I'm waiting... for someone what owes me some.'

'Not afraid of Saucy Jack?' My chest tightens as he moves into the lamplight: can one die of tension? He turns; something glitters above his ghostly face. I almost faint with relief, recognising the badge and number of a policeman's helmet. I slump into my recliner, trying to regain my nerve. I forced my mind back to the briefing.

'So our task is to expose the Masons as the killers?'

'No. We'd endanger the line. Nothing in universal awareness can be changed. But if obscure evidence is planted, to be understood later, we can destroy that. The line can survive the deletion of secrets. We think they planted clues. Take the chalk message about 'JUWES'. It means, not 'Jews'... but those who deserve that awful death.'

Briefly, this confident women is silent, lost in the reflection of cruelty and horror. She goes on grimly: 'Most Masons are decent: interested in philanthropy as well as business. Yet it's corrupt: absolute loyalty to unknown colleagues and superiors, a conspiracy of self-interest. Conscience is numbed, opposition dulled by the receipt of favours. At the core is a group who honour the Dark side of the triple deity, Jah-Bul-On. The actual killer is a pawn: at the time, too vicious to be owned. But as the legend moves across the chessboard, clues are unravelled, the Masonic connection clarifies.'

'And we're not supposed to help bring it out. Why?'

'With the original Ripper beyond justice, the mystique of immunity is starting to help the Dark Brothers recruit their own kind: seekers after a share in that power. Other Masons oppose them if they can, but are forced to rally against outside threats: the pawn can queen. We endeavour to dilute their mystique.'

As I ponder this depressing logic, Gwen stirs, opens her eyes, seems briefly weakened. 'It's ghastly out there. The lives these women lead. Can this be London? Our ancestors?'

I start to explain, nothing is unique to this time, this place.

'I know. Let's get on with it. You know your programme?'

'Start with Hutchinson: see why he hung around Miller's Court, what he really saw. Check anything to do with anomalies noted from evidence at the inquest: two different men seen with Kelly, two cries of murder, one loud, one quiet, Hutchinson's odd behaviour, Kelly being seen alive in the morning. The door locked, bolted from the inside, no key. And, the mysterious end to the murder sequence.'

'Forget the first man, the one with the beer pail. I've found he was just a client, didn't stay long.' Gwen looks more tense than I have ever seen her, and summons that mysterious strength. 'Remember, I am the activator. You may not be aware of me, but I shall be there. If I need you to do anything but observe, I will let you know. You are not to interfere with anything, however distressing, without orders. It wouldn't take much to disorient a sensitive like you.'

As I start to key the Namecaller, doubt sweeps over me. 'Is it so dangerous to interfere, if the ritual is so damaging?'

'Yes.' Her tone, a touch condescending, is motivated by concern. 'You are young to be involved in a thing like this.' She pauses, then continues wearily: 'You will see, if you give the Agency time, that despite its secrecy and rigid rules, it works, not for the Power of Light, that's too simple — let's say for the greater good.'

The Namecaller flashes a signal: Hutchinson is located.

'This indicates he's found somewhere to try and sleep!'

'He mustn't do that! He's supposed to be homeless, roaming the streets. Get in quickly, undetected, while you still can!'

Again the strange hovering; I slide into Hutchinson's mind. He starts: exhausted, he had almost nodded off in the doorway where he is slumped. I am nothing, scarcely observing, yet he is aware of strangeness. Then he is distracted by the cold and the November rain which besieges his refuge; a strong, angry man, raging against Fate for bringing him to this. Unemployed for weeks, he has lost his last digs, in a house filthier than the street, but warmer. Even his daughters have nothing to offer; they take their mother's part. Round the memory of his wife lies a screen of pain and hate I dare not touch. Bitter hints of an early, ill-advised marriage for lust; endless struggles and open, hungry mouths, then some powerful rival, a landlord perhaps or rack-rent boss, and I shy from his despair. The rain is dying off: I plant the thought that a nearby heavy tread may be a policeman, and exercise might bring a little warmth.

"There are thin red lines on her spectral face, like slashes, but they do not bleed: another marrs her throat, wide and hideous on the soft white flesh"

The hour is as small as the streets we pace are dreary. 'Carrying the banner', the unemployed call this bleak midnight routine. George worked for years as a night watchman; now he swings alone at his old, steady pace, eyes darting. Twice recently he has fed himself by finding coins in the gutter. I marvel as his spirit clings to life like a wolf to its prey. On our way through this endless warren of poverty, we see others in similar plight; old men huddled in crannies, women, scarcely younger, leaning on corners, trying to smile.

He burns against the bosses and money men; fights to keep his thoughts off crime. Yet the doss houses are packed with thieves; even they compete. Jack London will be wrong to compare this life with the Eskimos'. In the icy waste, few can live; but sea creatures yield food and oil to those bold enough to fight them; in hard times, the old and feeble walk into the snow with no banner to carry. Here, where the streets are paved with muddy sixpences, the struggle should be easier, but is more vicious. The city corrupts even the simple lust of the poor, for life and love, to its own dark ends.

"Again the night is ruptured by a cry of 'Help! Murder!"

A sudden shock of pleasure. Marie Kelly is walking through the night: he sees her mood as 'spreeish', and there are memories of good turns done and returned, of evenings at the Music Hall, in happier times, of beds shared on nights like this, though not of anything else given or paid for. To me, she looks pathetic, tipsy, though not enough to make the swing of her hip a caricature. By a gaslamp, I can just see that her glossy, raven hair hangs loose on her red dress. In turn, she brightens on seeing George: hurries up without the swing. Her manner is pure blarney, but the voice is Welsh, catching the sad music of the valleys. 'I'm desperate for the rent, Mr Hutchinson. Could you lend me half a crown till the weekend? Or even a tanner? I swear I'll pay it back.'

An agenda hides; he hopes: 'Girl, don't offer,' just as her eyes reply: 'Brother, don't ask. Not you, though I daren't refuse.' He can find no words, pulls out the linings of his empty pockets. We three are suspended like fleas in amber; the last barriers break between George's mind and mine, my will is doused in the flood of his love for this fallen woman. Marie Kelly! Could I have seen her as naught but whore and victim, victim and harlot! Through kinder eyes, I see the miner's widow slighted by the pit owners, sold out and selling herself by the age of twenty, somehow surviving, never forgetting the code of the dispossessed: when you do have, give! George lives by that. He has bought no love from Marie Kelly: even in better days, has not dared to, for he knows he could never afford to take her away from all this, his beloved sister in misfortune.

My parasite mind is heady with emotion, unwary. George speaks at last: 'Marie! I'm afraid for you! I sense some danger to you!'

My training from the Agency, for its strange crusade, yells for restraint, to save the timeline. Yet I don't crusade to be shamed by the unrequitable love of a starving man: I surge into his vocal chords, and shout: 'Get away from here. Whatever you do, stay away from Miller's Court tonight!'

Now the world sways: blackness and images swirl around me, as they do when one recovers from fainting. I struggle, and seem to see double; breathe and blink hard, so that for a moment it's as though Marie is bewildered, turning, running down the street. Then I blink again; she is only shaking her head. She has a strange expression, sad but forbidding, looks straight through George at me, and speaks in a voice unlike the other, but familiar: 'Don't try to change it, Dan. Pull yourself together! None of this can be changed.'

Her own voice returns: 'I wish I could help you, but I have to get some money. I'll die it I'm evicted, if I have to go into a doss house. But if I'm all right in a couple of hours, you'll hear me sing 'Sweet Violets', you can knock for somewhere to sleep.'

George leans on a gas lamp to rest, watches helpless as she reaches the end of the street where a well-dressed man has been waiting. He takes her by the arm, says something we cannot hear, then they head back past us. I cower at the back of George's mind, weak with misery. As the man passes, he notices our scrutiny and glares, eyes cold, fiercely triumphant. Ignoring us, he says: 'Don't worry, my dear, you will be all right for the sum I mentioned.'

Marie looks away: George studies the man carefully, for want of any better plan. He will not lie, describing the dark spats, horseshoe tie-pin and heavy, gold watchchain with its red seal; his night-trained eyes have missed nothing. As they reach the corner of Dorset Street, we follow. George is as full of self doubt and loathing as myself; his watchman's eye suspects the natty stranger, perturbed inside by a fear worse than hunger, yet there is a terror of disturbing his unfortunate sister at her night's work, with a

man perhaps able to pay all her arrears of rent.

They stop at the end of Miller's Court. The haunting Celtic voice carries clearly: 'Oh! I have lost my handkerchief!' Though coquettish, it has the sadness of two oppressed nations in it. He pulls out a bandana, red as her shawl in the gaslight, flourishes it, as though he is a matador, as in a sense he is. As they disappear into the dark alley, I hear her unforced laughter: shocking, in its context. Soon, Marie will die; quickly, it is true, though in terror. Then her poor woman's body will be desecrated, more than lesser evil could imagine, by the knife and slimy hands of the pervert; yet the strange perpetrator makes her laugh before.

George sits down opposite the court on the Maxwell's step. I sense his confusion: he has little hope of a bed, but he cannot leave. It is the darkest hour for us both. Nothing happens for a while; silence and cold numb us. Then there is a faint, half-smothered cry: 'Help, Murder!'

George shoots to his feet, starts forward, this ragged-trousered Galahad. At once, he steps in some slippery mess, loses balance, falls hard and winds himself. His last strength is almost gone. Deathly silence has fallen again; perhaps the killer has paused to hark for sounds of danger. George lacks the strength, but not the will, to intervene, before the hideous ripping up of his soul-sister's body begins.

I cannot leave him here. I take his mind and body, numbing his memory of that sad cry. The walk seems forever, yet it is only a few hundred yards to the safe house. I let him sink onto the step, return to my own body, help him in, find the soup Thermos.

Gwen is slumped at her console, mind scanning away. Having no idea what to do, I key recall, no result: again, a flicker on the screen, then nothing. I check the coordinates, freeze with terror! Gwen is still scanning whatever is left of the mind of Marie Kelly!

Near to panic, I key recall three or four times before resolving to venture out. No one said one can be trapped scanning a murder victim. Only Gwen has the utter dedication to brave that hideous scene: perhaps planning to mark the killer, in the last moment, to brand him. I must save her, whatever must be done, whatever damage to the timeline: if necessary, I will force the killer to carry his poor, mutilated victim through the streets to the safe house, so I can take Gwen to the future, to the help only the Agency can give.

George is sleeping on the spare recliner, the Thermos empty. I throw a blanket over him, grab my coat, flash, and gun. Then comes the last sound I expect to hear: a light, scratchy, but desperate knocking at the door. I throw it open, light floods out; there, trembling, pale as a Tudor Rose, stands Marie Kelly. There are thin red lines on her spectral face, like slashes, but they do not bleed: another marrs her throat, wide and hideous on the soft white flesh.

'Help us!' It is Gwen's voice, choked, hollow, but hers. Before I can react, a convulsion races through her whole body, as though someone were tearing it apart with knives, ripping her internal organs out. Her expression changes from despair to amazement: her eyes lock on the pistol in my hand, she cries: 'Holy Mary, Mother of God!' in her own voice, and staggers away down the street.

Nausea returns. I wonder if some other woman has been killed in Miller's Court, enabling Marie Kelly to escape. Then I realise the source of my disorientation: our scheduled warning to the doomed prostitute has split the timeline, so there are now two Maries, one already dead in her squalid bedsit, the second a twin from another universe, fled here to escape the fate she suffers in her mind.

"Jack The Ripper nods, mouths the word 'Stale-mate', and walks quietly out of the court"

Hiding my revolver, I follow as discreetly as I can. She pauses, sees me, hurries away into Dorset Street. I realise that some desperate instinct is returning her to the unhallowed sanctuary of her room. She must not see what is there, let alone encounter the monster who must still loiter. I break into a run, pausing briefly as I see her darting ahead into the court.

Again the night is ruptured by a cry of 'Help! Murder!'. Louder this time; it seems that the neighbourhood must awake. I could apprehend the killer: the timeline may be past help. I draw my gun and flash, duck into the dark passage. It is lit only by the flicker of a fire from one room: Number 13, the last dwelling place of Marie Kelly.

In the shadows, I see her reel from the window. It opens: the killer must be ready for any dreadful act. In that split second, it occurs to me that he may be superstitious, and should sample the terror he causes. I shine the light, brighter than any gas lamp, full into the second Marie's white face; there is a gasp, and the sound of staggering within that dreadful room. Marie rushes past me, out of the court; I hurry to the door, find the key, lock it, and commence a sepul-

chral knocking. I hear the bolt slam home, and decide to remove the key. Silence falls, and I realise that no one has been alarmed by the commotions of this night. So used are the people of this Abyss to desperate cries for help, that they are generally ignored.

The window is still open, and the murderer suddenly projects himself out, landing quietly on his feet. I catch him in the torchlight, making sure he can see my revolver. He has about him the iciest of *sang-froid*; desperation held in check by a harness of inhuman determination, like one whose sweat has frozen on his body. I prepare to shoot; but the silence of the sleeping tenements tells me the timeline may yet be preserved from damage. This conflict must somehow be apparent to the cornered man: Jack The Ripper nods, mouths the word 'Stalemate', and walks quietly out of the court.

I make sure Marie has gone, as he hurries down the street, then steel myself for the hardest work of the night. I confirm that he has not had time to write Masonic codes in blood on the walls; I perform the mundane duty of closing the window. No one who saw inside that terrible room would do other than I, even if he had not known the living Marie. No result of blind mania, the evil has an artistry in its arrangement of horrible, dripping pieces of flesh, so recently the private parts of a gentle girl, ripped away with no grievance.

Returning to my apparatus, it is easy to locate The Ripper's mind. He does not notice my presence; as he nears his own refuge, exhaustion supersedes his sense of triumph. There is even a rudimentary sense of guilt which I can exploit. It does not feel strange, when he pours his confession onto paper, seals the letter, addresses it to his Grand Master. There is relief as he mixes an unusually strong sleeping draught, no memory of the first as he prepares the second. He finds he needs an injection of morphine.

I leave that vile mind as it fades away. In the safe house, Gwen is still absent: Hutchinson stirs in his sleep. It is eight o'clock, and I hurriedly return to Caroline Maxwell. Just in time: she is setting out to the bakers. I get her to smile at Marie Kelly, who is walking unsteadily, staring at the entrance to Miller's Court with the expression of one unsure if she is waking from a nightmare. Her fresh complexion is drained, the phantom wounds still just visible. Her voice is plaintive: 'Oh, Carrie! I do feel so bad!'

