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REVIEWS GALORE!



DAVID CRONENBERG STARS IN *Clive Barker's*

NIGHTBREED

18

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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ROBIN VIDGEON B.S.C. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES G. ROBINSON AND JOE ROTH SCREENPLAY BY CLIVE BARKER BASED ON HIS NOVEL 'CABAL' PRODUCED BY GABRIELLA MARTINELLI DIRECTED BY CLIVE BARKER
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**FROM FRIDAY SEPT. 28TH ODEON West End 071 930 5252
AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

Welcome to FEAR's Octoberland, the place that leads to Halloween, where spiders spin their autumnal webs, the dew drips from dark green leaves, and dozens of other yucky naturey things happen.

As you will have noticed, we've teamed up with those nice people at Vestron — purveyors of many a fearful movie — to give you a free bookmark! Use it wisely lest you get lost during a chapter of nightmares...

And more: Vestron, amongst others, are giving away some great prizes this issue — check out the competitions!

Draw the curtains, pull up a chair and prepare to peruse our latest book of spells. Here you'll find ways to invoke the monsters of *Nightbreed* and the freaks from *Basketcase 2*, and find a recipe for spider stew in our *Arachnophobia* set report.

Horror author Joe R Lansdale instructs on Western magic, while Ramsey Campbell and Stephen Jones raise the awesome spectre of H P Lovecraft from the grave. Julian Lloyd Webber provides some sweet, unearthly music, and *Hardware* director Richard Stanley exhibits his ghost in the machine.

Plus stacks of FEAR news, reviews and fiction!

Into this month's FEAR dig in, before the winter chills begin...

FEAR

ISSUE 22 OCTOBER 1990

CONTENTS

- 4 THE WORLD OF FEAR**
Global news to leave you gutted...genetic engineering produces monstrous results in *Chimera*, spiders go to town in *Arachnophobia* and Patrick Swayze looks to life beyond the grave in *Ghost*.
- 16 FLESH AND FURY**
Not heard of *Nightbreed*? You must have cloth ears...Clive Barker gives FEAR the unexpurgated version of this mucho-hyped horror, featuring exotic creatures and psycho slashers on screen and off...
- 23 THE CALL TO CTHULHU**
Ramsey Campbell and Stephen Jones celebrate the centenary of Grandfather Lovecraft with a retrospective of the great man's writings and a look at their translation to big and small screen.
- 28 HOOKED!**
Frank Henenlotter and Richard Stanley, genre movie directors from either side of the Atlantic reveal the pains and pleasure of the first time filmmaker.
- 34 GRAPHIC DETAIL**
Warren Lapworth slips into his tank top and takes a tick to tell us about the latest comics and graphic novels.
- 36 FEAR FICTION**
Time-warp vampires, reconstituted lovers and mutant births leer from the pages of this month's fabbo fiction.
- 61 FEAR REVIEWS**
We cast our FEARful verdict on the latest on celluloid and tape with reviews of *RoboCop 2*, *Hardware*, *Nightbreed*, *Wild At Heart*, *Brain Dead* and *Amazon Women On The Moon*, and take a look at the latest in print, including Stephen King's *Four Past Midnight* and Ramsey Campbell's *Midnight Sun*.
- 77 FEAR COMPETITIONS**
Win loadsa lovely loot in this month's batch of FEAR brain-mashers.
- 80 FEAR FORUM**
We send a fire-breathing demon to deal death to your mail.



ARACHNO ATTACK!

J B Macabre reports on a new creepy crawly movie which marks the directorial debut of producer Frank Marshall and the acting efforts of an army of eight-legged arthropods.

Dr Ross Jennings has decided to move his family to the picturesque community of Canaima, California. Nestled between rolling green hills and rocky cliffs overlooking the ocean, the friendly community gives Dr Ross hopes of a new start in life.

The Jennings family quickly becomes adjusted to the small town way of life; the hospitality of their new neighbours makes them feel at home. All their neighbours, that is, except for one. Unbeknownst to the Jennings, a deadly South American spider has taken up residence in their barn, and has plans for a family of its own.

In the days following, several

citizens of Canaima will die under strange circumstances. As Dr Jennings begins to investigate the strange deaths, the medical evidence leads him to the disturbing diagnosis of death by fatal spider bite.

Arachnophobia stars Jeff Daniels as Dr Ross Jennings, John Goodman as Delbert McClintock, the Rambo of local exterminators, and Julian Sands as Dr James Atherton, a world-renowned entomologist. Directed by Frank Marshall, the film is being hailed as 'a thriller in the tradition of *Poltergeist* and *Jaws*.'

The script for *Arachnophobia* started a bidding war between four major studios, with Hollywood Pictures and Disney winning out. 'They were my hands-down first choice,' states screenwriter Don Jakoby, 'I thought they would have fun with it, and they did.'

Danish-born Mikal Salomon is cinematographer on the film. After a mere three years working in the States, he has already been nominated for an Academy Award and the ASC award for his work on the film *The Abyss*. Production designer Jim Bissell has worked on *Twilight Zone — The Movie* and *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial*.



SPIDER OLYMPICS

Before assembling a cast, the film's producers looked for an entomologist who could participate in the selection of some unusual actors. Steven Kutcher, Hollywood's best known bug and insect expert, accepted the challenge and began the search for his arachnoid for the starring role.

Steve worked alongside visual effects supervisor David Sosalla to organise a 'Spider Olympics' to test the skills of a variety of different spiders. 'We needed to cast some very special spiders for this movie,' recalls producer Richard Vane, 'because the script calls for spiders who can run, jump, walk upside down, spin a web — everything but do your taxes.'

'I felt it was very important to the realism of the movie to try and have a real spider that could do all the things in the script, rather than a mechanical one.

Dr James Atherton (Julian Sands) with a hairy handful (top); villains under scrutiny (below); and Jennings (Jeff Daniels) discovers the down side of country living (right)

After looking at about eight different varieties, we found the gold medalist,' adds director Frank Marshall. 'It's a delena spider, found in New Zealand. We were very lucky to find such a talented spider...'

With the delena cast as the drone or soldier spider, it was then necessary to find the film's star, a deadly Venezuelan spider who hitches a ride to Canaima. Jules Sylvester, the owner of Reptile Rentals who provide the film industry with everything from rattlesnakes to rodents, suggested an Amazonian bird-eating tarantula whose diet also consists of insects and mice.

THE WORLD OF FEAR



While the company began to warm up to the harmless delena spider, there was still some trepidation about the intimidating — and extremely large — South American tarantula.

'They are not venomous enough to kill somebody,' explains Marshall, 'but a bite can be pretty bad. They also throw off little hairs, like fibreglass, and these are uncomfortable on your skin, so they are handled with tremendous care. I would handle a delena, but you wouldn't see me handling a tarantula.'

CRAWLING SENSATION

One of Kutcher's responsibilities was to run a spider 'get acquainted' seminar for the cast and crew. After a brief slide show, Steve passed around a delena. The reason for this initiation was that in a few months Julian Sands would have to have the spiders crawling all over his face and body, while Jeff Daniels would be at odds with the large tarantula.

'I felt it was crucial to design shots that included actors and

spiders in the same frame,' says Marshall. 'The audience has to see the jeopardy with the actor, rather than starting with a shot of the actor and then cutting away to a spider that was filmed as an insert.' Richard Vane adds: 'None of the actors seemed to have problems with the spiders. I think Harley Jane Kozak was little reticent at first, but she was really much more courageous about it than I was. On the other hand, I didn't see any of the cast lining up to take one home as a pet!'

Keeping tabs on the fast-moving stars was a challenge for everyone in the production. Actor Jeff Daniels explains: 'For every 15 spiders, we had one 'spider wrangler'. With up to 200 spiders in a scene, there were a lot of wranglers running around. And they take their bugs very seriously. Last week, we couldn't find a few, so there we were, 85 people from the cast and crew down on our knees, looking for a spider like it was a contact lens.'

The spiders appeared to be unmotivated by traditional train-

ing methods, so the special effects and spider consultant teams joined forces to come up with a means of arousing their eight-legged actors. After dozens of attempts, they hit upon two things; they used a system of vibrating wires made of a fine filament, invisible to the camera, to produce a boundary for the spider, and they discovered that Lemon Pledge acted as a repellent and prevented the delena spiders from crawling in a certain direction. Perhaps the most regularly heard sound on set was the chorus of portable blow-dryers held by the spider wranglers and used in an effort to direct the spiders along a specific path.

While the most complex scenes required some 10 handlers and up to 200 spiders for any given shot, a team was also required to create a mechanical spider that could perform more sophisticated tasks. Assigned to the creation of the mechanical arachnid was the highly regarded creature effects supervisor Chris Walas, whose credits include *Gremlins*, *The Fly* and his directing debut with *The*

Fly 2. Chris brought his own team to Los Angeles to design more than 40 mechanical versions of the big spider. They watched a variety of films on tarantulas, played at slow speed to get the sequence of the spiders' leg movements in order for the 'puppets' to perform such tasks as leaping, dropping, scurrying and stalking.

'Our intent at the beginning of the show was to create mechanical spiders to blend in perfectly with the live ones,' says Chris. 'And after sitting through the dailies and watching people jump, I think we've made a pretty good job of it.'

CAKCLING AND HISSING

In *Arachnophobia*, the 'High Noon' showdown between Ross Jennings and the tarantula in the cellar involved the use of interchangeable live and mechanical spiders. 'Obviously we used the mechanical spider in situations where the real one might be injured, and I don't think you can tell the difference between Chris Walas' spiders and the real thing,' says Marshall.

Arachnophobia marks the directorial debut of Frank Marshall. Frank has produced such films as *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, the *Indiana Jones* series and the *Back To The Future* series as part of a collaborative team with Steven Spielberg and Kathleen Kennedy. The screenplay was written by Don Jakoby, based on a story by Jakoby and Al Williams. Born and raised in New York City, Don has worked with screenwriter Dan O'Bannon on *Blue Thunder* and the science fiction vampire myth *Lifeforce*. He was also part of the team of writers responsible for the screenplay of *The Philadelphia Experiment*.

Don was in a barn watching a spider spin a web high in the rafters when he got the idea for the story. 'The thought of something that small pursuing and attacking something much larger than itself and cackling or hissing while it did so haunted me in an abstract way,' he explains. And, after reading the screenplay, Frank felt that the story was a natural. 'All of us have some form of arachnophobia,' he says. 'Some of us just deal with it better than others.'

Warner Brothers in the UK have as yet only given an unconfirmed release date for *Arachnophobia* (January 4). But be warned: eight legs, two fangs and an attitude will be crawling towards your local cinema some time in the new year.

WELCOME TO GORMENGHAST

Ramsey Campbell, acclaimed horror author and president of the British Fantasy Society, extends a personal invite to FEAR readers to join him at this year's British Fantasy Convention.

The Midland Hotel in Birmingham is a Gormenghast of a place. Hundreds of birds have been seen fluttering at bedroom windows around dawn. Its bars go down into the gloom, and just when you think you've reached the lowest, your descent is rewarded by a fine real ale bar. The number of staircases may trouble the disabled, but overall the Midland has proved to be the most popular venue for the annual British Fantasy Convention. This year it will play host to the fifteenth, which promises to be the best yet.

As well as films, there will be talks and panel discussions, involving people I shall shortly name. These will range, if previous years are anything to go by, from the informative to the inebriated, and some may well consist of both. There will be an art show and a book room, the latter offering rare books as well as new ones. There will *not* be a masquerade. However, don't take that to threaten any undue seriousness.

Most of the attendees you've heard of are likely to be found in the bar, which is where you may look for your favourite author. Authors are generally friendliest when they have a drink in their hand, and if your favourite isn't there, your second favourite may well be thirsty too. Also at the bar you will find publishers eager to read the handwritten manuscript of your novel which is longer than *The Stand* and which your friends say is like King and Tolkien and Niven, except it's even better.

This year's toastmaster (or 'toaster' as some American conventions have it) is Stephen Laws, last year's Guest of Honour.

Readers of **FEAR** have already tasted his new novel, *The Frighteners*, and I hope you have all invested in a copy of the book. Previous books of his have rediscovered the tradition of British supernatural fiction, and we can't have enough of that. He is also an entertaining public speaker, and I'm sure he will toast well.

The British Guest of Honour is that stalwart of the Preston SF Group, Steve Gallagher. In his novels and short stories, and soon in the television adaptation of *Chimera*, Steve has been developing an individual talent for the macabre. Despite its being a horror novel, his latest (*Rain*) almost found favour with John Clute in *Interzone*. In public, Steve provides us with yet more to enjoy, and I guarantee you won't be disappointed.



**Toast of the town:
Stephen Laws**

The American GoH is Joe R Lansdale. How could the author of the terrifying *Nightrunners* and the enviably deranged *Drive-In* be other than entertaining? Since his *Cold In July* is one of the finest modern novels of any kind I've read for years, I hope also to learn from listening to him. Present too will be Adrian Cole, Chris Fowler, Charlie Grant, Brian Lumley, Kim Newman, Mark Morris, Pete Atkins, Ian Watson, and there's a rumour of Iain Banks...See you in the bar! Mine's a pint of the real stuff.

The British Fantasy Convention runs from 14-16 September at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham.

RED EYE

American author and cowboy Joe R Lansdale is famous for his blood-soaked visions in *Nightrunners* and *The Drive-In*, and his dark erotic thrillers, *Act of Love* and *Cold In July*, and he has recently been honoured with the Bram Stoker Award for his short stories. J B Macabre went west to talk to this literary gunslinger.

When you think of things that go creak in the night, you should not think of Joe Lansdale. His horror fiction has such a hard core of realism that it leaps off the page and goes straight for your throat.

Joe is a *writer* in the purest sense of the word, and a master storyteller. His talents go beyond horror and into the realms of the Western and science fiction. Recent winner of The Bram Stoker award for his short horror fiction, he returns again and again to that genre, never failing to unnerve or gross-out. 'I've always liked scary stories. It's that simple. I think simplifying it like that means more to me than some long explanation of how it lets out all the bad things in your soul. That seems to be the popular theory, the catharsis theory, and there seems to be something to that. Mainly, I like a variety of different types of fiction. Horror gives you a lot of room for expression. It allows you to handle almost any subject.'

FREE RANGE FEAR

An unconventional writer in many respects, Lansdale prefers to allow his mind free range rather than premeditating plots. 'What usually works for me is that I have images and ideas that grow stronger and stronger till I sit down and just write the book. I don't plot consciously. I'm sure I do subconsciously, otherwise nothing would get finished. I don't put

any big effort into plotting a book out. It usually requires me to be surprised as I go along.

'Every book and every story is just a little bit of a different experience for me. I may get up one morning and find that there is a new story I really want to plot out, but generally I find it out as I go along. At some point I find the ending and know I'm writing directly towards that ending. Someone once said that some people need a map to write and others merely need a compass to point the direction. I think that's the way I am.'

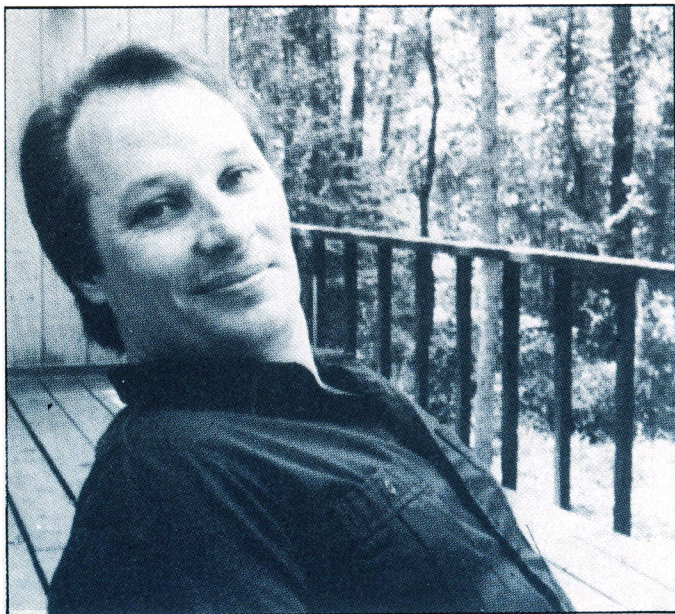
Stories of psycho-monsters and perverse love affairs feature heavily in his writing, so where does he do his research? 'Many times I find myself reading something I find interesting, or a piece of non-fiction, and it will suddenly supply the background for a story. Then a story will develop from what I'm doing, although it's not conscious research. If I need that kind of research, I'll certainly do it. I've written Western-related stories where I've researched the era, handguns, whatever the situation calls for.'

SELF INTEREST

Audience consciousness is as important as ever to an author wanting to make sales and, as the great hope of American horror fiction, Lansdale appears to be well aware of his target. But, despite that canny sense of identification, he denies that he ultimately has the reader in mind when writing. 'I don't think about writing for an audience; it doesn't occur to me at all. It's not that I don't care about the audience. I've said this before and been misinterpreted by people saying that I've said, 'To heck with the reader!' But in a sense that is right. When I sit down I'm not interested in the reader at that point, I'm interested in the story. If I start trying to second-guess the reader, I'm going to write a predictable story, or I'm going to write what I think are the expectations of the reader. That only leads to complacency.'

'I sit down to write the story that interests me. Then, when I get done, I hope like hell somebody likes it. It's not that I don't care about the audience, it's just that I can't visualise an audience, like saying, 'Oh, here's my Joe Lansdale audience'. I don't feel obligated to write the same type of story, although I've had the reputation lately for writing some

Photo: Karen Lansdale



Convention Guest, Lansdale back home on the porch

pretty strong stories of a graphic nature. I'd certainly write those as well as the others, but I've written a lot of stories that aren't like that. I just don't keep the audience in mind at all. That way, I don't worry if I'm going too far. Hell, somebody's got to cross the line, otherwise nobody's going to know where that line is.

'I suppose it's open to change if the right story comes along, but I don't have any conscious taboos. In our subconscious I suppose we all do. Usually if I find I have a taboo, I find some way to step past it. I say, 'If this bothers me, why does it?'. So, let's just kick its ass and see what happens. stomp on it till it squeals'. A lot of times, I'm sure, we're not aware of taboos. I think we all have them. They may be things that other people wouldn't even think of. I think crossing the line helps you to get rid of them or at least understand and come to grips with them.'

Lansdale is quick to point out that even horror writers have a sense of taboos and fears. He, for instance, is worried by random violence, 'which is expressed in *The Night They Missed The Horror Show* [one of his own short stories]. Racism frightens me very much. Many of the stories I've written are about racism, although some people have interpreted them as racist, and I think they've missed the whole point. People not caring about one another, you might think that sounds pretty damned stupid.

'The things that scare me are

not supernatural. I'm not a believer in the supernatural. If I use the supernatural it is usually as a representation of something in real life, some thematic element. I'm not saying that some day I might not write a lark of a story that's purely supernatural and that's it. *Dead In The West* is sort of that way. It's pure fun, it's a B movie without the popcorn.'

TOMBSTONE

His flippant tone belies his recent receipt of the prestigious Bram Stoker Award from the Horror Writers' of America. When the dirt's been dug and the headstone set, how would he most like to be remembered? 'That's a hard one. I guess I would like to be remembered as the writer who didn't flinch. That when there was something he was trying to visualise, he visualised it to the max. I hope that the images and the impact of the stories will strike someone in the same way that Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man Is Hard To Find* struck me. That story was a revelation for me when I read it, when I was in high school I guess, and repeatedly over the years. Just that it has power, it has impact, it has some kind of echo. Maybe something you can't even define, but there is some echo beyond the reading, some depth and substance that you can't put your finger on. After you read the story, it still bounces around in your head and from time to time you'll see something that will start it bouncing again.'

Lansdale is not ready to die just yet, though, and his future projects look exciting, even from this distance. 'Right now my mind is pretty well burnt up; but I'm working on a suspense novel. I

have one out called *Cold In July* and this is somewhat in that vein. I have another one I'm working on mentally. I made a few notes on it and it will incorporate suspense and horror elements. The story will be more of a return to the darker stuff. I think that's the main project.

'I've got a couple of short stories that are bouncing around. One of them has some science fiction ele-

ments, which is something that has been showing up in my work lately. I'm not sure why, but maybe because I started out to be a science fiction writer originally, and wasn't very good at it.'

Joe R Lansdale is American Guest Of Honour at the British Fantasy Convention on 14-16 September in Birmingham.

ROMERO SHINES ON

As *Monkeyshines* hits the video rental racks and *Two Evil Eyes* is released theatrically, director George A Romero is preparing to shoot Stephen King's horror thriller *The Dark Half*. Romero took time out from casting the movie to tell FEAR: 'We're working on it right now, with Orion again. We start shooting in October, hopefully.'

'I liked the idea very much when I read the book. I did not speak to Steve about it because he's done me so many favours already. Orion handled the rights and I'll make the movie.'



Will this movie serve to widen his audience still further? 'I think that if this film happens and everything goes well, and we actually complete the movie, then I can add a few more stripes. You definitely do get pigeon-holed. You want to do certain things, but the studios have their own ideas as to who should do what.'

The Dark Half represents yet another thriller from Pittsburgher Romero who made his reputation, if not his money, from the 'Dead' series

(see last issue for a set visit of the remake of *Night Of The Living Dead*). It was *Monkeyshines*, however, that gave him the thriller audience. 'The property was purchased by an American producer who approached me suggesting the book to me. I discovered that the real talking hands programme — where monkeys are taught to help handicapped people — started in Pittsburgh and that the woman researcher M J Willard who was the only one working on this was a Pittsburgher. That interested me, and also I've always worked with the Jekyll and Hyde theme, the beast within us. I thought it was a great idea, a telepathic link between a man, a brain without a body, and the monkey with a very agile body.'

The end of the film is

different from that of the book. 'The ending — in which the monkey bursts out of the protagonist's body on the operating table — was forced on us by the studio at the very end. It was because of audience reaction, they wanted us to put in, you know, *one more scare*.'

And those scares will be coming thick and fast on Romero's remake of *Night Of The Living Dead* — on which he acted as producer. 'I expect to see the US release around Halloween, from Columbia.'

AFTER SHOCK: FOURTH TIME AROUND

On Saturday 11 August, 500 devoted horror fans gathered together for the fourth annual Shock Around The Clock festival, a twenty hour extravaganza showcasing an impressive array of forthcoming fodder for macabre cinephiles. The most high profile offering was Jeff Burr's **Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3** (described by the censors as 'an obscenity'), which finally made its British screen debut following a number of false alarms at other gatherings. A gruesome, morbid farce, laced through with a rarified sadistic streak, **Texas 3** played at the very end of the festival to an exhausted but nevertheless attentive audience, who had by that point sat through 10 movies, a sneak preview of Russell Mulcahy's **Highlander 2: The Quickening**, and a smattering of celebrity appearances.

As usual, the audience response was unpredictable and intriguing: Steve DeJarnatt's nuclear nightmare **Miracle Mile** was the surprise hit of the festival, and the good news from Hemdale is that the picture should be on general release in November — watch this space. Also well received was Peter (Bad Taste) Jackson's **Meet The Feebles**, a near pornographic muppet show pastiche oozing with childishly faecal jokes. Demonstrating that there is indeed no such thing as a cheap laugh, the Shock crowd wallowed in Jackson's animated atrocities, but at present there is no UK release scheduled for this camp comedy.

Just as unexpected as the crowd's acceptance of **Meet The Feebles**, however, was the lukewarm reception given to **Hardware**, an impressive robotics nightmare blending high-tech violence and pop video aesthetics with an ingenious (if derivative) storyline. A low budget independent British production, **Hardware** was introduced (somewhat reticently) by director **Richard Stanley**, who explained that the picture was currently experiencing major problems with the US ratings board, the MPAA: quite apart from objecting to the on-screen violence (which includes eye gougings and

body rippings) the MPAA have apparently insisted that the distributors remove some of the movie's sexually related material, including a passing reference to the 'Hershey Highway'. Stanley reported a cutting time of around ten minutes currently being mooted Stateside...

Also on stage was the ubiquitous **Clive Barker**, introducing the long awaited **Nightbreed**. Barker delighted the crowds with his wit and repartee (the subject of sex with the prime minister was touched upon briefly), aided and abetted by the finest straight in the business, **Stefan 'dour' Jaworzyn**. As well as confirming that he would indeed soon be embarking upon a remake of **The Mummy**, Barker reported his intentions to make a sci-fi picture in the not too distant future. He also confessed that he will soon be moving to Los Angeles permanently, a move which will doubtless sadden some British fans.

The coup of this year's Shock, however, was the personal appearance of Italian maestro **Dario Argento**, who introduced his **George Romero** collaboration **Two Evil Eyes** to an ecstatic crowd. A veritable love-in ensued as festival organiser **Alan 'that's Mister Fabulous to you' Jones** and Dario Argento told the assembled masses how wonderful the other person was. Speaking in broken



Uncensored dreamer Dario Argento

English, a clearly emotional Argento then went on to describe a dream which he had had the previous night, involving the assassination of everyone who works for censor boards — the crowd was mightily impressed. After an extended mobbing by autograph hunters and enthusiastic fanzine writers, Argento left the

stage clear for **Two Evil Eyes**, which he then watched attentively from the back row to gauge the audience's response.

Shock Around The Clock 4 was a huge success, an object lesson in festival organisation, resting firmly upon the principle of delivering the goods as promised — no excuses. Considering that the show sold out entirely in three days, you may as well start booking now for next year's bash. **Mark Kermode**

SCI-FI FROM THE SKY

As dedicated cable and satellite television channels devoted to sport, movies, music and news come on the air, it's about time to launch a 24-hour channel devoted to science fiction, fantasy and horror. That's what Florida businessman Mitchell Rubenstein thinks, so he plans to launch the Sci-Fi Channel on cable in the States in December this year.

Rubenstein and the channel's cofounder Laurie Silvers took part in a Gallup research poll to determine whether there was enough interest in their channel. The poll concluded that the Sci-Fi Channel would be at least as popular as Nickelodeon (a comedy channel) and MTV among the 12-to-49 age grouping.

So there is an audience, but such a channel also needs careful programming to fill a 24-hour schedule. Rubenstein is interested in three categories of programming. First, library product — including old television series and movies. Confirmed titles range from the Forties' Universal horror films to Doctor Who and My Favourite Martian. There will also be a degree of in house production, mainly review and interview shows. Finally, Rubenstein is interested in pursuing coproduction deals for series and one-offs. Series such as **The Hitchhiker** are exclusive productions for HBO, a necessary move to provide much needed product to fill those hours of airtime.

To prove his science fiction credentials, Rubenstein has managed to involve two of the genre's luminaries — Isaac Asimov and Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry — on his board. The most ambitious of the proposed coproductions is a series entitled Isaac Asimov's Universe, a Twilight Zone-like series of strange

tales all written by different authors and including adaptations of some of Asimov's short stories, such as his robot tales.

Rubenstein has run into some flak over the name of his proposed service. Many science fiction fans detest the Sci-Fi label, preferring to label the genre 'SF', but Rubenstein says he has floated the name at conventions and not met with any great resistance once he has explained his choice. 'It's catchy, instantly identifiable to the general viewer. Science Fiction Channel was a bit long and we couldn't come up with anything else as readily identifiable'. So, the name has stuck.

The channel launches in December after several months of advertising and promotion. The Sci-Fi Channel could succeed with seven million subscribers, although only five million are expected initially to take up the service. Below that, the service hasn't a chance of surviving. **Brian J Robb**

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THE WORLD OF FEAR

Mark Salisbury encounters bestselling author Stephen Gallagher and his genetic man/ape creation on the set of ITV's new television series, *Chimera*.

Television has rarely, if ever, dealt with horror on an acceptable level, much less a respectable one. That might change this coming winter with the airing of a four hour mini-series based on Stephen Gallagher's horror novel *Chimera*, scripted by the author and produced by leading film and television independent Zenith (responsible for, amongst other films, *Sid And Nancy*, *The Hit* and the upcoming *Reflecting Skin*).

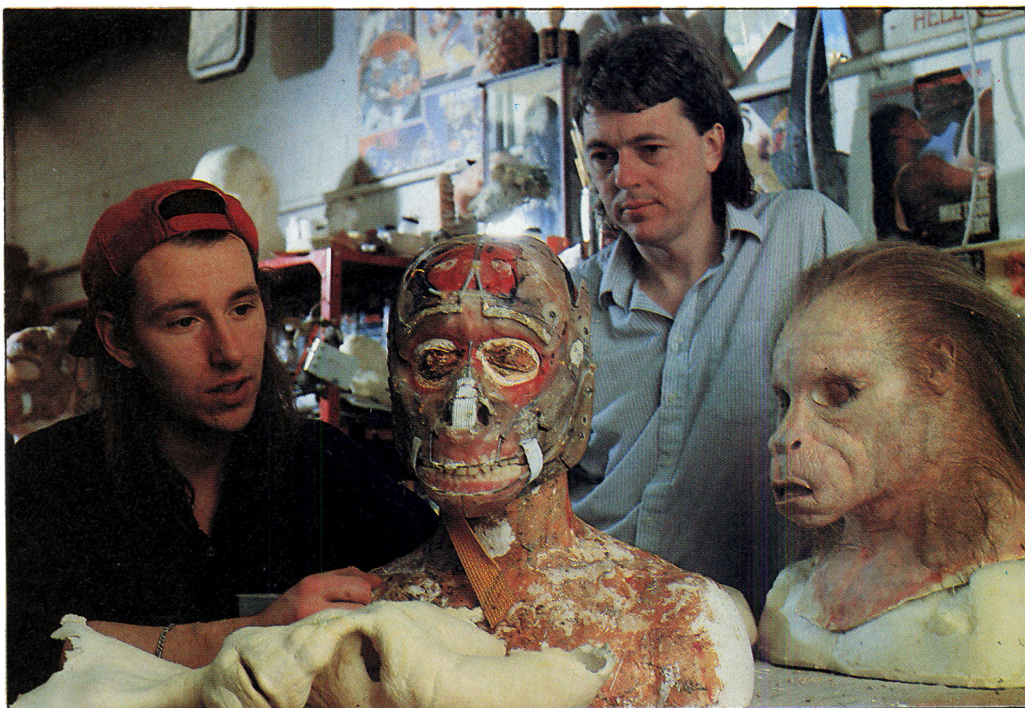
Chimera is no throwaway horror soap or programme-scheduler's cheap space filler destined to be consigned to a slot on the other side of midnight. This is high-concept, high drama, cofinanced by a leading ITV company. Moreover, this is horror with a primetime slot.

Gallagher's tale of genetic experimentation, its resultant man/animal hybrid creation and the consequences of its unleashing (albeit accidentally) on society follows the classic lines of the man-made monster genre. Its most obvious antecedent is H G Wells' *The Island Of Dr Moreau*, and it bears more than a passing similarity (in premise, at least) to the BBC's award-winning series, *First Born*.

LEAN AND HUNGRY

First published in 1982 (although written three years earlier), *Chimera* was originally adapted by its author for radio in the mid-Eighties during 'a lean and hungry period'. Ten years on, it retains a unique fascination for creator and audience alike for, with accelerating advancements in the field of genetic engineering, Gallagher's fictitious vision gains both credibility and plausibility by the hour.

'For me, it's amazingly fresh,' confesses an ebullient Gallagher, on location early in *Chimera*'s eight-week shoot. 'I must have done something right the first time out because the story's been so durable. When I came to rewrite the scripts I thought I was going to have to do a complete strip down and rewrite job, but in fact, the actual bones of the



Photos: Stephen Morley

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME



thing are solid. Most of the characters are the same, most of the motives are the same, though obviously some are more developed and explicit. And I'd be very surprised to find that there's a single line of dialogue in this that appeared in the original book.

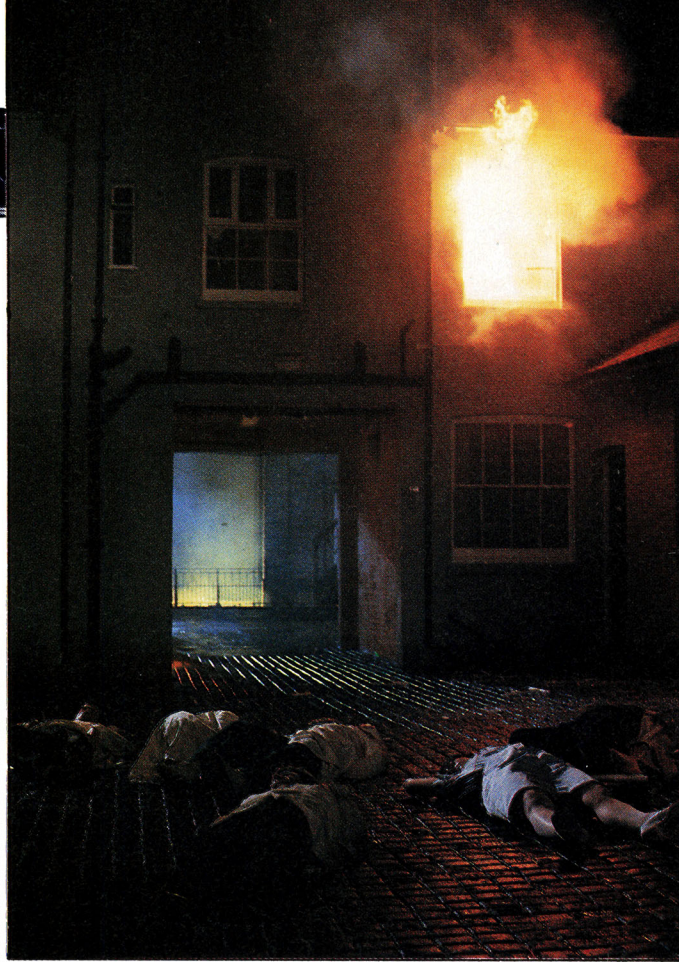
'In the book, some of the naivety as a novice novelist showed through in that a few of the characters were a little bit empty. But now I've taken those same people and I've got a handle on them and drawn them a little better.'