Mrs Maxwell clucks, asks if she would like a tot of rum.

'Oh, no, I'd only bring it up again.' She moves off slowly. I return to my own body, confirm that George is strirring. I take him over, break his fast quickly with the sandwiches and the coffee Thermos. He is still weary, but has work to do that I cannot.

We find Marie outside the 'Ten Bells'. She says sadly: 'Hello, George. I'm sorry to haunt you like this.'

I let him answer: 'Oh, Marie, what have they done to you?'

A little ghost of a smile flits: 'It doesn't matter what they do, after you're dead. They can't do any more to you then.'

I speak, urgently, with his voice. 'I can help you, Marie. I can get you away from here, to somewhere safe.'

Another smile, wider, but more bleak. 'You mad spalpeen! Do you think anywhere's safe for the likes of us?' Even so, she lets me steer her gently away, adding only: 'Or is it me that's mad? It's as though I have two bodies, one live, one murdered; two minds, one of them a stranger's.'

In the safe house, Marie collapses into the recliner, seems to pass out. Gwen suddenly reactivates herself.

'We can't leave her here!' We both snap, her before me.

I have allowed George a little knowledge of what has happened: 'I think you know who I am?'. As he nods, I continue: 'For Marie to be safe, it is important they think the dead woman in Miller's Court is her. You'll know what to forget, and what to remember.'

I give him our supply of Victorian gold sovereigns. As I switch the three of us through to the future, I hope he does well.

◆◆◆◆◆

It is now two years, of remembered time. Two: over a hundred. None of us will ever be the same, but we survived, with therapy, are friends. The timeline is unscathed: the anomalies as they were.

Marie Kelly has done better in our modern age than in the Victorian. She lives alone, runs the switchboard in the Agency office, attends evening classes and Alcoholics Anonymous. No one notices anything unusual about her. She has no regrets about that.

PETER T GARRATT was born in 1949 in Brighton, where he currently lives, working part-time as a clinical psychologist. He has sold stories to *Interzone, Dream* and Games Workshop's *Wolf Riders* anthology. He is a member of Friends of the Earth, the Liberal Democrats, and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society.

"No result of blind mania, the evil has an artistry in its arrangement of horrible, dripping pieces of flesh"

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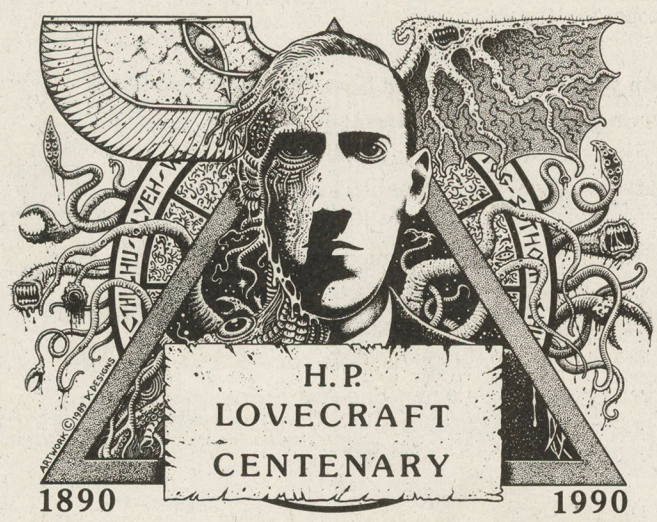

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FEAR Reviews

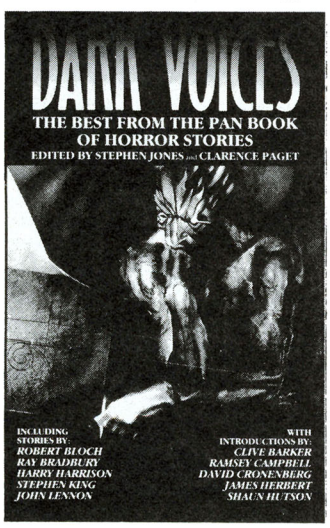
OFF THE SHELF

BLAST OFF

John Gilbert and Robert Rachin take a gander at a fistful of five new releases as Pan launches its new fantasy, horror and SF lists.

Editor Kathy Gale has chosen a particularly feisty collection of books to launch the Pan fantasy, horror and science fiction lists, with at least one of the five titles conforming to each genre.

The only comparison to the old list is *Dark Voices*, which collates some of the best short fiction from *The Pan Book Of Horror Stories*. Originally edited by Herbert Van Thal, this classic annual anthology



gathered together the most important stories, some from brand name authors such as Stephen King, and others from new writers who were cutting their teeth on the short story market.

Dark Voices is a super-anthology, coedited by Stephen Jones and Clarence Padget, showing just why *The Pan Book Of Horror Stories* became such a cult series, outselling all other such books. Here we have reprints of *The Mangler* from Stephen King, Ray Bradbury's *The Emmissary*, and Robert Aikman's *Ringing The Changes*.

Each story is introduced by a well known horror luminary. Points of interest include director David Cronenberg's introduction to George Langelaan's original short story *The Fly*, and F Paul Wilson's short intro to Beatle John Lennon's miniscule, though nevertheless enjoyable story, *No Flies On Frank*. Other contributors include Roberts Bloch and Holdstock, Harry Harrison and the author of my favourite tale within *Dark Voices*, Alan Ryan whose mixture of innocence, blood and evil is quite inspired.

The original annual Pan anthology has recently become a little ropy around the edges, but the publisher has employed a new editor in the guise of David Sutton as well as a new cover design, both of which will no doubt do wonders for sales. *Dark Voices*, in the meantime, is an excellent excuse for newcomers to get acquainted with Pan's top notch anthology series while regular readers can look upon it as a studied introduction to the new format.

THE BARSOOM PROJECT

The four other April releases rope in some new brand name and up and coming writers for Pan. No one who loves the science fiction field can, for instance, fail to recognise the names Larry Niven and Steven Barnes. Their latest novel, *The Barsoom Project*, is the follow-up to their first collaboration, *Dream Park*, though it's written as a stand alone piece.

Set in a massive, futuristic games park — similar to Michael Creighton's *Westworld* — where holograms are used to simulate reality, it shows that advanced entertainment might not all be fun. All the objects within the games are supposed to be harmless but several years ago someone introduced a real gun into a fat ripper called Fimbulwinter — a game designed to give substance abusers a work out. A gamer called Eviane innocently fires a fatal shot, but the incident is hushed up for the good of the games park.

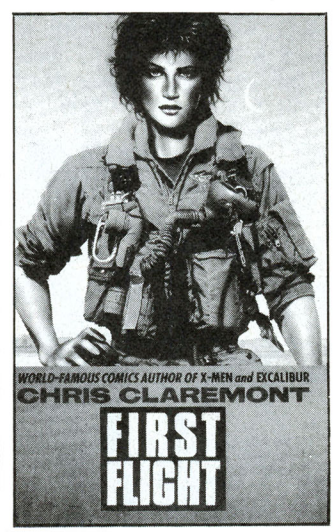
Now Eviane is back, using the gaming name of Michelle Rivers, and seemingly unaware of her past. The head of security decides to introduce her into another Fimbulwinter and, at the risk of all other players, find out who was responsible for sabotaging the original game.

Future politics and the ultimate in role-playing combine with industrial espionage to produce a fascinating, original and tautly plotted SF novel, with not one, but two of the genre's best writers on top form.

FIRST FLIGHT

From continuity to innovation, and a first novel by *X-Men* comics writer Chris Claremont. *First Flight* is a short space odyssey, written in a punchy style, with sprightly, rounded characters and a large amount of hardware-crunching action.

Far from being handicapped by his comics background — as some reviewers might point out — Claremont has a definite advantage over other novelists. He knows that to draw the crowds he needs to race with the story, filling in



character with movement and dialogue rather than pausing for a brief respite and a history lesson on the central players.

The first flight of the title refers to a simulation exercise failed by Lieutenant Nichole Shea, for which she is given a second chance. But this time the action is for real, and danger flies in on the wings of a Wolfpack of space pirates who leave her vessel plundered, damaged and drifting in space.

Survival appears to be impossible, until a strange ship arrives to pick them up. But this space cruiser is on no ordinary search and rescue mission, and the survivors of Shea's second chance become the first humans to meet an unusual alien race.

Claremont's bold, brassy prose propogates a first class

spacebound plot, melding a futuristic *Top Gun* with shades of *Star Trek, Battlestar Galactica* and *Close Encounters*. It's magnificent entertainment.

STAR SCROLL AND JASON COSMO

Science fiction gives way to fantasy, and Melanie Rawn's *Star Scroll*, the second in her *Dragon Prince* series. This mixes the subtle politics and magics of a *Dune*-like world with mighty, but benign dragons, which are very unlike Anne McCaffrey's famous beasts.

Star Scroll is certainly a strong follow-up to the inventive and very successful original novel, and fans will be pleased to note that it is not the last in the series. It quickly, but unsurprisingly puts Rawn at the top of the class as far as fantasy is concerned.

The final book for Pan's April launch is *Jason Cosmo*, a filet de fun a la Pratchett and Gardner, though it differs from these gentlemen's novels in one important respect: it's written in the first person.

And what a person. The action starts when Cosmo receives a call from a stranger who wants his head. Accused of being a demon and run out of his village all because someone got their facts wrong, this winsome little farmer travels through an enchanted land in search of his sanity.

Some of the land's inhabitants are a little strange, if not entirely awe-inspiring. There's Mercury Boltblaster — Merc to his friends — a wizard of arcane master rank who's on the run from the Dark Magic Society, and becomes Cosmo's guide. Then there's Zaran Zimazbar, supreme commander of PANGO (?), Govenor Birksnore, and Dylan of Ganth — no he's not from *The Magic Roundabout* or Piers Anthony's *Zanth*.

They represent some of the more bizarre characters in a book which we believe will achieve cult status. It will certainly ensure a very different read for fans of humourous fantasy.

So Pan appears to have put some effort into its varied selection of launch titles and this is one of those rare occasions when we can say without qualification that they've chosen wisely. It remains to be seen if, in the coming months, they continue to put out such top notch fiction.

THE KLINGON GAMBIT

Captain Kirk's adventures continue unabated with the Klingon menace still in his quadrant, this time in the form of the deadly starship Terror which has disabled a Vulcan research vessel and now has its weapons trained on Enterprise.

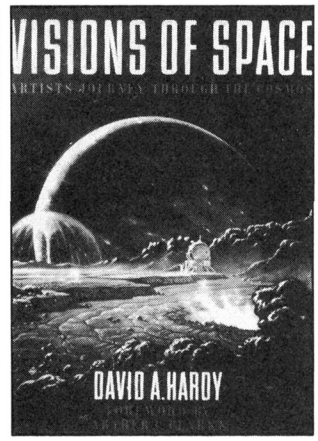
As with each *Star Trek* adventure the external struggle is mirrored by internal tensions and this book (Titan, paperback, £2.99) is no different. Spock has become emotional, Chekov insubordinate and Kirk has lost the ability to command.

Sounds familiar? Well it is. Some of the story points are apparent in several of the original *Star Trek* episodes, such as *The Tholian Web* and *Balance of Terror*. Robert E Vardman's is well written — and so it should be coming as it does from one of the top names in science fiction — but the storyline is unoriginal and, perhaps worse, uninspired. After all, *Star Trek* is as much about emotion as about dangerous high tech adventure, but the characters in this slim episode do not evoke their screen counterparts as well as some of the others in this long running series (this is number 33). And that, after all, is what these books are all about: extending a cult series, not acting as a life support system.
John Gilbert

VISIONS OF SPACE

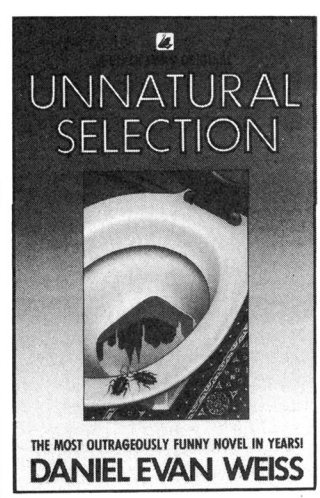
Subtitled *Artists Journey through the Cosmos*, this Paper Tiger book (HB, £16.95) is a lavish voyage indeed. David A Hardy — no mean artist himself — has lovingly compiled circa 200 colour examples of Space Art from the 19th century to the present.

As becomes apparent from his



informative text, Space Artists combine artistry with a thorough knowledge of their subject matter: their mission to boldly and scientifically depict worlds, galaxies and technology not yet seen by man. This is not science fiction per se, more a visualisation of what astronomers and scientists know is out there painted with photographic accuracy in the style of traditional landscape artists. The selection offered here is truly awesome, the overall effect both poetic and harsh, the talent and effort applied quite staggering.

This milestone book, with its exemplary production values, kindles every man's subconscious urge to pioneer beyond the constricting familiarity of Earth to carve the human future that will surely come. Give every major decision maker *Visions of Space*, and a meaningful, determined space program might be born!
Oliver Frey



UNNATURAL SELECTION

Ick! I can't think of any more loathesome crawling creature upon this Earth than the humble cockroach, and to have your whole apartment infested with them — the thought is just too bad to bear. But that's exactly what happens in Daniel Evan Weiss's hilarious new novel (Black Swan, paperback, £4.99).

Ira Fishblatt's girlfriend Ruth moves into his flat and, to make her feel more at home, he has his kitchen renovated, trapping the large family of cockroaches behind the skirting boards in the process. Until now, they've had the run of the kitchen, stuffing themselves on the food and having a right royal riot in the process.

The fun and games end abruptly as the roaches realise their life-threatening situation, and indirect action is called for. One of their clan, called Numbers, has a plan to entice Ira away from Ruth and into the arms of his next-door neighbour, Elizabeth. Numbers the kitchen sink messiah, is confident that he can exploit all of Ira's weaknesses, but there are some that he's missed and strengths that'll give the know-it-all grub a flea in his ear.

Weiss's novel explores the sins of society — particularly those exploited by the United States where it has been banned — without naming names, and shows that even by our ignorance of the little people can we do them irreparable damage. It shows that our understanding of other people relies on a mosaic of emotions in which one or more pieces are always missing. Scandalous, socially irreverent, but never irrelevant, *Unnatural Selection* will catch you and keep you until its bitter end.
John Gilbert

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Short story collections are often difficult to sell and, in general, don't do anything for the careers of most writers. Gene Wolf is not, however, a 'most' writer. His brilliant science fantasy works, including the *Book Of The New Son* novels, have an almost lyrical style reminiscent of authors such as Ray Bradbury, John Brunner and Harlan Ellison. His novels should be honoured while the variety of tone and style in his short stories is savoured.

Endangered Species (Orbit, paperback, £4.99) provides both the fat and the lean for eager fans. There are truly short stories such as *When I Was Ming The Merciless*, where a petty tyrant tries to explain his shortcomings, and *The Headless Man*, where one apparently mutant boy finds an apparently mutant girl. These are spiced with longer tales, such as *The Tale Of The Rose And The Nightingale, Silhouette* and my favourite, *The Last Thrilling Wonder Story*.

Each story has appeared elsewhere in magazines or anthologies and this book, though not a complete collection,

OPERATION SATURN

The Third Deluxe Collector's Edition of Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future

This April sees the fortieth anniversary of Dan Dare's first appearance in Eagle comic. The character may live on, but has had a chequered career since the glorious heydays of the fifties and early sixties.

Luckily for those old enough to remember his exploits then, and a whole new unaware audience, Hawk Books started facsimile reprints of the Dan Dare adventures as they appeared originally, scrupulously starting from day one and presented in the original Eagle size with nothing edited or changed, unlike an earlier effort by Paper Tiger which though welcome, could not resist tampering with the presentation.

The costly gamble seems to have paid off: the third volume (Feb 53 — May 54) is out and a joy to behold. Colour reproduction is stunning, considering it's from printed material, and the strip as devised by ground breaking Frank Hampson and his hard working team so long ago still sparkles with intelligence, humour and action never seen in today's boys' comics. The technology might have dated in places, but the plot keeps you turning the — giant — pages.

The hardback isn't cheap at £17.95, but well worth it. Jumping Jets! Having been launched into an illustrating career by my first encounter with Dan Dare at the tender age of eight, I can't wait for the next volume and hope the series will reach completeness.

Oliver Frey

gives some indication of Wolfe's abilities in the fields of fantasy, horror and science fiction. There are even two shorts, set in the world of The New Sun — The Map and The Cat. So this book has something for everyone, no matter what their genre, addictions or general tastes. Devour and enjoy.

John Gilbert

MAD MOON OF DREAMS

This is the concluding chapter of Brian Lumley's *Hero* trilogy (Headline, paperback, £3.50), in which Hero and Eldin lead a strange band of braves from the more usual landscapes of the Dreamlands to the strange moon hanging above the Earth.

This moon is inhabited by Mnomquah, a lizard god who crashed through the universe with dread Cthulhu and the other Great Old Ones bringing a new brutality to the young and chaos riven world.

Now that moon is about to fall out of orbit, finally bringing Mnomquah to the pit where his mate Oorn The Awful lies in wait. Their mating will coincide with the moon's final destruction, bringing death to all who live in the Dreamlands. Hero's new quest this time is not only to save the Earth from the dread Great Old Ones and their minions, but also from a grand natural disaster.

Brian Lumley gets better with each passing book. *Mad Moon Of Dreams* is written with all the confidence of a master reaching new heights in the pulp fantasy adventure. He has done something new for that genre, rejecting conventions, and hopefully, re-energising a field that most fans thought was dead and buried, just as he has done for vampires with his *Necroscope* novels.

The *Hero* novels are already gaining cult classic status, harking back to the golden days of fantasy when sex was not just a sentence away and violence didn't come by the pageful. Buy all three and be transported.

John Gilbert

ASIMOV'S CHRONOLOGY OF SCIENCE AND DISCOVERY

This veritable tome of 710 pages, collated by SF author Isaac Asimov (Grafton, hardback, £14.95) charts the development of life, the universe and everything from four million BC to 1988 — that's AD. Naturally, many of the entries are less prominent and informative than some encyclopaedias, but the book

SIGNING SESSION

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and
Neil Gaiman
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VAMPIRE MIND GAMES

CARRION COMFORT

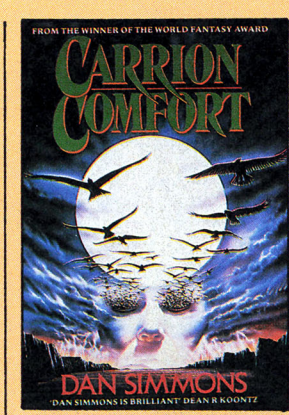
Dan Simmons
Publisher **Headline**
Format **HB, £14.95**
Category **Horror**

At last, World Fantasy award winner Dan Simmons hits the big time in the UK. *Carrion Comfort* is his first British mass market hardback, and it's easy to see why. The novel takes some comparatively old ideas, most recently found in the works of Colin Wilson and Ira Levin, and combines them into something that is startlingly unique.

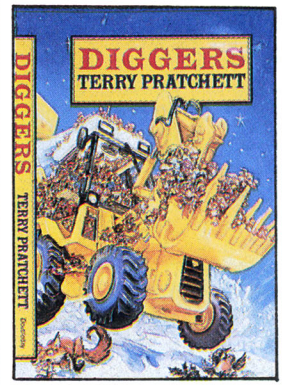
A group of mind vampires use their talents to play ruthless games with the minds and bodies of others. They share one goal; to enter the minds of human beings and force them to commit remote control murder, scoring points for their resourcefulness. This vicious game continues for decades until the group is split when one vampire determines to destroy the others. The Nazi mind vampire, known to his friends as Willi, apparently dies in an aircrash, at which point Melanie, a bittersweet and increasingly mad old lady murders the one whom she thinks is responsible — the third of the group, Nina.

Enter the novel's heroine, a young black girl called Natalie, whose father is needlessly killed by Melanie when Nina shuffles off the world stage. Quickly joining forces with an old Nazi hunter, Saul Laski, Natalie discovers that there are more than three of these vampires. Many of the others have hoisted themselves into positions of power, forming an elite club which during the summer months meets on a discreet island, where they play hunting games

They allow no one to stand in their way, and Simmons is rightfully ruthless with some of his characters, introducing them, expanding them and then, just when you think they'll be in



the game to the finish, heartlessly killing them. By the end of the book you wonder whether any of the central characters are going to survive. Simmons offers no signs of hope, just plays it like real life. Add to that his incomparable style and you've got a novel which may not be as tight as it could be, but fulfils all the requirements for grande entertainment.
John Gilbert



DIGGERS

Ever keen to show that his humour should not be regarded purely as the property of adults, *Discworld* author Terry Pratchett launches *Diggers* (Doubleday, hardback, £8.95), a sequel to *Truckers*, for a young audience.

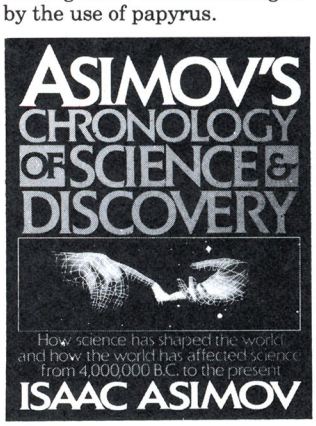
The book continues the story of the Nomes, entertaining little chaps — and chapesses — who were recently forced out of their cosy retreat within the bowels of a department store. They end up in an old used-up quarry which becomes home until the winter draws in and those awfully unfriendly human types decided to recommence digging.

Three nomic heroes are sent off to find another abode while the rest of the community dig in and try to defend their newly acquired territory from the mechanical interlopers. Their only defence is the monster Jekub, but even this is unlikely to win the fight against the crushing maw of human progress. The little guys appear to be doomed, but I suspect Pratchett doesn't know how to write a truly unhappy ending, so you can look forward to a happy and entertaining climax.

Diggers may not be one of Terry's famous tales but it contains some of the most enchanting characters I've ever stumbled across during my love affair with his books. If you're a Pratchett fan, don't be put off by the proclamations that this is a 'childrens' book'; it's not necessarily, and it'll fill a gap while you're waiting for the continuing adventures of the world on the turtle's back.
Mark Westerby

does give an idea of the major inventions created since bi-peds roamed the Earth.

I found it a startling read: stone tools were developed during the two million BC period, fire around the 500,000 mark and portable light in 20,000 BC. You soon begin to realise that many of the inventions we regard as relatively new in fact date back to discoveries made during the BC years or early AD. Sciences such as astronomy grew out of astrology, and modern-day writing skills were encouraged by the use of papyrus.



Asimov has put his information into an interesting format, with regard to development rather than classification. As such, it's not much of a reference work — although a comprehensive index exists at the back — but for those long, boring history or science lessons, it'll prove a teacher's pet.
Mark Westerby

SPACED OUT

TEKWAR

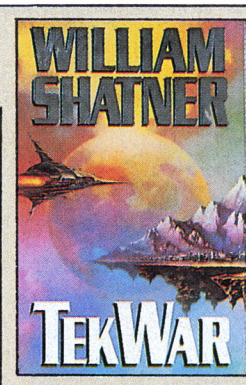
Author William Shatner
Publisher **Bantam**
Format **HB, £12.95**
Category **Science fiction**

Nice idea: a Chandleresque SF novel that returns ex-policeman Jake Cardigan back to Earth after serving an aborted prison sentence in cyrogenic stasis. His crime? Dealing Tek, an electronic hallucinogenic drug, banned because it gives addicts a warm corner, away from reality. But Jake was framed and the movers behind his release know that he will do anything for revenge.

Back home, Jake discovers that his wife has left him, taking his son to Mexico. For a short time his world falls apart, and he takes his Tek dispensing machine from under his bed and falls into a world in which his family still surrounds him.

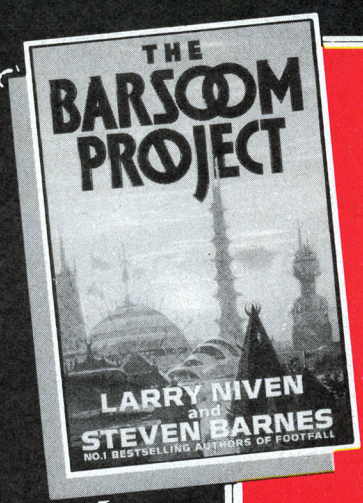
He is torn from these visions by his ex-partner, Gomez who forces him to face reality and take on the task of finding Dr Leon Kittridge and his daughter Beth who vanished after a plane crash in the Mexican jungle. A series of deadly events — a suicide trip android, a killer cyborg — leads him to a robotic simulacrum of Beth Kittridge. She has all the personal attributes of the real woman, all except her memory of before the accident. Cardigan soon learns why she has such a block. But the discovery could lead him back to jail before he concludes the case and wreaks his revenge.

TekWar provides an interesting storyline but could do with some grammatical trimming. Shatner's use of commas and full stops is often irritating, and sometimes dialogue is split in mid-sentence to allow the clumsy insertion of a noun and verb or adjective. As a first-time novelist Shatner can be absolved, but should the same be said of his editor who



appears to have left the writer's manuscript virgin in deference to his star status?

Shatner's stardom has, without doubt, aided the passage of this book onto the bestseller lists, but I doubt it would have happened like this if his name was not associated with *Star Trek*. I'm sure that some struggling novelists will be as sick as parrots at his sudden success and the amount of publicity that has been relished on this uninspired, barely average book. Ah, well — c'est la vie!
John Gilbert



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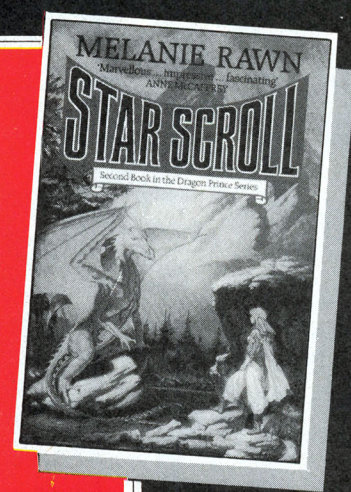
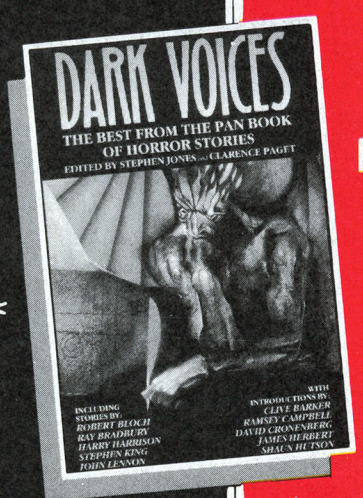


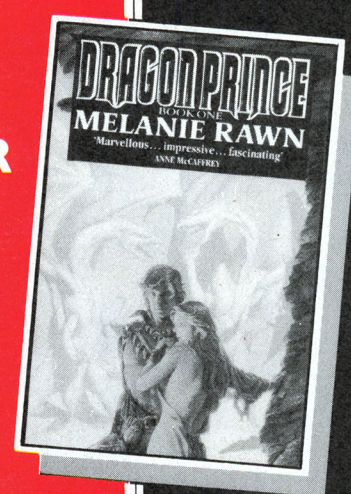
WATCH OUT FOR

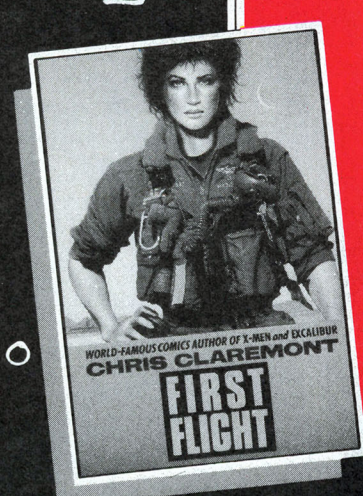
THE NEW FORCE IN SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY AND HORROR

APRIL 1990

The Barsoom Project
Larry Niven and Steven Barnes
Star Scroll
Melanie Rawn
Dark Voices: The Best from the Pan Books of Horror Stories
Edited by Stephen Jones and Clarence Paget
Dragon Prince
Melanie Rawn
Jason Cosmo
Dan McGirt
First Flight
Chris Claremont







Pan Books

GRAPHIC D

Beginning a graphic novel collection? Warren Lapworth shows the way...