BACK STORY

Gallagher is only too aware of his plot's parallels with *First Born*, a series which initially put *Chimera*'s production in jeopardy and brought about a one-year hiatus in shooting.

'I can't really comment on *First Born*,' he admits, 'because I didn't see it. I haven't read the book it

Clockwise from top left: Stephen Gallagher with animatronics designer Little John (seated); the Jenner Clinic is destroyed by fire; the hybrid creature, Chad, on the loose; Kenneth Cranham as the sinister government agent, Hennessey



was based on, I didn't even see the promos or the interviews in *Radio Times*, because I knew *Chimera* was on the boil.

'If you look at a piece of material one of two things happens: you decide not to put things in that coincide because they coincide, or you yield to temptation and put things in that you saw and liked. Neither of them is wrong. When *Chimera's* finished and in the can, I'll take a look at *First Born* and see what kind of areas we've overlapped in, if in fact we have. But *First Born* is out, it's had its repeat, it's history.'

The script for *Chimera*, the author says, has deviated from the book 'in detail but not in spirit. The entire first hour of this is stuff that you don't get in the book at all. Everything in that first hour is the back story. The book actually starts the morning after there's been a big explosion at the clinic and the book is then a fairly considered meditation and investigation of what happened there in the smoking ruins.

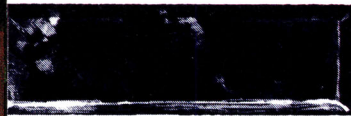
'Here we are a lot less subtle and more upfront about it. For the first hour you get exactly what happened there in the smoking ruins, you get all the bangs and the flashes and the stunts which are, in fact, what we are doing here tonight.'

CONFUSION

Tonight Gallagher is about to witness the cinematic debut of *Chimera's* genetic creation, Chad, a bipedal man/animal hybrid with a mental age of ten juxtaposed with the strength of a fully grown



ape. Those whose responsibility it is to breathe life into Chad, special effects make-up artist Little John, veteran of *Hellraiser*, *Nightbreed* and *Hardware*, and special action choreographer and ape expert Peter Elliot, are preparing a stunt version of the creation for a pyrotechnic effect. Elliot, who choreographed the apes in *Greystoke* and *Gorillas In The Mist* as well as working on *Quest For Fire*, puts Chad's motivation into simple perspective. 'It's the confused monster syn-



drome; it's always been kept in captivity, and it's real misunderstood. It *does* murder people and do terrible things, but it's all under the guise of 'my public doesn't understand me'. It's a genetic fuck-up, basically.'

Little John, on the other hand, sees Chad 'as an adolescent with a lot more suss'.

Away from the monster make-up, has Gallagher found himself constrained by the television medium and the guidelines imposed upon it? 'We took note of the IBA guidelines on violence, but in a way they don't impinge on what we are doing, because what we are looking at are the consequences of violence and the broader tapestry and strokes of the situation. Certainly, I felt no restraints in what I feel to be right with the story.

'It's a remarkable project for me,' he continues, 'because it mirrors very precisely what I had in mind when I was writing the thing. The changes that have been made in the rewrites for once, in my experience, are creative changes that I agree with 100 per cent and which have, really, been ways of facilitating me telling the story. This has been a dream project.'

HALF-HUMAN

As Little John's crew prepare the stunt Chad for action, Gallagher reflects on his creation like a proud parent. 'Chad's the hero of the story. What starts the whole thing off is an atrocious act of his and the whole subject matter of the piece involves the reasons for that atrocious act and the motivations behind it. And I would hope that by the time the end of the four hours comes, you understand what was going through his mind at the time, and think, 'probably if it had been me I would have done exactly the same thing'. At which point we demolish the barrier between half-human, and the piece will have done its job.

'It's certainly not a slam-bang adventure with a hero and a monster and a girl, it's a lot more complex and textured than that, and I would hope that at the end of it you don't have any clear-cut reaction that you can drop on the floor with your popcorn when you walk out of the place. If it's done its job, it should linger with you a lot longer than that.'

Stephen Gallagher is Guest Of Honour at the British Fantasy Convention on 14-16 September in Birmingham.

SNIP! SNIP!

- **Thomas Covenant** author **Stephen R Donaldson's** new novel, **The Gap Into Conflict**, launches a five volume SF/fantasy/adventure series. The book races through stories of love, money and space piracy, marking a hard-tech change of direction for Donaldson, who has been known for his high fantasy and pseudonymous detective fiction. Expect hardback publication on November 22, at £12.99.

- **Joe R Lansdale's Dead In The West** will be published in September by British hardcover house Kinnell. The company also stocks **The Drive-In 1 and 2** and **Act Of Love**. More info from: Kinnell Publications Ltd, 43 Kingsfield Ave, North Harrow, Middlesex HA2 6AQ.



The generation after next?

- **Star Trek: The Next Generation** fans might like to join a new club, **Ten Forward**. Membership registration costs £3.50 a year for three newsletters and a membership card. Contact: Ten Forward, 16 Bramwell Street, Eastwood, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S65 1RZ.

- Violent films are being shown in a prison at Long Beach, California. The exercise, which includes the screening of such movies as **The Texas Chainsaw Massacre** and **I Dismember Mama**, is being carried out in the hope that it will reduce the real violence in the prison. Quiet, gentle, films apparently have the opposite effect.

Ghost is a thriller and a love story which touches upon the concerns of this world and the next. J B Macabre reports on a new movie view of paranormal phenomena.

We all question our mortality and what awaits us in the 'hereafter', and it has been suggested by students of parapsychology that ghosts are spirits of the dead who are unable to 'pass on' because of something that binds them to their former lives.

Young lovers Sam Wheat (Patrick Swayze) and Molly Jensen (Demi Moore) have begun to make a home for themselves in a loft in the Tribeca district of New York; but their new-found bliss is shattered when Sam is murdered by an assailant on the New York streets. Sam's troubled spirit remains held on earth and he soon realises that he must try to reach out and help Molly when he discovers that her life too is in danger.

Through a chance encounter, Sam's ghost finds that the only person able to hear him is a psychic named Oda Mae Brown (Whoopi Goldberg), a charlatan who is astonished to discover that her powers are authentic.

Sam gradually begins to understand the reality of his new existence and the limits of his powers, and the struggle between the living and those departed results in a growing belief on Molly's part of Sam's 'presence'.

Ghost is based on a script by Bruce Joe Rubin, a graduate of the NYU film school. In the past Bruce has worked with his classmates Brian De Palma and Martin Scorsese, and his writing endeavours have included the major motion picture *Brainstorm* (directed by Douglas Trumbull) and the soon to be released *Jacob's Ladder* (directed by Adrian Lyne).

Bruce's enthusiasm for the script of *Ghost* is based on the concept of the mysteries that lie beyond our deaths: 'I was intrigued by the idea of capturing the sensations and emotions of a person who suddenly realises that they have passed from life into an immaterial world — a new universe.'



PSYCHIC FORCE

VERY TOUCHING

'I found myself utterly engrossed as Bruce told me the story of *Ghost*,' comments producer Lisa Weinstein. 'Whether or not you believe in ghosts, this story impressed me as being not only unusual but also provocative and very touching.' The film marks Lisa's producing debut. She began her career in New York by working at Joseph Papp's Shakespeare Festival in Central Park and later handled the production work on the film *John And Mary*.

Sharing Lisa's fascination with Bruce's script is director Jerry Zucker: 'It was unlike anything I had read before — a thriller and a love story set in two worlds, the physical and the spiritual. It was a fantasy, but you couldn't help thinking, 'Gee, that's maybe the way it really is.'

This is Jerry's first solo flight as director. His collaborative efforts with David Zucker and Jim Abrahams have produced hit films such as *Airplane*, *The Naked Gun* and *Ruthless People*. Jerry also wrote the screenplay for the independent hit *Kentucky Fried Movie*.

Also working on the production is veteran director of photography Adam Greenberg. Adam's film credits include the motion pictures *The Terminator*, *Alien Nation*, *Near Dark* and *Once Bitten*. The score is by three-time Oscar winning composer Maurice Jarre.

Though much of the plot deals with a very human side of death, there are a variety of stunning visual effects in *Ghost*, produced by Industrial Light & Magic, under the direction of Bruce

Nicholson and Ned Gorman, which help to create the effect of passing through solid objects. John Van Vliet and Katherine Kean, with Available Light Ltd, have created the good spirits and the dark spirits, and four-time Academy award winner Richard Edlund of Boss Film Studios has produced the effects for the final sequence.

Ghost began principal photography way back in July 1989 in Los Angeles. The company also had a five week shoot in New York, in locations such as Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn,

doesn't know why. He wishes he could tell Molly how much he loves her, which is something he didn't do while he was alive. Upon learning that her life is threatened, he wants to protect her. Yet how can Sam do that when he can't affect the physical world?

It is the medium Oda Mae Brown who provides Sam with a way to warn Molly that her life is in danger. 'Oda Mae has been making a bizarre living as a psychic — she's a scam artist who has been arrested many times,' explains Whoopi Goldberg. 'When Sam as a ghost comes to her, it



Manhattan's SoHo district, the subway and Wall Street.

Love after death: Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze

BIZARRE LIVING

As the ghost of the title, actor Patrick Swayze found his character a very challenging role as, after Sam is murdered, he begins to experience an uncanny new existence. 'This is the most interesting role I've ever played,' says Swayze. 'My character is a corporate New York banker. After he is killed, he remains on earth and

freaks her out. He needs her help. There is a part of me that has always wanted to be a hero, and Oda Mae permits me to play someone who becomes truly heroic.'

Ghost opens on October 5 at the Empire, Leicester Square in London and soon after at cinemas nationwide.

DANTE'S PLASTIC MAN — THAT'LL DO NICELY

John Glenday rounds up the latest screen projects from Britain and Los Angeles.

Terminator 2 now has a trailer doing the rounds in some areas. It pictures an assembly line of the future, gradually building killing machines; then on the model we are familiar with the face of **Arnold Schwarzenegger** appears and says, 'I'll be back'. Just enough to whet the appetite. The title the trailer is using is **T2: Judgement Day**, but insiders expect it will revert to **Terminator 2** for the film's release.

Die Hard 2 is a huge success, and **Die Hard 3** is already in the works. No airports or tower blocks this time around, though. The reported story for **Die Hard 3: Die Hardest** has **John McClaine (Bruce Willis)** dealing with an aggressive situation at a NASA site and ending up on a rocket heading for the Moon. Hats off to the writers (unknown at this time, but expect to see **Steven de Souza's** name on the credits) for their sheer audacity. Before any missions in space, Willis will work with **Heathers** director **Michael Lehman** on another action/adventure movie, **Hudson Hawk**. The **Heathers** are to continue as well. A TV series is planned in the US, but I hold little hope for any of the film's offbeat traits being carried over to the safety of TV-land.

ROBIN HOOD

More news on the Robin Hood films: two out of the three expected for next summer have been put on hold. The only one coming to fruition is the Morgan Creek production **Prince Of Thieves**, with Kevin Costner. Joining him will be **Heathers** star **Christian Slater**, and **Danny DeVito**. The director will be Kevin Reynolds (**Beast Of War**) and shooting is expected to take place in Sherwood Forest. Reports say that the Sheriff of Nottingham character dabbles in black magic, so expect a few fantasy FX elements there. It is also set in a yokel-filled England, so

if you're British you can bet the script will insult your intelligence with its 'Ooo-arr' dialogue.

As for the John McTiernan **Hood**, with **Mel Gibson** — it will have to wait. **McTiernan** has expressed an interest in directing a follow-up to **The Hunt For Red October**, featuring the **Alec Baldwin** character, **Jack Ryan**. No submarines for the sequel. If made, it would be based on the **Tom Clancy** novel, **A Clear And Present Danger**, and would deal with Ryan going into battle with Colombian drug barons.

There are rumours that **Joe Dante's** next project could be a movie based on the comic strip character, **Plastic Man**, and would be produced by **Batman** instigators **Guber and Peters**. Dante has expressed an interest in the character, but passed on it to do **Gremlins 2**. He also considered remaking **Gulliver's Travels**, but passed on that too. After the excellent but averagely successful **Gremlins 2**, perhaps a comic strip hero would be a good political

move; after all, there is plenty of scope for weirdness and surrealism with a character who can extend and bend his body into any shape.

A casting call apparently went out for 10,000 people to play monks in **Alien 3**. So far, Hicks and Newt are rumoured not to appear in number 3, but the script is undergoing another revision. Production is under way, so expect to see the movie some time next year.

Princes Of Mars, the Disney/Henson/Baker film that was put on hold when Henson died, may see the light of day once more. **Rick Baker** may direct, but the name of **Terry Gilliam** has also been linked with the project.

I have said it before, but **Sam (Evil Dead) Raimi's Darkman** has all the elements that **Batman** should have had, but lacked. Even the **Darkman** posters feature the main character standing on a high building, looking down. This movie will put Raimi up in the big league, but he hasn't forgotten his roots — **Dead 3** will be his next film.

RETRACTION

Issue 19 of **FEAR** included a story on **Harlan Ellison and Terminator 2** in which we stated that the author was receiving a sum of money from the budget of the movie in regard to a plagiarism suit against **James Cameron**.

FEAR would like to point out that this story was inaccurate and that, furthermore, Mr Ellison had nothing whatsoever to do with the information supplied to us by a US contact. We retract this story and apologise to both Mr Ellison and Mr Cameron for any inconvenience or embarrassment caused.

More apologies (!) for the mis-spelling in last month's **Harlan Ellison** interview of the book titles **Angry Candy** and **Deathbird Stories**, the latter of which is not up for **British publication...**

COMICS CONDOMINIUM



What have Casper the friendly ghost, Felix the Cat and Little Dot have in common with **Batman**, **Superman**, **Superboy** and the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**? Well, **Stateside Comics'** new retail store in **Barnet, Hertfordshire** has one of the most impressive ranges of early issues of these comics available in the UK.

The shop foyer is particularly well-stocked with the latest comics,

books, toys and novelties, and also provides a spacious area for book signings — there will be at least one signing a month if joint chief executive **Martin Gold** gets his way. Passing through the foyer, and a Tardis-like corridor, space-time resumes in the basement area with back issues of **Batman**, **Superman** and **Thor** dating back to the **Forties**. But beware: any attempt to remove rarities from the shelves sets off the infra-red security system.

The state of the art feel

continues with a computer system that will track down any comic you care to mention, and tell you whether it's in stock or likely to be. **Stateside** is the nearest thing you'll find to a comics hypermarket. The store's only drawback is its location, but the mail order service will offset any problem with this.

More info from: **Stateside Comics plc**, 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, Herts. Nearest station: **New Barnet (BR)**.

RETURNS

NEW EDITOR FOR SKELETON CREW

After the recent sacking of Skeleton Crew editor Dave Hughes, Argus Specialist Publications has installed a new editor for the title.

Dave Reeder is no newcomer to the horror scene. Previously, he has edited *Halls Of Horror*, *Fantasy Macabre*, the *BFS Newsletter* and *Shock Xpress*. Group Editor Stuart Cooke is pleased with the move, and pointed out several inaccuracies in the 'Crew'll Lies' news story in *FEAR* Issue 21.

'Argus Specialist Publications is 100 per cent behind the continued publication of Skeleton Crew. Your claim about ASP being 'committed to six months of publication' is completely unfounded...may I suggest that you send your 'source' away to check their facts.

'I have no idea who gave you the impression that only 20,000 copies of the magazine were withdrawn from circulation pending removal of the 'risque material'...The true figure is much higher.'

Finally, 'Skeleton Crew — Portraits of Horror — is copyright Argus Specialist Publications. It has no 'copyright' holder.'

When we pointed out that our particular copy of the offending Issue 2 of Skeleton Crew had © 1990 ASP and Dave Hughes printed on the masthead, Cooke replied: 'Hughes had no right to do that. He was the last person to see those pages before they went to print and had no permission from the company to print such a thing...'

You'll find that in the rebound issues — and in issue one — we are the only copyright holder.'

FEAR, of course, apologises for any inaccuracies within the story and willingly retracts them.

Birmingham might not be the brightest city in Britain, but it's where I've made my most difficult, thrilling and dangerous decisions.

I solemnly promise not to turn this into an autobiography, but I have some memories which, I think, sum up fandom and, I hope, explain the socially unsettling gap between it and 'professionalism'.

Four years ago, I was a very young journalist with a predictably solid job, working on a computer magazine. Life had begun to get boring so I used to take the Central Line tube from Chancery Lane to Tottenham Court Road and walk down to St Giles Circus where Forbidden Planet then had its domain — a small, dark shop, stuffed with magazines, posters, books, soundtracks and models (of the plastic kit kind).

I quickly fell in love, and every lunchtime took this hassleome journey to my straining Mecca, where I was thrilled to find issues of the latest American publications, and annoyed if I hadn't parted with at least £3.00 by the time I left.

On one of these trips I paused by a scattering of paper on the window shelf, and picked up a flyer for the British Fantasy Society. It didn't take much to convince myself that I should join and, two months later, during a dry September, I took the train from London to Birmingham New Street.

The Midland Hotel is on New Street but, as I discovered, difficult to find if you take the wrong turning in the shopping centre. And, once inside the hotel lobby, I was lost again, unknown to the milling hundreds and unprepared for the hearty revelries that even the convention progress reports cannot convey.

Everyone had people to see, books to inspect, and drinks to buy, so it wasn't until I'd self-consciously entered the dealers' room with its trestle tables full of books, that I met my first friend. It is that meeting that I remember the most from that weekend: not the panels, speeches or signings, good though they were. To find another fairly clean living King fan with no airs and graces, and later two libraries and a postman, all of whom shared my



interests...

Magic.

The professional contacts came later and, as I talked about my plans to start a fantasy magazine, more people wanted to know when — not because I had the cash, but simply because...just because. It took almost another year to get going, during which time I built my fan contacts, started to write for the *BFS Newsletter* and went into an unproductive freelance period after an argument with my previous publisher. Desperate, I cast around for work and, as money dwindled, approached Newsfield with a proposal for *FEAR*.

A month or so passed before they agreed to the initial premise but, even then, problems arose, as I became ill with rheumatic fever and was unable even to type through the agony of my red, bloated hands — one hell of an irony considering that that was the one thing the project then needed. Perhaps *FEAR* was destined to suffer the same fate as the other British horror journals, such as the infamous *Halls Of Horror*, but, this time, before it could raise its head off the chopping block.

Determination won through on all sides, though, and we started to publish using many of the fans I'd talked to during that first British Fantasy Convention. Two more Cons went by — a British one in Birmingham and the Worldcon in London. Both saw *FEAR*'s sales figures climb, and both had me swearing faithfully to my friends that I would keep a level head as well as holding on to my social contacts and fan's mentality. I bitterly attacked those

who appeared to be aloof and snuffy about mixing with the readers of books and watchers of films.

How naive was I?

Just a few months ago, a close friend called and suggested we go out for a drink in London. *I reached for my diary*. 'Sorry, I can't make it,' I replied — I had a film screening that evening, though I wasn't going to review the movie myself. As I set out to see *Robocop 2*, I realised I had become the type of creature that I'd loathed so much two years ago — aloof and incommunicado, though through no reason except pressures of work. I seldom talked to my real friends and, when I did, they seemed distant. I got the impression that they thought I had changed.

This type of memory might strike a chord with other 'professionals', and, if so, good. For me, now, they certainly bring home the realisation that person to person contact is more important than all the world's product. Meeting, talking, even arguing, is important, and that's what I'll be doing at the British Fantasy Convention this year.

FEAR has given me a platform upon which to give my views and tell my stories; the upcoming convention could give you a chance to give yours. So, if you see me at the bar, or in the dealers' room, just pull up a pew and let's chat. After all, that's what Cons are all about...

John Gilbert



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'LONDON'S BEST BACK-ISSUE SELECTION' - EVENING STANDARD

FLESH AND

A fistful of treasures, hardly touched: that sums up the golden marketing opportunities available to Twentieth Century Fox as it prepared to promote Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*. And yet, according to the director, the American launch missed chances and courted disaster, publicising *Nightbreed* as a slasher movie! Will the British premiere be better judged? Mark Salisbury asked Clive Barker the billion dollar question.



If there is one film that British fans of the fantastique are eagerly awaiting, it has to be Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*. The second directorial outing from the horror/fantasy genre's wunderkind, this adaptation of Barker's best-selling novel *Cabal* has sailed such a stormy transition from screenplay to screen that the problems encountered by its director are in danger of overshadowing the finished film.

Intimations of trouble first surfaced last Christmas when word filtered back from America that additional scenes were being

FURY

shot, and that the film was being re-edited. A disappointing box office response prompted further concern.

Additional footage, an alternative ending involving Decker's resurrection (based on US preview audiences' demands), a change of editor (Richard Marden going out, to be replaced by Mark Goldblatt who cut *The Terminator* and directed *The Punisher*) and a period of testing hell, were all foisted upon an increasingly disillusioned Barker over a period of three months as he hurried to meet a February release date. These factors conspired to distort his vision to such a degree that the film which emerged from the director's postproduction 'nightmare' (his word) in America was not the poetic hymn to the monstrous that he'd originally envisaged. At least 20 minutes — of material considered extraneous by Fox executives — are missing from the film we saw in rough cut form last September; scenes which slowed the pace below the frantic have been pared to the bone, leaving a slick rollercoaster ride.

SCREAM AND SHOUT

Nightbreed, it has to be said, was beset with problems almost from day one. The ousting of original producer Chris Figg midway through shooting threw the already problematic production into further disarray, but the difficulties endured this side of the Atlantic were insubstantial compared to those encountered by Barker during postproduction in Los Angeles.

Barker's highly critical and very public lambasting of the Hollywood system may, to

many, sound like sour grapes, complaints by an indignant director trying to save face after his film's relative failure at the US box office. But the treatment dealt out to Barker is indicative of that which befalls both low and high profile filmmakers every day in Hollywood. Recently, much has been written of the abrasive, arrogant, dictatorial style of producer Joel Silver, whose insulation of director Renny Harlin from studio pressure on *Die Hard 2*, when the movie's spiralling budget was reaching ridiculous proportions, is now legendary, and bears testimony to the predicament faced by the affable Barker when thrown into a milieu as hostile, objectionable and foreign as any of those described in his fiction.

'It's terrible to say it,' says Barker, in contemplative mood while eagerly awaiting *Nightbreed*'s UK release, 'but I think that a lot of people in these kinds of systems respect somebody who will yell and scream and be



Shuna Sassi, one of the Breed:
beautiful, ferocious and prickly



irrational and throw things, more than they will somebody who will come in and talk quietly, intellectually and deal honourably with them.

'I didn't have a producer who yelled and screamed and kicked arse. And despite the surface of sophistication that that community has, it really works at gutter level. People bully, people connive, this is nothing you haven't heard about Hollywood before, but there it is — and they lie.'

ANTI-VALUES

'I want to make movies, I don't want to make movies with dishonourable people. I think I'm probably going to have to once in a while. I would prefer to know the systems better. I made *Hellraiser* here, I made *Nightbreed* here. I walked over there to finish postproduction on the movie and discovered a whole different system of values, almost anti-values.

'The politics got so byzantine that I didn't

'The politics got so byzantine that I didn't know who was stabbing me in the back, who was stabbing me in the eye — but they all had knives'

know who was stabbing me in the back, who was stabbing me in the eye — but they all had knives. All those things happen to directors all the time, but because books aren't like that, it came as a real shock to realise that people would just lie straight to your face and there were times when I thought I really don't know what I'm doing this for. I don't know why I'm bothering to deal with these people, they are total bastards.'

Barker's disgust with the system doesn't end there. After a final test screening at Redondo Beach, California, the 500-strong audience reacted with universal delight. 'I came out of there thinking, 'My God, we've done it. They love it.' Which is one of the mys-

teries why Twentieth Century Fox (the distributors) didn't get behind it. If it didn't test well I could understand them dumping it, but the audience had a great time.'

Fox's failure to grasp the movie's motivation manifested itself in a misdirected marketing strategy. The film was released with a retouched *Bad Dreams* poster inscribed with the immortal ad line: 'Lori thought she knew everything about her boyfriend...she was wrong', and promoted as a stalk and slash film, something it most definitely is not. That the film wasn't even previewed to critics illustrated how little faith Fox had in their picture; as did their reluctance to release monster photos to the press lest it was mistaken



as being a film about monsters.

'When I saw the way they were selling the movie, I freaked out and said: 'What are you doing? This isn't the movie', and was given all kinds of excuses... 'Well there isn't time to change it, we have to release now'. And there was a very low awareness of the movie and they knew it. The recognition of Cronenberg was smaller than I thought. They knew they hadn't prepared the audiences for the existence of the movie, nobody knew the movie was coming, when the movie was advertised it wasn't the movie that we'd made. When the movie was out it was put out with posters that wholly misrepresented the content, and then of course it was gone.'

EVIL MONSTERS

The realisation of the depth of misunderstanding came when one of the heads of Morgan Creek (the production company) remarked to Barker: 'If you're not careful, some people are going to *like* the monsters.'

'Here's a guy who had presumably read the screenplay at some point or other who didn't get what had been done at all.

'I was crazy as a loon at that point. I didn't know what to do, but the thing is it's no use yelling, 'You stupid fucker', you have to sit down and say, 'Listen, this is the movie we've made, this is why we've made the movie...'

'Part of the problem is that people think so generically, they think 'horror movie': that anything that's ugly or monstrous is bad. Rex Reed said on TV: 'I like my monsters to be evil. So I don't like this movie because I like my monsters to be evil'. So no room for ambiguity, no room for Quasimodo, no room, apparently, for Frankenstein's monster, no room for all those wonderful creatures for whom we feel ambiguity, like King Kong. He liked his monsters evil, so fuck this movie.'

'If you are dealing with a movie that is a little bit quirky, a little bit strange, then people have to make creative decisions, and the trouble with making creative decisions, if you're a person who wants to keep their job, is you could be wrong.

'Our little *Nightbreed* comes along and it's a one weekend job which is going to work or it isn't, and if it doesn't who cares? It's a movie made by someone who made this other quirky S&M horror movie, who isn't one of the community, who's made this faintly European Hammer-horrorish sort of movie, and it's got Cronenberg in it and they're not that sure about Cronenberg either for a whole bunch of other reasons. And it's got all these weird creatures and we're supposed to like them, and no stars and it's violent, and it's weird and it inverts the moralities.

'The head of marketing at Morgan Creek never even saw the movie all the way through, and he was the guy publicising the movie! He could never make it through the film, it disgusted and distressed him. He said to me at one point, 'You're an intelligent man, why do you make these movies? They're disgusting and horrible'. And this guy was *selling* the movie!

'They were just incredibly confused as to how to market the picture. It's a monster movie and they were slightly ashamed of it being a monster movie. They were uneasy with the whole thing. And there is no way of articulating to people who just don't get it, what the pleasures of a monster movie are.'

WEIRDNESS QUOTIENT

Is he proud of the final film? 'It's more of a rollercoaster ride than originally intended. I was surprised at how little time the US audi-

18 October 1990 FEAR



'He said to me at one point, 'You're an intelligent man, why do you make these movies? They're disgusting and horrible'. And this guy was selling the movie!'

ence wanted to spend with dialogue when I tested the movie. The longer cut frankly didn't work for them. They wanted sensation after sensation after sensation. But it's roundabouts and swings in a way, because there's an element of excitement now in the movie. What happens now is the movie gets running and just never stops. I don't think it bores anybody, it moves way too fast to bore.

'But I've made my second Hammer movie, and it's a very different kind of movie to *Hellraiser*, but it was nevertheless in an essentially English tradition, indoor sets, and the whole thing being a little strange and quirky, rather than it all being super slick — gothic, if you like. It has a delirious quality, it begins with a dream and it never stops being

ter's enormous success in the States was due in the main to its release on video, both rental and sell-through. Barker is aware that *Nightbreed* has another life and, more importantly, another chance of success, even to the point of contemplating the further exploits of the Breed. Is a sequel likely? 'Yes, partially because the video company are very interested, but if it does well on video then there'll clearly be an audience for it. Again, *Hellraiser 3* will probably be made at the beginning of next year and as long as those

David Cronenberg, cult director of *Shivers*, *The Brood* and *Dead Ringers*, took the opportunity to step before the camera to play psychopathic psychiatrist Dr Decker in *Nightbreed*. Here, in part of an interview originally intended for Clive Barker's book *Nightbreed: The Making Of...*, Cronenberg talks to John Gilbert and Mark Salisbury about psychotic performance art.



Filmmakers David Cronenberg and Clive Barker

a dream all the way through, it has the tone of an opium dream movie and I like that a lot. Its weirdness quotient is high, which does tend to delight me.'

Nightbreed only made \$4 million less than *Hellraiser* at the US box office, and the lat-

Despite a few brief appearances in his own films and a John Landis thriller, David Cronenberg had little experience of acting before his debut as Dr Decker, a fact which he readily admits. Yet he has a very positive approach to the craft. 'It's not like directing at all, and very disconnected from day-to-day production. You're off five days, let's say, and then you're called in to do a day, and that's not conducive to directing.'

movies are made for a modest budget there's no reason why they shouldn't continue, so yeah, I think there's a good chance there'll be a sequel. I'd be involved in it but I've just signed a two-picture deal with Universal so that'll keep me out of the running for a while.'

FRESH CONFIDENCE

That deal (which includes a science fiction film) will see Barker first directing a remake of *The Mummy*. 'All we're taking is the title, it will not resemble at all any mummy movie you've ever seen before. Mummies are not terribly interesting, but the idea of a mummy, something that's ancient and belongs to a civilisation and a culture that still remains largely mysterious to us, is. It will be a deeply perverse and dark movie. If anybody thought I'd given up my extreme pathological and psychotic moviemaking after *Hellraiser*, they had better think again. I'm going to the limits of the MPAA.'

Universal's courting of Barker and their enthusiasm for his work has instilled him with fresh confidence in Hollywood, but his desire to have greater control has left him with no option but to move to Los Angeles, relocating to America permanently as of next March. 'If I wasn't writing books I'd feel very distressed by all of this. But I'm still learning, this is not my prime profession, and I do need to educate myself.'

Threatening moment: Lori and Narcisse (left); Peloquin (right), starved of flesh



FACES OF DEATH

Did he ever feel that, when Clive gave him directions, they were wrong? 'You discuss things. Everybody makes suggestions, but it never quite happens the way you put it. I know, as a director, I rely on my actors to keep me honest about a particular character. Clive has got about 60 or 70 characters to deal with in this film and I only have to deal with one. So, if Clive would say, 'Maybe he'd pick up the cup of coffee,' and I would say, 'Oh, no, I don't think he would do that', well, Clive would listen.'

'To a certain extent, Clive is going to trust my instincts as an actor, with that character, because that's the responsibility, to keep that character consistent through and through. On the other hand, you depend very much on your director to bring you into the movie at the right level.'

'You never shoot a movie in sequence and the first scene I shot was a scene at the end of the movie, and that was my introduction to the character of Decker: I don't say a word, but it's a very complex scene. Clive has to tell me what level we're on for that, because he's the only one who's got the whole picture in his mind. My instincts might say, 'Do this scene in an hysterical tone,' and he might say, 'No, no, that's quite wrong, because you've gotta build up later to even more hysteria, so if you go totally to the top, you've got no place to go. It's really a collaboration that way. It never really gets to: 'You're wrong.'

Both Barker and Cronenberg gained a



Psycho-killer: Cronenberg as the infamous Dr Decker

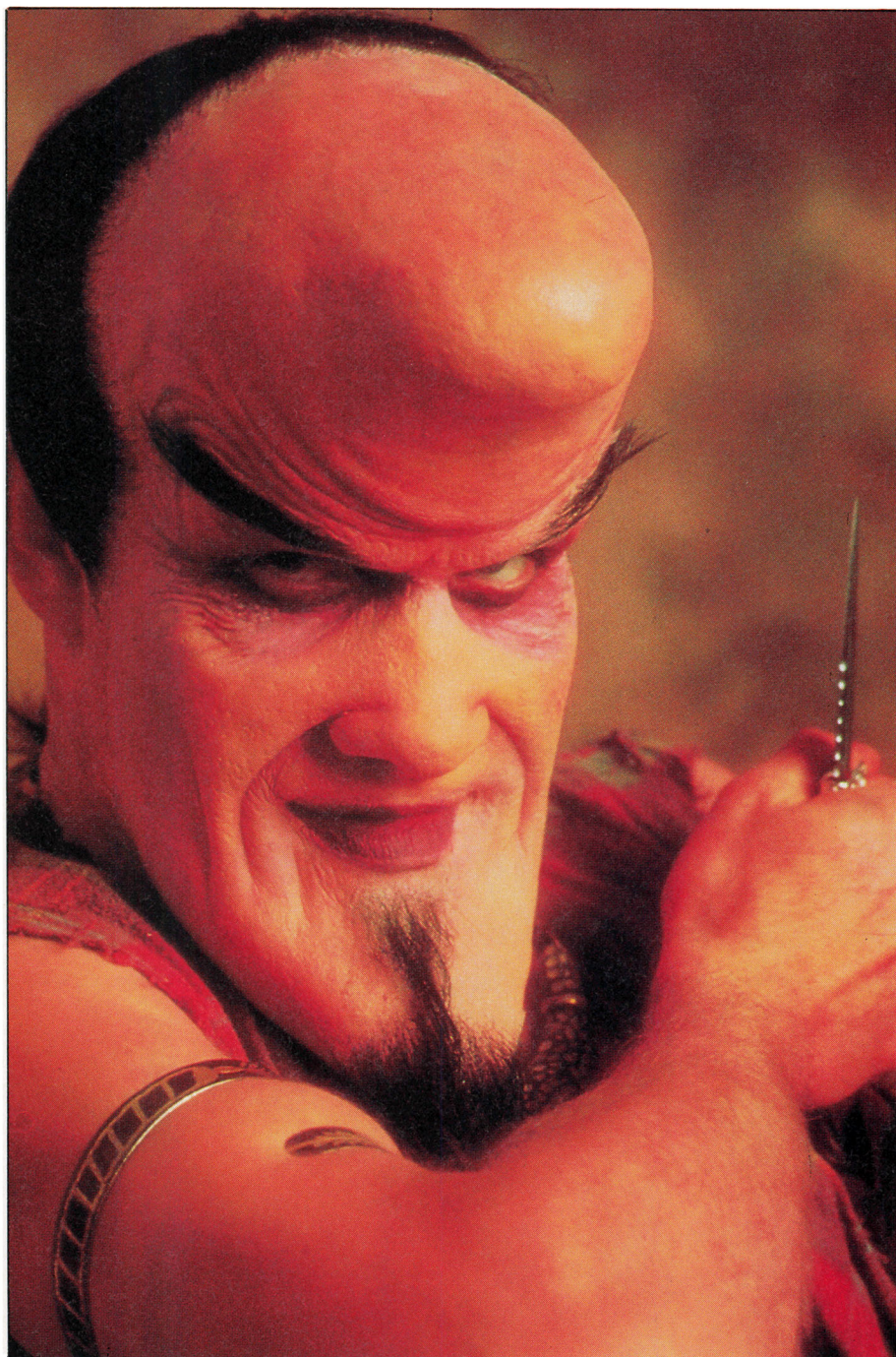
somewhat jokey reputation for enjoying the death scenes on set — there were quite a few of them. 'A death scene is always a wonderful thing to do. Basically it's all play, it's like kids, and that's what's nice about it. You get on the set, there's a strange balance between the adult part of yourself which has to be obedient and punctual, and the part that likes to play. It's really exciting to be on the set as an actor, and primarily be expected to play, make yourself up and put on funny clothes. That's what it is, and that is

my pleasure. It has nothing to do with real death or anything like that whatsoever.'