From March till May, Titan's 'Best Of British' graphic novel promotion will impose its presence upon bookshops, plugging various British-born graphic novels. With *Killing Joke, Watchmen, Swamp Thing* and *Tapping the Vein* (no prizes for guessing who Britain's most recognised comics writer is), it will make many high quality graphic novels readily available. Shame they couldn't reduce the prices...

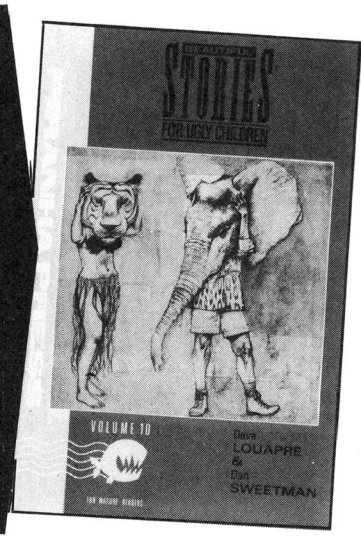
VENGEANCE RIDES AGAIN

He's back! Marvel's *Ghost Rider* has been given a second series, with Daniel Ketch as the new demonic biker. An off-shoot of Marvel's horror comic era of the early Seventies, the original *Ghost Rider* is one of my all-time favourite comics. A minion of the Devil, the flame-skulled Rider possessed the body of Jonathan Blaze and, when allowed to emerge by the frightened Blaze, would conjure up a cycle of fantastic speed and burn the souls of the guilty with his hellfire. In later issues, Blaze had to struggle to keep the demon within him: issues 60-78 were beautifully drawn and well scripted, all worth a **FEAR** reader's attention.

At the beginning of the second series, it's Halloween and Daniel and his sister, Barbara, witness a gangland killing. Barbara is shot and while hiding in a pile of scrapped vehicles Dan sees the glowing petrol cap of a strangely clean motorcycle. He touches it and is transformed into the Ghost Rider. This time around, the Rider is wilder than ever. With metal spikes all over his black leathers, wielding a lashing chain and riding a futuristic motorbike with wheels of flame, Javier Saltares and Mark Texeira's art portrays him well — grim, evil and dynamic. Howard Mackie's plotting is already more mainstream superhero than the original series but captures the right essence. Straight-ahead ghostly horror action; great fun.

JIM'S BEAUTIFUL PETS

Beautiful Stories For Ugly Children 10 (Piranha Press, £1.25, import) is set at 'Safari Jim's Last Chance Gas/Jungle Petting Zoo and Luau', a gas station in Dolphin County run by Jim and Connie, a hula dancer. Hitting on hard times, they do their best to generate trade with a mini zoo. Dan Sweetman's soothing pencil artwork accompanies Dave Louapre's brief text. It's a calm, readable tale but rather ordinary in comparison to earlier, alarming *Beautiful Stories*.

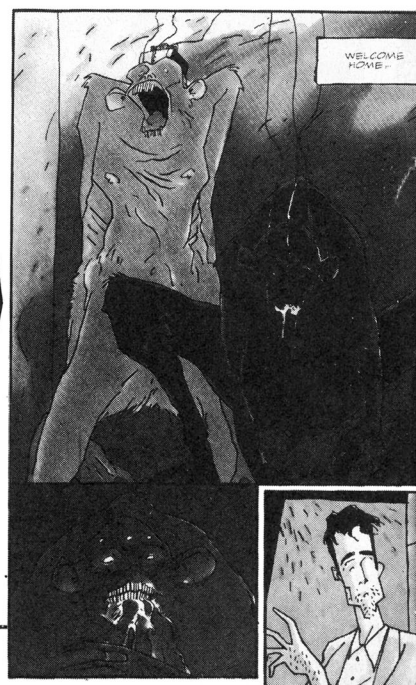


A-TIME TO WATCH

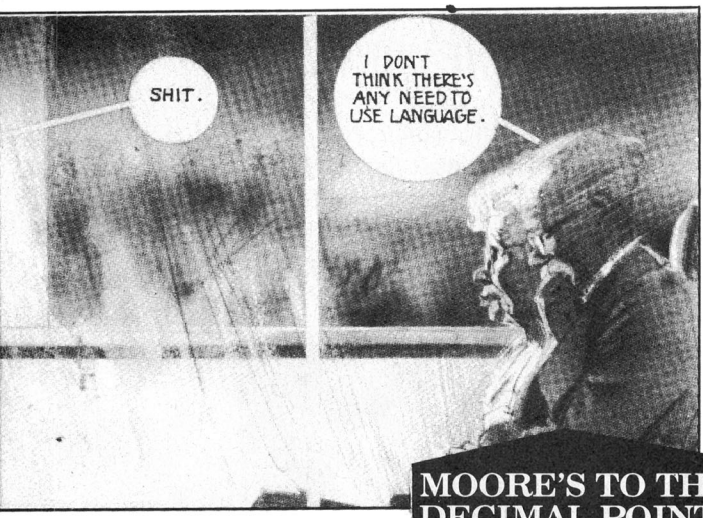
Part two of First Publishing's *Squalor* (£1.75, import) shows the aftermath of weirdo Harry's jaunt into A-space, a colourful dreamlike world of the subconscious which has an unbalancing effect on the mind — certainly it isn't helpful to Professor Tippicks, who Harry takes to A-space. From just this issue, it's difficult to judge the merits of *Squalor*. The art's rough and limp in places but it's helped by lively colouring and plot... Interesting but as yet non-cohesive.

SYNTHETIC DIVISIONS

The Epic division of Marvel Comics is developing some sort of fetish for household objects. First there was *Stray Toasters*, now we have *Plastic Forks* (£3.50, import). Written and drawn by Ted McKeever, the first issue, *Trauma Humane*, strikes a blow against animal experimentation. A doctor is developing the theory and devices to allow a single person to be both father and mother of a child; fertilisation without intercourse. A simple but thought-provoking, if not to say bizarre story, matched with distinctive angular art, *Plastic Forks* 1 is grim and well worthy of purchase.

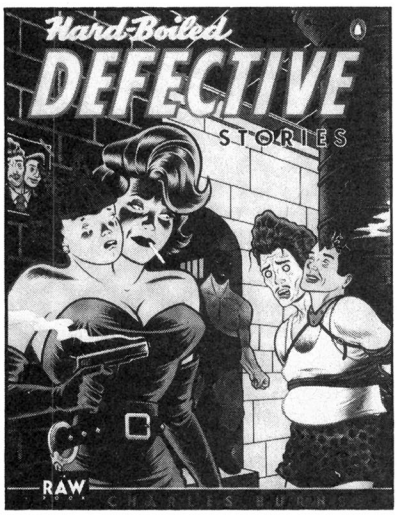


ETAIL



MOORE'S TO THE DECIMAL POINT

Again teaming with Bill Sienkiewicz, Alan Moore begins a 12 issue series, *Big Numbers*, for Mad Love (£2.75). From issue one, it's difficult to tell where it's heading. Christine returns to her home after ten years in London, Monica has just been released from Holloway prison, and a huge complex of glass and steel is about to be built. The destination for all three is Hampton, but no significance is made of this in the first issue. Sienkiewicz' mono pencilled artwork is both realistic and striking, although thus far there's been too little of the puzzling plot for him to work on.



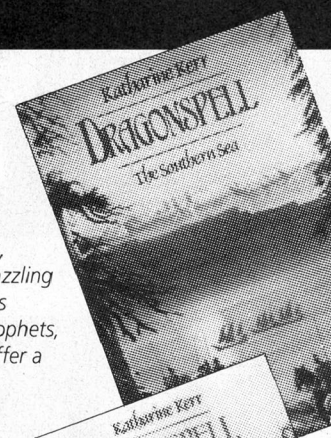
TRULY DEFECTIVE STORIES

El Borbah is an overweight private detective, although the leotard and mask he always wears imply a wrestling background. *Hard-boiled Defective Stories* (Penguin, £7.99) gathers five of his monochrome adventures into a single, tedious volume. Visuals are good — old-fashioned, crude and weakly shaded yet oddly appealing — but plot and dialogue are terrible. Fifties detective B-movie mixed with childish wacky SF/fantasy, it's highly bizarre but rapidly yawn inducing.

HISTORY IN THE REMAKING

Hard Core Horror (£1.25) puts a little blood and gore into the telling of history, with Lord Horror, a stylish man with a Mohican hairstyle, as the focal point. He's married to Jessie Matthews and his brother is James Joyce. Winston Churchill guest stars. Art (by Kris Guidido) is rough in many places, stipple shading crude; David Britton's hollow plot is text-heavy, its style implies novel/short story origins. An oddity, but not one of value.

DISCOVER
the new worlds



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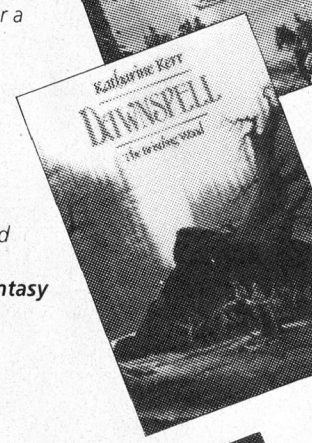

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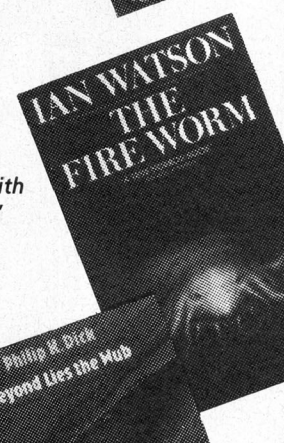

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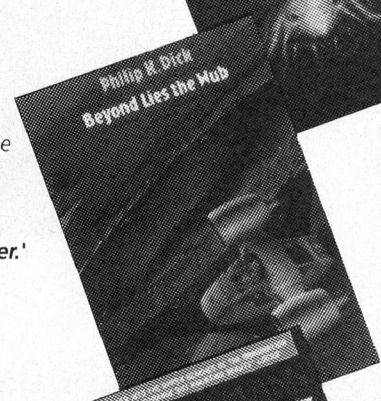

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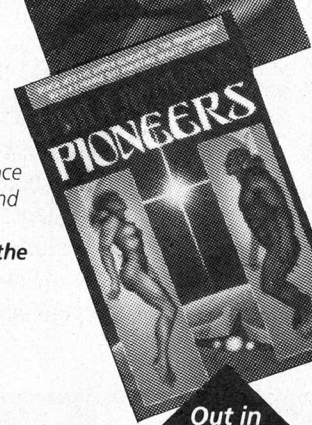

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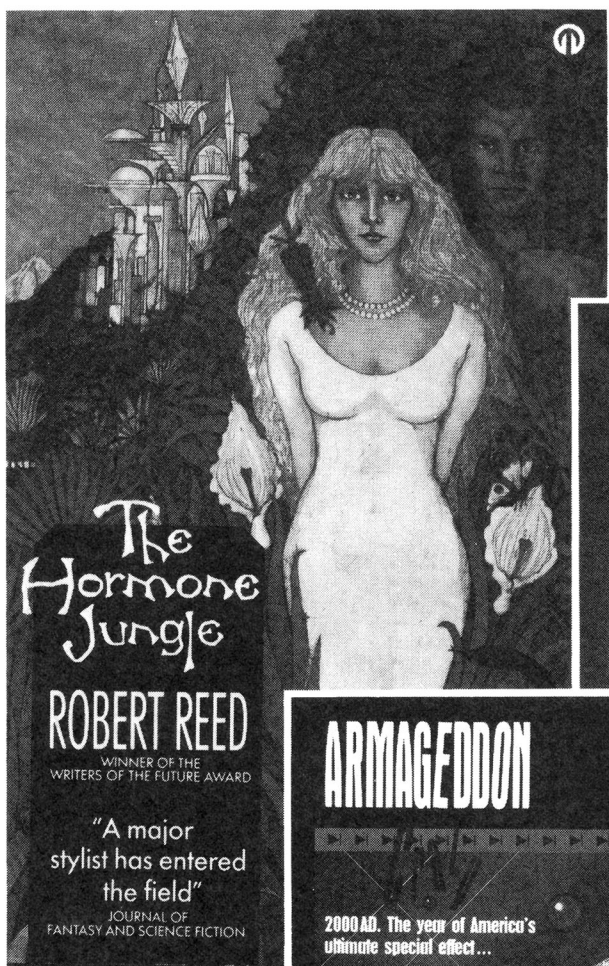

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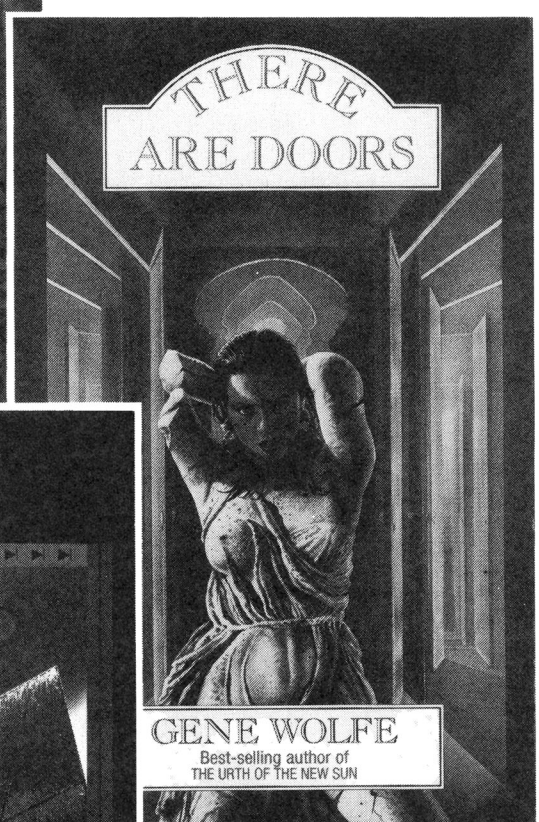

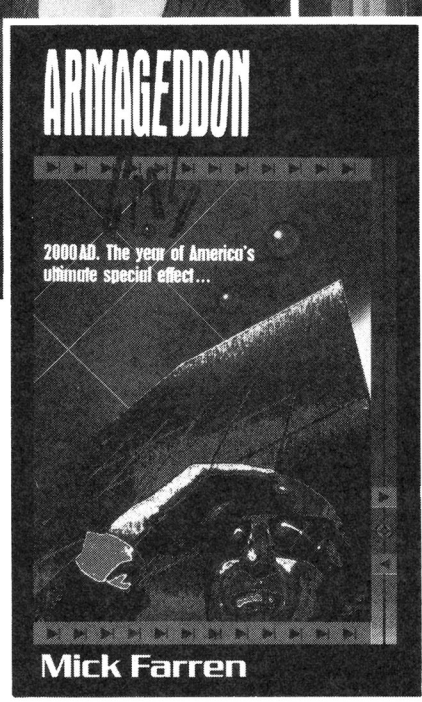

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B Format

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ORBIT

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RHAPSODY IN PINK

SHE DEVIL

Starring: **Meryl Streep, Roseanne Barr, Ed Begley Jr, Sylvia Miles, Linda Hunt**
Director **Susan Seidelman**
Distributor **Rank**
Cert PG

Ruth Patchet's life is ruled by mediocrity, revolving around housework, childcare, and the upkeep of a mundane but functioning marriage. Enter romantic novelist Mary Fisher (Streep), swathed in flowing chiffon — a rhapsody in pink — oozing arriviste wealth from every air-brushed pore, and lusting voraciously after hubby Bob. 'I try to think only beautiful thoughts... ' she breathes huskily before enticing him to her boudoir where multi-orgasmic delights await.

Ruth is at first philosophical ('I *hate* Mary Fisher'), but when Bob packs his bags and moves into the 'pink palace' with his new paramour, all hell breaks loose. Having been told by her slimy husband that she is a She Devil, Ruth decides to play the part to the full and promptly burns down the house, before systematically screwing up the lives of both her errant hubby and Ms Fisher.

Having previously been crucified in a TV mini-series, Fay Weldon's novel reappears as a Seidelman adaptation which goes some way towards repairing the damage, but also serves to highlight the shortcomings of the overpraised source. Nicely over-the-top performances by Begley and Streep make for an amusing and quick-witted first half, Seidelman positively relishing the chance to push the kitsch gross-out factor into overdrive. Yet whilst the initial impetus is strong, and the point well made that physical beauty is but a veneer, Barr's subsequent descent into demonic fury soon turns the movie into a mere catalogue of domestic disasters: as with *The War Of The Roses*, our interest declines at the point where the protagonists settle down to a straightforward war of attrition. Nevertheless, it is a worthy bash at an awkward text, and it's almost worth it just to see la Streep camping it up for once.

Mark Kermode

DE LAURENTIS COMEBACK

Uncut video versions of The Abyss and Aliens, Arnie dives in and ducks out of Predator 2, Dino de Laurentis rides into town, and New Line go for comic book character, The Mask. John Glenday has the latest movie news.

The underwater genre bows out with the release of *Leviathan* in May, and it will no doubt leave a bitter taste in the mouth.

The much hyped fad proved to be a major disappointment, with all of the movies jumping on the *The Abyss* bandwagon, which itself sank with a lot of interest, but little to show in the money stakes. Now, Twentieth Century Fox is rumoured to be giving the film a second chance on its video release by allowing director James Cameron to restore original footage cut out because of studio pressure. If Cameron is allowed to present the film in the way it was meant to be seen, it would show that the 'pizza out of the sea' sequence actually makes sense. We would also get to see the aliens holding the Earth at gunpoint by suspending tidal waves over major cities of the world.

At press time there is no release date for the video version of *The Abyss*, but at least Cameron can derive some added pleasure soon when *Aliens* is released in the UK in its original form. In the restored version, Ripley returns from deep space to find that the daughter she left behind as a child has grown into an adult while she was drifting about the cosmos between films. This gives meaning to the bond between Ripley and Newt later in the film, with Newt becoming a surrogate daughter.

Mr Cameron will hopefully have more luck with the production of his new wife's project, *Johnny Utah*. Kathryn Bigelow directs Lost Boy Keanu Reeves in this non-genre cop thriller.

As a footnote, I think it worth mentioning that the release date for *Alien 3* has been set, even though the film has yet to make it into production. It is expected to hit the screens in the US on May 23, 1991.

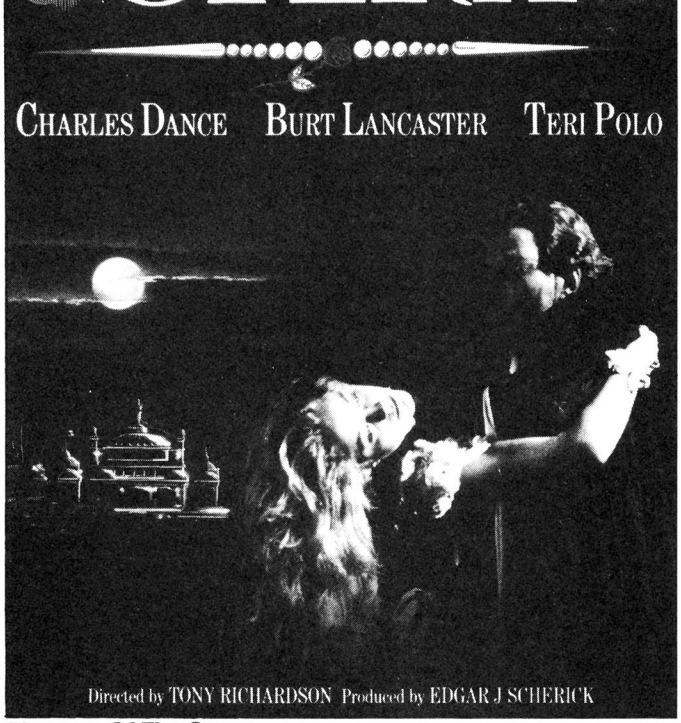
MILIUS MUSCLE

Sword and sorcery could return soon as the original *Conan The Barbarian* director, John Milius takes a second stab at directing *Alexander The Great*. Milius's desperation to direct the definitive movie of muscle and witchcraft has driven him to draw on a story loosely based on history! The compact Nineties' version of Arnold Schwarzeneggar, Jean Claude Van Damme (*Kickboxer, Bloodsport*) plays the hero when shooting commences later this year at Pinewood.

More *Predator 2* news: the production recently went on hold when Schwarzeneggar expressed an interest in starring in the sequel, but his interest soon waned and work resumed immediately with the casting of the remainder of the film. No time was wasted in mustering an ass-kicking gang to help Danny Glover beat the dozen or so aliens expected to appear. Joining Glover will be *Lethal Weapon* baddy Gary Busey, *Aliens* veteran Bill Paxton and Sean Penn's love interest from *Colors*, Maria Conchita Alonsa (she also appeared in *The Running Man*). *Predator 2* is released in the US at Christmas and will probably hit UK screens in early 1991.

PHANTOM'S DANCE

Freddy's bosses at New Line are desperately seeking to recreate the winning formula of sequelitis, having recently blown one chance with *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3: Leatherface*. New Line has turned to comic characters for salvation, purchasing the film rights to Dark Horse comics' character The Mask. Wasting no time, the company immediately lined up an eight million dollar budget and are about to start shooting. Expect sequels, as it appears that New Line will continue this approach to filmmaking until the money runs out. It's sad; I don't mind sequels, but I don't



Phantom Of The Opera

want continually to watch the television series, wear the T-shirt/badge/watch, eat the pie, etc.

Titbit corner: Stanley Kubrick's new film has the working title of *Prometheus* and will involve big bucks and big sets — and it won't be 2061, as some rumours suggest.

Dino de Laurentis is back with a vengeance! Having recently been discharged from bankruptcy, Dino has returned to his movie career with renewed vigour. His first production will be *Evil Dead 3*, which is slated to start shooting in the late spring.

Also billed is a screen adaptation of Stephen King's short story, *Sometimes They Come Back*, which is obviously Dino's attempt to cash in on *Pet Sematary*. There's life in the old dog yet.

And finally, another version of *Phantom Of The Opera* has appeared, with little warning. It will appear on video and has Charles Dance playing an extremely debonair phantom. Burt Lancaster is on hand to assist, and with a running time of three and a half hours, the film needs all the help it can get. Coming soon to a video store near you!

COMMUNION

Starring **Christopher Walken, Lindsay Crouse**
Director **Philippe Mora**
Distributor **Vestron**
Cert TBA

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with claiming that a clearly fallacious but nonetheless exciting story is actually true — indeed, the oral mythical and folk-tale traditions draw heavily upon such a technique. Yet, as director Stuart Rosenberg discovered when transferring Jay Anson's *Amityville Horror* to the screen, celluloid magnifies rather than shrinks the credibility gap which the 'modern myth' genre attempts to bridge. This is a shortcoming horribly apparent in *Communion*.

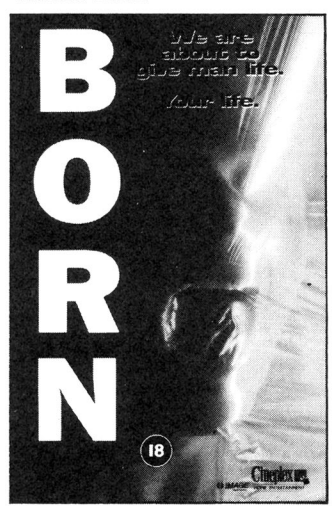
Whilst author Whitley Strieber sought to convince the public that his tale was not a sci-fi fantasy but a documentary account of alien abduction, the transference from impenetrable text to big screen entertainment has destroyed the one thing which Strieber's story had going for it — the veneer of authenticity — leaving merely a substandard sci-fi romp which plagiarises both *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* and ends up stranded in a twilight nether-region between fantasy and farce. Gone is the ambiguity present in the novel (did it happen or was it merely hallucination?); this is replaced with laughable visuals which entirely belie Mora's claim that he resisted the temptation to 'goose it up'. Masked aliens remove their outer shells to reveal monstrous visages which seem strangely appropriate in this pantomime adaptation. Walken battles valiantly to anchor the movie in some form of credibility, even when surrounded by disco dancing Ewok-type teddy bears (I kid you not), or being anally examined with what appears to be a pepper-pot attached to the end of a hose-pipe. It's a losing battle, however, as Mora bathes the screen for the umpteenth time in Industrial Light and Magic-esque splendour, and pumps up another notch the horrifically misplaced, droning soundtrack. A horribly misguided affair.
Mark Kermode

B.O.R.N.

Starring: **Ross Hagen, Hoke Howell, P J Soles, William Smith, Russ Tamblyn, Amanda Blake**
Director **Ross Hagen**
Distributor **Parkfield Entertainment**
Cert 18, 87 mins
Rental

'Somewhere in a city of 17.5 million people, medical science has created a modern nightmare...'

The city in *B.O.R.N.* is anytown, USA and the nightmare concerns a secret organisation, the Body Organ Replacement Network, which trades in human organs obtained from less than willing donors. B.O.R.N. picks people up off the street and removes their vital parts, which it then sells to the highest bidder. But the forces of evil have reckoned without Buck.



Buck?

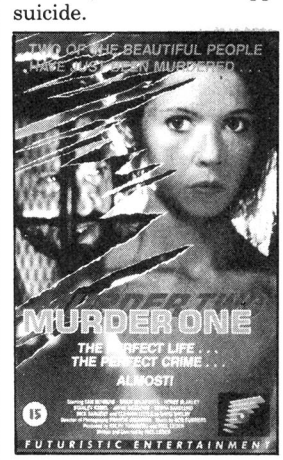
When our hero, an out-of-town rancher and foster father of sixteen discovers that a clutch of his daughters has been kidnapped, he sets off on a quest to recover them. His search is punctuated (as naturally it would be) by a few beers and lots of buddy talk with his old friend, an ex police department investigator. However, when the owners of B.O.R.N. realise that Buck is a living witness to their unethical practices, they set out to obliterate him, together with the rest of his sizeable brood.

Hot on the heels of the latest real life scandals concerning the illegal trade in human organs, *B.O.R.N.* begins as an interesting metaphor for the moral decay besetting American urban life ('This whole world's just a stinkin' toilet, waitin' to be flushed,' says Buck lyrically), then blows it with a poor script, bad acting and a method of film direction which seems to have taken the current ad agency theory about ten second bites very seriously indeed. Though liberally laced with action scenes and operating room gore, *B.O.R.N.* fails to entertain simply because it lacks the basic ingredients necessary to the craft of successful filmmaking.
Patience Coster

MURDER ONE MURDER TWO

Starring: **Sam Behrens, Shari Belafonte, Cleavon Little, Dick Sargent, Debra Sandlund, Stanley Kamel**
Director **Paul Leder**
Distributor **Futuristic Entertainment**
Cert 15, 90 mins
Rental

Bearded lawyer hero, Lee (Behrens) is a very inquisitive man. So when Walter, the gay brother of his ex-wife goes missing and is then found dead, he begins to work out exactly what happened. Suicide is ruled out when a dodgy deal is uncovered, Walter's business partner, Lisa (Belafonte) having forged his signature to complete the exchange of his £35 million home for ten paintings by his lover, Richard. This highly uneven trade, instituted to prevent will difficulties, implies that Richard is the murderer, abetted by Lisa and her lawyer. But then Murder Two: that of Richard, and another supposed suicide.



Though Lee is motivated by the desire to get back together with his ex-wife, this is not enough for him to do *everything*, and he gets his new housekeeper, David (an ex-con just released from prison!) to do his dirty work. The pieces of the puzzle fall into place (I love a good cliché), and Lee gradually tracks the greedy murderer.

Murder One Murder Two has a glossy, TV movie feel, albeit not as polished as the glamorous world implied by the packaging

KIRK'S LAST STAND

STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER

Starring: **William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, James Doohan, DeForest Kelly**
Director **William Shatner**
Distributor **CIC**
Cert PG
Rental

Kirk and the crew

It didn't take long for this little gem to appear on video, probably because it's not the most successful Trekkie movie to date.

When I first saw William Shatner's attempts to match Leonard Nimoy's obvious directing talents, I wanted to throw up. The sledgehammer humour, the sickening sentimentality and the aborted message of this movie had me heaving to leave my cinema seat. The last thing I wanted to do was see it on video.