Fortunately — for the public at large — Cronenberg is not a Method actor, preferring to rely on an instinct for character rather than reams of information about cleanliness freaks or psychopaths. 'You're going to do your version of a psychotic. My interests and Clive's overlapped to a certain extent. We both could talk about famous psychotics of the past, and some of the future, so we really don't need that kind of input. I find that very inhibiting as a director or writer. I tend to invent my research rather than do it.'

Barker and Cronenberg: two film directors who have worked in the horror genre. Clive is obviously appreciative of David's work, but how does David feel about Clive's abilities as an author? 'There are certain similarities between what I do and what he does, and then there are some extreme differences. For me, it's the differences that are exciting rather than the similarities. We're both interested in transcendence through transformation, considered in a very physical sense rather than a metaphysical sense. Those are themes that we both return to again and again. But he is much more exuberant in his sense of invention and his creation of new mythologies without any rational explanation. That's where we become different: I would never create the Cenobites, for example, I would never create the *Nightbreed*. Those are the differences there, I think.'





Kinski: the man in the moon

THE SELLING OF NIGHTBREED

20 October 1990 FEAR

Stephen Jones, unit publicist on *Hellraiser*, *Hellbound* and *Nightbreed*, talks exclusively to John Gilbert about the problems with publicity on Clive Barker's monstrous pet project.

The unit publicist on any movie coordinates the set visits, interviews and stills while the film is in production. They have a unique eagle's eye view of the project, both in front of and behind the cameras, and journalists such as ourselves are indebted to them for allowing us to talk to the stars, director, and special effects crews.

Genre journalists are certainly beholden to Stephen Jones, who comparatively recently showed that film companies need to have a unit publicist who knows the subject matter

NIGHTBREED: THE VERDICT

**'This was a bitch'n'...
It's too good to
describe, kind of like
sex'**

**'Dude, it's fucking
scary'**

'You'll shit your pants'

**'GOD!! This movie
was God!!'**

**Selection of test-card
responses to the final
Nightbreed audience
preview, Redondo Beach,
California.**

and can push the film forward, against competition from blockbusters such as the Indiana Joneses of this world. 'I worked as a film journalist for ten years,' says Jones, 'and found that film publicity, particularly in the fantasy, horror and science fiction fields, was not good. There were closed sets, and when you asked for notes on the cast or crew when the film was in production the answer was, invariably, 'No'. There was need in the industry for someone to come in who knew the area.'

Until then, publicists had generally waited for the one week in which the film opened and then deluged the press with information. Too late, according to Jones, who strongly believes that information and stills released during production tempt press and audiences alike when release is nigh. 'We put a package together and sold *Hellraiser* very strongly during production. It was a new style of pub-

licity, creating a mood of anticipation for the audience who want to know about the make-up effects. It's no good telling them when the film's come out. They want to know six months in advance.'

That was certainly the case on *Nightbreed*, which had journalists queueing to get a glimpse of the sympathetic monsters, and the director who was, according to those press notes, breaking new ground with this epic. But, as production drew to a close, the budgetary problems arose and the paymasters, Morgan Creek, insisted on a greater creative say.

'When we first sat down at the end of January 1989, it was a much smaller film with a budget of about \$7 million. But, a third of the way through production, everybody realised that the film was under budget. The costs spiralled to twice as much as the original budget, and we went from making a low to mid budget movie to a reasonably high budget film. There was also more control from Morgan Creek.'

The unit publicist usually relinquishes control over his thousands of movie stills and notes, giving them to the filmmakers, in this case Morgan Creek, and then waits for the phone to ring, and the marketing people to ask his advice. No such call came from Morgan Creek or Twentieth Century Fox. Indeed, Fox in America seemed to ignore even the guidance and advice from Clive Barker who was, after all, the director. 'Clive's vision of horror is, to my mind, unique, but they ignored it and said, 'this is yet another horror film, let's sell it this way'. The man spent two years of his life on this pet project, worked closely with the Fox people to create a campaign that involved the monsters, then they dumped it and he wasn't informed.

'There was also no American press showing. This is a long film, an epic monster movie, and when the filmmaker decides not to show it to the press, as if it's going to be dumped on the market, the coverage you get is already biased against the film.'

The film, however, appears to have withstood the gaze of European critics, whose verdicts are more or less favourably in line. The British arm of Twentieth Century Fox also appears to be more in tune with the movie, aiming to promote it with a photographic monster. Let's hope that the Bible's 'prophet in his own country' adage does not apply this time, and that the film receives a prodigal son's reception.

THE MEANING OF MAGIC

Clive Barker's next book, *Imajickä*, is, according to its author, another huge, dark fantasy tome and, unlike *The Great And Secret Show*, is very much an English novel. 'As *Weaveworld* stood to the story of the Garden of Eden, this stands to the life of Christ,' says Barker. 'It's about what magic is really for, and it's not for bringing rabbits out of hats. It's about the mythology that underpins all magical activity, and when I say magical I don't mean illusions, I mean magic in the sense of Crowley magick.'

'I have been meeting and having very informative exchanges with practising magicians in this country and in America. I treat the occult very seriously, in fact more and more seriously, and have found great insight into what I do from these people.'

Mark Salisbury



DINE WITH CLIVE BARKER

FEAR
competition

Can't get to a signing? You could have author and film director **CLIVE BARKER** to yourself for an evening of food, wine and conversation.

Clive has a busy schedule planned for the promotion of **NIGHTBREED**, and a new book to write, but he's been a friend of **FEAR** magazine since its first issue and wants to spend some time with one lucky reader. They will also pick up signed copies of **THE MAKING OF NIGHTBREED** and **CABAL**.

The **SECOND PRIZE WINNER** will receive an original penned *Nightbreed* illustration, signed by Clive, as well as the books mentioned above.

TEN RUNNERS UP will each be sent signed copies of the Collins' *Making Of...* book and *Cabal*.

Pretty powerful stuff, even for us. If you want to meet Clive Barker, just tell us:

Which medieval religious order was purported to worship the Breed's god of Midian.

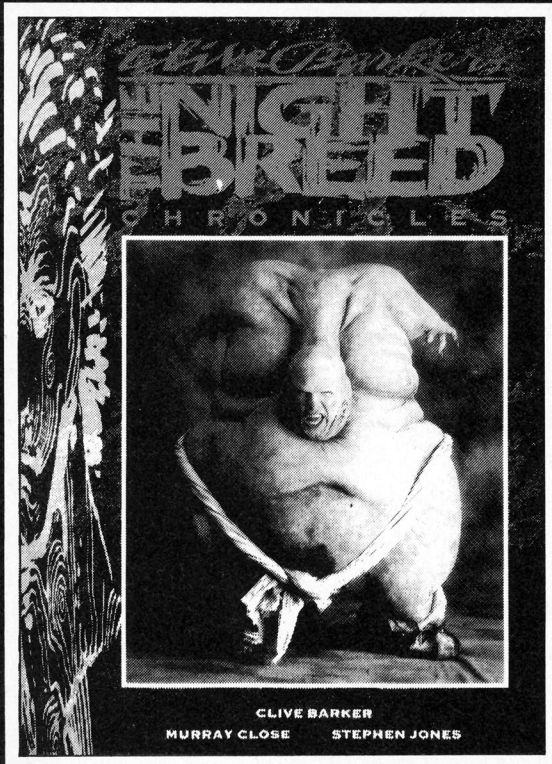
Simple, huh?

Send your answers to **BREED COMPO, FEAR, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1JW,**

As usual, no employees of **FEAR**, Newsfield or Twentieth Century Fox may take part.

TITAN BOOKS PRESENTS

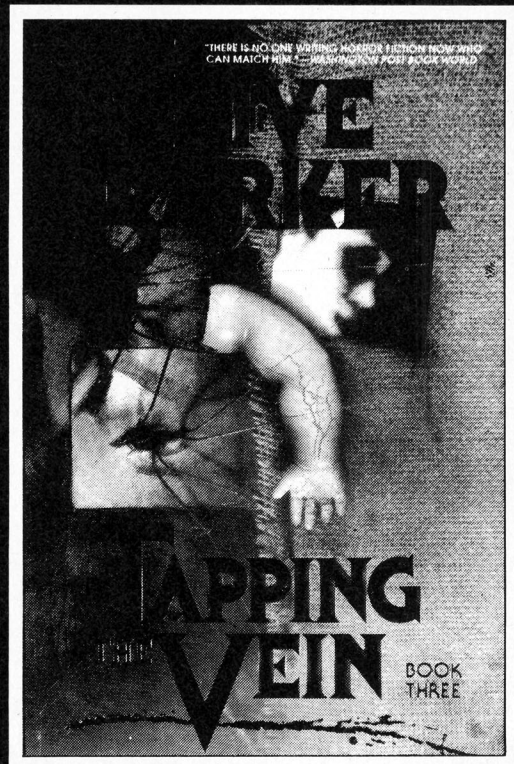
Clive Barker



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CLIVE BARKER'S NIGHTBREED CHRONICLES

A stunning portrait gallery featuring full colour photographs of the monstrous creatures which inhabit the city of Midian in the forthcoming epic fantasy film NIGHTBREED.
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To celebrate Cthulhu mythos creator H P Lovecraft's centenary, FEAR invited author Ramsey Campbell to chart the great man's life and reveal why he thinks Lovecraft's stories have had such an influence on generations of horror writers.

THE CALL TO CTHULHU

H

oward Phillips Lovecraft (pictured right) was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1890, and died there in 1937. Except for a shortlived marriage which took him to New York, he always made Providence his home. In some ways

he was a lonely figure, convinced of his own physical ugliness, but he corresponded with numerous friends, many of them writers of weird fiction: August Derleth, Donald Wandrei, Robert Bloch, Clark Ashton Smith, Frank Belknap Long and Fritz Leiber were amongst them.

He signed himself 'Grandfather' to his youngest correspondents, and as teenagers Bloch and Derleth benefited from his criticism when they began to sell stories to *Weird Tales*, the pulp magazine which published most of Lovecraft's work in the field. His criticism of his own work was harsher, and during the last years of his life he believed that almost all his tales were failures, not even worth preserving in book form.

Since then, however, he has emerged as the most influential horror writer of this century. He is also probably the most controversial, and so I'd better state my view at the outset: I believe Lovecraft is one of the most important writers in the field.

He's most famous for inventing what has come to be known as the Cthulhu Mythos, in itself enough to antagonise some of his detractors. Lovecraft never referred to it by that name — with his usual self-deprecation, he dismissed it as 'Yog-Sothothery'. Nor is it likely that he ever said what he is most often quoted as saying: 'All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practising black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again'.

For a start, many of his stories are certainly *not* based on this idea, and even those which belong to the Lovecraft mythos (the term I prefer, for whatever that's worth) don't conform to this essentially Christian model of evil versus good. Indeed, in 1935 he wrote: 'Nothing is really typical of my efforts...I'm simply casting about for better ways to crystallise and capture certain strong impressions



(involving the elements of *time, the unknown, cause and effect, fear, scenic and architectural beauty*, and other seemingly ill-assorted things) which persist in clamouring for expression.' In the same letter he advises his correspondent to 'avoid actually recognising myths such as vampirism, reincarnation, etc', and praises writers he himself admires for creating 'a sort of distinctive awe of their own'. All of which helps to explain how the Lovecraft mythos came into being — as a stage in Lovecraft's attempts to create a perfect form for his preoccupations and for the weird tale.

DELICATE FANTASIES

Of course, many writers are driven by their dissatisfaction with their own work and by the hope of doing better next time. In Lovecraft's case, when his last illness put an end to his fiction, he had written virtually every kind of weird tale there was to write. He wrote a couple in his mid-teens, but the work for which he's best known began in 1917 with *The Tomb*, a ghost story about 'a dreamer and a visionary' whose obsession with the past and with death causes him to find companions in the ancestral vault. Indeed, at least ten of his stories are relatively delicate fantasies, often based on his dreams, and ten years later he wrote a novel, *The Dream-Quest Of Unknown Kadeth*, in the midst of his most famous horrors. Recognisably Lovecraftian horror began in 1917 too, with *Dagon*, in which the narrator is cast ashore on an island raised by a submarine earthquake and glimpses a giant survivor of the race which built a monolith there — froglike and fishlike, yet 'damnable human'.

Now this is the kind of material which Lovecraft's detractors use to demonstrate his supposed inadequacies as a writer, in particular his tendency to suggest rather than show. (In 1923 he wrote to Frank Bellknap Long: 'I am not so much thrilled by a visible charnel house or conclave of daemons, as I am by the suspicion that a charnel vault exists below an immemorially ancient castle, or that a certain very old man has taken part in a daemonic conclave 50 years ago. I crave the ethereal, the remote, the shadowy, and the doubtful...') But it needs to be said that *Dagon* is an early minor story, of greatest interest as a first draft for both *The Call Of Cthulhu* (the upheaved island and its denizen) and *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. Clearly the visions it hints at meant a good deal to him.

In 1921 he wrote *The Nameless City* and introduced the *Necronomicon*, that best known of forbidden books. The title, which he later translated as 'An Image of the Law of the Dead', came to him in a dream. Abdul Alhazred, the name of the author, was suggested to Lovecraft when he was five years old as a suitable name for himself while playing Arabian Nights games. The book was the first major image Lovecraft invented as a symbol of terrors and wonders larger than the human mind could grasp. On one level, the point is the sense of breathless anticipation and of 'dread suspense' Lovecraft sought to convey to the reader, and soon he would devote much of his creative energy to shaping entire stories to that end.

The products of those efforts are enviably various: *The Outsider*, a metaphor for his own feelings about himself; the dreamlike vision of *The Music Of Erich Zann*, the only one of Lovecraft's tales which the late Robert Aickman liked; the subterranean horror of *The Rats In The Walls*, perhaps Lovecraft's most powerful achievement of what he called 'loathsome fright'; the relentless sense of

doom in *The Shunned House*...Then, in mid 1926, he wrote *The Call Of Cthulhu*, and horror fiction was never quite the same again.

INDIFFERENT TO MAN

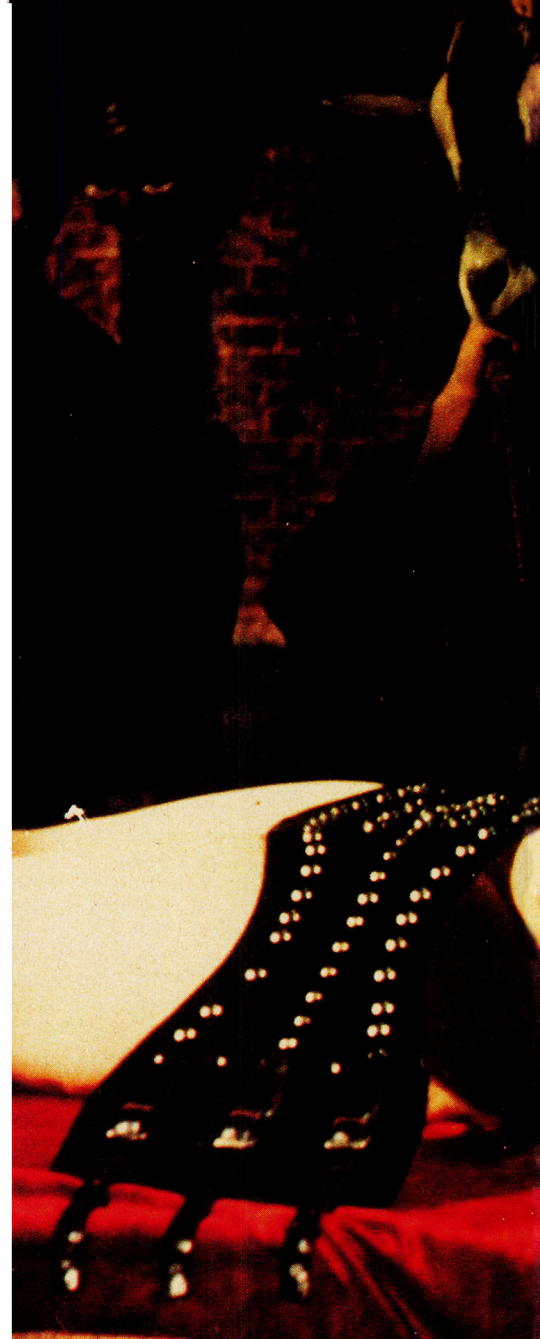
The Call of Cthulhu blends science fiction and an invented occultism to communicate a sense of awe and terror, in particular of the enormity of the unknown universe. It is wholly original and yet rooted in the work of authors Lovecraft admired, particularly the hints of other dimensions which Blackwood conveys in *The Willows* (Lovecraft's favourite weird tale) and the complicatedly suggestive structure of *Machen's Great God Pan*. It is also yet another beginning for Lovecraft but, sadly, the furthest many of his imitators progress.

'His work unites the British and American traditions of horror fiction; it unites the realistic and the fantastic, the personal and the cosmic, the occult and the scientific.'

The following year he wrote *The Colour Out Of Space* which subsequently he always regarded as his best work. Almost the opening line of *The Call of Cthulhu* is 'We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity,' and *Colour* develops that theme. 'It was just a colour out of space,' but it is Lovecraft's purest symbol, the strongest expression of his sense that the universe, and anything living out there in the dark of space or time, is indifferent to man. Yet the terror in the story is only a stage on the way to the awesomeness of the finale. For me *Colour* is Lovecraft's masterpiece, and the single best introduction to his work.

But he was continuing the experiment. Among his other tales of the period are *Pickman's Model*, which reads like a tribute to the cruel humour of Ambrose Bierce, and *The Case Of Charles Dexter Ward*, the most Gothic of his stories, which sustains a superb build-up of supernatural terror at novel length. (Two other novels which he had planned to write, *The Club Of The Seven Dreamers* and *The House Of The Worm*, exist only as titles; but with Lovecraft, sometimes the title is enough to awaken the imagination.) He was also revising stories for clients, so extensively that most of the stories (for instance, those signed by Zealia Brown Bishop — *The Curse Of Yig*, *The Mound*, and *Medusa's Coil*) are virtually all his own work, unlike the stories published by Lovecraft and August Derleth, which were in fact written by Derleth.


The Bishop stories, and perhaps *Out Of The Eons*, signed by Hazel Heald, sometimes approach Lovecraft's own standard, but in other cases it seems he was devoting too much of his time to indifferent material. Still,



perhaps this let him recharge his batteries, because his own work continued to progress. *The Dunwich Horror* (1928) is probably his most substantial fusion of science fiction and the occult, while *The Whisperer In Darkness* (1930) and *At The Mountains Of Madness* (1931) show him moving closer to science fiction. In the latter pair, curiosity and exploration are overcoming terror. Even the aliens in *Mountains Of Madness* are scientists, no longer incomprehensibly monstrous.

But Lovecraft's self-doubt was catching up with him. He so much disliked typing that he never prepared *Charles Dexter Ward* for publication. When *Mountains Of Madness* was rejected by *Weird Tales*, he took that as a sign that he was all but written out. I assume Michael Moorcock had this in mind when he claimed that Lovecraft 'regressed into an attitude of permanent defensiveness,' but if this were wholly true then Lovecraft would surely have stopped writing; the truth about a writer is to be found in his work.

In the last years of his life he wrote several fine tales of terror — *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, *The Thing On The Doorstep*, *The Hunter Of The Dark* — but his best late story, the awe-inspiring *Shadow Out Of Time*, displeased him so much that he mailed the handwritten manuscript to Derleth without even keeping a copy. 'My work dissatisfies me extremely,' he wrote to a correspondent, '& of



HAUNTERS OF THE DARK

Stephen Jones takes a look at film adaptations of
the works of H P Lovecraft.

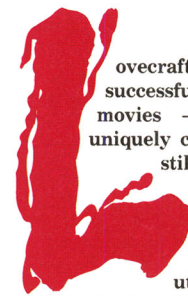
late I have destroyed much more than I have saved'. In March 1937, he died of intestinal cancer after a winter of agony. The last things he wrote were a long unfinished letter to a correspondent and, a scientist to the end, observations of his own symptoms.

Perhaps few people other than readers of *Weird Tales* would ever have heard of him if it hadn't been for August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, who created Arkham House to publish his collected works and showed the world that there was a market for horror in hardcover. (Sheldon Jaffrey's *Arkham House Companion* is an excellent guide to the first fifty years of that publisher.) By the Sixties, Lovecraft and his mythos were becoming widely known and imitated, and that is the source of a problem. It's easy to convince oneself that by imitating the apparent excesses of some of Lovecraft's writing that one is adding to his imaginative achievement — I certainly thought so when I was teenager and writing my first book — but that misses the point. His stylistic tricks — the runs of adjectives and images, the extended fantastic metaphors — are generally part of the construction of the story, without which they aren't worth imitating; as Fritz Leiber says, Lovecraft's language is orchestrated. And when lesser writers like myself began to elaborate the mythos, explaining what Lovecraft had only suggested, we simply turned it into another

stale occult concept of the kind it had been meant to replace.

It's a tribute to the power of his work that Lovecraft has survived any amount of inept imitation and continued to influence writers as excellent (and as different) as Thomas Ligotti and T E D Klein. In striving to write fiction which would make positive use both of his talents and of his limitations (in particular his difficulties with creating characters), he developed near-perfect structures for the horror story. As with Machen, his determination to convey awe gives his tales a quality too seldom found. His work unites the British and American traditions of horror fiction; it unites the realistic and the fantastic, the personal and the cosmic, the occult and the scientific. No wonder he is worth rereading when there is so much to discover.

In his last letter he describes how, on one of his last expeditions before his illness began to overcome him, he was joined by 'two tiny kittens' (cats being his favourite animal) in the midst of a hitherto unexplored forest near Providence. As he emerged from the forest after sunset they disappeared among the trees. I should like to think that in his final moments he may have dreamed of being accompanied by them on the 'voyages of discovery' he had planned. He deserved a final vision, after having left us with so many and never appreciating that he had.



Lovecraft's stories have never been successfully transferred to the movies — perhaps because his uniquely cosmic and twisted visions still surpass Hollywood's technical abilities to recreate them effectively. A number of — mostly low budget — features have utilised specific elements and ideas from Lovecraft's fiction, but failed because they have never followed through with his outlandish and original concepts. It was not until more than 25 years after HPL's death that filmmakers first decided to adapt his work, but despite a rash of Lovecraft-inspired movies in the late Eighties, the results still do not do the author's work justice.

Caltiki, The Immortal Monster. [Original title: *Caltiki, Il Monstro Immortale*]

Italy/Spain 1959. Dir Robert Hampton (Riccardo Freda). Scr Phillip Just (Filippo Sanjust). Starring John Merivale, Diori Perego, Giacomo Rossi-Stuart. Allied Artists.

Ramsey Campbell describes this low budget monster-on-the-loose flick as the 'one film which is more HPL than any'. Made by Italians, set in Mexico and shot in Spain, *Caltiki* involves an amorphous shape that rises from an underground lake near a Mayan temple and turns its victims into skeletal-armed murderers. Better than it sounds, it was directed by cult Italian auteur Freda, and photographed by the equally venerated Mario Bava (under the alias of 'John Foam').

Scarlet Friday

USA/Italy circa 1963. Dir Mario Bava. Starring Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee. AIP.

AIP's first announcement that they planned to film H P Lovecraft's *The Dunwich Horror* was to have costarred horror greats Karloff and Lee. Unfortunately, Karloff rejected the proposed screenplay, and the project languished until 1969. In the early Sixties AIP also announced versions of *The Rats In The Walls*, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and *The Case Of Charles Dexter Ward* — the latter two both to be titled *The Haunted Village!*

The Haunted Palace

USA 1963. Prod/Dir Roger Corman. Scr Charles Beaumont. Starring Vincent Price, Debra Paget, Lon Chaney Jr, Leo Gordon, Elisha Cook, John Dierkes, Milton Parson. AIP.

The first 'official' Lovecraft adaptation, although the ads credited it to the then bigger box office draw of Edgar Allan Poe. Acclaimed genre author Beaumont turns in a literate screenplay that transfers Lovecraft's short novel *The Case Of Charles Dexter Ward* into the necrophilic atmosphere of Poe's celebrated poem.

Dark Intruder

USA 1965. Dir Harvey Hart. Scr Barrie Lyndon. Starring Leslie Nielsen, Gilbert Green, Charles Bolander, Mark Richman, Judi Meredith. Universal. Atmospheric low budget television pilot for the projected *Black Cloak* series, but deemed too horrific by the studio and released in US cinemas. Nielsen is an occult detective in San Francisco of the early 1900s, and investigates a series of bizarre murders.

Monster Of Terror [US title: Die, Monster, Die!]

UK 1965. Dir Daniel Haller. Scr Jerry Sohl. Starring Boris Karloff, Nick Adams, Suzan Farmer, Freda Jackson, Terence de Marney, Patrick Magee. AIP.

Corman's art director Daniel Haller made his directing debut with this weak adaptation of Lovecraft's *The Colour Out Of Space*. Despite a script by SF writer Sohl, it contains none of the cosmic horror found in the original story. Adams portrays insipid hero Stephen Reinhart, a young American scientist visiting the little English village of Arkham to see his fiancée Susan Witley (Farmer), and meet her parents. Her father, Nathum, turns out to be a wheelchair-bound Karloff, who is experimenting with a radioactive meteorite in the basement. The unearthly rays cause plants and animals to mutate and horribly disfigure old Mrs Witley. The climax has Nathum (obviously not Karloff) go on a berserk rampage as a glowing monster. Once again, Lovecraft's themes were discarded in favour of a simple SF plot, although the film does feature some nice special effects and a forbidden book entitled *The Cult Of The Outer Ones*. It was shot under the better title of *The House At The End Of The World*.

The Shattered Room

UK 1966. Dir David Greene. Scr D B Ledrov and Nathaniel Tanchuck. Starring Gig Young, Carol Lynley, Oliver Reed, Flora Robson, William Devlin, Bernard Kay. Warner/Troy-Schneck.

Started by Ken Russell, who walked off set and was replaced by Greene, making his feature debut. With Russell gone, the new director changed the script daily, replacing the mythical Deep One of Lovecraft



and August Derleth's story with a clichéd mad twin sister. Reed plays his usual sadistic thug of this period, but there are some eerie sequences and effective use of subjective camerawork. Of course, the plot has nothing to do with Lovecraft.

Curse Of The Crimson Altar [US title: The Crimson Cult]

UK 1968. Dir Vernon Sewell. Scr Mervyn Haisman, Henry Lincoln and Gerry Levy. Starring Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee, Mark Eden, Barbara Steele, Michael Gough, Rupert Davies. Tigon British.

An early draft of this script was supposedly based on Lovecraft's story *Dreams In The Witch House*, but you'd never guess it from the finished film. The promise of teaming top horror stars Karloff, Lee, Steele and Gough is never fulfilled in this low budget thriller. A green-skinned Steele portrays Lavinia Marsh, a 300-year-old witch burned at the stake, who is reincarnated in Christopher Lee! Karloff is restricted to a wheelchair (and caught a cold during production which led to his death the following year), but he still manages to steal all the best scenes.

The Dunwich Horror

USA 1969. Dir Daniel Haller. Scr Curtis Lee Hanson, Henry Rosenbaum and Ronald Silkosky. Starring Sandra Dee, Dean Stockwell, Ed Begley, Lloyd Bochner, Sam Jaffe. AIP.

Originally announced as *Dunwich*, with a script by Ray Russell and starring Peter Fonda, this updated version of Lovecraft's story features Dee as a student of Miskatonic University, kidnapped by a crazed Wilbur Whateley (Stockwell) who is about to use his stolen copy of *The Necronomicon* to release the Great Old Ones. Ed Begley (in his last role) plays Dr Henry Armitage, who discovers that Wilbur has a monstrous psychedelic 'twin' brother locked in the attic. Haller's second attempt to film Lovecraft never really achieves the cosmic scope the story needs, but still contains effective scenes, including a wild dream sequence, the death of Old Whately, and a mountain-top climax. Roger Corman was executive producer.

Equinox

USA 1969. Dir Mark McGee and Jack Woods. Scr Mark Magee. Starring Edward Connell, Barbara Hewitt, Frank Boers Jr, Robin Christopher, Jack Woods, Fritz Leiber. Tonylyn/Jack H Harris.

Started on 16mm as an amateur film in 1967 by writer/director McGee. Producers Harris and Muren added extra sequences directed by actor Jack Woods, and the result was released in 1971. Lovecraft-inspired story about four teenagers who are given a *Necronomicon*-type tome of black magic by an old man in a cave. Soon the woods are full of

stop-motion monsters led by the demon Asmodeus. Good special effects by Muren, David Allen and Jim Danforth make this low budget fantasy better than expected. Horror writer Fritz Leiber features as a missing professor and Forrest J Ackerman contributes his voice to a tape recording.

Colour Out Of Space

USA 1971. Scr Robert Thom. AIP.

Announced for production in the early Seventies, the script combined elements from two Lovecraft stories, *The Colour Out Of Space* and *The Case Of Charles Dexter Ward*. It was never made.

Rod Serling's Night Gallery: Pickman's Model

USA 1971. Starring Bradford Dillman, Louise Sorel, Donald Morrat, Jock Livingston, Joshua Bryant, Joan Tompkins. Universal/NBC-TV.

Directed by producer Jack Laird, this was one of the better episodes in the otherwise lacklustre television series.

Rod Serling's Night Gallery: Cool Air

USA 1971. Starring Barbara Rush, Henry Darrow, Beatrice Kay, Larry Blake, Karl Lucas. Universal/NBC-TV.

Routine Rod Serling adaptation of Lovecraft's short story.

Rod Serling's Night Gallery: Professor Peabody's Last Lecture

USA 1971. Starring Carl Reiner. Universal/NBC-TV.

This jokey episode, written by producer Jack Laird, has Professor Peabody (Reiner) talking about Cthulhu and the rest of the Mythos pantheon while reading from a paperback edition of *The Necronomicon*.

Kolchak: The Night Stalker: Horror In The Heights. [Alternative title: The Rakshasa]

USA 1974/75. Starring Darren McGavin, Simon Oakland, Jack Grinnage, Ruth McDevitt, Phil Silvers, Benny Rubin, Abraham Soafar. Universal/ABC-TV.

One of the better episodes of the shortlived *Kolchak* television series, based on two tele-movies written by Richard Matheson. Investigative reporter Carl Kolchak (McGavin) discovers a legendary monster luring its victims to their deaths by taking on the appearance of someone they trust. The script, by Hammer veteran Jimmy Sangster, was supposedly a tribute to Lovecraft.

The Whisperer In Darkness

USA 1975. Dir/Scr David C Smith. Starring David Clement, J Vernon Shea, Ron Koloskee, Barry Meshel. Pentagram Pictures.

A 35-minute amateur version of the Lovecraft story,

shot on Super 8 in Ohio.

The Cry Of Cthulhu

USA 1979. Dir Wolfgang Glattes. Prod/Scr David Hurd and William Baetz. Cinema Vista Corporation.

Announced as a \$6 million original treatment of Lovecraft's Mythos, the first in a four film series, to be shot in the Black Forest, Germany, for release in 1981. Nothing happened. 'I want to make 'Cthulhu' a household word,' said producer David Hurd. He didn't.

The Music Of Erich Zann

USA circa 1979.

Dreamlike 17-minute amateur short based on the Lovecraft story.

Artemis 81

UK/Denmark 1981. Dir Alastair Reid. Scr David Rudkin. Starring Hywel Bennett, Dinah Stabb, Dan O'Herlihy, Sting, Anthony Steel, Ingrid Pitt. BBC-TV.

Television movie set in the future with definite Lovecraftian overtones. A pagan statue from a Danish museum is stolen, bringing death to those who come into contact with it; meanwhile, Von Drachenfels, an old musician, is terrified that a curse upon him will cause the devastation of the Earth. Unfortunately, this promising narrative soon becomes confused, thanks to pretentious dreamlike sequences and a sub-plot involving a race of replacement humans hidden beneath the hills of Britain. At three hours, it's too long.

The Beyond [Original title: E Tu Vivrai Nel Terrore!...L'Aldila; US title: Seven Doors To Death]

Italy/USA 1981. Dir Lucio Fulci. Scr Lucio Fulci, Giorgio Mariuzzo and Dardano Sacchetti. Starring Katherine MacColl, David Warbeck, Sarah Keller, Antoine Saint John. Fulvia Film.