But I tempted fate, slipped the preview cassette in the slot and was treated to an object lesson in expectation. Truthfully, I expected *The Final Frontier* to be awful when I first saw it, but sitting down to watch it a second time made me appreciate its good points.

The movie is a visual treat and Shatner has tried to include shots that are slightly different from the SF norm and take you back to the original premise of *Star Trek*, where the Enterprise was regarded as a tall galleon. Unfortunately, this presentation was somewhat muted by budgetry and time restraints. It was also brave of Shatner to include the idea of ageing within the film. Although Nimoy played with the concept in *The Wrath Of Khan*, Shatner goes further, and for the first time we can see that even heroes age. Many fans, and critics, were not pleased with the constant reminders of mortality — which in cases such as Kirk's 'I'll die alone speech' were pretty sickening. But the idea was sound, and bravo to Bill Shatner for using it.

So, despite its many flaws, Shatner's vision of the *Star Trek* universe has some validity; I would even venture to say that it beats the storyline and characterisation of the first movie. A great chasm may exist between the remarkable Nimoy, (*The Wrath Of Khan, The Search For Spock, The Voyage Home*) and this effort, but that should not condemn the movie to celluloid limbo. This reviewer's view is duly reappraised.
John Gilbert

Rushweek

blurb. The overriding style of the story, the look and the casting, is that of pretty much any American cop show — *Miami Vice* mixed with *Cagney and Lacey* and *Dynasty*. Lee is a plain, carbon-copy amateur detective, and the only character to stick in the mind is Cleavon Little as David, who delivers his sarcastic lines dead-pan and with a disdained expression.
Warren Lapworth

FOOD OF THE GODS 2

***Starring*: Paul Coufos, Lisa Schrage, Jackie Burroughs**
Director: **Damian Lee**
Distributor: **Guild**
Cert 18, 83 mins
Rental

Oh dear, Dr Kates is in a real mess, she had this kid in her clinic and he wouldn't grow. So she gave him some of her growth serum, and now the eight year old boy is TEN feet tall. Wow! It's time to call former pupil Prof Neil Hamilton down at the university in the hope that he can develop an antidote. Anyway, after some animal

rights types bust up the Prof's Lab, some formerly cuddly — but now contaminated — rats escape to freedom in the sewers (GASP!). Let's call in Rat-A-Tak. Now, these guys are great. One of them is a super Clint Eastwood take-off and the other a classic Shreddie (see page 26). Well, they didn't help much. So the rats are on the rampage, ripping out students' throats and the like. Well, now the Prof's just going to have to go down the sewers — with a cute girl student, of course — and sort these rodents out. Meanwhile, back at the clinic, the big kid's busting out.

Straight into... *Gods 3*, no doubt.

Well, it was a good laugh I suppose.
David Western

RUSHWEEK

Starring: **Dean Hamilton, Courtney Gebhart, Don Grant, Roy Thinnes**
Director **Bob Bralver**
Distributor **Guild**
Cert 18, 96 mins
Rental

I thought axe-wielding maniacs had gone out the window since Jason so unsuccessfully went to New York, but no, here we have a cloaked chopper carving up the chicks on yet another American campus during the local Rushweek rag.

The problem is that, even in its campier moments, you're not sure whether the director of *Rushweek* is making a serious horror movie or just a mickey-take. True *Friday The 13th* tension takes the place of graphic gore but the characters are so unbelievable, so stereotypical. First, you have the luscious college undergraduate working for the campus rag, who uncovers a series of student deaths which the Dean (played with unusual crustiness and grey hair by Roy Thinnes) and her hippy editor, laugh off.

Then there's the head of wild BCB sorority whose previous girlfriend, who later turns out to be the Dean's daughter, was murdered during the previous year's Rushweek. Cameo characters include the token young gay (with all the attendant clichés), a kitchen worker who takes nudie snaps of the local girls, and two Laurel and Hardy campus security guards who travel around in a milkfloat-cum-golfmobile. It comes as no surprise that all are red herrings and the vicious murderer is easy to spot.

Rushweek is another schmaltzy teen horror flick which you view when there's nothing else to do. If you just remember that, you won't go wrong when renting.
John Gilbert

ROBOT JOX

Starring: **Gary Graham, Anne-Marie Johnson, Paul Koslo**
Director **Stuart Gordon**
Distributor **Entertainment in Video**
Cert 15, 81 mins
Rental

Basing a movie on a range of toys was the novel idea behind *Masters of the Universe*, and this science fiction actioner aims to repeat the notion by putting the popular Transformers robot toys into a real world.

Fifty years after a near final nuclear holocaust and the outlawing of war, international territorial disputes are settled by good old-fashioned single combat. Giant robots, piloted by champions sitting in a cockpit built into their chest, fight it out in a vast arena before the gaping crowds.

Stuart Gordon, well known for *Re-Animator* delivers a slick

Robot Jox

look at the lives of the champions, their loves, their antagonisms, and adds a good dollop of treachery and wheeler dealing. But, the real stars are the robots. David Allen's special effects manage to make their colossal size quite believable, as did *The Empire Strikes Back* years ago with its At-Ats.

The movie looks expensive, is beautifully shot and crisply edited for fast paced action. The characters may be one dimensional, but do push the plot along effectively to the final climactic battle, where the human hearts of the fighting machines discover that some things never change: the respect for a good fighting opponent. All in all very entertaining.

Oliver Frey

WICKED STEPMOTHER

Starring: **Bette Davis, Barbara Carrera, Colleen Camp, Lionel Stander, David Rasche, Tom Bosley, Richard Moll, Seymour Cassel, Evelyn Keyes, Laurene Landon**
Director **Larry Cohen**
Distributor **MGM/UA**
Cert PG, 90 mins
Rental

When Lieutenant Macintosh (Tom Bosley) discovers an American family shrunk to lilliputian size and decanted into a shoe-box, he suspects foul play. The little folk explain that an elderly woman wormed her way into their household, only to reduce them to this and abscond with the family fortune. Macintosh resolves to find the culprit, but an identity parade of little old ladies proves fruitless.

When upwardly mobile lawyer Steven and his wife Jenny return home from holiday they find that there is a new woman in Jenny's father's life. In their absence, Sam (Lionel Stander) has married Miranda (Bette Davis) who, to the dismay of this po-faced vegetarian, non-smoking couple, has introduced him to the delights of sex, meat, cigarettes and daytime TV. 'It was never like this with your mother,' he confides to Jenny, as she gazes wistfully at a framed photo of Mom (Joan Crawford, naturally). Jenny is appalled that Sam has found true love with this repulsive old witch (yes, witch...), but there are a number of other things which puzzle her — Miranda's presence has triggered off her allergy to cats, although there doesn't appear to be a cat in the house, the TV reception has miraculously improved and hairs are beginning to sprout on Sam's bald pate.

Enter Miranda's exotic, erotic 'daughter' Priscilla (Barbara Carrera), whose effect on the male members of the household is even more startling than her mother's, and whose mischievous sorcery is certainly more destructive. At last, Jenny decides that something must be done about these domineering women if she is to prevent her family life falling apart.

A prolific writer/director/producer of low budget horror films (*It's Alive, Demon, It Lives Again*, etc) which consistently lampoon the neuroses of middle America, Larry Cohen uses his skill at touching a topical nerve to camp effect in his latest 'black comedy'. Though frequently written off as exploitation entertainment 'in the worst possible taste', Cohen films occupy a sub-genre in American filmmaking as distinct as the Corman-produced films of the Seventies, in that they are consistently witty, well-made and 'subversive'. Self-reflexive jokes abound in the Cohen universe — as when Jenny douses Priscilla with water in order to divest her of her witch's powers: 'It didn't work, did it Dorothy?' shrieks Priscilla, 'This is reality, not MGM!' And there are some neat special effects too. Wicked, witty and totally entertaining; rush to your rental store now.

Patience Coster

Barbara Carrera stirs it in Wicked Stepmother

HALLOWEEN 4: THE RETURN OF MICHAEL MYERS

Starring: **Donald Pleasance, Ellie Cornell, Danielle Harris, Michael Pataki, Beau Starr**
Director **Dwight H Little**
Distributor **Braveworld**
Cert 18, 85 mins
Rental

Reviewed as a cinema release in **FEAR** 12, *Halloween 4* returns us to the darkened streets of Haddonfield, the Illinois town Myers stalked ten years ago. On October 31, 1989, he's back, having escaped during a transfer to a state hospital. The masked Myers is out for the blood of his niece but of course

SPOT THE BOIL

HOW TO GET AHEAD IN ADVERTISING

Starring: **Richard E Grant, Rachel Ward**
Director **Bruce Robinson**
Distributor **CIC**
Cert 18, 96 mins
Rental

You know that something is dramatically wrong the moment you see a ranting Richard E Grant running stark naked through his garden, pursued by a hypo-wielding doctor. The problem? A huge, talking boil on the side of Grant's neck!

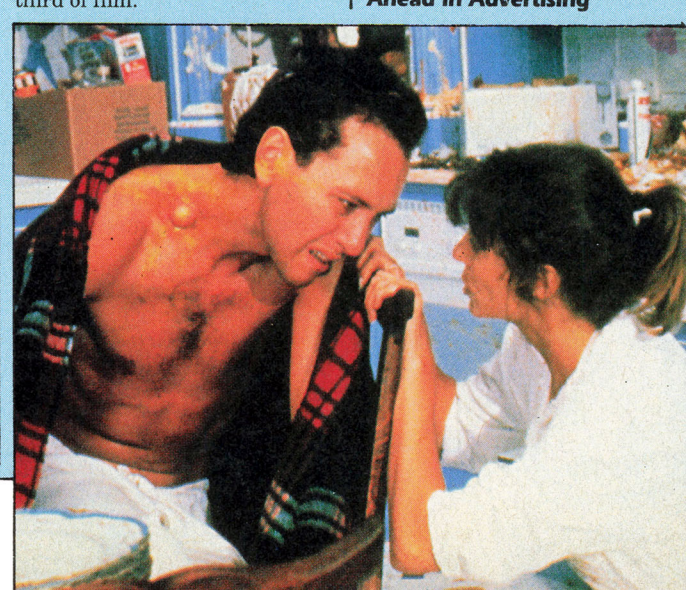
To understand the advent of said boil we have to go back a day. Grant plays a pressured advertising account manager who can't think of a suitable campaign for a boil cream. Closeted in his office, he tries on a number of personas; the professional woman who knows about blackheads, a lady scientist with a penchant for pimples and, finally, an increasingly irritated ad man. None work; he goes home to his wife — played with rising mania by Rachel Ward — insults her 'fat, feminist' friend during a terse dinner party, and attempts to dump as many consumer goods as he can gather together, including cluck of chickens in the bath/down the toilet.

While his wife despairs, Grant goes to sleep on a chair in the living room and wakes up with the infamous angry boil which sports a mouth, eyes and a talent for launching very bad one liners. As the film progresses, Grant visits a psychiatrist and the boil eventually grows to head-sized dimensions.

The ending, which I won't spoil for those of you with febrile imaginations, is suitably madcap, though not a patch on the realistic lunacy in the first third of film.

Grant is the star player of this piece with Ward as a somewhat muted second. In some respects *How To Get Ahead In Advertising* is a star vehicle for the actor, who has also appeared in *Warlock* and *Withnail And I*, but here he is accompanied by none of drawbacks attendant in previous films. The humour goes off the boil (yek!) towards the end of the film, but the gruesome and unhappy ending at once serves as a message concerning the plastic world of promotions and as a reminder that the British can still make comedies.

John Gilbert



Richard E Grant reaches boiling point in How To Get Ahead in Advertising

doesn't mind who else's he spills on the way.

Predictably straightforward, *Halloween 4* runs on remarkably similar lines to the original Carpenter movie. Pleasance returns as the semi-manic Dr Loomis, while the killer has a good time maiming people in a variety of unoriginal ways. Better than Jason's exploits, but still only a third-rate rental.
Warren Lapworth

FRIDAY THE 13TH - Part VIII JASON TAKES MANHATTAN

Starring: **Jensen Daggett, Scott Reeves, Barbara Bingham**
Writer/Director **Rob Hedden**
Distributor **CIC Video**
Cert 18, 108 mins
Rental

Here we go again! This series obviously intends to reach part 13, while seriously reducing America's teenage population. The holiday camp surroundings having been exploited to the full, it's obviously time to find a new setting for Jason's murderous tendencies. What better than a school cruise ship outing to the Big Apple! A split power cable's electricity awakens the rotting corpse at the bottom of the lake, and it's dead boys and girls all

Jason's back — again?!!!

the way onto the cruise ship where — you guessed — it's more dead boys and girls, and the odd crew member (a curiously under-manned boat) until via a dinghy the (few) survivors and two teachers reach New York. Jason is not shaken off though. A few more dead boys and girls later and he meets his near end through toxic waste in the sewers. As the two lucky surviving bimbos disappear into Times Square, a bedraggled Jason emerges from the subway...

The saga has turned endearingly mellow, with the gore now merely perfunctory and sort of tongue in cheek. Jason's recurring ghostly apparition as a drowning little boy aims to create sympathy, while the relentless dispatching of youngsters has begun to smack of the *Carry On* films.

The odd thing is, the whole experience starts growing on you! Nicely shot and put together, this should provide a jolly evening's viewing. Where's part nine?
Oliver Frey

SEX AND SLASH

THE BANKER

***Starring*: Robert Forster, Duncan Regehr, Shanna Reed, Jeff Conaway, Leif Garrett, Richard Roundtree**
Directors **Al Ororato, Jerry Franks**
Distributor **RCA/Columbia**
Cert 18, 98 mins
Rental

When a Beverly Hills call girl becomes the victim of a ritualistic killing, ace cop Daniel Jefferson (Forster) is hauled in to apprehend the murderer.

Not before long, the killer strikes again and soon the murders take on a strange pattern; the prostitutes are shot with a crossbow, mutilated, and a primitive symbol etched in blood is found next to each of the victims' bodies.

Meanwhile Sharon (Reed), a journalist and Jefferson's ex-girlfriend, has taken up the crusade on behalf of the victims on her midday TV news slot. It soon transpires that the chief suspect is wealthy banker Spalding Osborne (Regehr); but Jefferson has to have a cast-iron case against this immensely powerful man if he is to bring him to justice.