There are Lovecraftian references in several of Fulci's movies. Here *The Book Of Eibon* turns up in an incoherent story involving the dead returning to life when one of the seven gateways to Hell is opened in New Orleans. After a promising start, the film quickly loses all logic and we are left with banal dialogue, terrible dubbing, and an army of flesh-tearing zombies.

The Twilight Zone: Gramma

USA 1985. Starring Barrett Oliver, Darlanne Fluegel, Frederick Long. CBS-TV.

This 19-minute adaptation of Stephen King's story, scripted by Harlan Ellison, was originally set to be directed by William Friedkin. However, when he was forced to bow out because of other commitments, cinematographer Bradford May stepped in. A young boy (Oliver) is left alone with his horrible grandmother, who is a witch. Lovecraftian references include *The Necronomicon* and various Mythos names invoked as part of the old woman's spells.

Re-Animator

USA 1986. Dir Stuart Gordon. Scr Dennis Paoli, William J Norris and Stuart Gordon. Starring Bruce Abbott, Barbara Crampton, David Gale, Robert Sampson, Jeffrey Coombs. Empire Pictures.

H P Lovecraft finally got his name above the title in this wild, outrageous low budget horror/comedy, loosely based on his story *Herbert West: Reanimator*. Released unrated in America because of the gore, and one of the best scenes cut by the UK censor. Still, Gordon directs with a nice sense of manic fun, and although the film is hardly Lovecraftian in tone, it made enough money at the box office to create a mini Lovecraft boom during the late Eighties.

From Beyond

Italy/USA 1986. Dir Stuart Gordon. Scr Dennis Paoli. Starring Jeffrey Coombs, Barbara Crampton,

Ken Foree, Ted Sorel, Carolyn Purdy-Gordon. Empire Pictures.

Very loosely based on one of Lovecraft's lesser tales, this attempt by the same director and stars of *Re-Animator* to out-gross the success of that earlier film fails because of its B movie mentality.

The Real Ghostbusters: The Collect Call Of Cthulhu

Japan/USA 1986. Voices: Arsenio Hall, Maurice La Marche, Lorenzo Music, Laura Summer, Frank Welker. Columbia Pictures Television.

Perhaps the oddest entry in this HPL filmography. This episode of the popular children's TV cartoon series, based on the blockbuster movie, has the ghostbusters visiting Arkham on the trail of a stolen copy of *The Necronomicon*.

Evil Dead 2

USA 1987. Dir Sam Raimi. Scr Sam Raimi and Sam Spiegel. Starring Bruce Campbell, Sarah Berry, Dan Hicks, Kassie Wesley, Theodore Raimi. Renaissance Pictures.

Rollercoaster-ride remake of the first *Evil Dead* (1982), as a group of travellers seeking refuge in a woodland hut set loose some Mythos-inspired demonic forces.

The Curse

USA 1987. Dir David Keith. Scr David Chaskin. Starring Will Wheaton, Claude Atkins, Malcolm Danare, Cooper Huckabee, John Schneider. Trans World Entertainment.



As if *Monster Of Terror* wasn't bad enough, actor David Keith decided to make another version of Lovecraft's story *The Colour Out Of Space*, and the result went straight to video. Titled *The Farm* during shooting.

Pulse Pounders

USA 1987/88. Prod/Dir Charles Band. Scr Dennis Paoli. Starring Barbara Crampton, Jeffery Coombs, David Gale, Una Brandon-Jones, David Warner. Empire Pictures.

An attempt to put a trio of Empire's biggest hits — *Trancers 2: The Return Of Jack Death*, *The Dungeonmaster 2: A Sorcerer's Nightmare*, and Lovecraft's *The Evil Clergyman* — into one film. It was never released, and although the *Trancers* episode is being expanded to feature-length, the HPL adaptation remains in limbo.

Testament Of Randolph Carter

USA circa 1987. Starring Shaun Branney. The HP Lovecraft Historical Society. The Colorado College. Hour-long amateur adaptation of HPL's *The Statement Of Randolph Carter*.

The Unnameable

USA 1988. Dir/Scr Jean-Paul Ouellette. Starring Charles King, Mark Kinsey Stephenson, Alexandra Durrell, Laura Albert, Eben Ham. K P Productions/Yankee Classics/Vidmark.

Another low budget Lovecraft adaptation released directly to video. Based loosely on a minor 1923 tale in which high school kids explore the cursed house of an ancient sorcerer and are killed off one by one by his monstrous offspring. Although it probably owes more to the teenagers-in-jeopardy/slasher cycle than HPL, there are references to the Miskatonic University and *The Necronomicon*, plus a great Lovecraftian monster (played by mime Katrin Alexandre).

The Shadow Over Innsmouth

USA 1988. Dir Stuart Gordon. Scr Dennis Paoli. Vestron.

Another major Lovecraft movie that was never made. Vestron couldn't come up with the \$7 million Gordon needed to do the project justice. Paoli's script combines the classic novella with another Lovecraft story, *The Thing On The Doorstep*, and at one time it looked as if they were going to shoot it in England. Acclaimed illustrator Berni Wrightson was employed as creature designer and produced around 70 drawings, while Dick Smith would have supervised the special make-up effects. Director Fritz Lang first expressed interest in the property during the 1930s, and other attempts to get it off the ground were periodically announced during the 1960s and 1970s.

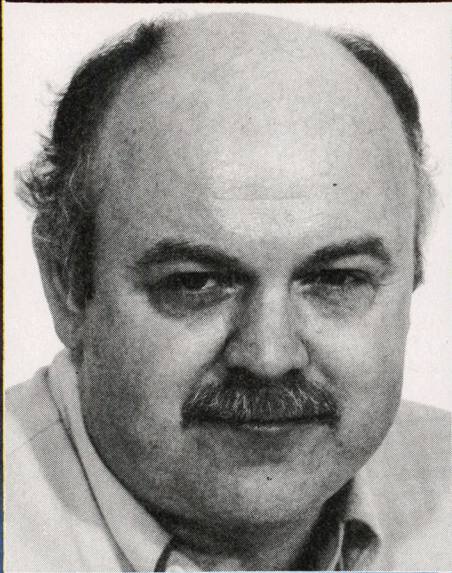
Dark Intruder (above), and (previous spread) Curse Of The Crimson Altar

Bride Of Re-Animator. [UK title: Re-Animator 2]

USA 1989. Prod/Dir Brian Yuzna. Scr Woody Keith and Rick Fry. Starring Jeffrey Coombs, Bruce Abbott, Claude Earl Jones, Fabiana Udrnto, David Gale, Kathleen Kinmont. Wildstreet Pictures/Medusa.

Lovecraft's centenary is celebrated with this inferior B-movie sequel to the 1985 box office hit. More attention to the script and less of Screaming Mad George's polymerous prosthetics would have helped.

Finally, it is also worth noting that on television Lovecraftian references regularly turn up in kids' cartoons, like *Thundercats*, while Fred Olen Ray's movie *The Tomb*, which was originally announced as a Lovecraft project, was mercifully released without any reference to HPL.



Frank Henenlotter

Frank Henenlotter has a thing for freaks. His first horror film, *Basket Case*, became a cult classic. Its sequel, *Basket Case 2* and his equally odd horror movie, *Frankenhooker* have again got audiences and censors in a lather. Philip Nutman paid a visit to the director's LA-based lair.

28 October 1990 FEAR

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lthough it was a tremendous success in the early Eighties' low budget stakes, *Basket Case* did not mean that writer/director Frank Henenlotter found Hollywood banging at his door. 'Anything but,' he says, with an exaggerated frown. 'All we had were cheapskate financiers knocking on the door asking us to make no-budget stalk 'n' slash pictures or offering us ridiculously low sums to do *Basket Case 2*. It was very frustrating.'

Eight years on, New York-based Henenlotter and his long time producer partner Edgar Levins have finally made that elusive sequel. Was the decision forged by the lure of the mighty dollar,

or something more? 'It happened totally unexpectedly. I'd gone to see Jim Glickenhaus (director of *The Exterminator* and *Blue Jean Cop*) at Shapiro Glickenhaus Entertainment concerning another project, an insect script I'd written that everyone who read it said they loved but no one wanted to finance, and like everyone else, Jim didn't want to do it. But he seemed keen to work on something with us so I pitched *Frankenhooker* to him, which he liked, and I said, 'Well, there's always *Basket Case 2*.'

SEEING THE LIGHT

Within days of this meeting, Henenlotter and Levins found themselves in the enviable position of having a two-picture deal and work began in earnest with Frank writing the *Basket Case* sequel solo while he collaborated on



HOOKED!

Frank Henenlotter and Richard Stanley, horror movie directors from opposite sides of the Atlantic, reveal the mutual pains and pleasures of the first-time filmmaker.

it its unusual character.

But didn't Duane and Belial die at the end of the first film? 'They almost died,' Henenlotter corrects me with a chuckle. 'So they fell out of a hotel window.' He shrugs. 'Anyway, the two ideas seemed to work out. I could have the house of freaks and the boys fitted right in.'

Henenlotter's obvious enthusiasm for the film they never expected to make is not confined to his recollections. Having a \$2.5 million budget to work with certainly didn't hurt, but the director

insists it was definitely something more. 'I just can't be specific about it, but it seems this movie was meant to happen, and I'm real happy about the way it's turned out.'

DANGER MAN

Not only are Henenlotter, Ievins and SGE pleased with the result, the critics smiled favourably too. Both *The Village Voice* and *The New York Post's* Phantom of the Movies gave the picture a resounding thumbs up, and the film did better at the box office than most other horror pictures released this year. With articles in film magazines proclaiming him 'America's Most Dangerous Filmmaker', it appears that Frank Henenlotter has finally graduated from low budget obscurity to national cult status.

Henenlotter has been telling stories on film since he was a kid. A devout fan of

Creativity under wraps in *Frankenhooker* (left); Belial suffers the pangs of separation in *Basket Case 2* (below)

Frankenhooker with former horror journalist Robert Martin.

'I didn't have a clue what I was going to do after I walked out of that meeting, so I sat down at home with a note pad and a bottle of Bacardi Light, and all of a sudden it just happened. Long before the situation came up, I'd had an idea of doing a film about a house of freaks, and that was the first image that hit me. The question was, could Duane and Belial fit into it?'

Basket Case 2 followed the adventures of twin brothers Duane and Belial Bradley in the Big Bad Apple as they sought out and killed the surgeons who had separated them at birth. A quirky revenge drama, the film used New York's sleazier environs to great effect and, rather than hindering the story, the \$35,000 budget imbued the picture with a gritty atmosphere which helped to give





Sending up tits-and-ass exploitation? James Lorinz as the bereaved Jeffrey in *Frankenhooker*

anything weird, wonderful and trashy, the first movie he recalls seeing was *Valley Of The Zombies* back in 1958, when he was seven years old. By the time he turned 14, he was shooting numerous short epics on Super 8, creating his own oeuvre of mutated movies. If you've seen *Basket Case* and *Brain Damage*, you'll see the clear influence of those movies which were his formative favourites — *The Wolf Man*, William Castle's *The Tingler*, *Circus Of Horrors* — and if you know your exploitation movies half as well, you'll see the in-jokes and references to flicks such as *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*, Jesus Franco and, in the case of *Frankenhooker*, just about every low grade Frankenstein movie ever made.

In his early days as an amateur filmmaker, Henenlotter called himself Norman Bates Productions and squeezed out such unseen classics as *Son Of Psycho* and *Lurid Women*. Then, while working on *Slash Of The Knife*, his first 16mm picture, he met Edgar Levins who was experimenting with stop motion shorts. But it was a few years before the two of them started working together seriously.

BRAIN DAMAGED

Prior to *Basket Case*, the two movie fiends tried to get a project called *Ooze* off the ground. Although it was low budget, 'we just couldn't raise the money,' Henenlotter recalls, 'so I just wrote a script that could be made for less money.' And Belial Bradley was 'born'.

Moviemaking, according to the director, is seldom as much fun as it sounds. 'Really, up until we made *Basket Case 2*, I can't say it's been fun to direct. I went through such misery on *Basket Case* and *Brain Damage*. I started to wonder if I'd ever want to do it again. *Frankenhooker*, which we shot immediately before *Basket Case 2*, was a real nightmare.'

But now that *Frankenhooker's* out there, playing midnight shows after its initial theatrical run, how does he feel about it? 'Like I've said before, I can't watch *Basket Case*. I can watch about 10 minutes of *Brain Damage*, and I can

watch probably half of *Frankenhooker*. That's not to say I don't think I did a decent job under the circumstances, it's just...they're painful to watch. But I am pleased SGE stuck to their guns and released it unrated rather than cut it down from an X because of the sexual content. We always thought there'd be a problem with the MPAA, but I gotta hand it to Jim Glickenhaus, he stuck to his guns.'

SEX BOMB

At press time it was uncertain whether *Frankenhooker* was going to get a British release. Rumours had been floating around London that the BBFC found the film highly offensive even if it was a comedy that sent up Frankenstein movies and tits-and-ass exploitation.

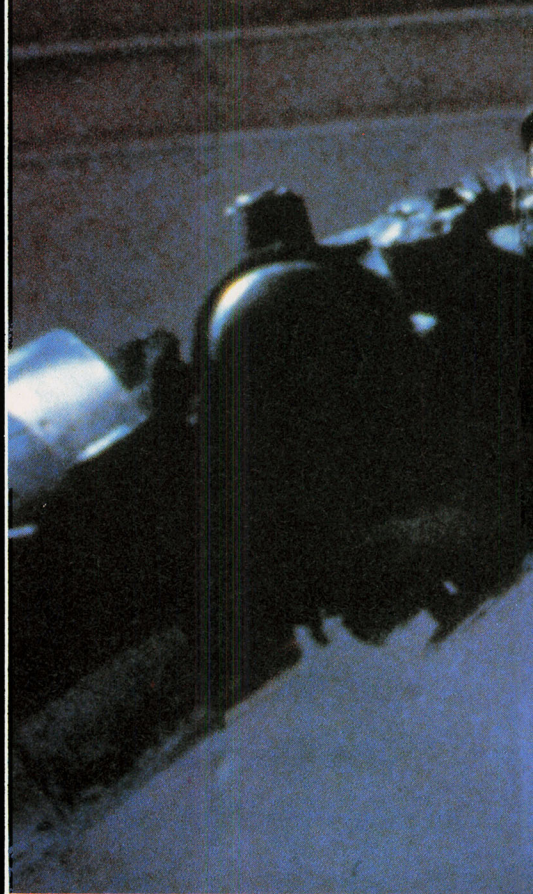
When Elisabeth Shelly (Patty Mullen) dies in a freak lawnmower accident, Jeffrey Franken (James Lorinz, from *Street Trash*), her mad school drop-out boyfriend is heartbroken...well, almost. Young Jeffrey may not be terribly adept on the social front, but he's a whiz when it comes to science, and he manages to preserve her head with the aid of his home chemistry lab. Intent on keeping the head alive, he goes about finding a body or two so he can rebuild her. Considering Elisabeth had a weight problem prior to the lawnmower encounter, Jeff decides to go one stage further and turn her into the girl of his dreams.

Since the kind of woman he lusts for is not the type you find in suburbia, he forsakes New Jersey in favour of Manhattan, where he tracks down some slinky hookers to provide spare parts. To get what he needs, the madcap medico develops a form of crack that makes the user explode. Oops! There go the girls, all nine of them, and Jeff starts reconstructing the woman of his dreams.

SOCIALLY RETARDED

Overall, Henenlotter seems pleased with *Frankenhooker's* content. 'As you watch the movie you come to believe Jeffrey Franken is caught up in this drama. It's believable he's smart enough to be able to do what he's doing, but also socially retarded to the point where he's not able to integrate the repercussions of everything he does. Once you buy the premise, the film is true to itself. The comedy aris-

TO AND



es from the goofiness of the circumstances, not from slapstick. It's like *Re-Animator* — every time Herbert West tried to do something you believed it, and the black comedy arose from the way things kept turning out wrong.'

With both movies doing so successfully it looks likely that Frank Henenlotter will make another two pictures this year, one of which will be *Basket Case 3*. 'I've got the script planned out. We're going to take Duane on the road. I think it's going to be even more fun to make than the last one. It's certainly going to be more insane!'

In a genre where comedy should work with horror, but in the wrong hands seldom does, Henenlotter is a true original, just the kind of independent filmmaker horror needs if it's going to explore new, demented areas in the Nineties.

So what's in his basket?

Do you really want to know?

HELL BACK



First time director Richard Stanley looks likely to become an overnight success with his London-lensed SF/horror movie *Hardware*. But as FEAR's Philip Nutman reports, instant stardom has not gone to Stanley's head...

I had to make the characters a lot more sympathetic than they should have been; the leads aren't quite as fucked up as they originally were,' states first time director Stanley concerning the changes he had to make to *Hardware*, his £1 million budgeted feature debut, a cyberpunk horror movie he calls 'a bad drug trip into the future'.

'Aside from having to soften the characters, the rest of it was just down to economics. We didn't have the time or the money to make some of the material as unpleasant as I intended.

' Stanley, a tall, soft spoken, South African born filmmaker who cut his

teeth on anthropological documentaries and rock videos, looks mildly disappointed as he recalls the travails of getting his first feature onto the screen. 'Chief's death was okay,' he continues, referring to the scene in which the boys at FX company Image Animation chop former *EastEnders* actor Oscar James in half. 'There should have been a bit more blood, but on the whole I think it works. Paul MacKenzie's character, Vernon, gets the shorter shrift; he gets shot in the head, whereas originally he was meant to get shot in the groin, he left alive, then cut up with the chainsaw. He got about a page into the script of screaming and begging as his spine was severed so he couldn't move, beseeching Jill to help him. But she can't because the 'droid is using him as bait to get her.

FEAR October 1990 31



Effects-wise, it would have taken two days to shoot but we were at the end of the schedule and were close to overrunning, so all we could do was shoot him in the head.'

NO SYMPATHY

Hardware is an uncompromising low budget movie, quite unlike anything made in Britain before, that goes beyond even the darkest moments of the *Hellraiser* pictures. Set somewhere in 21st century America, it details the relationship between Hard Mo Baxter (Dylan McDermott), a burnt-out soldier cum scavenger, and his girlfriend Jill (Stacy Travis), a reclusive sculptress who lives in a crumbling apartment block high above the pollution-soaked streets of a metropolis that's drowning in its own decay. When Mo returns for Christmas, he gives Jill the skull of an android to use in her post industrial collages, not realising that it is part of Mark 13, a prototype combat 'droid that can rebuild itself and is virtually indestructible. Reconstructing itself from the piles of electrical junk stored in the apartment, Mark 13 goes to work and the body count rises...

'I should imagine the censors are going to have a good time with this. *Hardware's* a nihilistic movie; there's no

hope in the story, no redemption. But what we have is nowhere near the extreme I wanted.

'The only thing Palace [Pictures, the film's co-financiers along with Wicked Films and US indie Miramax] made me take out was the footage of real death, which was part of a TV documentary running in the background at one point. In *RoboCop* they had a lot of TV material that was pure American kitsch, and I figured in *Hardware* they'd have television, but I thought we should take it in a very different direction, more like snuff TV, because everything in this movie is about death. Society is cannibalising itself, and so is mankind if it doesn't change its course.'

Despite the material that was pruned at the financier's behest, Richard Stanley had delivered what he promised when FEAR visited the set of *Hardware* late last year. But the writer/director is not into shocking people for the hell of it. 'Horror films should be confrontational, death should be depicted as violent, unpleasant. Filmmakers are being dishonest when they make killing look easy, clean. *It isn't*. I wanted to push it as far as I could because I'm tired of seeing 'safe' horror movies that don't deliver. Mark 13 is a killing machine, Mo is a burnt-out soldier. Everyone in this film's

fucked up. There could be no happy ending.'

Although he's expecting the film to lose some of its hard edges along the route to certification, his biggest disappointment lies with the characters. 'It means I've got a lead in my movie who I don't like. It's a bit of a Dario Argento situation; Dario's often said he deliberately casts actors he has no sympathy with, but I ended up with a square-jawed lead who believes in the family, in God, is career-military with short hair and reads the Bible. I find it very hard to sympathise with him. He was meant to be more like a Hell's Angel in the original script.'

Stanley does not, however, feel that the changes have hurt the film. 'I would have preferred Mo to be in that mould, but the same terrible things still happen. It would have been more interesting if the characters had deeper flaws to start off with, but personally I prefer to hurt people I like — in movies anyway,' he laughs.

BLACK MAGIC

At twenty-something, Richard Stanley is an unusual character. Of mixed Irish, British and South American parentage, he was born in South Africa, the son of an anthropologist mother and Marxist father, who he never really knew as his family split up when he was young. He studied film for two years at Cape Town Film and Video School before being boot-ed out during his final term for endangering the lives of actors on a shoot. 'We were filming a stunt sequence on a cliff face, using professional climbers as doubles for the actors, and they doubled so well the faculty heads didn't believe we didn't use the actors!'

Stanley signed up with a college of music to film documentary footage of tribal customs, music and dance, a subject he was familiar with having studied anthropology for two years prior to film school. His studies aside, what really drew him to the subject was his childhood experiences in Mozambique. 'A lot of my interests stem from the fortunate fact that I was lost there as a kid. That was where we lost track of my father as we got caught up in the revolution.' Stanley and his older sister were separated from their parents and drifted around the civil war torn country.

To protect her younger brother from the chaos, his sister took him to a tribal witchdoctor who performed a ritual to provide a Swazi spirit guide to look after him in times of trouble, and to this day Stanley is never seen without the medalion depicting Mowag, his guardian angel. 'I developed a close relationship with the spirit, and treated it as an invisible playmate, then when I became a teenager it graduated to become a split personality and I experienced many schizophrenic events. Then when I started my anthropology course I saw the whole experience in a different light and it revived my interest in black magic.'

Up yours: William Hootkins (left), Carl McCoy (top right) and Stacy Travis as sculptress Jill in Richard Stanley's anarchic debut feature, *Hardware*

'Everything in this movie is about death. Society is cannibalising itself, and so is mankind if it doesn't change its course'





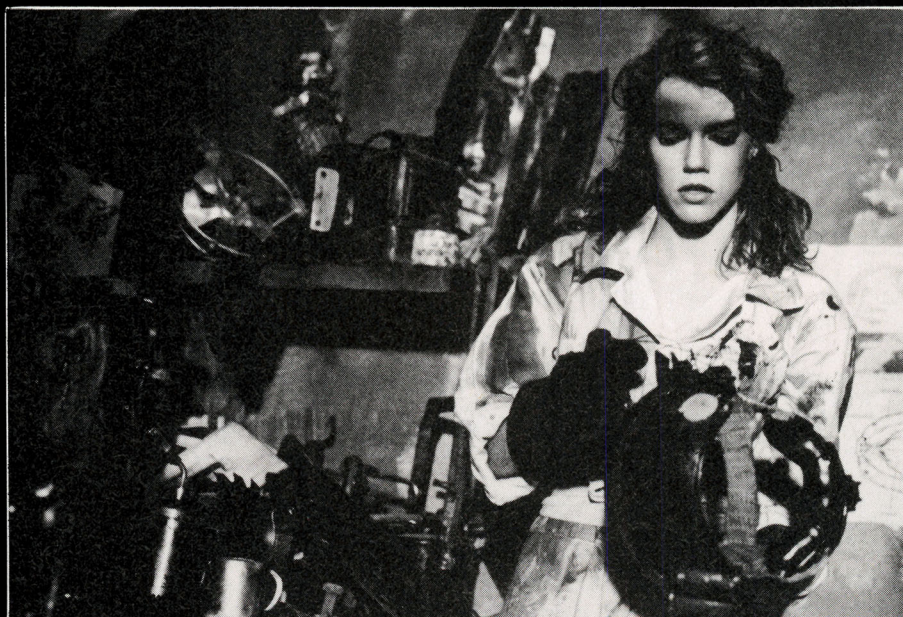
'I haven't seen a werewolf in a movie that looks like the real thing, so it's time to set the record straight'

PUBLIC IMAGE

Stanley eventually decided to leave South Africa in the early Eighties when he was drafted into the army. 'Actually, it was a combination of things. I had a bad car accident, there was trouble looming with the authorities over something I won't go into, and the army was the last straw.'

Coming to London, he worked as a waiter while feverishly writing screenplays and shooting Super 8 shorts, which led him to direct videos for bands, including *The Fields Of The Nephilim*, Public Image Limited and a host of unknown French groups. During this time, he started work on a Super 8 project that was to metamorphose into *Hardware*. 'It was the same characters, the same setting, but very laid back, more of a comedy. That became the basis for the script, which turned increasingly mean, and evolved into another draft which was where Mark 13 first appeared.'

Audiences are going to be surprised by the film's mean energy when *Hardware* opens in September, but the biggest surprise will be if Stanley gets to make *Dust Devil*, his next project — at least in the way he plans. 'It's a road movie western



romance sociopolitical police procedural psychokiller movie about a cop tracking down a shape-shifter in Africa. I haven't seen a werewolf in a movie that looks like the real thing, so it's time to set the record straight. The main character is a borderline demon straight out of popular mythology, he is the Hitchhiker, the Man With No Name, Demon Gunslinger-Walking Dude, the basic Nomad archetype, which is a figure I've always had an obsession with. He appears in my promos, has a cameo in *Hardware*, so *Dust Devil* is the next logical step.'

The plan is to shoot the film entirely on location in Namibia, and the budget has been tentatively set at £3 million. Part of the director's rationale is to escape from the cosy confines of middle

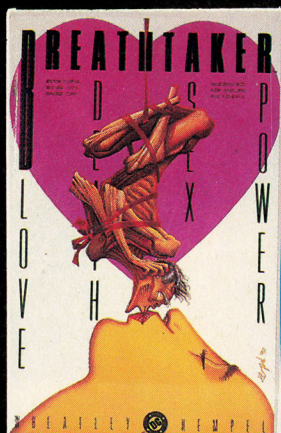
class suburbia, so often used as the starting point for horror these days. 'I want to get away from that, starting a story in an environment that's one step away from Hell.' And then it's downhill all the way. 'If there's no normality to return to you've got the opportunity to do some really interesting things.'

Like tackle the subject of racism, another area genre films usually avoid. 'The main character's a Negro cop, and because he's working for the white man he's alienated from his tribal group. But once the murders start happening he's the only one who is aware there is an element of tribal ritual involved. The more he gets involved with what's going on, the less connection he has with society. Basically, it's a road movie into Hell.'

GRAPHIC DE

Warren Lapworth celebrates the fact that Graphic Detail is now six months old with some weird humour, weirder characters and the demise of a rather ordinary series.

Who exactly is Chase Darrow? Where does she come from? What is the extent of her powers and how did she get them? These questions raised themselves before I was even halfway through part one of *Breathtaker* (DC, £3.50, import). Paul Raymond dies after falling from a window with Chase, but if that hadn't killed him old age would — despite only being fifty. Chase hungers for love and people find her irresistible, but her lovemaking gradually drains them of their life, prematurely ageing them.



■ Not taking a breather in *Breathtaker* (above) and flower power in *Alien Legion* (below)

BUG-EYED AND NERVOUS

Faster than a speeding lawnmower! Able to leap tall doorsteps in a single stumble! It strikes fear into hearts of the bravest carpets! It's *The Tick* (New England Comics, £1.45, import)! As issue eight begins, the infamous (or should that be *unfamous*?) Chairface has been arrested, but one of his rabid cows is on the loose. Our hero, seven feet tall with a predilection for dressing up as a vast bloodsucking arachnid, is struck by a meteor and takes it for analysis with his sidekick, Arthur, who dresses as a rabbit. The meteor is apparently from Utah, but would-be assassins soon render it of secondary importance. A free mini-comic is incorporated into the story, a horror



This world's only superhero is The Man, an arrogant son-of-a-bitch whose TV show's ratings are suffering, not least of which because he killed some people. The 'accident' was shown on network news, so to improve his public profile he's on the hunt for the runaway, unwitting killer, Chase Darrow.

In most places, the illustrations are reminiscent of a more detailed *Plastic Forks*; broad outlines, angular faces and some gaudy colouring. Where TV programmes are concerned, however, the look is more glossy, polished, similar to *Tempus Fugitive* (reviewed last issue).

Breathtaker's concept is fairly derivative, Chase is similar to a life-draining vampire from the *Life Force* movie but also an upturned *Hellraiser*, with Chase turning lovers into zombies rather than killing them, to prevent her husband from being one. A brash 'hero' like The Man isn't exactly new, either, but *Breathtaker's* elements all come together to make an intriguing, highly readable tale that is as curiously irresistible as Chase herself. Possibly the best bookshelf format limited series around.



TAIL



■ Man-eating cow and The Tick

spoof called *The Red Eye*.

Written and pencilled by Ben Edlund (inked by Dave Garcia), *The Tick* has neat, clear backdrops and busy characters, the Tick himself with a wide range of ludicrous expressions. This is the first time I've encountered him and although his exploits didn't exactly get me rolling around the floor, I laughed a few times and grinned wryly a lot. This issue's story is patently nonsensical, as I'm sure those that came before were. I hope following issues are in the same vein and regret I've never spotted *The Tick* before.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO GO...

...Go with a smile by picking up *Batman v The Joker* (Hamlyn, £8.99), 19 stories pitting the Dark Knight against his most notorious nemesis. Subtitled *The Greatest Joker Stories Ever Told* (ie a follow-up to *The Greatest Batman*), the adventures range from 1941 (*Batman 1*) to 1980 (issue 321), lingering most in the Fifties, and include such gems as *The Man Behind The Red Hood*, *The Crazy Crime Clown* and *The Great Joker-Clayface Feud* (all but six of the 19 begin with 'the').

Obviously, artwork varies through the stories but most are traditional, the familiar square-jawed Batman and simple form and inking. Plots aren't exactly sophisticated either, generally cheap 'n' cheerful, but on the whole are a wide, representative selection of the Joker's antics. This is an essential purchase for Batman and particularly Joker fans, while the rest of us should consider it a valuable piece of comic history.

NO ANGEL

Greg Salinger's anti-hero alter-ego now has his own *Foolkiller* ten-issue limited series (Marvel, 60p), opening predictably in a mental institute. Greg's a relatively reformed character but seeks an outlet for his creativity so begins a series of potential newspaper articles. Meanwhile, Kurt Gerhardt is having a tough time. Following his father's death, he's sacked from his banking job and, unable to find employment, his home life deteriorates and his wife files for divorce.

Visuals rise slightly above the functional and their impact is sure to increase when the Foolkiller appears in the comic. Steve Gerber's creation intrigued me in an early-Eighties *Amazing Spider-Man* and I'll be very interested to see what he does with the Foolkiller this time. Signs indicate that Kurt rather than Greg will be the psychotic cavalier, perhaps with Greg trying to stop his reign of death. *Foolkiller* subtly diverts from the mainstream and, at 60p a throw, is worth picking up for a few issues.

IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? NOPE, IT'S A TANK

The earlier adventures of *Deadline* magazine's star have been collected into a *Tank Girl* graphic novel (Penguin, £5.99). The raunchy Girl has a skinhead haircut, over-sized boots and a preference for booze, fags, snogging kangaroos and, of course, recklessly speeding around Australia in a tank. The stories include colostomy bags, Indiana Potato Jones, testicle-expanding

guns and many other bizarre things besides, not least of which are Jet Girl, Sub Girl and Booga, Tank's 'roo lover.

Jamie Hewlett's illustrations have high street-cred, and are similar to Brendan McCarthy's bright, cartoony style but wilder, more aggressive, and with plenty of small visuals to supplement the main images. The stories, by Alan Martin but aided by Hewlett, are as hip as the art; utterly stupid, full of cheap (if not to say crude) jokes and semi-obscure references but great fun to read and truly funny in places. After reading of her exploits en masse, I'm hooked on Tank Girl so I'll have to put *Deadline* on my 'regular buy' list.

DON'T BE AFRAID

Remember the cover of FEAR 15? It illustrated the issue's lead feature, an interview with director Sam *Evil Dead* Raimi on his latest project, *DarkMan*. Marvel have adapted the movie into a three-issue limited series (60p per part), also available together as a graphic novel. Biochemist Peyton Westlake is working on a highly sophisticated process whereby parts of the face or body can be synthesised after pictures of them have been digitised. The process is intended to restore mutilated accident victims but the created bodily parts deteriorate after 99 minutes. He discovers that darkness prevents their decay but Durant soon arrives, a gangster intending to take over the dockland site Westlake's lab's situated on. He's beaten up and then horribly disfigured in an explosion which throws his body into the river. He's rescued and doctors deprive him of his sense of touch to spare him the agony of his burns. However, this humane process has an unpleasant effect on his mind...