'In the jungle, as in the business world, it always comes down to this: two men, two weapons, and only one of them comes out alive.' According to villainous Spalding Osborne (and I'm not giving anything away here, his identification with the murders is clear right from the beginning) men have gone soft in the slick, consumerist modern world, where all the major battles are fought on Wall Street. There's no Nature red in tooth and claw and, evidently, too few women are carved up.

Strangely, his sentiments seem to be echoed by the film itself, which revels in male posturing, routine sex and slash scenes, and includes a bevy of simple-minded bimbos. The tokenistic presence of Sharon, career woman and feminist, did not convince me otherwise.

The Banker is basically an unsavoury buddy movie — with Jefferson and his Hispanic sidekick as latterday versions of The Lone Ranger and Tonto; but it is slick and competently made, and the presence of Regehr — who sweeps from one atrocity to another looking like Rutger Hauer in the Guinness ads — is compelling.
Patience Coster

MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

Starring: **Patrick MacNee, Adrian Paul, Clare Hoak**
Director **Larry Brand**
Distributor **MGM/UA**
Cert 18, 80 mins
Rental

Having directed the cult version of this Edgar Allan Poe story in 1964, Roger Corman returns to it as producer for this remake. The film is one of quite a batch of Poe stories in production with various companies and seemingly heralds a revival of his gothic horror themes. Alas, we can but hope this Masque will not prove a yardstick for the other Poe feasts to come.

Vile plague spreads across medieval Europe, led by the red cloaked hooded figure of Machiavel (MacNee). Surly Prince Prospero (Adrian Paul) shuts himself and a chosen few away in his castle to avoid the pestilence, killing all who would enter and spread the disease. Innocent girls are provided to add entertainment for the barricaded who eat, drink and revel their fear away. Prospero falls for lovely peasant Julietta, but his loose morals propel her into his close friend Claudio's arms, and jealousy and strife ensue — until the arrival of the Red Death.

Corman's original was a stylish, fluid sixties bravura piece, with a certain measure of high camp added by Vincent Price's Prospero. This version

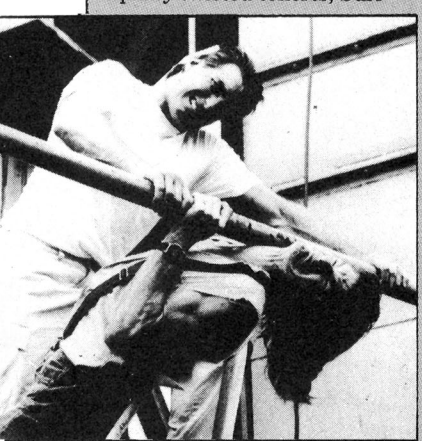
Masque Of The Red Death

CAR WARS

DRIVING FORCE

Starring: **Sam Jones, Catherine Bach, Don Swayze,**
Director **Andrew Prowse**
Distributor **Medusa Home Video**
Cert 15, 85 mins
Rental

Patrick Swayze is famous as a Dirty Dancer. *Don* Swayze is just plain *dirty*. He plays Nelson, a vile pick-up truck driver of the near future who terrorises an unidentified rural area with help from his equally twisted cohorts, Surf and Pool. They work for Black Knight, the wrecking/repair company that directly rivals the one joined by Steve O'Neil (Sam Jones). To say that competition between Nelson and Steve becomes fierce is a vast understatement, and Steve has the added problem of having to retrieve one wreck per day, or be dismissed.



But that's only part of it. The rich parents of Steve's dead wife are trying to gain custody of his daughter, Becky (Stefanie Mason), and will resort to underhand tricks to get her. Help is at hand in the shape of Pete (Ancel Cook), an old friend of Steve's father, and Harry (Catherine Bach), a wealthy female industrialist ('My dad wanted a boy') who becomes romantically involved with Steve (yawn).

Although there are sub-plots involving characters a-plenty — Becky, her grandparents, Harry, and a new wrecking company run by Steve and Pete — the whole movie boils down to Steve versus Nelson. While there's *some* action on foot, this battle mostly takes place on wheels and in scenes of sparse originality. Car chases are common and (usually) tedious enough in films and TV, so when faced with a movie which revolves around them it can be tempting to press the visual search button.

However, the production manages to hold together, grim, greasy scenes contrasting with those in the plush homes of Harry and Becky's grandparents and keeping the viewer watching — but far from engrossed. In short, unless you're a big road-racing fan, the force needn't necessarily be with you.
Warren Lapworth

reflects none of Corman's spark and opts for the 'dirty medieval' style of films like *The Name of the Rose*. Director Brand handles this reasonably well, and yet what the film lacks is pace, action and ultimately life. The amount of long brooding that goes on is just not warranted by the shallow characterisation and smacks of pretension. The randomness and inevitability of death, the allegorical figure of Machiavel, the godlike power of princes could have made a strong film, but tragic poses alone do not suffice. As to any sense of horror, outright or implied, it is sadly lacking. Add to this the obligatory 'medieval' lute music and you might think the Red Death is just what the characters deserve —, but even he hardly gets a look-in.
Oliver Frey

DAREDREAMER

Starring: **Tim Noah, Adam Eastwood, Alyce LaTourelle, Michael A Jackson**
Director **Barry Caillier**
Distributor **Futuristic**
Cert 15, 100 mins
Rental

Winston lives in a world of his own. His parents don't understand him, and at school his accident-prone, absent-minded behaviour earns the ridicule of sexy fifth-form bitch, Cindy. He is also tormented by Dante, the leader of a supercool gang of leather-boys. But Winston has a secret: in his head his daydreams take on a life of their own and become full-blown musical numbers, generally with Winston as the star and transformed into a successful lover, hunky hero and, on one occasion, a Michael Jackson clone!

However, when Winston tries to describe his fantasies, no one takes him seriously not even his best buddy, Max. Then one day, in mid daydream, Winston encounters fellow student Jennie and discovers that she too is a daredreamer. But where will their fantasies lead them... ?

Winston (Tim Noah) plays mind games in Daredreamer

There are a number of problems with this rock musical fantasy, most of which pertain to its length (it is *too* long) and its target audience (is there one?). Obviously, there's no accounting for taste, but I would doubt whether a late-Eighties teen audience — the age group at which this high school drama must be aimed — would go for the kind of music which, like Winston's curly mop of blond hair and bemused blue eyes, belongs back in another era, with Roger Daltry's *Tommy*.

Nevertheless, *Daredreamer* is an engaging film with imaginatively realised fantasy sequences, generally reasonable performances and record racks full of MOR rock renditions by the versatile Tim Noah.
Patience Coster

FIELD OF DREAMS

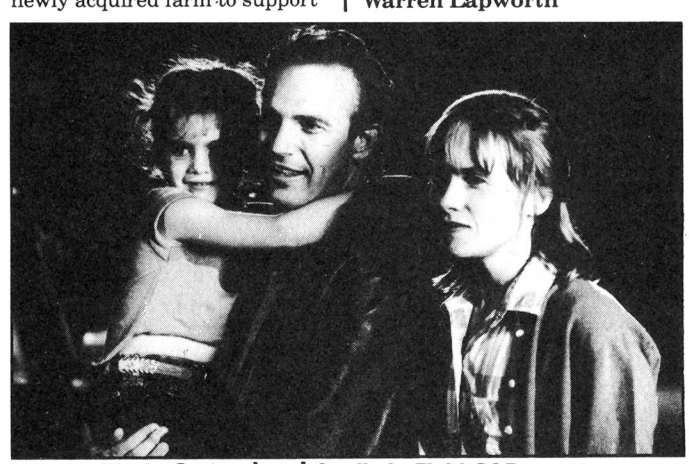
Starring: **Kevin Costner, Amy Madigan, James Earl Jones, Ray Liotta, Gaby Hoffman**
Director **Phil Alden Robinson**
Distributor **Guild Home Video**
Cert PG, 108 mins
Rental

Life becomes even more complicated for Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner) — who already has a wife, child and newly acquired farm to support — when he hears a ghostly voice while out wandering his corn fields. 'If you build it, he will come,' is the cryptic message, and from a subsequent vision he deduces that 'it' is a baseball field and 'he' is old-time baseball player Shoeless Joe Jackson, a man who was much admired by Ray and his deceased father. Flying in the face of logic and economics, Ray gives up precious crop acreage to build the sports field. Naturally, the local townsfolk think him a little odd.

The ghost of Shoeless Joe *does* come (no surprise there), but Ray's task is not complete. He receives a second message, which leads him to Sixties' liberationist writer Terence Mann (James Earl Jones). The trail continues, with Ray, his wife and Terence trying to solve the mystery before the bank forecloses on the ailing farm.

The ultimate result of Ray's 'quest' is rather obvious (I'll leave you to work it out) but *Field Of Dreams* is the kind of pleasant movie where a happy, sentimental ending is inevitable. The plot is more complicated than the average family movie, especially one with sporting overtones, and it's akin to a detective movie, bar the corpses. Costner takes an affable, bright lead role, Amy Madigan supports him doggedly as his wife, but Earl Jones' voice is too instantly recognisable as that of Darth Vader for him to be taken seriously.

Rent *Field Of Dreams* in readiness for the baseball season on Channel 4 — it'll put you in the pitcher.
Warren Lapworth



Kinsella (Kevin Costner) and family in Field Of Dreams

Collectables

FEAR takes a look at some recent video releases on sell-thru – all priced at £9.99 each.

AN INVITATION TO THE BLACK MUSEUM

Introduced by: **Shaw Taylor**
Director **Sandy Kaye**
Distributor **Pendulum Communications**
Cert E, 45 mins

An Invitation To The Black Museum may be short, but it's also sharp and deeply disturbing.

Introduced by John Dellow, Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and hosted by Shaw Taylor, best known as the host of *Police 5*, this programme links macabre exhibits in New Scotland Yard's Black Museum to the crimes with which they are associated.

A short ladder leads Taylor to tell dramatically the tale of Charlie Peace, a dwarf burglar whose violin case carried a musical instrument by day and the tools of his nefarious trade by night. He was eventually arrested and hung for murder in 1878.

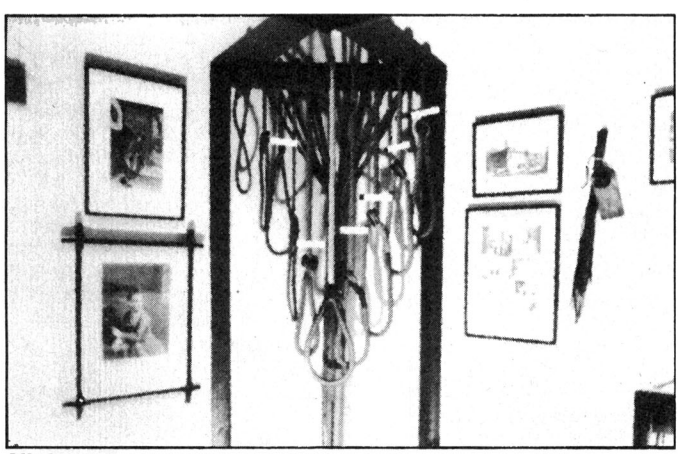
Ruth Ellis was the last victim of the hangman's noose when, in the late 1950s, she killed her ex-lover. The murder weapon, a gun, lies behind glass in the museum.

Further trophies include a can opener used to gut a woman by a particularly vicious lady-killer, the boiling pots of Dennis Neilsen and, of course, the 'Dear Boss' note supposedly penned by Jack The Ripper and delivered to a national newspaper.

Finally, Taylor fondles the various nooses used to hang some of Britain's most notorious murderers. Each noose was made to measure so that the rope did not break or decapitate the victim.

As the credits roll, we're treated to a lingering shot of a row of shiny death masks, and you can't help wondering who's who. Some of the faces seem to be relaxed in sleep, others are less at ease, but all share the ragged imprint of the noose around the neck.

Such sights are not normally shown to the general public, and you need a private invitation in order to visit the Black Museum. Producer Sandy Kaye's immaculately researched and dramatically understated look around this most gruesome of exhibitions relies on the crimes themselves, and not on violent reconstruction, to pack the punch. We are simply told the facts, against the background of a clever combination of light and shadow, the occasional gunshot, and those artefacts, made dreadful by association.
John Gilbert



All the noose that's fit to print

FREDDY'S NIGHTMARES

Krueger fanatics anxious for the retail release of *Nightmare 4* can calm themselves with *Freddy's Nightmares 2* (Braveworld, £9.99). These two stories, *Sister's Keeper* (involving identical twins with opposing personalities) and *Freddy's Tricks Or Treats* (a student has her dreams recorded), would both benefit from having their 45 minute duration cut by a third. Restrained gore, necessary for their TV programme origins, means they lack OTT effects and the fun of the *Nightmare* movies is lost because of this.
Warren Lapworth

In *Revenge of The Teenage Vixens From Outer Space* (Castle, 15) three sexy teenage girls and their Queen arrive on Earth to check out the men — their own planet has none. The busty aliens move in on the boys at the local high-school, much to the horror of the local girls who must now fight to keep their guys. Silly schoolgirl stuff.

Also from Castle comes *The Witchfinder General* (18): the scene is East Anglia in the hands of Cromwell's Roundheads. The dreaded Matthew Hopkins (Vincent Price) and his henchmen are touring the area and stringing up any supposed witch or Papist. After despatching young Sarah's uncle, her betrothed, a roundhead officer called Richard (Ian Ogilvy) will not rest until Hopkins too is snuffed out. A well-made, well-acted minor classic.

Warner Home Video have seven titles, and we kick off with *City Under The Sea*. Young Jill is snatched from her hotel by a strange sea creature (a gill-man), and pursued by young geologist Tab Hunter and his artist chum to the city beneath the sea. Dear old Vincent Price and his mates are trying to save the city from destruction by an active volcano. Can Tab the geologist help, or should he save Jill? Does he have a choice? A rather wooden and slow movie.

In *Konga*, crazy old scientist (Michael Gough) has developed a growth hormone with which he injects his pet chimp, who eventually develops into a giant gorilla (clever, that). And the usual mayhem follows. Give me King Kong any day.

The Man Who Haunted Himself stars Roger Moore as Mr Pelham who, after a serious car crash, seems to have a double. Pelham two quickly begins to take over both their lives, with sad results for Pelham one. Nice performance from Mr Moore in this OK, late-night thriller.

In *The Brain Machine*, Dr Allan takes a brain scan of a four-time killer, but his estranged wife Dr Roberts has an amnesia case with the same scan. This must mean trouble, and it does. Reasonable 1950s b/w thriller.

TWISTED NERVES

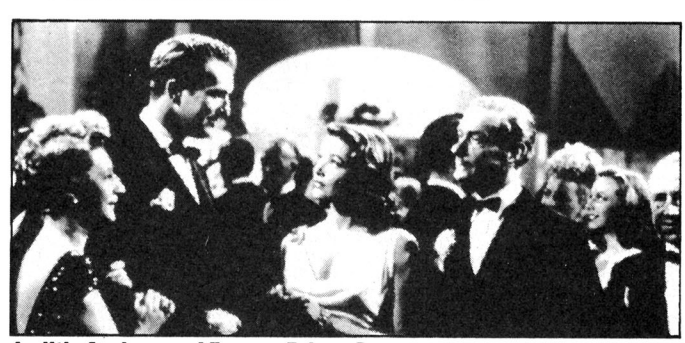
In *Fright*, Susan George babysits for a neighbour, but the neighbour's nutcase former husband has escaped from the asylum and goes home to check out the family. And boy does he give Susan and her boyfriend a hard time! Ian Bannen is quite good as the nut in this 'OK-after-a-few-jars-at-one-o'clock-in-the-morning' movie.

Twisted Nerve, directed by Roy Boulting, is a neat thriller littered with British mini-stars. Young Martin (Hywel Bennett), in the shape of simple-minded Georgie, takes a shine to Hayley Mills. Martin leaves home and his hated stepdad (Frank Finlay), and moves into Hayley's mum's guest house. On the first night, Martin bumps off poor old dad and, soon after, Hayley's mum gets the chop. What can Hayley do? Good movie with nice acting all round.

Dropping in on this world from his own dying planet, David Bowie is *The Man Who Fell To Earth*. With his superior intelligence, Bowie soon creates a multinational empire to fund a trip to his home planet to rescue his family. But Earth life conspires against him and he becomes a hopeless alcoholic. Directed by Nicolas Roeg in 1976, *The Man Who Fell To Earth* is beautifully filmed and Bowie gives his best performance to date.
David Western

LAURA

Otto Preminger's film-noirish murder mystery of 1944 (CBS/FOX All Time Greats), may not quite be **FEAR**, but the eerily moody black and white telling of mysterious Laura's murder, voiced-over flashbacks and all, is hauntingly compelling — with inimitable Vincent Price joining Gene Tierney, Dana Andrews and Clifton Webb in high society skullduggery.
Oliver Frey



Judith Anderson, Vincent Price, Gene Tierney and Clifton Webb before the murder of Laura

RAISING THE DEAD

The Spook, First Lady of Foul Rumour, rakes over the ashes of some of your letters...

Would you Granny Smith it? I think the post office has delivered my latest mailbag to the wrong address. Some of you out there seem to think we hold sway over that bastion of good taste and little old ladies' social club, the BBFC. Far be it from me to put you right (the Ed wouldn't allow it anyway); but p'raps the least I can do is offer an 'umble opinion on your latest pathetic scribblings...

Sean York, of Chelmsford in Essex, is obviously a Dario Argento fan — while BBFC Club Secretary Jimmy Ferman is probably not. Incensed by the way in which Big D's latest dynarama has been handled, Sean writes:

'Opera is fantastic, but I'm dismayed to hear of proposed cuts for an English version. Surely they jest? Cutting the ending and the crows scene (one of Argento's most spectacular) would ruin the film. Creepers was bad enough. The BBFC are idiots. How can Bad Taste and Society get through uncut and Opera and Susperia not even get released?'

Well, Sean, it's like the good ol' British law: there's no such thing as precedent and many of the decisions made by the BBFC depend upon taste — good or not.

Censorship also appears to be flavour of the month with John Spencer, MSMC proclaiming:

'I'd like to express my agreement with what Sam Raimi said about the censorship board'.

Yes, the director of *Evil Dead* and *DarkMan* divulged a wealth of opinion about the BBFC in **FEAR** Issue 15, and the Club Secretary's ears must surely be burning. Anyway, John goes on...

'What I don't like is the superior and smug attitude that they can see such things and they won't be affected. They think that civvies are too weak and emotionally unstable to handle it.

'Bullshit!! I've been watching horror films since I was six, I've read over 2,000 horror books, own over 350 horror videos, and to me they are just brilliant fiction.

'I love the horror genre, and will die with a horror vid on the TV and a book in my hand.'

Humph! I couldn't agree with you more! What's an MSMC, by the way?

Matt Watering of Bicknacre in Essex, wants to relieve himself in the same way:

'I yearn for the day when uncut films will be shown in cinemas, but the truth of the matter is that at present there seems to be little change in the BBFC's stubborn attitude. They created a 12 certificate, so why not something for uncut films?'

Well Matt, let me finish on this subject by saying that the BBFC do have an 'uncut' option. You can get an R rating in the UK but your film can then only be shown at cinema clubs and cannot be advertised; which isn't too good for the old bank balance!

And now, an attack on us — er, in a roundabout sort of way — from David Silver from nowhere in particular.

'I find your magazine fascinating but am equally astonished by its existence. The intellectual content of the articles seems to indicate great intelligence in your readership. Yet the surprising thing, in many ways, is how you can get to as many as 15 issues writing intelligently about a genre that is mostly crap.

'It is easy to understand the continuation of F***** with its eternal photos of bursting brains and skewered teenagers, as that's what most horror films seem to consist of nowadays. Your magazine, however, seems to be far from exploitational. In some ways that's what bothers me.'**

It bothers you? What do you think it does to us? No, really, we try to cater for all tastes, some weird, disgusting and bizarre, like those of that SF crowd, and some prim and proper, like those of the nice folk who enjoy zombie chow times. Be assured, we will continue with our sick ways until the men in white coats come to put us away, or the man from the ministry closes us down!

Finally, Stephen King rears his oh-so beautiful head again. I knew we couldn't go a month without him. Tim Kirkby of Petts Wood in Kent writes:

'I bought Stephen King's The Talisman, co-written with Peter Straub, when it first came out in 1985 and on the cover it said 'SOON TO BE A MAJOR FILM'. Having maintained the fact that it is still King's best book to date, five years on I am still waiting for any sign or word concerning the film. Please enlighten me if you can.'

You know Tim, I was only saying the other day that **FEAR** is probably the one genre magazine that Mr King has not graced with either an interview or a 'free short story'. Most people who can get in touch with him place their special Bat phone next to their God link. Still, no sour grapes. Here's the simple answer to your question. The movie project is still bouncing around Hollywood like an overweight pingpong ball with Steven Spielberg as the most likely candidate for the job.

And now for the complex answer... Hell, sorry, we just don't have space! My coffin awaits...

NEXT ISSUE

FEAR

GOES TO TEXAS!

- **LEATHERFACE — THE UNTOLD STORY: Original Texas Chainsaw 3 author David Schow shows us how a brave horror film can go off the tracks. Witness the process of creation, from script to censor to screen.**
- **BRUCE CAMPBELL shares more dark thoughts on Maniac Cop 2 and Evil Dead 3.**
- **VIRGINIA ANDREWS, author of Flowers In The Attic, Heaven and the soon to be released Web Of Dreams in one of the few major interviews she gave shortly before her death.**
- **DOUBLE-BARRELLED FICTION: Stephen Laws' The Frighteners and Douglas Clegg's Goat Dance. Both on the way up.**

COMING SOON...

- **DANNY ELFMAN, composer of music for Batman, Darkman and Nightbreed, shows how a score is put together.**
- **NAZI IMAGES AND THE HORROR FILM: A controversial look at a hot topic by the author of our infamous cannibals feature.**
- **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD is remade. We go on set.**
- **TOTAL RECALL: Exclusive coverage, as only FEAR knows how, of Arnie Schwarzenegger's new SF movie.**

And just a gentle reminder...

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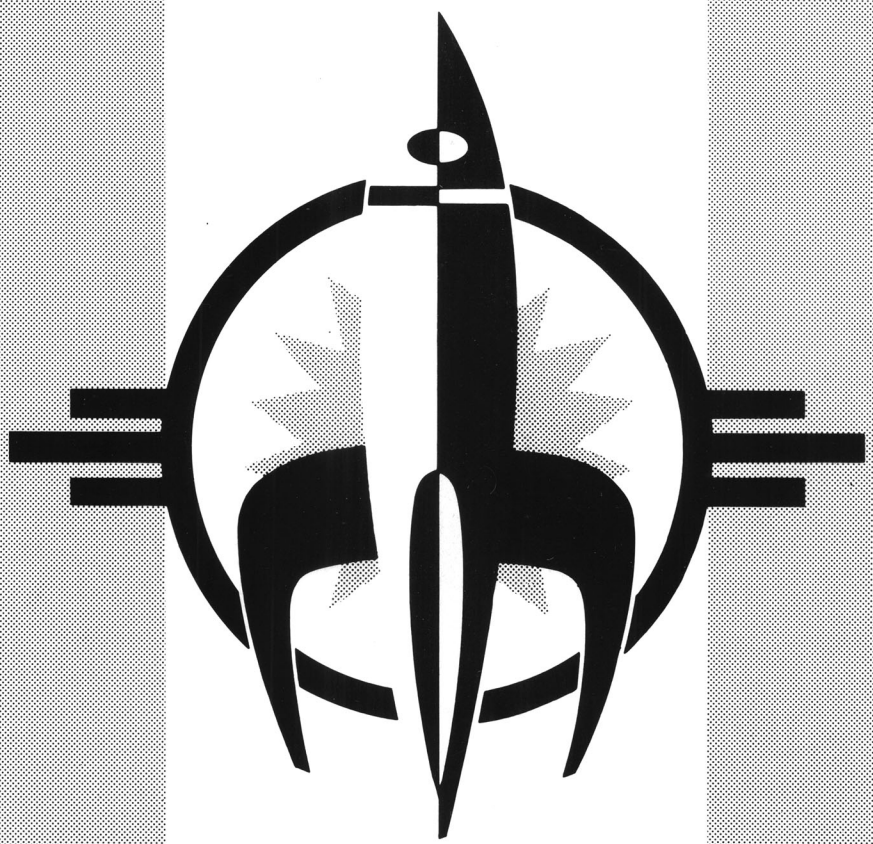

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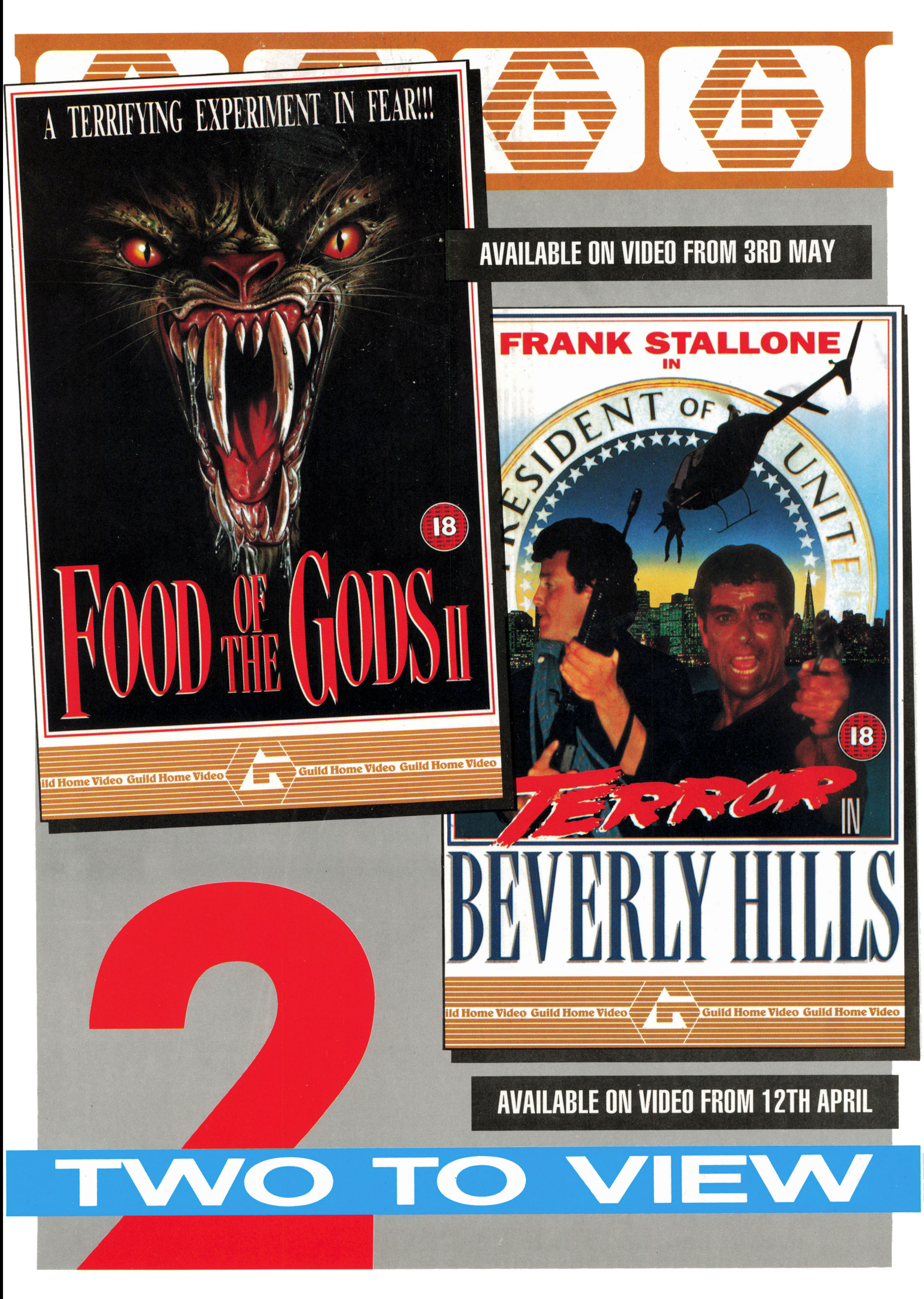
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