With breakdowns by Bob Hall and, more importantly, finishing by Mark Teixeira (*Ghost Rider*), *DarkMan* has a suitably hard, gritty look. But movie adaptations have always been a dodgy comic area and, although I've

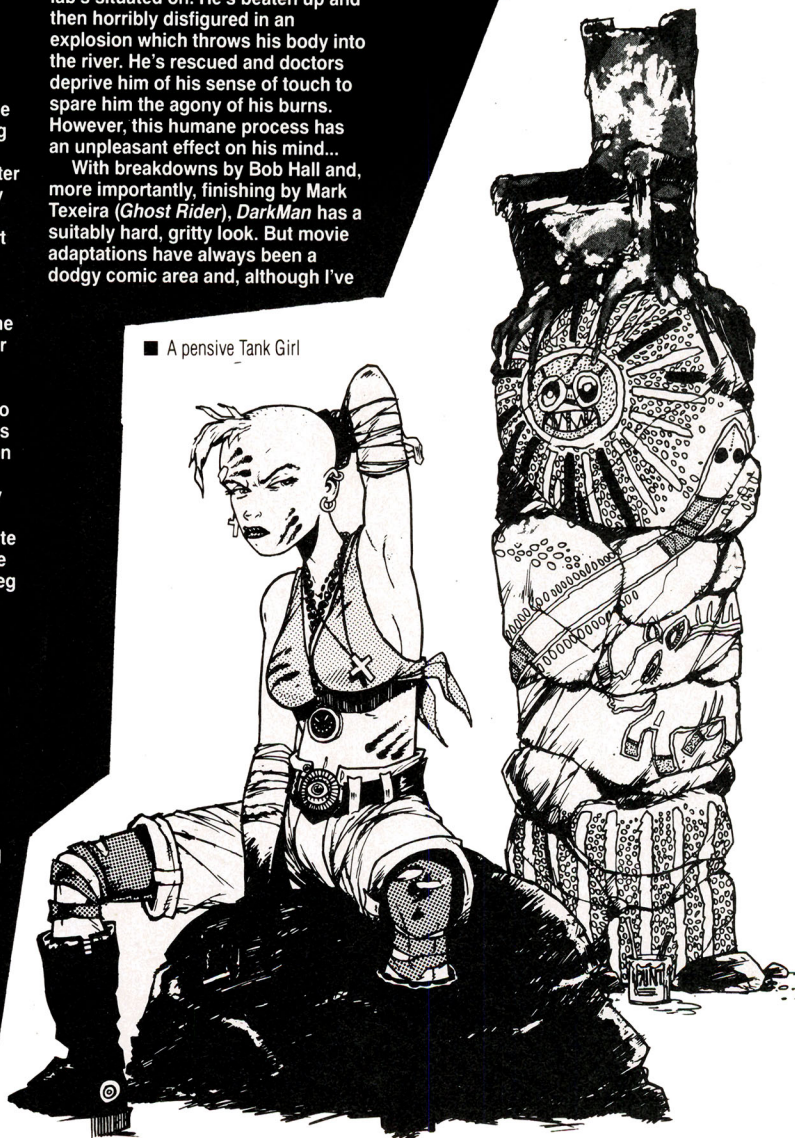
not yet seen it, I suspect *DarkMan* isn't the sort of film that would easily translate. It's by no means dull but is best as a piece of Raimi memorabilia.

AND NOW, THE END IS NEAR

In their eighteenth and final issue, the bunch of humanoid misfits known as *Alien Legion* (Epic, 90p, import) have just returned home to Greelbase when Jugger Grimrod is kidnapped. His captors are Rammers, fellow Legion members who want him as the champion warrior for their homeworld, Ruxpin IV. Although reluctant, he takes on the Rammers' crab-like enemies.

Artwork is excellent, Stroman (pencils) and Farmer (inks) putting in plenty of detail and dynamic panel composition, aided by Vasquez's careful, atmospheric colouring. The story, by Chuck Dixon, is bland, your average group of people and aliens wandering around space and shooting other aliens. Bearing in mind Epic's new bi-monthly baby, *Tomorrow Knights* (reviewed in FEAR 18 and now on its third issue), I'm not surprised they're withdrawing *Alien Legion*; they're of a similar nature and *Tomorrow Knights* is a more refreshing read. However, Epic aren't abandoning fans of the Legion, as they have a three-part bookshelf format limited series in the pipeline and more are planned. Now, isn't that nice of them?

■ A pensive Tank Girl



FEAR FICTION

36 DEADSPEAK

By Brian Lumley.

An extract from the latest chapter in the Necroscope saga by this FEAR fiction award-winning author.

40 FICTION FILE

Pat Murphy.

40 SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

By James Lovegrove.

A do-it-yourself love affair.

43 THE MIDAS FACTOR

By Cherith Baldry.

The effects of a performance enhancing drug lead a failed university professor to reassess his life.

45 FICTION FILE

Julian Lloyd Webber.

46 THE COLOR OF CHANCE IS GREEN

By Jeff VanderMeer.

Two toads in a hole.

49 HAPPIER ENDINGS

By J N Williamson.

Death is a new beginning.

52 FICTION FILE

F Paul Wilson.

52 THE VOLUNTEER

By Simon Kemp.

On Death Row, how much choice do you have?

SUBMITTING SHORT STORIES TO FEAR

If you have written 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 long and typed, preferably double spaced. Remember to enclose a daytime 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. We have been deluged with submissions recently, therefore it could be some considerable time, months even, before you receive a positive or negative reply. Please bear this in mind when submitting fiction to FEAR. Also it makes sense to keep a copy of your story... just in case.

FEAR FICTION EXTRACT

Several months ago we asked readers to nominate their favourite piece of FEAR fiction by an established author. After sifting through the overwhelming number of responses, we found without a shadow of a doubt that Brian Lumley was the clear winner. To celebrate his victory, Brian is allowing us to publish an episode from his riveting new novel, **Necroscope IV: Dead-speak**. Prepare to be **Wamphry-ed...**

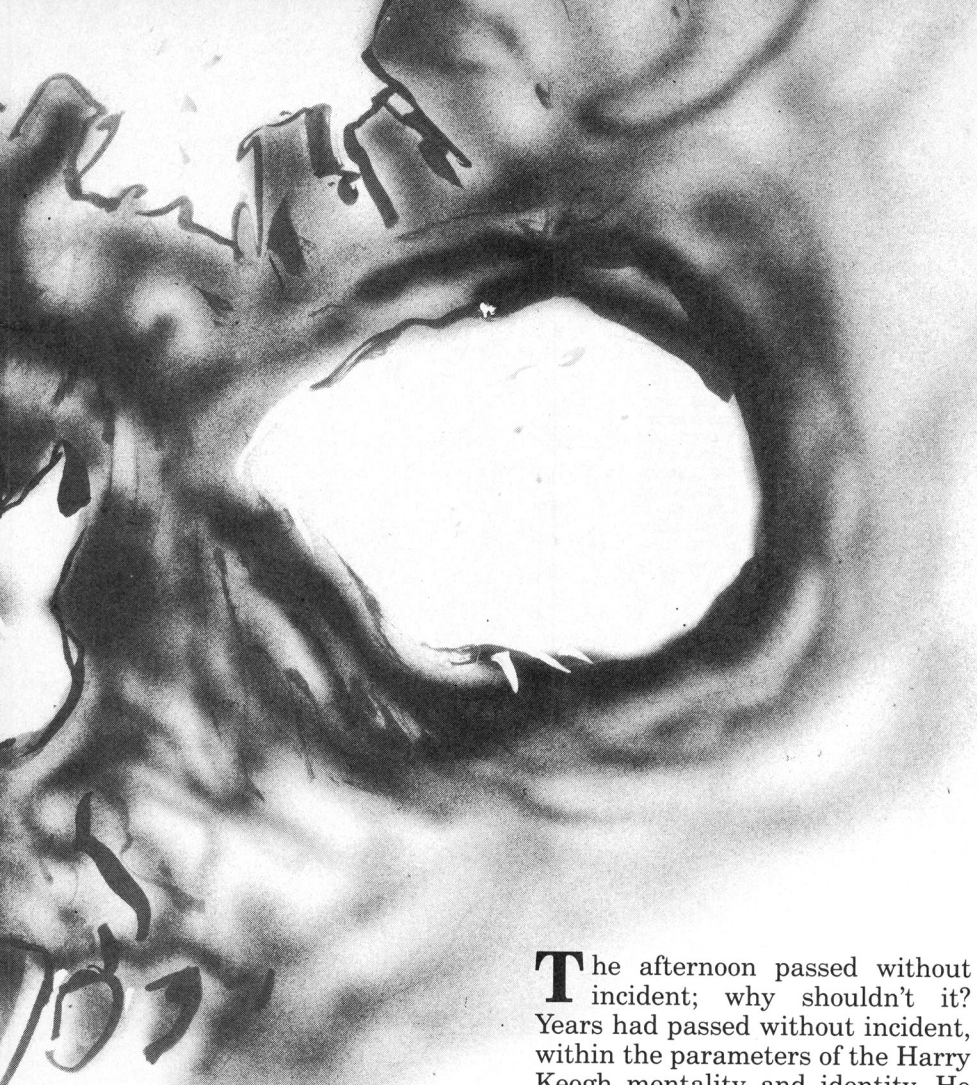
BRIAN LUMLEY

DEADSP NECROSCOPE IV

Ex-Necroscope! Harry Keogh, hero to the Great Majority, has been robbed of his ability to communicate with the Legions of the Tomb. He may no longer *consciously* talk to his dead friends. Worse, he is innumerate: shorn of his intuitive mathematical skills,

he has lost the power to conjure doorways into the metaphysical Möbius Continuum. But the dead, who have every good reason to want to talk to Harry as of old, haven't given up on him yet.

E-Branch, Britain's top-secret ESPionage organisation, would wish for Harry's powers to be returned to him; but in the USSR, E-Branch's Soviet equivalent is equally anxious that this should not happen. So that even on the eve of Communism's disintegration, Harry Keogh, ex-Necroscope, is



EAK

once again a focal point in the dark world of East-West cloak-and-dagger scheming.

To further complicate matters, an ancient undead evil has risen up and walks among us. A powerful vampire — Janos Ferenczy, bloodson of Faethor — is back in the world of the living!

At home in his rambling, decaying old house not far from Edinburgh, Harry feels a terrible mood of depression settling on him like a shroud. There have been certain weird portents; strange times are in the offing, certainly; Harry tries, however blindly, helplessly, to prepare himself for...for what? To protect himself against...against what?

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF NIGHTMARE, the kind you dream and the kind you live.

The afternoon passed without incident; why shouldn't it? Years had passed without incident, within the parameters of the Harry Keogh mentality and identity. He spent most of the time considering his position (which was this: that he was no longer a Necroscope, that he no longer had access to the Möbius Continuum), and ways in which he might improve that position and recover his talents before they atrophied utterly.

It was possible — barely, Harry supposed, considering his innumeracy — that if he could speak to Möbius, then Möbius might be able to stabilise whatever mathematical gyro was now out of kilter in his head. Except first he must be able to speak to him, which was likewise out of the question. For of course Möbius had been dead for well over a hundred years, and Harry was forbidden to speak to the dead on penalty of mental agony.

He could not speak to the dead, but the dead might even now be looking at ways in which they could communicate with him. He suspected — no, he more than suspected, was sure — that he spoke to them in his dreams, even though he was forbidden to remember or act upon what they had told him. But still he was aware that warnings had been passed, even if he didn't know what those warnings were about.

One thing was certain, however: he knew that within himself and

within every man, woman and child on the surface of the globe, a blue thread unwound from the past and was even now spinning into the future of humanity, and that he had dreamed — or been warned — of red threads amidst the blue.

And apart from that — this inescapable mood or sensation of something impending, something terrible — the rest of it was a Chinese puzzle with no solution, a maze with no exit, the square root of minus one, whose value may only be expressed in the abstract. Harry knew the latter for a fact, even if he no longer knew what it meant. And it was a puzzle he'd examined almost to distraction, a maze he'd explored to exhaustion, and an equation he hadn't even attempted because like all mathematical concepts it simply wouldn't read.

In the evening he sat and watched television, mainly for relaxation. He'd considered calling Sandra, and then hadn't. There was something on her mind, too, he knew; and anyway, what right had he to draw her into...whatever this was, or whatever it might turn out to be? None.

So it went; evening drew towards night; Harry prepared for bed, only to sit dozing in his chair. The dish in his garden collected signals and unscrambled their pictures onto his screen. He started awake at the sound of applause, and discovered an American chat-show host talking to a fat lady who had the most human, appealing eyes Harry could imagine. The show was called 'Interesting People' or some such and Harry had watched it before. Usually it was anything but interesting; but now he caught the word 'extrasensory' and sat up a little straighter. Naturally enough, he found ESP in all its forms entirely fascinating.

'So...let's get this right,' the skeletally thin host said to the fat lady. 'You went deaf when you were eighteen months old, and so never learned how to speak, right?'

'That's right,' the fat lady answered, 'but I do have this incredible memory, and obviously I'd heard a great many human conversations before I went deaf. Anyway, speech never developed in me, so I wasn't only deaf but dumb, too. Then, three years ago, I got married. My husband is a technician in a recording studio. He took me in one day and I watched him



working, and I suddenly made the connection between the oscillating sensors on his machinery and the voices and instrument sounds of the group he was recording.'

'Suddenly, you got the idea of sound, right?'

'That's correct,' the fat lady smiled, and continued: 'Now, I had of course learned sign-language or dactylogy — which in my mind I'd called dumbspeak — and also knew that some deaf people could carry on perfectly normal conversations, which I termed deafspeak. But I hadn't tried it myself simply because I hadn't *understood* sound! You see, my deafness was total. Absolute. Sound didn't exist — except in my memory!'

'And so you saw this hypnotist?'

'Harry could only crouch there watching, mouthing silent denials. as they drew close to the frenzied, maddened boss of E-Branch and began to raise their stones'

'Indeed I did. It was hard but he was patient — and of course it mightn't have been possible at all except he was able to use dumbspeak. So he hypnotised me and brought back all the conversations I'd heard as a baby. And when I woke up —'

'— You could speak?'

'Exactly as you hear me now, yes!'

'The hell you say! Not only fully articulate but almost entirely without accent! Mrs Zdzienicki, that's a most fascinating story and you really are one of *the* most Interrrrresting People we've ever had on this show!'

The camera stayed on his thin, smiling face and he nodded his head in frenetic affirmation. 'Yessiree! And now, let's move on to —'

But Harry had already moved, to switch off the set; and as the screen blinked out he saw how dark it had grown. Almost midnight, and the house temperature already falling as the timer cut power to the central heating system. It was time he was in bed...

...Or, maybe he'd watch just one

more interview with one of those Interrrrresting People! He didn't remember switching the set on again, but as its picture formed he was drawn in through the screen where he found Jack Garrulous or whatever his name was adrift in the Möbius Continuum.

'Welcome to the show, Harry!' said Jack. 'And we just know we're going to find you verrry interesting! Now, I've been sort of admiring this, er, place you've got here? What did you say it was called?' He held out his microphone for Harry to speak into.

'This is the Möbius Continuum, Jack,' said Harry, a little nervously, 'and I'm not really supposed to be here.'

'The hell you say! But on this show anything goes, Harry. You're on prime-time, son, so don't be shy!'

'Time?' Harry said. 'But all time is prime, Jack. Is time what you're interested in? Well, in that case, take a look in here.' And grabbing Garrulous by the elbow he guided him through a future-time door.

'Interrrrresting!' the other approved, as side by side they shot into the future, towards that far faint haze of blue which was the expansion of humanity through the three mundane dimensions of the space-time universe. 'And what are these myriad blue threads, Harry?'

'The life-threads of the human race,' Harry explained. 'See over there? That one just this moment bursting into being, such a pure, shining blue that it's almost blinding? That's a newborn baby with a long, long way to go. And this one here, gradually fading and getting ready to blink out?' He lowered his voice in respect. 'Well, that's an old man about to die.'

'The hell — you — say!' said Jack Garrulous, awed. 'But of course, you'd know all about that, now wouldn't you, Harry? I mean, about death and such? For after all, aren't you the one they call a Necrowhatsit?'

'A Necroscope, yes 'Harry nodded. 'Or at least I was.'

'And how's that for a talent, folks?' Garrulous beamed with teeth like piano keys. 'For Harry Keogh's the man who talks to the dead! And he's the *only* one they'll talk back to — but in the nicest possible way! See, they kind of love him. So,' (he turned back to Harry), 'what do you call that sort of conversation, Harry? I mean, when you're talking to dead folks? See, a

little while ago we were speaking to this Mrs Zdzienicki who told us all about dumbspeak and deafspeak and —

'Deadspeak,' Harry cut him short.

'Deadspeak? Really? The hell...you...say! Well, if you haven't been one of the most Interrrrr...' And he paused, squinting over Harry's shoulder.

'Um?' said Harry.

'One last question, son,' said Garrulous, urgently, his narrowing eyes fixed on something just outside Harry's sphere of vision. 'I mean, you told us about the blue life-threads sure enough, but what in all get-out's the meaning of a red one, eh?'

Harry's head snapped round; wide-eyed, he stared; and saw a scarlet thread, even now angling in towards him! And:

'*Vampire!*' he yelled, rolling out of his armchair into the darkness of the room. And framed in the doorway leading back into the rest of the house, he saw the silhouette of what could only be one thing: that which he'd known was coming for him!

There was a small table beside his chair, which Harry had knocked flying. Groping in the darkness, his fingers found two things: a table-lamp thrown to the floor, and the weapon he'd worked on earlier in the day. The latter was loaded. Switching on the lamp, Harry went into a crouch behind his chair and brought up his gleaming metal crossbow into view — and saw that his worst nightmare had advanced into the room.

There was no denying the thing: the slate-grey colour of its flesh, its gaping jaws and what they contained, its pointed ears and the high-collared cape which gave its skull and menacing features definition. It was a vampire — of the comic-book variety! But even realising that this wasn't the real thing (and he of all people should know), still Harry's finger had tightened on the trigger.

It was all reaction. This body he'd trained to a peak of perfection was working just as he'd programmed it to work in a hundred simulations of this very situation. And despite the fact that he'd come immediately awake — and that he knew this thing in his room with him was a fraud — still his adrenalin was flowing and his heart pounding, and his weapon's fifteen-inch hardwood bolt already in flight. It was

only in the last split second that he'd tried to avert disaster by elevating the crossbow's tiller up towards the ceiling. But that had been enough, barely.

Wellesley, seeing the crossbow in Harry's hand, had blown froth through his plastic teeth in a gasp of terror and tried to back off. The bolt missed his right ear by a hairsbreadth, struck through the collar of his costume cape and snatched him back against the wall. It buried itself deep in plaster and old brick and pinned him there.

He spat out his teeth and yelled: 'Jesus Christ, you idiot, it's me!' But this was as much for the benefit of Darcy Clarke, back there somewhere in the dark house, as for Harry Keogh. For even as he was shouting, Wellesley's right hand reached inside the coat under his cape and grasped the grip of his issue 9 mm Browning. This was his main chance. Keogh had attacked him, just as he'd hoped he would. It was self-defence, that's all.

Harry, taking no chances, had cocked his bow, snatched the auxiliary bolt from its clips under the tiller of his weapon and placed it in the breech. In a sort of slow-motion born of the speed of his own actions, he saw Wellesley's arm straightening and coming up into the firing position; but he couldn't believe the man would shoot him. Why? For what reasons? Or perhaps Wellesley feared he was going to use the crossbow again. That must be it, yes. He dropped his weapon into the armchair's well and threw up his arms.

But now Wellesley's aim was unwavering, his eyes glinting, his knuckles turning white in the trigger-guard of the automatic. And he actually grinned as he shouted: 'Keogh, you madman — no! — no!'

Then...three things, happening almost simultaneously:

One: Darcy Clarke's voice, which Harry recognised immediately, shouting, 'Wellesley, get out of there. Get the fuck out of there!' And his footsteps coming clattering down the corridor, and his cursing as he collided with a plant-pot and stand and knocked them over.

Two: Harry throwing himself over backwards behind the armchair as finally Wellesley's intention became clear, and hearing the angry *whirrr* of the bullet as the first shot went wide by an inch. And levering himself up to make a grab for the cross-

bow again, just in time to see the look on Wellesley's face turn from a mixture of incomprehensible rage and murderous intent to one of sheerest horror as his eyes were drawn to something behind Harry, which caused them to flash wide and disbelieving in a moment.

Three: the crash of shattering glass and snapping of thin wooden mullions inwards as something wet and heavy and clumsy came plunging through the locked patio doors into the room, something which drew Wellesley's fire from Harry to itself!

'*Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!*' the head of E-Branch screamed, emptying his gun over Harry's head, which he'd now turned towards the shattered glass door. And there, staggering from the impact of the shots but somehow managing to keep its feet, Harry saw something — indeed, *someone*, though who exactly it would be hard to tell — which he'd thought never to see again. And even though he didn't know this one, still he knew him or it for a friend. For in the old days, all of the dead had been Harry's friends!

This one was bloated, wet, intact, not long dead — but long enough to smell very badly. And behind it came a second corpse, dusty, withered, almost mummified, stepping through the frame of the shattered door. They were in their crumbling burial sheets and each of them carried a stone, advancing on Wellesley where he stood pinned to the wall, still yanking on the trigger of his empty gun.

And Harry could only crouch there watching, mouthing silent denials. As they drew close to the frenzied, maddened boss of E-Branch and began to raise their stones.

That was when the corridor light came on and Darcy Clarke stumbled into the room. His talent for survival — unfelt except by Darcy himself — was shrieking at him to get the hell out of here, almost physically driving him back. But somehow he fought it; and after all, the hostility of the dead wasn't directed at him but at his boss. 'Harry!' he yelled, when he saw what was happening in the room. 'For God's sake call them off!'

'I can't,' Harry yelled back. 'You know I can't!' But at least he could put himself between them. He did that now, jumped forward and somehow got between the dead

things and Wellesley where he gibbered and frothed. And there they stood with their stones upraised, and the soggy one seeking to put Harry gently to one side.

He might have, too, but suddenly suicidal, Harry cried out: 'No! Go back to where you belong! It's a mistake!' Or at least he tried to. But he only got as far as 'go back where — ' For he was forbidden to speak to the dead. But fortunately for Wellesley, the dead weren't forbidden to heed him.

As Harry clapped his hands to his head and cried out, jerking like a spastic puppet as he crumpled up, so the dead men let fall their stones and turned away, and went out again into the night.

Strangled until now, Wellesley found his voice again; but it was a deranged voice if ever Darcy Clarke heard one. 'Did you see? Did you see?' Wellesley gibbered. 'I didn't believe it, but now I've seen for myself. He called them up against me! He's a monster, by God, a *monster!* But it's the end of you, Harry Keogh!'

He'd freed the spent magazine from his gun and dropped it to the carpeted floor, and was in the process of bringing a fully loaded one out of his pocket when Clarke hit him with all the force he could muster. Gun and magazine went flying, and Wellesley hung there in his makeup, suspended from the crossbow bolt.

Then there were more running footsteps, and in the next moment the two-man back-up team was there wondering what the hell was going on; and Darcy was down on the floor with Harry, holding him in his arms as the agonised man clutched at his head and gasped out his unbearable pain, and slid down into the deep, dark well of merciful oblivion...

BRIAN LUMLEY is fast gaining a reputation as one of Britain's most prolific and successful fantasy/horror writers. His series of Necroscope novels, the latest volume of which is *Deadspeak*, has found him thousands of fans, deservedly pushing sales of his fantasy novels, such as *The Burrowers Beneath*, to new heights. Last year he won the British Fantasy Award for his short story *Fruiting Bodies*, which is about to be included, along with *Other Fungi*, in a Lumley anthology from American publisher Tor.

FICTION FILE 15

PAT MURPHY



Award-winning author and science adventurer Pat Murphy talks to Liz Holliday about her latest SF novel, *The City Not Long After*.

Pat Murphy is the author of award-winning novels such as *The Falling Woman*, and of the superb short story *Rachel In Love*. She also works at The Exploratorium in San Francisco, which sounds like a giant art and science adventure playground. Its founder, Frank Oppenheimer once said: 'We don't live in the real world. We live in a world we made up.'

This may illuminate the theme of her new book, *The City, Not Long After* (Pan, £12.95). Set in a world devastated by plague, the novel tells of a group of artists living in a depopulated San Francisco and their attempts to deal with the militaristic Fourstar and his attempts to re-unite America. In this, it is a reiteration of themes Murphy dealt with in her novelette, *Art In The War Zone*. 'I suppose one of the themes had to do with non-violence, learning to deal with the world in an unexpected way. People follow rules that have been made for them, and one of the things about Danny-boy and the artists in the book is that they are following a different set of rules.'

The war the artists wage is one of surreal pacifism, and that reflects the art with which they have filled the city: the Golden Gate Bridge painted many shades of blue, the mirror and crystal Garden of Light maze, the spidery robots built by The Machine. Among all of this, the city itself is dreaming. Ghosts

from the past wander its streets, as well as strange robot-spirits, like the angel.

Little wonder then, that the city sometimes seems to be the strongest character in the novel: 'San Francisco is a city with its own very definite personality. I mean, all cities have their own personalities, but I think in San Francisco it's stronger. I was very conscious that the city had become a character. It seemed absolutely certain to me, living in San Francisco, that the city would have a say in the thing, that it would have a point of view.'

I wondered if the voice of the city was also that of Pat Murphy. 'I say that's probably pretty reasonable. But in the end, all of the characters in the book are ultimately mine. I probably identify most strongly with Jax, being the character who is very ambivalent and confused about wanting to go with the new world, but at the same time disagreeing with Danny-boy on the need for violence. She's the character that I think I feel most akin to.'

I found the book very political both in its discussion of the power structures in the city and in the reorganisation of economic value. 'That's real interesting. You see, I'm not a very political person. I suppose I'm political in the same way as the artists in *The City, Not Long After* are. I have my own way of looking at the world, but I've never been politically active in the sense of working for various parties, that sort of thing. It may be a political book, but I almost didn't set out to write one. But it is about the way groups of people relate to one another, which is definitely politics.'

Whether you consider the book to be political or purely aesthetic, one thing is certain: it will change the way you view the world and yourself, at least for a little while — if you let it.

PRIME EVIL SHORT STORY COMPETITION

FEAR publishes the second of the three winning entries.

Look out for the other winner next issue!

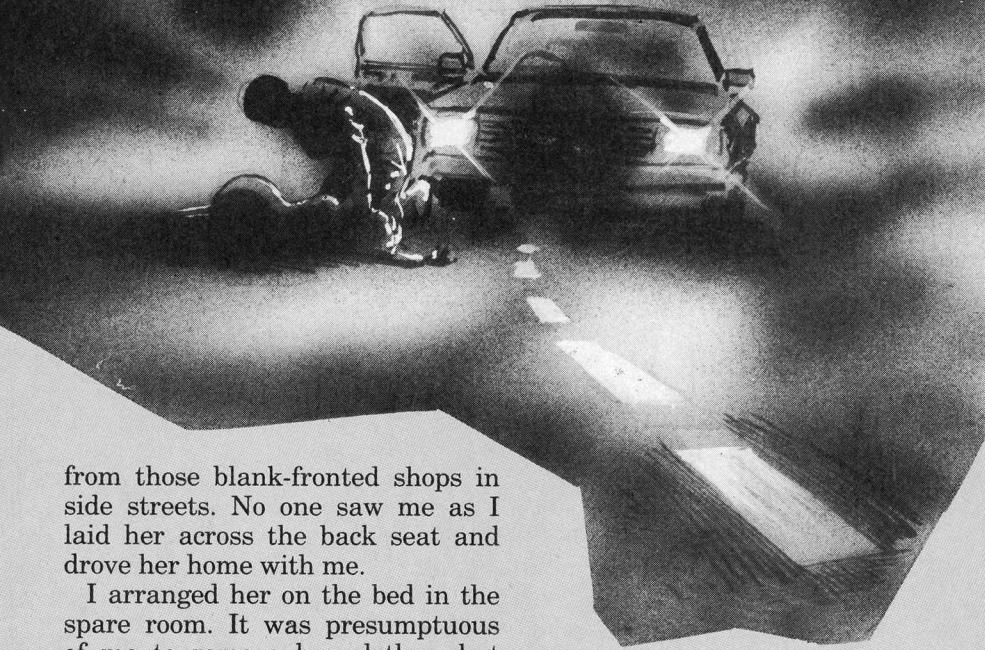
When Nora stepped out into the headlights, there was no way I could avoid her. The fender embraced her legs and she jackknifed slam flat over the bonnet, arms outstretched, face to the windscreen, looking me straight in the eye — I swear. We held eye contact for as long as it took for her to slither back to the road, me with my foot squashing the brake pedal and my hands squeezing the life out of the steering wheel, she flattened and already dead. Yet, though she was dead, in that moment the sparks of recognition blazed between us and I knew our love was meant to be.

I was driving home from Susie's house, where I had been told it was over, whatever we had was over. I had left her in tears. Me in tears, that is, not Susie. I was driving away from her house along blurred, stinging streets, neon lights like starbursts, houses that had become squarish blotches of orange-white, and then Nora stepped out into the headlights and I didn't see her in time because I was blind with tears because Susie didn't love me any more. So Nora was meant to come and throw her arms out to me over the bonnet and stare at me in her death as if I was the only one who could ever make her happy again, and then roll floppily out of sight.

I waited for her to stir, moan, breathe, flutter her eyelids. When I was sure she was dead, I picked her up and carried her to the car. Her lightness and the scarlet O of her lips and the resilient intractability of her limbs reminded me of an inflatable doll, the kind you get

James Lovegrove

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED



from those blank-fronted shops in side streets. No one saw me as I laid her across the back seat and drove her home with me.

I arranged her on the bed in the spare room. It was presumptuous of me to remove her clothes, but everyone hates to go to bed fully dressed and I did it as civilly as circumstances allowed, leaving her almost decent in her white cotton underwear.

I skimmed through her belongings for a name but found only a credit card with a surname and two initials, one of which was N, so I called her Nora after my mother.

After supper, before bedtime, I looked in on Nora. Her lips had turned purple and her left arm jutted over the side of the bed, hand dangling. Other than that, she was at peace. I wished her good night.

She wasn't looking as peaceful in the morning. The contours of her stomach and thighs were lost in the waxy thickening of her skin and her joints showed blue-black bruises. The air in the room was ripe, but what bedroom doesn't smell in the morning, of farts and sleeping bodies?

I thought about her all day at work. I signed documents and attended meetings and thought about nothing but Nora.

Back home, I bounded upstairs to see how she was getting on. She was swollen as though someone had pushed a bicycle pump into her mouth and inflated her. Her fingers, once slender, resembled pork sausages. Flesh strained around the elastic waistband of her knickers and the wiring of her bra and, although it pained me to do so, I had to remove them. Naked on the counterpane, she was beautiful, Ophelian, delicately vulnerable. But still she smelled.

It was all right for a couple of days. I could bear the smell on account of her beauty and her few demands, and I would look in on her morning and evening without fail, but the length of these visits shortened as the smell mounted in leaps and bounds. I bought her perfume from the chemist's, dabbed it all over her and all over the room, using up the entire bottle, but its sickly sweetness only added to the sweetly sick smell of Nora, blending manmade and womanmade.

We couldn't go on like this, and I told Nora so, and with authority in my voice. The smell was pervading the whole house. She was always there, always around me, in the air. Nowhere indoors could I get away from her. Even in the shower, smothering myself in shampoo and slippery scented gel, I smelled her in the clouds of steam like earthy mist over moors.

But I would have done anything to keep her. Our love was meant to be. I would do anything to keep that love alive. Isn't it funny how the bland, lifeless clichés from pop songs suddenly burst out vibrant and true when you're in love, really in love?

So, with a library copy of Gray's propped up against the pillow, a scarf over my nose and mouth, and a knife honed by the sharpener mounted on the kitchen wall, I gutted her.

The fine lines and cross-hatching in Gray's didn't prepare me for the settled and reeking mess of Nora's insides. Choking, I sloshed rubbery handfuls of her into plastic bags. When I was finished, the sunken cavity of her belly and the jagged slit running up her navel were — let's be frank — unattractive. And her skin was a chromatograph of spreading bruises, and the worst of her sat in the dustbin for Tuesday's collection, and she wasn't the same. She had changed. The one constant left in our relationship was the one thing about her I hated: the smell.

I had to fill in the cavity of her belly with a length of garden hose and give her back her heart in the shape of my alarm clock, which I tucked beneath her ribcage where it ticked away the semi-seconds, perhaps a little too fast for a healthy heart but that's love for you.

Once I'd done this, once I'd started making improvements, it seemed unchivalrous to stop, so I hollowed out her throat and inserted a small radio. If I wanted her to talk to me, I flipped a switch and she gave me Radio 4. Her conversation was wide-ranging and knowledgeable, though not especially feminine except during Woman's Hour. If I grew tired of her voice, I could shut her up at the touch of a button.

When her eyelids peeled away to reveal balls of milky white, I got in there quickly with a couple of paste diamonds. I would have given her the genuine article but I don't earn



nearly enough. She made do. Paste diamonds are a girl's second-best friend.

Her left arm had to go. The hand kept butting against my crotch in a crude fashion; perhaps deliberately. I replaced it with a broomstick, to which I had attached five kitchen knives. I positioned the new arm so that there would be no risk to my anatomy. Her right arm soon got replaced by the tube and nozzle of a vacuum cleaner, for reasons of symmetry and aesthetics.

I bought a device from one of the blank-fronted shops as a substitute for Nora's most intimate organ. It ran off the mains and therefore I didn't trust it much because you hear of all sorts of dreadful accidents that happen to people with plugs and sockets. Besides, it was a devil to clean out. Used up a whole packet of cotton buds. But at least I knew it was there and knew I could make love with Nora should we ever feel like it.

Eventually her legs became so misshapen it was a kindness that I substituted a mop for the left and a carpet roller for the right. I had dreams of her crossing the floor, cleaning linoleum and rug, and all the while playing the theme tune to *The Archers*.

The drying rack from the sink became her ribs. Unfortunately, her breasts then collapsed in on themselves like badly-set jelly. My solution was a stroke of genius. I wrung the silicon gel from a freezer bag into a pair of pink polythene sacks, each topped by a teat from a baby's dummy, and stuck these on.

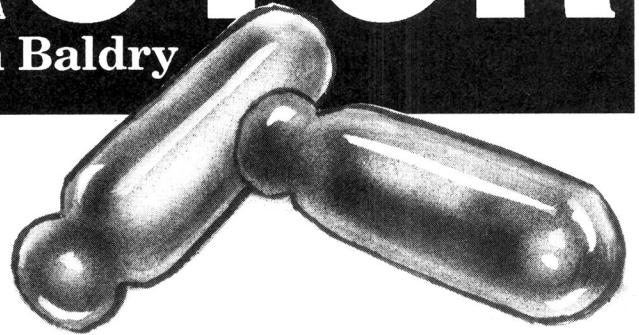
I think the *pièce de résistance* was her brain. I scooped her skull clean and fitted an electric blender. With her hair glued around its perspex cylinder, it symbolised to me the mind of Woman — nimble, utilitarian, deceptively simple to use, lethally sharp.

There she lay, Nora, restored to beauty and her rightful place in my affections, as it was meant to be. She wanted nothing from me except a new bottle of perfume every week. The longer we were together, the stronger our love grew. We would stay together while our looks faded and our eyesight failed, way past the stage when other couples lost interest, when their love crumbled into mere complacency, when nothing the one did could satisfy the other. Way past the expiry date of love's warranty.

42 October 1990 FEAR

THE MIDAS FACTOR

By Cherith Baldry



Horatio Frant, scholar, small and self-effacing, fitted the borrowed key into the door of the Biochemistry building, and let himself in. The corridor was brightly lit, but the building was silent. Even his mouse-like steps rang out clearly, so that before he reached it, the door at the end of the corridor opened. Standing there was Leonard Winchester, biochemist, strongly tipped for a soon-to-be-va-cant professorship.

'Excellent,' Winchester said. 'You're a punctual man, Dr Frant. I like that.'

He spoke as if commenting on the favourable appearance of some particularly important specimen. Horatio Frant's misgivings increased. He could not imagine why Winchester should ask him, an obscure member of the English Department, to come to his office so late, and Winchester's behaviour was not reassuring.

'Tell me, Dr Frant,' the scientist asked, closing the office door and waving Frant to a chair, 'have you ever thought about success?'

Horatio Frant blinked and replied that he couldn't say he had.

'Success. Have you noticed that some people seem to attract success? The financier, bringing off a

brilliant coup? The statesman, leading his country through crisis? The... er...' Winchester paused and gave a small, deprecating cough. '...The scientist, pushing back the frontiers of knowledge? Have you noticed how some people inevitably do the right thing?'

Paralysed by rhetoric, Frant ventured a small shake of the head. Winchester leaned forward confidentially.

'I have, Dr Frant, and I have concluded that this facility for success has a physical origin. Suppose there should be some substance, present to some degree in all of us, but present in certain individuals in enormous quantities, that should so act on our mental and physical states as to ensure success in all we do.'

'Fantastic,' Frant said.

Winchester sat back with an expression of triumph.

'Not fantastic at all, my dear fellow. I have isolated this substance. I have tested it, but not exhaustively enough. And that is where I need your help.'

Frant took a deep breath. He was dealing with a madman. A vigorous and powerful madman, in a deserted building. It was essential not to provoke him.

'How can I help?' he asked.

'By testing SP,' Winchester explained. 'I call it SP — success

potential. The SP factor. I began by testing it on rabbits — they came to no harm, but unfortunately it's rather difficult to assess the ambitions of rabbits. The only observable change in their behaviour was an increase in their...er...breeding propensities. Then I started taking it myself, with no ill effects, as you see. There's nothing to be afraid of. Unfortunately, nothing has happened that couldn't be explained by coincidence, or...' he cleared his throat, '...talent. I am a success already, whereas you, Dr Frant, are...'

'A failure,' Horatio Frant finished for him.

'No, no, my dear fellow. Shall we say that your undoubted abilities haven't yet received due recognition? But they could, Dr Frant, they could. How about it?'

'Now wait,' Frant protested. 'I admit that in university terms I haven't been particularly successful. But I have a congenial job, a home, a salary — shouldn't you find some...tramp, for example? The results would be much more spectacular.'

'Exactly.' Winchester slapped the desk sharply. 'Far too spectacular. I can't emphasise too much the secrecy of this. In your case, Dr Frant, we will know from where your success stems, but to the world at large it will appear as merely the flowering of natural talent.'

'Surely it couldn't work?' Frant asked. 'Not in general. There must be a balance of success and failure. As the poet says...' he smiled dryly, '...when everybody's somebody, then no one's anybody.'

'Good God!' Winchester exploded. 'We can't sell SP over the counter like aspirin! This is top secret. It will be administered very carefully. The statesman on the day of a top-level conference. The scientist as he embarks on a crucial experiment. But for you, Dr Frant...' His voice softened. From a drawer he took a small bottle filled with green, bomb-shaped capsules. 'As the key to our project, an unlimited supply. I'm setting the world at your feet.'

'All the kingdoms of the world...' Frant murmured.

Winchester was watching him closely. Slowly Frant put out one hand and closed it around the small bottle.

On the way home, he considered the situation. Already he had taken one SP capsule. He felt nothing. No ill effects, no magic touch.

Nothing. His instructions were simple. He was to write detailed reports to Winchester, but they were not to meet. The biochemist seemed, in Frant's opinion, almost paranoid about secrecy.

He was also wondering what he could do to test SP, and remembered that he still cherished the manuscript of an unpublished, and apparently unpublishable, novel. Suppose he attempted to rewrite it? In his study he took a capsule and noted the date and time of the dose. While giving it time to take effect, he prepared paper and typewriter, and then sat down to write.

That was on Friday evening. At half past three on Monday morning he typed the last full stop. All that weekend he had taken only essential breaks, and a second version of the novel lay before him. SP had at least stimulated him to a new fluency, but he was too tired to judge the result.

Satisfied that it was finished, he went to bed.

He had no lecture until Monday afternoon, and it was not until then that any change really struck him.

Horatio Frant was not an inspired lecturer. No one knew that better than he did. He could not hold an audience. He failed to hold them physically as well as mentally, and at this stage of term his lectures were sparsely attended by a collection of the nervous, the over-conscientious, and the plain masochistic.

This particular lecture was on the life of Shakespeare. The audience seemed to have come for a good nap, but after five minutes Frant realised that they were listening. Sitting up and listening. Pens flew across paper. At the back, someone giggled. It was most gratifying. There was a complacent air about Dr Frant as he adjourned to the Common Room for tea.

Once there, the complacency evaporated. He began to remember what he had said. Had it been — he hesitated to ask himself — scholarly? Had he not given the impression that the poet was... well, a bit of a lad? He had not actually misinformed his students, but still... He was so uneasy that instead of dining in college he went straight home to read the revised novel.

By the time he had finished, his uneasiness was replaced by utter dismay. Certainly his book had been dull, but it had expressed certain beliefs; the revised version

expressed nothing of the kind. His chief character, a university professor, had become a top executive, his wife had become his mistress, and a new character, his first estranged wife, added a new angle to the plot. A change of sex of a minor character transformed an uninspired love interest into a racy little homosexual affair. It was subtly handled, but it was more than distasteful to Dr Frant. The book was original, witty, tightly constructed and well-written. It was a bestseller. But it was not the book he wanted to write.

Rapidly he prepared his report. This was something even Winchester had not understood. SP had limits. It bestowed conspicuous success, the acclaim of a bestseller — or a flamboyant lecture. Not for SP the quiet satisfaction of a job well done, not if it did not lead to public appreciation. He posted the report and was disappointed when there was no reply. He had to restrain himself from tackling Winchester personally. He went on taking SP, finding his lectures better attended than ever, but he was too nervous to look for other ways of testing it.

"Have you noticed that some people seem to attract success? Have you noticed how some people inevitably do the right thing?"

On the following Monday things came to a head. Dr Frant was walking as usual from library to college for lunch when a woman darted out of the stream of shoppers and took his arm.

'Horatio — what happened to you last weekend?'

Dr Frant was appalled. This was Catherine Lovat, a very old friend, and on the Saturday evening of the previous weekend, when he had done nothing but rewrite the novel, he had totally forgotten the Lovats' dinner party. He apologised abjectly.

'I'll forgive you,' Catherine said, smiling. 'If you want to make up for it, you can buy me lunch.'

Dr Frant was delighted. They entered a nearby coffee house, which at that time was usually packed to the doors, but miracu-



lously a table was free and a waitress materialised.

'Actually, Kate,' Dr Frant said, when they had ordered, 'I was occupied last weekend — rewriting the book.'

That was a confidence; Catherine Lovat was one of the few people who knew about the book. It was one of her virtues that she would find it a completely adequate excuse for missing a dinner party. He was wondering how much more to tell her when she laughed nervously.

'Do you know, it's twelve years since you've called me Kate? No one else does.'

There was no reply to that. It took him aback too quickly. Twelve years ago she had been Catherine Austin, 'Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom,' the only woman he had ever wanted to marry. He had seen a lot of her, had even taken her out occasionally, but he had known she would eventually marry John Lovat. Now, twelve years and three children later, she was still beautiful, still desirable, still married.

He realised she was speaking to him again.

'Come round this weekend instead.'

'I'd love to... if I dare show my face in front of John.'

'Oh, he'll be off on a conference.'

Dr Frant blinked. Had he heard right, or if so, had his overstrained nerves totally misinterpreted an innocent remark? A glance at her face, and her subsequent conversation, removed his doubts. He found it difficult to get through that meal. While he remained resolutely obtuse, something was beating away in his brain — he could have Catherine, wipe out that twelve years' hurt, live with her and love her as he had always wanted.

He stopped short. SP. That was it. Conspicuous success. A beautiful woman, taken away from a colleague who was so much more successful... at present. But there was a price. A husband. Three children. And Catherine, made less than herself, not because she loved him, but because of the drug running in his veins.

He shivered. He could not accept her offer. SP had robbed him of something, a pleasant meal with a woman he cared for. It had given nothing in return, for what it would give, he had no use for, at that

'Frant took a deep breath. He was dealing with a madman. A vigorous and powerful madman, in a deserted building. It was essential not to provoke him'

price.

He went to his lecture, the last of the series on the life of Shakespeare. The hall was crowded. They were sitting in the aisles and on the window-sills. Certainly there were many more than were required to take the course. Heavens, was he that good?

This must stop, he thought. He struggled to return to his dry lecture notes, but somehow he found himself scintillating again in what was by now a most distressing fashion. Customarily, students would applaud at the end of a course. Usually Dr Frant received a polite spatter, indistinguishable from the rain on the roof; this time he got a standing ovation. He shot one appalled glance at the packed lecture hall, and bolted. That did it. He spent the rest of the afternoon making certain preparations.

It was late that night when Horatio Frant, carrying a briefcase, let himself quietly into the Biochemistry building with his borrowed key. Again the lights were on, again the building was deserted. Winchester's door was locked. Dr Frant had never picked a lock, but a few seconds fiddling with a piece of bent wire brought for the purpose produced results.

Once inside, he telephoned Winchester's home. The biochemist was abrupt, but Frant had thought out carefully what to say.

'I've something important to tell you, about SP. I must see you at once. Can you come to the lab?'

'Can't it go in the report?' He sounded annoyed.

'No, emphatically not. We must meet.'

Winchester sounded even more angry that Frant should dare to insist, but after a little more argument he agreed to come, as Frant had known he would.

'And bring any material you have on the project.'

'What for? Not that it matters —

it's all in the office anyway.'

Frant put down the phone and set to work rapidly. He had about half an hour. His bent wire opened Winchester's desk; the filing cabinet was unlocked. He collected everything relating to SP — notes, formulae, his own report, and a box full of the green bomb-shaped capsules. Then he carried them, with his own briefcase, through to the teaching lab, where there was an incinerator, clearly labelled with instructions.

Glancing at his watch — ten minutes to go — he took a capsule. Then he incinerated the rest of them along with Winchester's papers, his own notes, and, half-reluctantly, the manuscript of the revised novel. Laying the almost empty briefcase on the bench, he sat beside it and waited.

Soon he heard the outer door open and close, and footsteps approaching. He called out, and Winchester appeared in the doorway.

'I was just going to bed,' Winchester snapped, 'so I hope you've got some good excuse. Come into the office.'

Frant shook his head. He found that he was completely calm.

'No, thank you. I am quite comfortable here.'

'All right,' Winchester agreed, moving towards him. 'Get on with it.'

'You received my report,' Frant began, 'on the... one-sided nature of the SP factor?'

'Yes. What of it?'

'Do you know, I've never thought that a very inspired name. I prefer to call it the Midas factor. You remember the legend? King Midas prayed that everything he touched should turn to gold, and the gods granted his prayer. It worked. Everything, mind you — food, drink, even his own daughter. He had to ask the gods to take their gift back. Yes, the Midas factor. Extraordinarily appropriate.'

Winchester lost his temper. 'I suppose all this drivel means that you can't cope? You want to call it off. I might have known, but...'

'It's not as simple as that. Strange things have been happening to me. I fill lecture halls with specious eloquence. Women fall — metaphorically speaking, of course — at my feet. I have written an immoral novel. Fortunately, I think I am a man of intergrity. I can

resist the temptation to take advantage of these occurrences. I do not think it unduly arrogant to say that not everyone would do so.'

'I've told you, adequate security...'

'Nonsense. You allow it to an important man in a crisis. Would he not want it again? Wouldn't others hear about it and want it? What would a foreign power not give for one capsule, for analysis? So, Dr Winchester, I'm extremely sorry, but I've just fed all the capsules, and your notes, into that incinerator.'

'You did what?' Winchester stepped forward, and then relaxed. 'What good will that do? The formulae are in my head. I can make another supply within a week. Do you think you can stop me?'

Horatio Frant sighed.

'You forget that I'm suitably primed by the Midas factor. I knew you wouldn't see it my way, so I came prepared.'

He reached into his briefcase and drew out a small pistol.

'You're mad!' Winchester exclaimed.

'No, But I know what a madness of greed and envy your discovery would unleash on the world. I can't allow that.'

He had the satisfaction of seeing Winchester begin to back away.

'You'll never get away with it,' he said hoarsely.

'A conventional line,' Frant murmured, 'and quite untrue. Of course your family know that you left home after a phone call, but for security reasons you certainly did not tell them whom you went to meet. I won't bore you with the details of how I obtained this gun, but I assure you, it won't be traced to me. There are many people who have a key to this lab, but I shan't be one of them, once I've returned your spare to your pocket. As you observe, I am wearing gloves. And the final touch — not quite twenty minutes ago, I took my final capsule. If your hypothesis is correct, Dr Winchester, I can't fail.'

Horatio Frant smiled. And pulled the trigger.

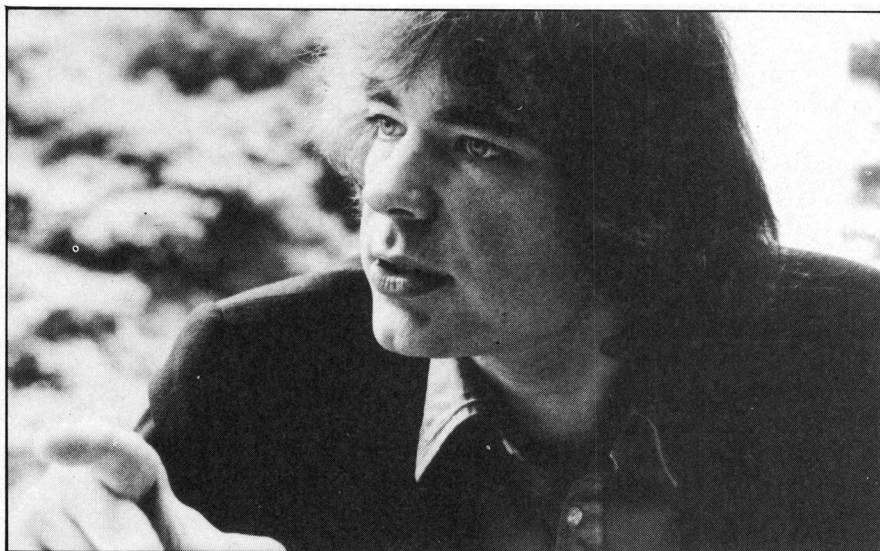


CHERITH BALDRY

was born in Lancaster and read English at Manchester and Oxford. She now works as a teacher and freelance writer. She has published two science fiction novels for older children, short stories, and a play. She is married with two children.

FICTION FILE 16

JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER



FEAR reader and world famous cellist Julian Lloyd Webber shocks John Gilbert with news of his first horror anthology.

Music is his main claim to fame but, oh how often we categorise a person by their career. Julian Lloyd Webber is just such a person and, although his love of horror stories may appear strange to some of his less flexible fellows, that predilection is, to some extent, explained in his first anthology called *Short Sharp Shocks* which will be published in October by Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

'I like psychological horror stories. They have more appeal to me than blood and gore. I've read all the Pan books [of horror stories] and most of the Fontana books. A large number of the stories were bad, but when you hit a good one it made it all worthwhile. Certain stories just refused to go away. I like grotesque stories rather than horror, stories with black humour. I would also like to encourage an outlet for those stories.'

That outlet, *Short Sharp Shocks*, came about through a conversation with horror author Conrad Hill. 'It's all Conrad's fault. He originally contacted publishers Arthur Baker, but found that they had been taken over by Weidenfeld and Nicolson. They called him back and said that they would like to do an anthology edited by Julian Lloyd Webber.'

Horror also holds Julian's prodigious family together. His brother, Andrew, wrote the hit musical *Phantom Of The Opera*, and his father encouraged his interests with regular visits to the cinema and an indulgence in the

right sort of reading material. 'My father played organ for the silent movies, and I think he'd have played for the original *Phantom Of The Opera*.' Of the tonnage of contemporary horror films, he likes *The Fly*, and *Assault On Precinct 13* is one of my top movies.

'I don't like Freddy in the *Nightmare On Elm Street* series. The films are ludicrous. You can't kill the guy, and there's nothing more to be said. But I liked *The Omen*, and loved Billy Whitelaw in it.'

And literature? Stephen King, of course, comes into the frame, but Julian has even risked his sanity with a recent Shaun Hutson bestseller. 'I think *Misery* [by Stephen King] is a brilliant book. Just those two people fighting it out. I read one Shaun Hutson book, called *Victims*, and I was enjoying it, but the ending just seemed to be a cop-out.'

The ghost stories and grotesqueries in his anthology were each included after some deliberation, but Julian is confident with the ingredients and his criteria for the mix. 'There were stories that I just had to include, such as Conrad's *The Bush Master*. I also love the David Morrell story. I like bizarre situations. My only worry about the anthology is whether the stories stick together. But I suppose people don't read one after the other.'

Although he would be quite happy to edit another anthology 'if the first is successful', he has no aspirations towards writing his own short stories or novels, 'because I have written a book called *Travels With My Cello*. It took a tremendous amount of time. Too much time away from my playing.'

Julian already has plans for the next anthology. He is a regular reader of FEAR and has his eye on one story in particular — though we're not, of course, saying that he will use it. 'I liked 'Vitamin Y' [by Wayne Dean-Richards, in Issue 8]. I would like to put that in the anthology if we do another one.'



THE COLOR OF CHANGE

'My frogs will decide this, Jimmy.' Nigel smiles. I snicker. 'How? A duel?'

Pillars of smoke rise from the card tables and my eyes water. Bar girls leer through the haze, sitting on laps and tables like obedient cats. I cough. Red lanterns slung from the walls gleam fuzzy through the gloom, their light giving me a headache. They coat Nigel's face crimson.

'A race.' He grunts, wealth grinning at me. Gold fillings. A kind of cash and carry. Good when in a hurry. The one diamond eye glitters, facets soaking up the illumination. Bloody-eyed. Bloody-minded. Just for a moment, something living passed through the diamond.

If I squint over Nigel's left shoulder, I can see Jake behind the bar, face floating and dislocated. He grins, shoots me a finger. Meet you in Hell, Jake. Everyone, from the One-Legged Man who begs at the front door, to Tight Rope Malone talking up some skirt, displays a generous humor. I have been in 'A Fresh Bucket Of Blood' enough times to sense the mood: anticipation. New Orleans is what they call a gambling town, even if it means a killing, though times have changed somewhat. In the 1890s, Nigel might have lynched me without pretense. Now that pleasure is reserved only for law men and politicians. Or men like Walker, with eyes of dust and a straight-backed fanatic gait.

Money changes hands as I watch. Tight Rope spreads sawdust on the floor: to soak up the blood. I won-

Jeff
Vandermeer **IS**
GREEN



der what my odds are. Maybe I should bet against myself, earn some money for the children. Whose children? I am not keen on dying. There are better places to die than New Orleans. Perhaps Rio de Janeiro on All Saints' Eve, amid the skull masks, the gallons of vino, and the tall, dark women.

I think this while appearing to contemplate Nigel's 'offer', flipping a coin with thumb and forefinger. It comes up heads seven straight times.

I survey Nigel as I flip. A thick man, stooped, with a rock-hard gut and black hair to his shoulders. They say when he was a child the Creoles killed his parents and raised him themselves. The Indians taught him to run with the fox, swim with the otter. He moves like neither, a sideways-lurching shadow. They say when he was old enough, he cut his adopted parents' throats as they slept. It was then his Indian spirit died. The fox and the otter left him to his own

devices.

'So,' Nigel snarls, 'do you agree?'

'I'm thinking,' I say. Nigel's two pockets, low on his enormous trenchcoat, bulge. A frog stares from each, solemn faces pouting over the seams, eyes amber bright. Their names are Divide and Conquer. Both are whip-lean, sleek, and a torpid river green. The Cajuns have learned to hate Divide and Conquer, for Nigel only carries them when he forecloses on a farm... or is about to punish someone. Then he grins in his low, animal way and says, 'How about a wager?'

Nigel loves his frogs — and Nigel loves too few things. Money, power, his mistress. Different kinds of love, but all with one element in common: lust. I owe and can't pay. He will try to kill me. He loves the money but he loves the power more. An example — that's what I'll be. To Nigel, the color of chance is as green as the color of his money.

'C'mon,' he mutters, impatient. Jake takes bets on how long I'll last.

'Okay,' I say. 'But no loaded dice. You race Divide and Conquer and I'll race two of my own.' I point to my carrying case. 'Toads.' I don't sweat — a quality that has served me well in poker games — but my throat is dry, my hands shake. I am wishing too late that my thirst for gambling had not been so strong. The thirst fades as soon as the money's gone.

Nigel's smile disappears. 'Toads are slower than frogs, Jimmy.'

I manage a weak chuckle. Everyone knows Divide is Conquer's master in speed and endurance. He would give me Conquer.

'Not these toads.' I loosen my collar. 'It's the only fair way — for the bets.'

Nigel is thinking: *the more hope I give him, the higher the bets, the higher the take...*

'All right, Jimmy. But they'll do the mazes.' He smiles, certain he has caught me in his own trap.

I hear a quick intake of breath. It is Jake. 'Not the mazes!' he shouts in mock horror. The One-Legged Man does a gleeful dance on the table tops and the bar girls giggle.

My face drains of blood. 'I don't know, Nigel...'

Nigel pulls out a foot-long knife, almost a machete. He never cleans it. Blood has crusted around the hilt. A gutting instrument, with a drainage sluice.

'The mazes. Sure,' I say.

The buzz of voices rises around us. The gamesters have another match to watch: the legions of old men smoking hand-rolled cigars from Havana are happy. The One-Legged Man hops over to where we stand, smile lost in his beard.

'Ten to one against!' he cackles, shoving past to the main gathering. It centers around Jake, who scribbles numbers on the back of yellowing paper. Word must be spreading: soldiers on rotation leave from Cuba walk in off the street. A few sailors, too. A second circle forms, half-finished but enthusiastic. Nigel and I are at its center. This has all the appearance of a circus, and Nigel obliges, roaring, 'Bring out the mazes!' with the savage finesse of a ringmaster. The bar girls hasten to obey, hoping one of them might supplant Lilith, his latest mistress.

Two tables are cleared, the wood-

en mazes hefted onto them. Nigel had the mazes specially fashioned by twins, two French carpenters: Jean Claude and Jean Luc Rimbaud. Each is identical, a tortuous labyrinth of walls, inner sanctums packed with wriggling worms. Nigel's frogs have travelled these passages a thousand times and their fathers before them, theirs fathers' fathers as well, until in some memory of a memory in their own heads, *they know the way before travelling it!* My toads have but one subtlety.

Nigel watches me as I place them at the starting gate: a block of wood that slides smoothly in its worn grooves. Divide and Conquer are also ready.

Jake is the starter; he stares at me, snickers, and shouts, 'Go!' The crowd cheers. Jake is not the only bookie and the bets intensify until the takers sound like auction callers: 'Nine dollars for the man in black. At ten to one, twenty, thirty — all right, step up and bet!' People jostle each other in a sea of elbows and shoulders but they are careful to avoid me; I am, it seems, already dead.

Nigel smiles. There are twelve turns to this maze. Divide is on the third already. Conquer follows on the second.

My toads have yet to reach the first.

Jake whispers in my ear: 'Soon, bastard. Just wait!'

I shove him into a group of chairs. He gets up, moves towards me, hesitates and, hatred blazoned on his face, disappears into the mob. My breath comes short and quick.

Time for action. I search for the One-Legged Man, find him, and beckon him over. He resembles an old-time prospector, even down to the crazy grin and dusty vest. His eyes never focus, bouncing from object to object. The leg on which he stands is compact and strangely muscular. At times, it is difficult to imagine him with two.

'What d'ya want?' he says, hopping up and down.

'Stay close. And when I ask you anything, nod yes.'

Nigel watches his frogs as I slip the Man a dollar, the last of my money. He will be able to buy whiskey for a week. He puffs up with pride and I think he would almost give me his life now.

Nigel leers at me, makes a cutting motion across his throat. I

frown. Divide and Conquer are neck and neck, tackling the ninth turn. My toads have managed to surpass themselves: they've reached the fourth. Jake is delirious, howling and saying, 'Yes, yes, yes!' All those I.O.U.s I gave him, each and every one, will be avenged. Jake is a petty man.

Still, I don't sweat, though the bar is hot and quarters cramped. I imagine even the walls sweat, wood warping over the years until finally it falls apart. My mind is calm, but my body feels like it too is falling apart.

Divide and Conquer have made it past the tenth.

My poor pair approach the fifth. **T**he bet takers have closed shop, the odds too great. A hush comes over the crowd and I can hear sounds from the street: the jangle-clop of horse and car-

'They say when he was old enough, he cut his adopted parents' throats as they slept'

riage, the hollowness of boots on wooden sidewalks, the voices of drunken singers.

Lilith has appeared at Nigel's side, having fought off the other bar maids. She smiles at me, flirting even with death.

Divide and Conquer take the eleventh.

My pathetic charges conquer the fifth.

Jake crows. Nigel shakes with triumph, fists pumping the empty air. Certain members of the crowd will become filthy rich.

Divide and Conquer take the twelfth and victory.

My unworthy acquisitions are stumped at six.

The crowd yells its appreciation, the vibration shaking the floor. But the celebration quickly subsides. Some of the bar maids even have the decency to turn away as Nigel approaches, knife held in one iron-hard hand.

'You lose!' Jake screams the words.

'I'm gonna slice you good, Jimmy,' Nigel says. That diamond shines like a lighthouse strobe.

'Wait!' I raise one hand.

Nigel hesitates, and I fill those precious seconds with words.

'You can't kill me until the race is



over. The race is not over until my toads finish.'

Jake shouts his outrage. Lilith winks at me, whispers, 'Clel-var, clel-var...' The crowd is restless. Where is the blood? For some on the losing side of bets, it is the only compensation they will receive. Besides, what use then for the sawdust? I must not disappoint them.

First, I have to deal with Nigel's stare of disbelief.

He shakes his head. 'No, Jimmy,' he says, advancing. I quickly move from range, stumble into the One-Legged Man. I put my arm around him.

'Ask the Man, Nigel. Just ask him. He'll tell you the rules — isn't that right, One-Legged Man?'

The One-Legged Man nods his head, happy to be the center of attention. I may not know everything, but I know something the others do not: the One-Legged Man

'Nigel's face whitens and Jake spouts obscenities. 'Kill him! Kill him now!''

saved Nigel's life once, out West. That's why he's one-legged. Rumor is Nigel ate it off him when they found themselves stuck in the desert and that's why the One-Legged Man went crazy. Whatever the facts, Nigel stands by the Man.

Nigel steps forward, steps back; he brings the knife up... his arm swings down again. He glares at me and then stomps over to the mazes, hands shaking. Twitching. I am careful to stand opposite him.

Divide and Conquer are already in Nigel's pockets.

My bankrupt investments contemplate the seventh.

Nigel taps his foot against the table leg.

'I'm sorry,' I say. 'My toads are slower than I thought.'

'Shut up,' Nigel snarls. There is some irony to a conversation between an executioner and his victim. Jake, already drunk and disappointed, places a hand on Nigel's shoulder, begs him to ignore the One-Legged Man. Nigel shrugs him off. The soldiers leave to meet their curfew, the bar darkening as dusk falls. Some civilians desert the party too. The blood has not been spilled fast enough for their

tastes. Perhaps a cock fight instead.

My unworthy degenerates confer before the seventh corner.

Jake pouts in his own corner.

And Nigel? He will not cross the One-Legged Man, but maybe there is a way to slip through the rules... Divide and Conquer stir restlessly in his pockets, anxious for the feel of cool water. Flies buzz, the sound no doubt magnified in his mind until each is deadly as a falcon — and twice as large. Sweat runs down his face, coats his arms, soaks into his clothes. Surely he itches. The diamond eye must aggravate him and the fillings in his mouth throb. Lilith has already retired to his quarters. What an itch that must be. But the clincher is the vein bulging across Nigel's forehead. I feel certain if he stands that way — legs apart, hands on hips — his heart will surely explode within an hour. I wait.

My stumbling understudies have negotiated the seventh corner, but the eighth, oh, the eighth has them flummoxed.

I shake my head, gesture toward my toads. 'I'm sorry Nigel. They are slow.'

The crow has dispersed, sensing Nigel's mood may prove fatal for them as well. Jake grits his teeth, cleans the lint from his fingernails with a blunt dagger. Nigel consults a watch, almost ripping it from its gold chain.

'Damn it all!' He smashes his fist against the table.

I decide it is time to plant the seed.

'I am sorry, Nigel,' I say. 'Perhaps they will die before they finish and we can all retire before midnight.'

Soon I will have him. Only, Nigel is slow. Slower than honey or natural death. He watches the comical ineptitude of my charges, growing more furious by the second. He cannot see the path I have given him.

My inexcusable dung-heaps have stumbled into the solution for eight.

I sigh, as if impatient for this charade to be over.

Nigel's face whitens and Jake spouts obscenities. 'Kill him! Kill him now!'

Nigel is silent for a moment. Then, whip-quick, he looks over at me. 'Die, eh?'

Before I can answer, his gutting knife has skewered one of my

toads. Fluid squirts from my bumbling amphibian. It hits Nigel in the face. It dribbles down his shoulder onto his arm. He screams, falls to his knees, hands clawing at his eyes. Chairs are overturned. He smashes against a table. The itching has intensified, considerably. Nigel's flesh burns. He twitches, spasms, and then slumps unconscious, head sagging to one side. Soon he will be dead.

Jake, the fear of God in his eyes, scrambles out the door before I have time to pull Nigel's knife from the toad. Now there is only the One-Legged Man, who grins inanely at me, saying, 'Good trick. Good trick.'

Carefully, I extract the remaining toad from the mess of poison. I place it back in the carrying case. My hands shake a bit, but this is to be expected.

The One-Legged Man sees the flash of scarlet, blue, and emerald.

'Oh, it's beautiful,' he whispers, 'very lovely,' as though he has seen a precious gem. 'What is his name?' 'Death.'

'And the other?'

'Death Too.' My little joke.

'Beautiful...'

I pat him on the shoulder, walk to the door. When I glance back, the One-Legged Man has sat down, a whiskey glass in his hand. He stares through the amber liquid, a faraway glint in his eyes.

'You know, Mister Firewalker,' he says, 'now that I recollect, Nigel *did* cut off my leg. Hacked it off with a saw... Yes, now I remember...' For, once the words carry weight, spoken in a lean, sane voice. But his face is that of an idiot and tomorrow he will be back to begging at the door.

'I know. You told me a week ago,' I say. 'Good night.'

Then I am on my way out of New Orleans, Death safely hidden in its cage.

JEFF VANDERMEER is a young author working and living in the States, whose atmospheric short story *So The Dead Walk Slowly* we published in **FEAR** Issue 11. This year Jeff has had fiction published in *Asimov's SF Magazine*, *Starshore*, *Pulphouse* and *Nova SF* (Italy). He was a finalist for a Readercon Best Short Work Award and a finalist for a Rhysling Award for best long poem.

HAPPIER ENDINGS

By J N Williamson



Propped erect and loosely tied into his wheelchair, Virgil had been left alone at a positively unconscionable hour in the twilit corridor of the shabby nursing home. Needing to go almost as much as he needed to lie prone and sleep, he told himself the truth again, anyway, recited the facts of the situation like the most earnest conceivable player: that Virgil Lukens still knew more than most folks gave him credit for knowing, and that he hadn't yet exhibited the slightest sign of senility, even if that *was* what had landed him in the goddamned home. The litany he replayed in his mind was his first article of faith —

And it was clear enough that he was the sane one when they had obviously forgotten where they *put* him.

Imperceptible repeated nods of gritty emphasis wobbled his skull and sent his watery gaze trickling down the stark hallway where it

finally met the rust-colored darkness puddled round the main hall Christmas tree. No one was in evidence there, either, which could mean that all the ignoramuses who worked in the home had retired for the night — a thought that might ordinarily have frightened an eighty-six year old man. He'd be a mess by morning, if Virgil's hunch was right, but there was the consolation that somebody's head could roll as a consequence of misplacing him. Just because he could scarcely move on account of the virulent arthritis that was his constant companion — just because he seldom spoke when he was spoken to, these days — did not mean Virgil Lukens was any man's dummy! It only seemed that way because he was dying. And because he knew all the people he had available to speak to did not understand why his life had been played out like a dimly disappointing, plotless film, and he didn't know who to see about the possibility of a refund.

In a sympathetic but independent action of great age, Virgil's lower lip quavered. What kind of ending was this for the sort of man who had adored the films, revelled in nuances and directorial touches that the ordinary moviegoer never so much as noticed? *This* was the

moment in his story when Doc Reiner was supposed to rush into the corridor to tell him 'they' had found a cure, or, if that was a little 1940-ish for everybody, that Virgil Lukens' body parts would save the life of (1) some great idol of the old man's, (2) his beautiful crippled granddaughter, who wanted to Dance, or (3) a scientist who was on the verge of discovering (a) a means of ending war for all time, (b) rocket fuel capable of taking the Doomed World's People to a space satellite, or (c) Atlantis.

He wasn't supposed to die of peeing himself and contracting pneumonia in a nursing home that was nearly as old as he was!

Sighing, he did his best to settle for fixing his stony gaze on the artificial Yule tree and the coldly geometrical distribution of gift-wrapped packages sparsely secreted beneath the lower boughs. The damn tree was in its dotage and most of the lights worked uremically, at best; the few that shone were disposed to blink dispassionately back at Virgil, as if they had their own problems.

But the folks who ran the home couldn't very well expect to pack tired-out old human beings into tissue-lined boxes and, slipping them into a closet, draw them out again next season.

For Virgil, there wasn't going to be any next season.

His blue-for-boys blanket chose that instant to sag its way down to his pale, paper-slippered feet. He



yearned to reach forward and draw it up, for the sake of dignity, and he *could have* — except the pain Virgil recalled every time he thought of moving argued against it. He also wanted to wheel himself into the big room and turn on the TV. But the fact that he had never given much of a hang for regular television programming, except for Movies Of The Week or feature pictures making their way onto the tube, made the cop-out of remembered physical pain an easy excuse. Besides, any time they ever found him anywhere except where they had left him, the jig was up. He'd have to do more things for himself, after that. And since the story of his life was that every attempt Virgil had made to succeed was immediately met by unexpected, out-of-the-blue setbacks — almost as if someone cosmic had ordered his humdrum existence for him, and balked at even the smallest attainments — it was only reasonable, only fair, that he'd finish his existence depending upon other people to handle the mechanics. Wind-up the key in the center of his spine, so to speak, and spare Virgil any final failures.

Just thinking about movies had brought an all but undetectable smile to his mostly toothless lips. He hadn't merely *liked* motion pictures, he'd been a *movie nut* — mainly because he'd wanted to be an actor in his youth, and quite naturally developed a filmic philosophy soon after getting married and settling down. It had been enough to pretend to be somebody else, on occasion, somebody better. Somebody whose problems were already laid out in advance, written into the script; and so Virgil had coped with his ordinary daily challenges goodhumoredly for a very long period of time, recognising crises and actual losses as plot points; as character development. Down the line, he knew, he'd be getting the breaks — and the harder the times, the worse the setbacks, the greater the payoffs would be as his personal story soared towards the climactic, satisfying and fulfilling ending!

Except that the only soaring Virgil had ever done was over a three-day period when he and Emma went on their honeymoon, and that was sixty years ago!

Movies weren't better than ever, like they'd boasted. They might be more realistic and

they were definitely grimmer — but they weren't better, they weren't what they'd been when young Virgil tucked himself into a seat at the old Zaring Theater and tuned out the rest of the world.

Emma would have a few respectable years of semi-solvent living after he was gone. That was the entire payoff, the climax, to *this* story. Goodie!

Not that Doctor Reiner's hushed delivery of the death sentence weeks ago — the news that Virgil wouldn't be around for Christmas — had quite convinced him of the reality of life. Tomorrow was December 25th, and he'd made it this far — obviously enough, to the considerable annoyance of Doc and the people running this home. They probably saw every defiant anomaly like him as a slap in the face to medical science, a stubborn, old-fashioned tendency to do it one's own way, and the hell with statistics, prognosis and the lot! And though Virgil hadn't really remained alive for that reason or even to celebrate another Christmas, he was privately inclined this instant to view his stubborn hold to life as a minor accomplishment — his first in years, actually — and a last ditch source of hope that his very own story might yet culminate in a manner matching his own preference for happier endings than they generally set-up these days. He understood that smiles as the credits rolled weren't cool, but a few modern films — *Cocoon*, for example — had managed to produce a respectable set of box office figures.

Maybe *The Virgil Lukens Story* would end that way yet, or, if not, close on an interesting note, a twist.

But that didn't appear too likely for an eighty-six year old codger who was stranded in a wheelchair and had to go. *Badly*.

Virgil finally caught his lower lip spasming, clamped his lips together. Starting to look back over his life this way was a sure sign, and the review wasn't exactly the kind of mood-setter that led either to joyful surprises or entirely unplanned-for twist endings. Yet it seemed the absolute truth to Virgil that regardless of every optimistic deed in his life, every courageous or audacious response to arising events, some unaccountable, usually apparently-insignificant damned thing always came up to wreck his

plans! The realisation of that was the one secret he'd never whispered in his Emma's ear, because he knew that she would have to conclude that he was paranoid. And maybe he was, because Virgil genuinely believed that, in spite of all his preparations, caution, and cunning — his hardest work, his most imaginative efforts — he had *never* been a *truly free man*.

That somebody... *something*... had decreed, ultimately, that regardless of what he did or when — he'd flop.

That some — some force, some power, unguessable and covert as masked sin, was always there to shake its finger in his face and then point the finger down.

Down the ladder. Not to abysmal, egregiously horrible living like that of the maimed, the totally lonely, the hideously diseased — Virgil might have been able to deal with that, to take true solace from his acts of courage —

Simply to flophood. Nowhereville. Stagnating, boring, unnoticed, unimportant all-but-nothingness.

Maybe I can conk out at precisely one minute after midnight, Virgil thought. It would fulfill their Christmas predictions, but at least it'd be exact, and there's some drama in leaving the world just as merry Christmas arrives.

Strange.

Why, 'strange'? Virgil asked himself. And *what* was strange?

Strange, but a sense of peacefulness had just wafted over and though Virgil Lukens. At the very moment he had considered the relative suitability of dying one minute after the start of Christmas day. Closing his dry mouth and slowly swivelling his head in order to glance in directions other than that of the main hall, and the tree, he sensed a slackening of his intensity of commitment to last-second accomplishments. Could that mean someone cosmic had agreed with him, finally, decided he might have his way — if, of course, dying in a mere matter of moments was a case of anyone having his way!

I don't care what you say, I admire his guts — even his stubbornness!

Virgil tried to look behind him, to identify the speaker, but couldn't. Not without exquisite, arching pain, anyway, and giving away the fact that he could move.

Hearing no answer to the remark, Virgil felt resignation, and composure, and decided he had

finally imagined something out of whole cloth. This was not uncommon in recent months. Whatever Virgil couldn't understand at once, these days, had a way of shoving aside his rational grasp of things and turning his mind to mush. His mouth generally spouted oatmeal these days anyway, which was the true reason why he seldom spoke. Doing so meant risking misunderstanding, then bewilderment, so it had seemed better to keep his fully logical and well reasoned thoughts to himself.

The only thing to do now seemed to be remaining erect in the movable chair that he never moved, create a kind of wan, distant smile, try to keep his lips together without drooling, and wait to see if his life story might have a sequel showing on the better screens in paradise. When his friends had all died one by one and were lowered into the earth, that had been it. None had contacted Virgil from the great beyond, and that was what had persuaded him to believe in a hereafter. There'd always be considerable doubt about whether he'd simply dreamed up any occult movie contacts from the other side, so winding up a film that way was smalltime stuff. Obviously, there was the chance of a sequel but he'd know about it only when he *got* there. If heaven was any damn good, why would anybody arriving there demand, first thing out of the box, to make a call to the living?

'Open your eyes.'

Surprised both by the voice and the fact that his eyes had been closed, Virgil obeyed. Simultaneously, an imposing man clad in whites not unlike those worn by Doc Reiner turned the wheelchair so that Virgil might see him.

He saw a slim, bound manuscript in the tall man's hands. He was conscious of a peevishly dapper mustache that made Virgil think of William Powell's and an intent, critical manner, but not of the fellow's face. He knew it was not the person who had admired his guts.

'I tried to tell you all along that it wouldn't play,' the imposing man said.

There was a woman, also wearing white clothing, fidgeting by his side. 'We must have had ten story conferences. We didn't arrive at a decent shooting script until we had thrashed out every change you proposed making. All I stood up for

was the basic premise.'

'Still and all,' the tall man said loftily, 'even the best directors can only do so much with inferior material.' He raised a palm to quell her rising complaint. 'The supporting characters were adequate conceptions, I'll grant you. Particularly the wife; Emma. But my dear, there was *no* resolution to tie everything together! The plot meandered absolutely everywhere, and, as you can see for yourself, the lead was fundamentally miscast.' A sigh. 'I told you that the producer *insists* upon a message.'

'Say there!' Virgil's spontaneous interruption came out quite clearly, giving him heart. From an unused

'Could that mean someone cosmic had agreed with him, finally, decided he might have his way?'

wing of the nursing home the red eye of a camera peered unblinkingly at him. He thought he saw some kind of contraption on wheels beginning to rumble towards him and the others. 'Who are you folks, anyway?'

'Just look at him,' said the imposing man. He fingered his mustache, sighed. 'The story is over and he hasn't changed a jot, developed as much as an iota! He's still trying to be heroically free despite every obstacle set in his path!'

'Your revisions prevented him from advancing,' the woman insisted. 'But I'll accept the responsibility. It won't be the first time,' she added, *sotto voce*, 'for the writer to shoulder the blame.'

The man glanced inside his manuscript, snapped it shut and tossed it to her. 'I want the whole script reworked, darling, and that's the end of it.'

'Again?' she gasped, biting her lip. 'You want to junk the lot and begin from scratch *again*?'

'From the credits and Fade in,' he said, nodding peremptorily. 'I'll grant you that the *déjà vu* factor may pose some problems, but the producer positively *insists* on happier endings now.' He turned his back to the cameraman and lowered his voice. 'Be a dear and don't fight me this time. Times are changing. We must stay ahead of the opposition, at least abreast of him.'

Virgil glanced in panic from the two figures in white to the red light. It was right in front of him now, staring. He began fumbling with the straps loosely holding him to the wheelchair, tried to find words with which to ask what was happening all around him. In the near-darkness of the main hall Doc Reiner appeared, stretching and yawning, slipping out of his whites — and vanishing! The Christmas tree lights blinked off. When it was gone, too, Virgil saw past it to a tunnel of infinite blackness — or was there a faint, flickering brightness at the end of it?

'I *must* have moments of joy, of triumph,' the woman said stubbornly even as she and the imposing man seemed to dwindle away behind Virgil and he realised that he was moving, sweeping toward the stygian tunnel with no impression of his wheelchair itself achieving motion, 'if the storyline is to be happily resolved.'

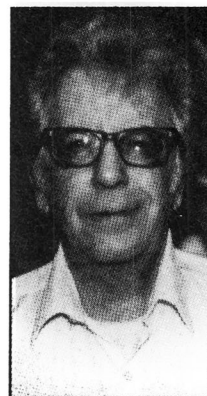
Her last words reached Virgil as a distant echo.

'All right; very well,' the man thundered. But his voice was being devoured by a sound of rushing that was not the wind, that was more like film being re-reeled at a terrific rate of speed. 'Have it your way — but I *still* think it's trite!'

Virgil tried to shout, to emit his cries of terror, but his mind had once more turned to mush.

Then eighty-six years had been given back to him, his mind was still basically mush, and he was struggling until he was able, at last, to scream his abject fear — freely.

He wouldn't be as fond of the movies this time.



J N WILLIAMSON is an American author and anthologist who has some 36 novels to his name, including *Ghost*, *Playmates*, *The Evil One*, *The Ritual*, *Babel's Children*, *Noonspell*, *The Banished*, *The Longest Night* and *Ghost Mansion*. Two of his novels, *Horror House* and *The Offspring*, have been published in the UK by W H Allen. His short fiction has appeared widely in magazines in the States, and his 1987 non-fiction book, *How To Write Tales Of Horror, Fantasy And Science Fiction* has recently been acquired by Robinson for reprint in the UK.

FICTION FILE 17

F PAUL WILSON



Doctor by day, horror writer by night, F Paul Wilson still finds time to enjoy the accolades from fans of novels such as *The Keep*, *The Touch* and *The Tomb*.

Celebrating twenty years as an author, he tells John Gilbert about *Reborn*, his soon to be published sequel to *The Keep* which, if fate had been unkind, would have been a very different book.

For William Sloane, The early brewer of science with the supernatural'. The dedication inside the book at first seems odd for a horror writer, but on learning that F Paul Wilson is also a professional physician, was originally enamoured with science fiction and has always included some science in even his most gruesome tales, the picture becomes clearer.

'I started out writing science fiction, but once I started writing horror, the change of style, the way it hits you up close in the face, I didn't want to go back to science fiction which is very distant.

'I get a lot of satisfaction out of writing emotional horror. I'm exposed to biological science in my practice, and mixing with people is on the plus side for any writer. That's the only reason I stay in practice. There are some days when I say: 'What am I doing this for?'

Wilson has spent 20 years in the medical field, and earlier this year he celebrated two decades as a writer. 'One keeps it fresh for the other. When I get home from my medical office, I'm itching to write. But now I have a three book contract with Berkley and NEL. I've never had multiple contracts before and there's more pressure to get things done

now.'

Reborn is the sequel to Paul's first book, *The Keep* which was written some ten years ago and continues the story of the vampiric creature originally released from its tomb in a Nazi castle during World War II. 'I never intended to write a sequel: I'm against sequels. *Reborn* was cooking in my brain for quite a few years, and I thought I would never get it right.

The new novel is now the second part of a series but, initially, Paul almost wrote *Reborn* without its connection to *The Keep*. He admits that he 'could have had *Reborn* as a *Rosemary's Baby*-type of thing, but that's been done, and done better'. But once he incorporated the monstrous evil of the original book into the new novel he had the makings of a series.'

The Keep was a huge, instant success, in paperback if not hardback, a success which Paul was expecting if industry reaction was to be believed. 'There was such enthusiasm, I could tell I had something. I told my agent I was sending him the first 100 pages and, after receiving it, he called me back three times.'

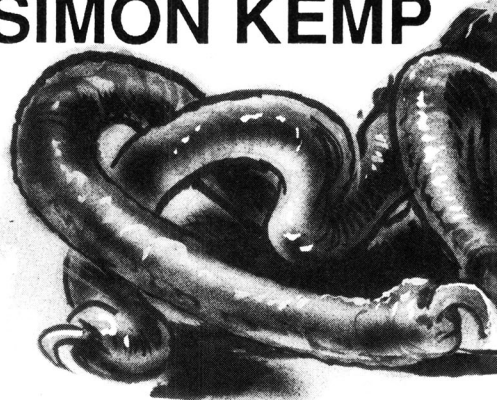
As the paperback went on sale, the Paramount film project was before the cameras. It was a monumental flop, for reasons that Paul is not shy in pointing out. 'It went straight onto [CIC] cassette in Britain and Europe, and it's still 20 million dollars in the red. Paramount put a lot into it, but Michael Mann was out of his depth. He was the wrong director. They had an excellent set designer and a good cast [including Gabriel Byrne, Ian McKellen and Scott Glenn], but the problem was with the script. Michael Mann, who was also the writer, just didn't know what to do with it.' Needless to say, if *Reborn* ever goes into production, Paul wants first stab at the screenplay.

His next book, after the third in the *Keep* series, is already under wraps and is again a horror novel, this time called *Fibs*. 'I've got another one already done. It's really concentrated, small scale horror, and takes place in Manhattan.'

If he continues to be so prolific he may yet have to swap that stethoscope for a word processor.

The Vo

SIMON KEMP



The air under the green jungle canopy is still and humid. High up in the trees the man they once called Lucas Hannon

watches the clouds drift silently across the perfect blue sky. He feels nothing for the world outside the jungle, time spent here in the dark green night is everything. Memories are starting to fade, faces, names, friends and lovers are leaving his mind, but perhaps that's no bad thing. They are ties to a previous life and have no place in him.

Lucas is free but not alone, soon there will be another. He wants to smile but it's difficult, he's forgotten how.

The robbery had been a complete fiasco. Three cops dead and Lucas had pulled the trigger on all of them. They dropped him in the deep end for that, and on Death Row there was little chance of being thrown a life jacket.

Lucas shared a cell with a man they called Griffin, an ex-pusher who had worked over an undercover policeman with an acetylene torch before shooting him through the mouth. They were all there on Death Row, the child murderers, cop killers and assorted psychos that society wanted to forget. Monsters that were beyond the power of the good to rehabilitate and better left to the caring hands of Hell.

A hot day in June. Griffin had met his maker that morning and

Volunteer



Lucas sat on the bunk, his thoughts running around the events of the next few hours when they came for him. A long, handcuffed walk to the execution chamber, his head shaved and the straps on his wrists pulled tight. Down goes the switch, and his eyeballs boil and explode wetly. No more Lucas Hannon, one less cop killer for the world to analyse and ponder.

The sound of the cell door being opened startled him. He expected the priest, with his empty words of hope and forgiveness. Let him choke on them. It wasn't a priest, but the two men who walked in bore a certain similarity. Dressed in expensive suits and with studied expressions of superiority, they looked as though they belonged on the doorstep, the power of Jesus on their lips and the light of Heaven shining behind their eyes. 'Repent, sinner, save yourself a place in God's kingdom with your diner's card.'

One of them carried Lucas's prison file with him and had obviously done his homework. Put simply, they had a deal for him. Fate had thrown him a Mae West and the drowning man grabbed it with both hands.

A secret department from the Pentagon was looking for 'volunteers' for a sensitive line of research. The project was completely classified and carried with it a degree of risk for the test subjects involved. Lucas felt he had nothing to lose, he was only hours away from the chair and any chance was better than nothing. Should he

make it through the tests, there would be rewards. Money, a new identity and a second chance at life. Lucas signed the papers, the horror of the chair thankfully fading away. To Hell with the risks, he would escape before they had a chance to test anything on him.

The hour of his execution came and went. He sat and sweated blood. Finally, towards evening, he was sent for and released into their custody. Two other prisoners walked free with Lucas Hannon that day. Collins was a short, nervous-looking man with thick glasses. He had robbed a gas station, killing the owner in the process. Harris was tall with long, greasy black hair and a beard, a kidnapper who had gotten nervous and stabbed his victim. It seemed strange, Lucas had expected more. Maybe they were choosy.

He was feeling good as they led him to the car, the sky was bright and clear, perfect, like the cover of an expensive holiday brochure. The car waiting for them was quite something. He had never ridden in anything like it. Black and stretched to an impossible length, inside it smelt of rich leather upholstery and Cuban cigars. He doubted it did more than about fifty yards to the gallon. The man sitting in the back seat smiled as they got in, it was not a reassuring sight. He introduced himself as Doctor Adams, the big man of the project, and he knew it. He was about fifty with a thin, drawn face, eyes of dark grey like lead ball bearings and an alligator's smile. Physically he was unimpressive but he radiated an air of immense strength. The aura of it was almost tangible. He shook their hands and told them to sit back and enjoy the ride.

They drove for an hour, the engine running quiet as a whisper, the car a sleek black ghost racing through the night on highways of shadow. Lucas's mind was full of questions but the time didn't seem right for asking them. After a while Adams turned away from the window and regarded them all with his dead eyes. He tapped on the dark glass of the partition that separated them from the driver and the car slowed down and stopped.

'Well gentleman, we have reached our first destination, and now I must ask you to roll up your sleeves.'

He removed a shiny steel case from his inside pocket, and opening

it withdrew three disposable syringes filled with a clear liquid. He seemed to sense the prisoners' reticence.

'Come now gentlemen, this is nothing to worry about. It's just a little something to knock you out for a while. Our final destination is, and must remain secret, you see.' He gave them another of his disturbing reptilian smiles. 'When the time comes for your release from our little project we wouldn't want you running around as a security leak, now would we?'

Lucas looked at his companions, Carter and Harris both had their sleeves rolled up, and he noticed the track marks running up Carter's left arm like a kid's dot-to-dot drawing. Whatever was in the syringes worked damn fast, a cold sting as the needle punctured the vein and then everything faded into silent, dark obscurity.

The first thing Lucas was aware of when he woke was the dull whoosh of the fan on the ceiling as its blades cut sluggishly through the hot sticky air. He lay there watching it for a while, trying to remember where he was. Then the memory of the grinning Adams and his needles returned, he could feel the soreness in his arm from the injection. He struggled to sit up but it wasn't easy, he felt sick and light-headed, his mouth was dry and his tongue was like chalk. There was a plastic cup of water next to him and he drank it down quickly. The sensation of nausea gradually passed and he started to study his surroundings.

The room was about twelve foot square and had recently been given a coat of whitewash, the smell of fresh paint was still strong. The bed and the table next to it were the only pieces of furniture. Lucas had been dressed in a pair of green pyjamas that were two sizes too large for him. His clothes were on the table, the pockets emptied and his wristwatch gone. He laughed quietly to himself, the warm embrace of the electric chair a fading vision of dread. He was still alive and the world hadn't forgotten him yet. He smiled broadly at the empty room.

He was about to get up and try the door when it opened and Adams walked in with three other men and a woman. They wore spotless white lab coats and the woman carried with her an enamel kidney-shaped tray. Adams was the first to



speak.

'Awake already? Very encouraging Lucas, yes, very encouraging. Sign of a good constitution and that might see you through. My colleagues and I require a blood sample, so I'm afraid it's another needle. Better if you'd stayed asleep.' He finished his bout of forced camaraderie with another smile. The effect failed miserably and the reptilian image bounced back into Lucas's head.

Lucas turned his attention to the woman approaching him. She took a syringe from the dish and swabbed his arm with antiseptic. She was attractive, about twenty-five and smelt of expensive perfume. It had been a long time since Lucas had been close to a woman and it showed. His erection arched all too visibly beneath the covers. Fortunately she was blocking the view from Adams and the others as she extracted the blood sample. She withdrew the needle and glanced up to look into his face, her voice as sweet as bird song.

'My name's Doctor Hastings and don't worry, I don't take it personally.'

Embarrassed, he managed to smile lamely. She put the full syringe back into the tray and turned to speak to him again.

'I suggest you try and get some more sleep Mr Hannon, we have a busy schedule lined up for you.'

'Just where the Hell am I anyway?' he asked.

Adams must have overheard the question. 'Now then Lucas, remember what I said about security? You will be told only what you need to know, nothing more. Think how fortunate you are to be here at all. You were close to the end, without hope, and now the game's changed. Learn to play my rules Lucas, believe me, it's the best chance you've got.'

The door shut behind them and he recognised the familiar click of a lock being turned. He was in another prison, nothing ever changed.

Adams sat alone in his office. It was his place, his secret refuge from the others where he could sit and think. He looked at the small perspex cage on his desk. The rat was oblivious to the peering stare outside its box. Adams had named him Dante, after the Italian poet whose work he admired so much. The rodent was a challenge, a test of his willpower. He trembled as he put on the surgical gloves, feeling a measure of security as the second

skin slid coldly over his hands. As he unclipped the cover, his breath came in short, ragged gasps. Dante was warm and soft in his hand, his nose burrowed inquisitively between Adams fingers. His confidence growing, Adams stroked the rat's back with his forefinger. He was breathing easier, had he beaten the fear? Was this all he had been afraid of? The thing was so small and weak. Carefully, he put the rat down on the desk and watched it in fascination as it pattered its way across the files and papers. He had held himself in check; it was time to celebrate a victory.

Adams opened the drawer and took out the dagger. It was an old SS piece, the blade still sharp and keen, the silver skull emblem glittered in the lamplight. He had kept it for this special occasion, for the day he conquered the fear.

He felt sure of himself, the gloves were no longer necessary and he tore them off. He held the rat gently against the table, it wriggled and squirmed but he didn't mind, the fear was gone, a thing of the past. He brought the razor-sharp blade down in one swift motion, shattering the rat's vertebrae and impaling it to the desk top. It screeched and wriggled violently as it tried in vain to struggle free. Still holding it, he pulled the rat back against the blade, effectively cutting it in two. There was more blood than he had expected and it took some time to die.

Wrapping the tattered corpse of the rat in the remains of the gloves he dropped them both into the rubbish bin. He felt calm and relaxed, he had been dreading the confrontation with the monster but in the end it had been so easy. He sat back in the creaking chair and took the syringe from the other drawer. The alkaloid narcotic thrill rushed into his brain, and he laughed as the dagger melted into a dozen blood-red moths that circled the lamp in a slow, fluttering dance. The skull was singing to him.

The next day Lucas was moved to another room. It was a considerable improvement with its own adjoining bathroom and a few bits of furniture. Better still, there was a window. Looking out he could see a runway, two large brick buildings and several smaller outhouses. The whole place was surrounded by a tall barbed-wire fence and patrolled by men in combat uni-

forms with angry-looking dogs trotting by their ankles. Beyond the fence he could see a line of dense jungle vegetation stretching away into the distance on both sides.

Food was brought to him around noon and it tasted a lot better than the slop they'd fed him back in the joint. He spent the day alone in his room, the door was still kept locked and the window wouldn't open, so he lay back on the bed and watched the darkness start to fall. The sun dropped slowly behind the tree line, a fiery red eye sinking into a sea of molten gold. Lucas closed his eyes, his mind already wandering down paths of possible escape.

Linda Hastings stepped out of the shower and dried herself. She hated the heat and took a shower every day to wash off the worst of the hot stickiness that had built up during the day. Hannon interested her, he was different from the others they had brought here, certainly better looking. There had been something in their brief meeting that day. An attraction on both sides. She lay naked on the bed, legs slightly apart, and ran a hand across her belly towards her damp cleft. Gently she eased in a finger, the rhythm speeding up and the electric spark of orgasm building. Yes, there was an attraction.

The next few days were a rush of activity and Hannon was seldom left alone. Hastings took him on a tour of the base but wouldn't be drawn by his questions. She insisted that Adams was the only one amongst them with the authority to tell him anything. Whilst they walked he watched in fascination the thin material of her cotton dress adhering to the full roundness of her breasts in the damp heat. Despite the pleasant distractions he still found time to take in the details of the fence as they passed by. There was only one gate and that stood at the far end of the compound. A small wooden hut next to it seemed to indicate that it was guarded, probably around the damn clock.

Since their arrival he had seen nothing of Harris and Carter and Hastings wouldn't say anything about them. They paused in their stroll and Lucas pointed to the large bunker-like structures.

'What are those over there?'

'They're the labs and animal pens. You'll be meeting doctor Adams there later, after I've run a few tests on you.'

'Anything painful?'

'Oh, I'm sure you're up to it, Mr Hannon,' she laughed.

'You don't have to be so formal. My name's Lucas, but you probably know that from my file. Anyway, Adams calls me Lucas so I can't see why you shouldn't.'

'OK,' she paused, 'Lucas it is then. My name's Linda by the way.'

'Nice name.'

They ate in the small canteen; it was a miserable building, the product of military efficiency rather than aesthetic judgement. The food matched the surroundings perfectly, but Lucas didn't pay it much attention. He was too busy noticing how beautiful her eyes were. Deep cool green, like the ocean. Leaving most of the food uneaten, and as if

'He brought the razor-sharp blade down in one swift motion, shattering the rat's vertebrae and impaling it to the desk top'

a silent agreement had been made, she led him to her quarters.

It was hot and still outside, huge oily-sheened flies buzzed about in the motionless air looking for death. They didn't have far to go. Behind one of the brick buildings was a small fenced-in enclosure. It was full of large metal drums and black rubber bags. They were everywhere, stacked and piled up on one another four and five deep. One bag had split and the gossamer-winged vultures swarmed about it in a white noise haze. The severed arm that protruded from the bag was alive with them. It lay pale and fly-blown in the dry dust, the flies rising and falling around its raw, torn end just below the elbow. Despite the insect's best efforts there was still enough flesh on the arm and the strange eruption of tumorous growths and blisters that covered it looked like a fungus. Some of the blisters had burst, the fetid liquid that seeped from them reeked of organic abnormality and death.

Lucas lay next to her, breathing deeply. The exertion of their lovemaking had left them exhausted in the close air of the room. He was asleep, his head against her

breast and she could feel the warmth of his breath drifting across her belly. She had read all his files, and knew about the robbery and the shootings, but it didn't matter. She wanted to be with him, forever, and at whatever the cost. He wasn't the first to have been brought here and he might not be the last, but that meant nothing. She only knew that she wanted him to live, and to share his life with hers. She reached down between them, tenderly stroking him, feeling his arousal stir against her palm. He opened his eyes and smiled, slipping into her with ease, feeling her legs cross around his back. Outside the flies fed on.

They left her room at around four in the afternoon. Lucas noticed the change in her mood, something was troubling her. He put his hand on her shoulder, she turned to face him and he noticed her eyes were red and tear-filled.

'What's wrong?'

'Nothing. I'm OK.'

'Don't try and kid a kidder, Linda. What's got you so uptight?'

She seemed to hesitate, looking down the length of the corridor. Assuring herself that it was empty she turned back to him, her voice barely above a whisper.

'Your life's in terrible danger here, Lucas. Even if you survive the tests they'll never let you out.'

'Look Linda, they said there would be risks, I'm prepared to take them. It wasn't a question of risk back in prison, it was a certainty that I'd never see another day.'

His voice calmed her, he seemed so strong and confident. He was so sure of himself and she hoped some of his strength would magically transfer itself to her. If only she felt like him.

'You must understand, you're not the first people they've brought here. None of your predecessors ever made it.'

He held her hand tightly in his.

'Who else has been here? What happened to them?'

'Adams got quite a few volunteers for the first stage of testing. None of them survived. That's why they went to you and the others and offered you the chance. It's no chance really, you'll die and it will be as certain and as final as the electric chair could ever be. In many ways, it'll be worse.'

'What is this place? Who is Adams?'

'This project, the research, everything, it's all down to Adams. It's his brainchild. He got the funding and the backing from the government for all of it. He's a genius, probably the greatest expert in the world in the field of biological warfare. That's what this place is for, only now I think it's gone beyond that. That's why he wants you. The research is near complete, lab animals can only be useful up to a certain point. It's time to see what happens when it's tried on a human subject!'

'Can you help me out of here? Better still, we'll both go.'

Lucas stopped speaking as the door nearby opened and Adams stepped into the hall. Lucas hadn't even heard the handle turn and he had a nudging suspicion that the door had been open all along.

If the doctor had overheard anything he didn't show it. He stood there grinning at them. Just like a lizard in a lab coat, Lucas thought.

'Ah, Doctor Hastings and the good volunteer.' The sarcasm in his voice was unmistakable. 'How pleased I am that I found you both. I need your advice doctor, on some of the final readings that are coming through. I've got McCarthy lined up to finish Lucas's preliminary tests, so if you would come with me I'd be most grateful.'

Lucas watched them leave. Was Adams' grip on her arm anything more than just an act of friendly ushering? Had he overheard them? Plans for getting out of this place needed to be formulated, and quickly.

He spent the rest of the day in the lab undergoing tests with a cheerless individual called McCarthy. By that evening he was exhausted, the tests had been both physically and mentally tiring.

The door to his room was still securely locked at night. Half an hour of working at it with a knife stolen from the canteen rewarded him with the click of opening tumblers. Outside, the corridors were cloaked in shadow. He found Carter's and Harris's rooms but they were unlocked and empty. The beds had been stripped and they were gone. He felt uneasy, his initial triumph at escaping execution was being replaced by a new doubt. That familiar feeling in the pit of his stomach had returned, it had been with him in prison and he thought he had left it there. Now it was back, he knew it was time to



leave.

The following day they took him to the lab again. He was given a massive round of injections that left him feeling weak for two days. He saw no sign of Linda, and her room, like the others, had been emptied.

Adams sent for him that evening for what he called a 'question and answer' session. It didn't cut much ice with Lucas. The man was throwing him so much bullshit it looked like he'd need wings to keep above it. The doctor turned real nasty when Lucas asked him about the project and whether it had anything to do with germ warfare; the

'The eyes burned into Lucas's soul, glowing with hellish witch light and maddened rage'

smile vanished and he spouted his security speech again. It was like having a conversation with a brick wall. The doctor looked up at the clock, drained his plastic cup of dishwasher coffee and wished Lucas a good night.

That night in bed, Lucas studied his options. They were limited to say the least. The fence would be the fly in the ointment. He was able to get out of his room but the fence would be awkward. If he could get into the lab he might be able to find something that would cut through it. It was a chance and better than sitting on his thumbs waiting for the needle to finish what the electric chair had missed. He closed his eyes and worried about Linda Hastings. The first person other than himself that he had ever given a shit about.

The electronic whine of the alarm broke through the fog of his troubled sleep. He'd made up his mind and tonight he'd try for one of the labs to see if he could find something that would get through the fence. No money, no transport, nothing but at least he'd be alive. He tried to concentrate on the escape but images of Linda kept nudging his plans to one side. He could see her face, always lodged at the back of his mind, going around like a stuck record.

There was a knock on the door, he recognised it as his escort to the lab. He wondered why they

bothered to knock, perhaps he should open it to them, the look on their faces would be worth the effort. Effort was the right word. He felt shattered; as he sat up his head started to spin like a neon ferris wheel. He felt his bowels open and the stench was the last thing he remembered.

The room smelt of damp straw and excrement. It was dark but he could sense he was not alone. He realised that he was naked and he ran his hands up the length of his right leg. Something was wrong, it felt strange. He choked back a scream; the leg was covered in sore blisters and pustules. Some of them ruptured wetly as he touched them, the stink was unbearable. His face, arms and torso were the same. Soft, liquid-filled blisters everywhere. Panic rose within him, a fetid cloud of it that threatened to choke his mind and stifle the light of reason. He guessed he was in the animal pen that Linda had told him about. Worse, he was in a cage. All around him, shadows were prowling back and forth behind cage bars. They looked like they belonged to apes or dogs.

Suddenly something crashed into the bars behind him. He whirled around in terror and let out a short, muffled sob of surprise. He'd found Harris. He was in the cage next to Lucas's, clutching the bars and wildly rocking the whole thing from side to side. Lucas barely recognised him. In places, huge chunks of skin and flesh had been torn away, leaving the white glare of bone beneath. A low gurgle came from his throat, he was trying to speak. Lucas watched in horror as Harris's mouth opened and a huge tumorous tongue flopped out amid a torrent of congealed blood and vomit, and undulated towards him. Like a magician's silk scarf trick, it kept coming. Lucas edged up in one corner of his cage and crouched on his haunches, oblivious to the painful rupturing of his sores that this caused.

He looked frantically around the cage for something to use against the ghastly apparition that slithered towards him. The only thing to hand was a steel water bowl but it was better than nothing. The strange tentacle touched his bare foot and he recoiled in horror at its hot, slimy touch. He bought the bowl down with as much force as he could find. The Harris creature found its voice at last, and let out a

thunderous cry of agony. The obscene tongue burst apart like a rotten fruit, showering him with a steaming visceral fluid. Harris, or whatever he had become, rolled around in the straw screaming in agony. The horrible appendage hung limp and dripping from his toothless mouth. In his agony he appeared to ignore the terrified man in the next cage and Lucas took the opportunity to look at him more carefully. It was surprising how well he seemed to be able to see in the dark.

Harris had quietened down, the seeping tongue slid back into his mouth and down his throat. Lucas stared in amazement at the man's hands. They were twice the size of a normal man's, with long ragged nails covered in dried blood. Judging from the state of him it looked as though he had been scratching and tearing away huge sections of his own skin and flesh. He screamed again, and as Lucas watched, a huge blister rose up on his chest. It was like those that covered his own body, only much, much larger and where the skin was stretched thin and taunt he could see something dark moving underneath. Harris stared down and then turned to look Lucas full in the face.

Lucas gripped the makeshift weapon tightly, not knowing quite what to expect. It was worse than he could have imagined, the monster smiled. Lucas dropped the bowl in terror. He raised his hands to his ears but it was useless, Harris's bellow of laughter was too loud to be muffled so easily. More incredible, the noise didn't come from his drooling mouth but from the ugly lump of the giant blister. Harris raised his arm, flexing the large malformed claws with relish and brought them down in an arc across the pulsating dome of the growth. It sounded like a piece of canvas being torn in two and an oozing split ran down its centre.

Ribs were snapped and forced outwards, and a gory mess of deformed internal organs were pushed through the widening gap by whatever was forcing its way out. The pulpy remains of Harris's lungs and heart lay steaming on the dirty straw, the room smelt like a charnel house. The man Lucas knew as Harris was dead, his eyes rolled back with only their whites showing. A dark flood of body fluids and blood poured from the opened



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blister; something was coming through.

Lucas could see an impossibly thin arm tipped with a cruel talon push its way up. Others like it followed, and then the whole corpse shuddered as further ribs were snapped aside and a huge, bloated, slug-like mass slid wetly to the floor. A shiny blanket of blood and gore slipped from it as it dragged itself away from the ghastly nest.

It had eight legs, like a spider and it stumbled around the cage with uncertainty, like a new-born foal. Its head grew directly from the torso, and its features were unmistakably Harris's. The eyes burned into Lucas's soul, glowing with hellish witch light and maddened rage. The jaws looked large and powerful, strings of sputum hung down from the yellowed fangs, and the monster snapped at him in a strange, almost playful gesture.

It smiled, and spoke with the voice of the damned.

'It's me, Lucas! Look, I've been born again. Adams was right, a chance at a new life!'

Lucas tried to speak but the words refused to form in his throat. He glanced down, his sores were worse, pulsing with a life of their own. He felt hot, like a flame had been set within him and his eyes began to fill with blood. Through the crimson haze he could see the Harris thing watching him, laughing in a shrill manic whine.

'Don't worry, Lucas, it's nothing to fear! Your turn has come! A chance for a new life, or is it a chance *in* a new life?'

Lucas was dimly aware of the lights being turned on, he could hear voices. The agony was intense and it was growing stronger by the second. Inside his belly he could feel something begin to wriggle. The light in the room was painfully bright and he could just discern the outlines of Adams and McCarthy standing outside the cage. The transformed Harris was hurling itself against the bars with amazing strength. Its fevered screams and wailing were overpowering in the small room.

McCarthy held the knock-out gas canister firmly in his right hand. He pulled the release ring and flipped it into Harris's cage. The creature lashed out at him with the vicious clawed mandibles, but to no avail. The monstrosity was soon obscured by a heavy cloud of gas. Gradually the creature within the

cage became still and the room quietened down but for the frightened chattering of the apes.

Adams turned to McCarthy, his voice tense and excited. 'Did you see it, Tom? Did you see what he had become? It's incredible, we never thought it would be this dramatic! His entire molecular structure has been altered.

It's an astonishing mutation! When Carter died this morning I thought it was all over, but this, this is better than anything I'd ever dreamt of!'

'The air was thick with tattered fragments of organs and the coppery reek of freshly spilt blood'

McCarthy walked over to the far wall and switched on the extractor fan. Slowly the pungent gas began to clear. He appeared as jubilant as Adams. 'I hope the gas hasn't damaged him. In his new form it could've been hostile to his altered physiology!' Adams nodded, but his attention had been drawn to Lucas's cage. 'It's a possibility, but I think we have another success on our hands. Look at Lucas!'

They were both staring, but it seemed irrelevant to him. He felt a shift in the depths of his consciousness and suddenly the world changed around him. It had become dark and warm and he could hear the unmistakable sound of a heart beating erratically nearby. It was so close, and the situation came to him in a moment. He was inside his own body, except that it didn't feel like his body any more. It was just a host, a place to hide until he was ready. The real Lucas Hannon had a new life and body to match. A surge of strength flowed through his new system like a charge of electricity, he was filled with the force of life and the craving for rebirth.

Adams made a grab for a second canister but it was too late, all Hell had broken loose. Lucas's body jerked spasmodically as if it had been plugged into a power socket, then it tore apart, straight down, from sternum to groin. The air was thick with tattered fragments of organs and the coppery reek of

freshly spilt blood.

McCarthy screamed and ran to the alarm box, but he was too slow and a huge phallic tentacle shot up from the ruin of Lucas's corpse towards him. The appendage wrapped itself around his legs, winding its way up to his neck, twisting with sinuous rubbery strength. The snap as McCarthy's neck broke was clearly audible.

Similar tentacles were bursting from the frantically heaving corpse like a mad eruption of party streamers. They swayed back and forth, glistening wet and new, as if testing the air.

Adams drew the nickel-plated .45 from his shoulder holster and pumped three rounds into the thing. It didn't slow for a second. The reborn Lucas dragged himself free from the mess of his old self, a heaving tentacled mass, a gore-drenched nightmare.

Like a headless humanoid squid, he rushed against the steel bars. The gun was hot in Adams's hand, the hammer clicked in vain against the empty chamber. He could see the cage beginning to give way, the bars were buckling under the enormous pressure. The Lucas-creature had an uncanny degree of bodily control. He was altering his molecular composition, shifting and shaping himself at will, even as Adams watched. The tentacles continued to pull at the bars as the headless shoulders burst like a flower-bud and a long thin snake of a neck wound between the gaps. Organic moisture shone on the flaking, mottled skin as it writhed and twisted through the air.

Adams dropped the useless gun, he was frozen to the spot, terror rising in him like a mist. He wanted to run but he was caught, transfixed in morbid fascination. The neck stopped a few inches from his face, it drifted back and forth and the ripe smell of biological chaos caused him to catch his breath. The blunt end of the neck exploded, spraying him in noxious fluid. The head that pushed its way out was unmistakably Lucas's.

'Hello Adams,' it hissed. 'Here's to all the lies and bullshit.'

The jaws opened wide and a jet of hot dirt spattered into the doctor's face; he reeled back, choking in disgust. The appendage that clutched the corpse of McCarthy dropped its inert prize and wrapped itself around Adams' legs, holding him tight. The strange, drifting head



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studied him, its patchwork of human features stretched into a look of mock surprise. 'Why doctor, you gave me the impression you liked shit! After all, you gave us so much of it!' The voice changed, becoming deeper, a parody of the doctor's. 'Play by my rules, Adams. Believe me, it's the best chance you've got!'

The monstrous eyes widened and a twisted smile hooked uneasily across its face. The muscles rippled and stretched, and a twitching snout pushed forward. The giant rat's head moved to within an inch of the doctor's face, its breath rank and fetid. Adams was too terrified to cry out. It wasn't fair, he'd been

'His corpse was pinned out like a butterfly, the belly held open with shiny metal clamps'

certain he had beaten the fear. Dear God, it was back with him again. Crawling around in his stomach like a sharp clockwork spider. The flame of insanity caught behind his eyes and a string of spittle fell from his gasping mouth.

The cage bars gave up the fight and sprang apart with a dull clang. 'Time for a rest I think!' the rat cackled. The creature leapt out into the middle of the room. A smaller tentacle struck the man across the face, breaking his nose and knocking him instantly unconscious.

Lucas knew he hadn't much time left before the alarm was raised. The rushing sensation of strength and power that tore through every fibre of his being was so strong. He could feel and control every part of it, every cell in his structure followed his will. He didn't know how long it would last but whilst it did, he felt irrepressible.

The creature looked back at the cage next to his own, the creature he had once known as Harris was dead and gone, killed by the gas. One thought drove him on, one image flashed in his mind. Where was the girl, what had happened to Linda Hastings?

Holding the doctor in his grip, he strode towards the door. It was locked but one sure pull and the door was ripped from its hinges. The corridor outside was empty and he recognised it, doors on

either side led to the two main labs. He reared up before the first, drawing the rat's head and neck back into this torso. The door gave way easily, a slight internal adjustment and he was looking at the world from eyes in his stomach.

The lights were off but he could see every detail as easily as if he were standing in full summer daylight. Metal shelves ran along the walls, bottles and surgical instruments stacked in careful regimental order.

On the metal autopsy bench he found what was left

of Carter. His corpse was pinned out like a butterfly, the belly held open with shiny metal clamps. Lucas could see the first signs of the change upon him, in his eviscerated stomach cavity the embryonic structure of his rebirth was dead and cold. Lucas turned aside and noticed the black rubber body-bag on the floor next to the table. The zipper slid open easily and he looked down at the body of Linda Hastings, the woman he had loved.

The bullet wound in her forehead was black and congealed. Dried blood had seeped down her cheeks and the skin under her eyes was dark and blood filled. Her love for him had cost her everything. Lucas examined the body, she hadn't been dead for more than a few days so maybe it would work.

Every cell in his anatomy was responding to his bidding, it was a chance he would take. He had no time for human emotions of guilt and revulsion, the jaws grew from his chest and he bit into the cold flesh of her thigh and gulped down the dead meat.

It was time to leave, but before that he would give the unconscious doctor something to remember them all by.

The soldier gripped his M-16 tightly. The lab door had been snapped off its hinges and as he stepped through he was just in time to see something he'd rather forget crawl through the open skylight. He swore afterwards that he'd hit it with several rounds but it didn't stop, and within seconds had vanished from view.

The creature feels the weak, pitiful flesh of the woman he loves calling to him from within the warmth of his stomach. The cells are growing, multiplying and taking form. With his help, they are prospering. He has made up his mind that he will explain it all to her when the

time comes. He'll tell her that there's nothing to fear and that she will have to trust him. In a day or two this body they both share will die and the rebirth will come. In this reborn creature they will both be together, Lucas Hannon and Linda Hastings, both of them, as one.

Adams wakes up, he wants to scream but it is pointless, the soft walls of the cell block every sound. He still wonders why they put him in here. Don't other people see them like he does? They're hard to miss, and even harder to stop once they're in. He's sure that they're out there in darkness somewhere. Scratching their way towards his bed with revenge boiling behind their feral eyes. The straight-jacket is awkward and uncomfortable but they won't take it off. He's tried to ask them nicely but they won't listen to him. He doesn't know how they expect him to be able to fight with his arms bound up. They'll be here soon. They come every night, hundreds of huge brown rats pouring from the walls, noses twitching, claws shining for his blood. He can't understand it, why haven't they come tonight? Where are they?

Something feels wrong, beneath the straight-jacket his stomach feels as if it's on fire. A hundred hot needles shooting through the coils of his intestines. The agony grows, waves of it shattering through him, travelling up. A rush of blood spills from his mouth as the rat gnaws its way out from within his throat. He stumbles against the wall, unable to scream as it twists around inside the torn, bloody hole of his neck. He's dead before the creature has wormed its way free. The rat scampers onto his face, leaving bloody claw marks across his cheeks. It looks at him with small human eyes, eyes that once belonged to a man called Lucas Hannon. The doctor feels nothing as it sinks its teeth into his eye.

Far away in the green shadow of the jungle Lucas remembers how to smile.



SIMON KEMP is a freelance computer graphics designer and artist. He has also written reviews for magazines and illustrated several science fiction articles. He is close to finishing his first novel, and a horror film screenplay entitled *Hidden Depths*. Kemp's short story, *The Fossil Man*, appeared in **FEAR 17**.

FEAR REVIEW

Not To Be Missed



Recommended



Fair



Poor



Diabolical



CINEMA AND VIDEO



HORROR

Brain Dead
 Little Monsters
 Nightbreed
 Revenge Of The Radioactive Reporter
 Sundown
 Teen Witch
 Twice Dead



SCIENCE FICTION

Dr Who: The Dominators
 Dr Who: The Web Planet



Flash Gordon
 Hardware
 Killer Klowns From Outer Space
 Megaville
 RoboCop 2
 Robo Ninja
 Trancers
 Voyage Of The Rock Aliens



FANTASY

Amazon Women On The Moon
 Death Of The Incredible Hulk



THRILLER

Apprentice To Murder
 Blood Ransom
 Body Chemistry
 Cold Comfort
 Destiny To Order
 Flowers In The Attic
 Ghost
 Money, Power, Murder
 Personals
 Pin
 Relentless
 Renegades
 Tango And Cash
 Vampire's Kiss
 Wild At Heart



CINEMA

URBAN HELL

HARDWARE

Starring Stacy Travis, Dylan McDermott, John Lynch, Iggy Pop, Carl McCoy
 Director Richard Stanley
 Distributor Palace Pictures
 Cert 18



Diminutive rock musician Prince may sing about having seen the future, but that future certainly isn't the one depicted in *Hardware*.

Set some time in the next century, it is a vision of urban hell that recalls classic J G Ballard novels *The Drought*, *Highrise* and *Crash*. America is in the never-ending throes of civil war, the population explosion has reached crisis point, serious pollution is an inescapable fact of life, cancer is all-pervasive, anatomical replacement common, and the only way to deal with it all is to light up another joint and listen to Angry Bob (Pop) rant on the radio. At least that's what reclusive sculptress Jill (Travis) does when not working on her bizarre post-industrial sculptures in her squalid apartment while waiting for Hard Mo Baxter (McDermott), her soldier-of-fortune lover, to return from one of his foraging trips. And return he does, on Christmas Eve, bringing with him the skull of an android, bought off a nomadic zone tripper (McCoy) as a present. What neither of them realise is that the

robot head belongs to Mark 13, a prototype military killing machine that can rebuild itself. Inevitably, this cousin to *The Terminator* reconstructs itself out of the electrical debris scattered around the flat and starts to do what it does best — kill.

Hardware, like its metal protagonist, is a movie composed of different elements — part *Rear Window*, part *Terminator*, with Hitchcockian voyeurism, Ridley Scott stylistic flourishes, and James Cameron techno fetish — that totals more than the sum of its parts. Visually forceful, aurally loud, it assaults the viewer with constant images of death and destruction, proving first-time writer/director Richard Stanley knows both his cinema technique and what makes the genre work. Kudos is also due to cinematographer Steven Chivers and to actors Stacy Travis and John Lynch. Lynch's antics as Shades, the acid-dropping astronaut, provide some light relief in what amounts to an hallucinogenic rollercoaster ride into a future nightmare.

The only down side is Dylan McDermott's wooden, pretty boy performance and the movie's dramatically slow first 40 minutes. But, from there on in, *Hardware* gets as nasty as they come these days, and demands to be seen on the big screen.

Philip Nutman





MEDIUM RARE

GHOST

Starring Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore, Whoopi Goldberg, Tony Goldwyn
Director Jerry Zucker
Distributor UIP
Cert 12



A supernatural love story that makes judicious use of special effects, Jerry Zucker's first dramatic feature displays great narrative assurance and visual style while sustaining our emotional involvement with its well-drawn characters. The touching story of two young lovers divided by death, it is all the more remarkable for being able to juggle romance, thrills and humour without ever compromising audience credibility.

Soon after they move into a Manhattan loft apartment, Molly (Moore) watches helplessly as her boyfriend Sam (Swayze) is shot dead by a mugger. Also watching helplessly is Swayze's now disembodied ghost, who sees her anguish but cannot touch her or speak to her. Almost by accident, Sam finds that he can communicate with Molly through Oda Mae Brown (Goldberg), a fake medium who suddenly hears Sam's voice and realises that she has the gift after all. However, despite Molly's aching desire to hear from her dead lover, she ignores Oda Mae's messages and gives up the ghost. Unable to move physical objects or influence events in the real world, Sam watches impotently as his work colleague Carl (Goldwyn) consoles Molly, or while his killer uses



■ Whoopi Goldberg and Patrick Swayze

stolen keys to enter their apartment.

Having deftly established Sam and Molly's intense love for one another, Bruce Joel Rubin's script deals a killer blow, then shifts gear into thriller mode as the suspenseful plot unfolds. The frustrations of a ghostly existence are especially well done, so it is both irritating and distracting when Zucker cheats (twice in quick succession) during the otherwise wonderful finale. This quibble aside, Zucker's lovingly crafted film restores one's flagging faith in the magic of the movies.

Nigel Floyd



NIGHTBREED

Starring Craig Sheffer, Anne Bobby, David Cronenberg, Charles Haid
Director Clive Barker
Distributor Twentieth Century Fox
Cert 18



'Wait till he tastes blood — that'll bring out the beast in him...' Following a horrific history of studio wranglings, alternative endings and Stateside promotional mismanagement, Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*, the movie that began life as the celluloid adaptation of *Cabal*, finally reaches the British screen. Coherent it ain't. Nor, indeed, does it bear much resemblance to its literary source. Yet, despite its tortured parentage and illegitimate birth, *Nightbreed* emerges as a superior monster movie, brandishing enough energetic visual flair to distract one's attention from (if not entirely compensate for) the confusions of the chaotic storyline.

Beset by ecstatic visions of Midian, an underworld lair inhabited by the monstrous tribes of the moon, strapping youth Boone is also haunted by murderous nightmares, nightmares which his unholy shrink Decker insists he is living out in real life. Pursued by the police and betrayed by his confidante, Boone turns to the darker side of his nature, finding sanctuary in death amongst the Nightbreed, a morbid community in twilight exile from the persecutions of daylight.

Described by its creator as 'a Hammer type B movie' (presumably because of the extended use of artificer-laden graveyard sets) Clive Barker's cinematic magnum opus paints a gaudy

canvas of freakish nature, aided in large part by the boldly imaginative creations of Image Animation, whose unrestrained love of the perverse takes full flight in fleshing out Barker's wet dreams. Whilst Craig Sheffer and Anne Bobby present peculiarly faceless portraits of the (human) hero and heroine, the

■ *Nightbreed*: ripped to shreds?



supporting cameo roles carry the slack — weight admirably, most notably the irrepressible Charles Haid, excelling as the splendidly gung-ho police chief Captain Eigerman, whose answer to the supernatural disturbances is to blow the shit out of everything that moves. 'You're a freak, and a cannibal,' screams the reddened face of law enforcement; 'and you've come to the *wrong town!*' The casting of David Cronenberg as the

deranged Decker also turns out to be a particularly astute move, the director presenting an entirely convincing portrait of nightmarish thoughts beneath a placid exterior simply by being himself.

Barker's narrative meanwhile is shambolic to say the least, the victim of extensive slashing rewrites and hastily compiled 'enhancement shoots', riddling *Nightbreed* with an incoherence which will almost certainly discourage the casual viewer. Nevertheless, for those willing to go the distance and meet this bastard child halfway, the rewards are handsome and the surprises numerous.
Mark Kermode



VAMPIRE'S KISS

Starring Nicolas Cage, Maria Conchita Alonso, Jennifer Beals, Elizabeth Ashley
Director Robert Bierman
Distributor Hemdale
Cert 18



Scripted by *After Hours* writer Joseph Minion, this is not a horror movie but another darkly comic Yuppie nightmare. Cage gives a manically mannered performance as Peter Loew, a young literary agent whose obsession with his secretary's inability to find an obscure ten year old contract, and frustration at the shallowness of his casual sexual contacts, push him over the edge into insanity. Increasingly alienated from the people and things around him. Loew alternates between harassing his timid secretary (Alonso), clubbing all night, and visits to his shrink (Ashley). Until one night, in a moment of orgasmic pleasure, the mysterious Rachel (Beals) bites his neck. Loew becomes fixated with the idea that Rachel is a vampire, and that he is her victim.

At first, Loew can handle it, but soon he starts pulling down shades, or wearing them. And as the obsession takes hold, he hunches over in a gross parody of Max Schrenk's gaunt, slope-shouldered Nosteratu. With only a short pause for reflection (staring wild-eyed into a lavatory mirror, he screams, 'Where am I? I've become one — a vampire!'), Loew's mental disintegration gathers pace. He takes to wearing a set of plastic fangs and stalking the dark streets and pulsing discos in search of necks to bite.

Nicolas Cage's excessive acting style has been called neo-expressionist, a term that might also be applied to the moody, burnished colours of Stefan Czapsky's photography, which transforms the glass towers of modern New York into the Gothic city of Loew's distorted imagination. A viciously funny and emotionally corrosating study of Yuppie alienation and incipient madness, Bierman's debut feature leaves one trembling between corrosive laughter, edgy terror and a residual sadness at Loew's pitiful plight.

Nigel Floyd



ROBOCOP 2

Starring Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Tom Noonan, Dan O'Herlihy, Belinda Bauer
Director Irvin Kershner
Distributor Rank
Cert 18



Following the well-documented dumping of Ed Neumeir and Michael Miner's initial 'Corporate Wars' script, here is the corporate whores' version that replaced it. Having sold body and soul to producer Jon

Davison, comic-book writer Frank Miller and coscripser Walon Green — abetted by Kershner's uninspired direction — have created a sequel that disappoints at every level. Jettisoning the most interesting element of Paul Verhoeven's film (RoboCop's residual humanity, as revealed by memory flashes of a previous life), this offers only a vulgarised rerun of the original.

With the overworked police force on strike and the ravaged city of Detroit at the mercy of vicious drug baron Cain (Noonan) and an ultra-addictive drug, Nuke, Omni Consumer Products tries to foreclose on the bankrupt city and take it into private ownership. The Old Man, OCP's ruthless supremo has also hired ambitious young corporate climber Dr Juliette Faxx (Bauer) to develop (surprise, surprise!) a new and improved RoboCop 2. Meanwhile, RoboCop himself is reduced to scrap metal by Cain's hoods, then reassembled, reprogrammed and neutralised by Dr Faxx. Only by administering a severe shock to his system is RoboCop able to restore his crime-fighting function and prepare for the predictable showdown with his mechanical nemesis, a stop-motion robot monster powered by Cain's transplanted and Nuke-addicted brain.

This sorry sequel is rich only in ironies, not the least of which is that a film scripted by a comic-book writer should lack the original's graphic visual style. A corporate abortion conceived with the cynicism of an OCP product, this lumbers, staggers and misfires with the gracelessness of ED209.

Nigel Floyd



WILD AT HEART

Starring Nicholas Cage, Laura Dern, Dianne Ladd, Harry Dean Stanton, Willem Dafoe, Isabella Rossellini, Crispin Glover
Director David Lynch
Distributor Palace
Cert 18

In this shockingly violent, wickedly funny and bizarrely beautiful picture, Lynch again shows how true love can triumph in a wicked world. Imprisoned for manslaughter after killing a man with his bare hands, Sailor (Cage) emerges two years later to be met by his girlfriend Lula (Dern), whose disappointing mother caused the initial trouble. Motivated by jealousy, maternal love and a guilty secret, Lula's distraught mother seeks help from two contrasting men: honest detective Johnny Farrigan (Harry Dean Stanton) and ruthless gangster Emile Santos. She will do anything to keep her daughter Lula away from Sailor, including putting out a contract on his life.

When the young lovers cross the state line en route to New Orleans, *Wild At Heart* turns into a surrealistic Yellow Brick Road movie, the laconic 'B' picture dialogue littered with cryptic references to *The Wizard Of Oz*. The free-wheeling narrative tends to unravel rather than unfold, striking images sometimes exploding onto the screen in an arbitrary fashion. In one of the most haunting sequences Lynch has ever committed to celluloid, Sailor and Lula happen upon a car crash in the desert at night, watching helplessly as the only surviving passenger dies in front of their eyes.

Cage's histrionic Method acting and manic energy are perfectly in tune with Lynch's fierce vision, while Dern is a revelation as the sultry Lula, her raunchy love scenes enough to make the virginal Sandy from *Blue Velvet* blush bright



■ On the run: Nicolas Cage and Laura Dern in *Wild At Heart*

pink. And keeping up Lynch's reputation for memorably loathsome villains, Willem Dafoe gives Dennis Hopper's Frank Booth a run for his money, as metal-toothed reptile Bobby Peru, for whom sex is also a predatory game of power and humiliation. Like the weird world it depicts, Lynch's movie is 'wild at heart and crazy on top'.

Nigel Floyd



DESTINY TO ORDER

Starring Michael Ironside, Stephen Ouimette, Alberta Watson, Victoria Snow
Director Jim Purdy
Distributor Colourbox
Cert 18

Imagination runs riot in more than one way in this Canadian theatrical thriller. JD is running out of ideas for his latest book, a thriller about a sexy nightclub singer who falls in love with a heavy by the name of Kenrick. Thanks to a stormy night, his personal computer induces that extra bit of electro-magnetic spark of imagination and one by one, his fictional characters



come to life, and JD gets to experience criticism from his very own creations.

This is only the beginning of the nightmare, as JD soon experiences a worsening of the scenario. Kenrick steals the boosted floppy disk and takes over control of all characters, including his creator and author. Everything he writes on disk happens. JD has lost control and is now on the receiving end.

Destiny To Order is a peculiar piece of filmmaking. Although termed a comedy thriller, it distinctly lacks any humorous elements, comedy referring to the staged play and setting. As a thriller, it fails completely, as the plot tends to be drowned by the richness of the individual theatrical scenarios. And yet, in its own peculiar way, *Destiny To Order* works extremely well as an imaginative and novel theatrical piece, an experience. If shot in black and white, it would have made a perfect *Twilight Zone* feature. So if that's your cup of tea, give it a go.

Franco Frey



RENEGADES

Starring Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips, Jami Gertz, Rob Knepper, Bill Knepper
Director Jack Sholder
Cert 18, 102 mins

If you're into tough cop thrillers with hair-raising car and subway chases (plus pursuits on foot) and minimal and unbelievable plots, then *Renegades* is just the ticket.

Kiefer Sutherland is Buster McHenry, a hard-edged rogue cop who trusts no one and always works alone. His unorthodox methods have gained him the usual bad reputation with his bosses and frankly, with the developments on his latest assignment, no one would care to disagree. In order to root out a bent cop, Buster stages a diamond raid with the help of vicious mobster Marino. The heist goes drastically wrong, the jeweller gets shot and the robbers make their escape with a detour through a nearby museum, where Marino cannot resist stealing a sacred and ancient lance, killing a Red Indian who tries to stop him in the process.

The scene is set for the most spectacular car chase sequence, where the robbers are chased by a horde of police cars and one lonely Indian Hank Storm, out to retrieve the Lakota Sioux lance and eager to nail the murderer of his brother. Thanks to Buster's exceptional driving skills, the gang make their getaway, but shoot him and leave him for dead; Hank discovers Buster and saves his life in order to get to

Marino.

After this hectic warm-up the film settles into the usual unlikely team-up of the two characters, who gradually learn to trust each other and proceed to uncover the bent police cop and send off the vile Marino into less than happy hunting grounds.

Kiefer Sutherland and Lou Diamond Phillips as Buster and Hank manage to keep the sparks flying between the numerous action sequences with their tough cop versus Red Indian wit routine, but ultimately there isn't much sensitive characterisation to be had in this type of action film. If the body count doesn't put you off, *Renegades* will provide you with excellent, but not lead-free, entertainment.

Franco Frey



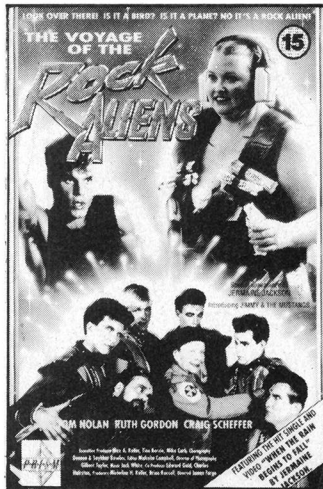
VOYAGE OF THE ROCK ALIENS

Starring Craig Sheffer, Pia Zadora, Tom Nolan
Director James Fargo
Distributor Prism



Yes, the name's familiar, and one wonders whether Prism launched this slick space orientated *Grease* rip-off to coincide with Sheffer's appearance in *Nightbreed*.

The storyline is reminiscent of Julien Temple's *Earth Girls Are Easy*, with Pia Zadora falling out with her hunksome



boyfriend (Sheffer) and into the arms of whipish, white-hued alien. All are involved in the rock scene, though it's fairly easy to see that Sheffer's singing voice is a direct dub. He can move, however, and the some of the dance sequences in this otherwise forgettable movie are quite watchable.

Let's hope Sheffer doesn't make a habit of choosing the wrong roles. He might have looked okay in this obvious Zadora 'star' vehicle, but such cushioned crap won't do his dramatic career much good. Take it from me, Craig: don't go near another musical.

John Gilbert



ROBO NINJA

Starring Fuyukichi Maki, Hanbei Kawai
Director Keita Amamiya
Distributor Colourbox
Cert 15, 89 mins



The cast list may be virtually indecipherable and the dubbing atrocious, but once you get involved with this Japanese SF movie it takes you all the way, shouting action, if

■ Michael Ironside in *Destiny To Order*

not suspense.

An evil force of Cyborg Ninja warriors, governed by a Star Wars-style emperor has come to conquer Earth. Their mission is not, however, that simple. The emperor needs new flesh and noble blood for his body, and who better to supply this than the human Princess Saki? Kidnapped by her blood-hungry foe, she is prepared as a sacrifice for the tree of life which also contains the decomposing body of a noble Earth warrior. This warrior's soul has been incorporated into a metal Robo ninja and his memory has been erased, but he's beginning to remember his 'death' at a big battle, and turns rogue against the Emperor.

Meanwhile — and isn't that the way with all Japanese films? — this Ninja's brother is launching an attack on the Emperor's castle. But time is running out, and the starspawed warlord is gaining strength.


Forget the story logistics, the overacting, puzzling camerawork, and unintentionally hilarious dhow-shaped spaceships, *Robo ninja* has some wonderfully inventive special effects and is worth renting on that account alone. American low budget film directors could take a lesson in ingenuity from *Robo ninja*; it is an oddity which you have to watch, updating all those marvellous *Watermargin* stories that the BBC screened not so long ago. D

John Gilbert



BLOOD RANSOM

Starring Oliver Reed, Robert Vaughn, Claudia Udy, Lisa Rinna, Maureen Kedes, Sharon Schaffer
Director Cedric Sundstrom
Distributor Braveworld/MGM/UA
Cert 18, 88 mins

 From his hideout in a small Central American country, ruthless drugs baron General Belmondo (Reed) controls the lives of the citizens with a grip of iron. Trouble starts when Belmondo's son Claude is caught on a drugs run by DEA agent Eduard Delacorte (Vaughn). When Belmondo hears of this he orders a plane load of people bound for Mexico to be hijacked and taken to his stronghold. Among the hostages are a bunch of college students, one of which is Delacorte's daughter, Lucy, who is travelling with her three friends.

After shooting all the non college students, Belmondo orders the

■ Blood Ransom



remaining hostages to be dressed in rags and locked up in cages. He then sends an ultimatum to the US government: release his son within 72 hours or ten of the hostages die, and two more will be killed each day past the deadline.

Lucy and co decide to take matters into their own hands and bust out of the stronghold. After managing to outrun Belmondo's guards they arm themselves with supplies found in a rusty transporter plane and head for the nearest village. Along the way they enlist the aid of two nerdy geologists and hatch a cunning plan to re-enter Belmondo's abode and rescue their friends.


Despite its two big-name stars, *Blood Ransom* falls flat on its face and never really recovers. Although little is seen of Robert Vaughn, I can honestly say that this is one of his worst performances, only Oliver Reed as the psychotic General really lifts the film to a watchable level. And, as for the four supposed heroines, I've rarely seen such wooden acting (excepting perhaps the first few episodes of the new *Star Trek* series). Okay to watch on a very rainy afternoon, but don't go out of your way to hire it.

Mark Caswell



MONEY, POWER, MURDER

Starring Kevin Dobson, Blyth Danner, Josef Sommer
Director Lee Philips
Distributor CBS/Fox
Cert 18, 91 mins

 The sins of American television evangelists come under scrutiny once more in this thriller starring ex-Kojacker, Kevin Dobson. Curly-haired Dobson has aged somewhat since his appearance with Telly Savalas, but his nose for crime remains Pinnocchio-sharp.

Here he plays an inquisitive television reporter whose reputation has been gained by asking personal questions in private situations with uneasy subjects while the cameras are rolling. He's rather like Neil Kinnock, slipping in sneaky supplementary questions at Prime Minister's Question Time, and this makes him the perfect investigator for the little mysteries posed by *Money, Power, Murder*.

A famous chat show hostess has disappeared. The police presume she has been murdered and, as our snoopy hack soon discovers, everyone who



■ Money, Power, Murder

knew the bitchy woman had motive and opportunity.

We're not finished yet, though.

Shortly after her vanishing act, a man claiming to be her ex-husband turns up and pleads with Dobson to find out who murdered her. Then the star's personal assistant is murdered, followed by many of the guys on the long shortlist of suspects.

Our tele-investigator is puzzled by the case, until he realises that he's looking at two sets of crimes, rather than just the one. The corrupt ploys of a television evangelist, who is planning to take over a major network, are involved, as is the chat show hostess's husband.


The storyline of this thriller is very convoluted, but it still flags during the beginning, middle and end of this tale. The fact cannot be avoided that, despite the solid acting, the interesting character development and steady camerawork, *Money, Power, Murder* has very few thrilling moments. The movie's pacing is uneven and, when the post-credits roll, you're left confused as to some of the relationships involved within this corrupt world of television.

John Gilbert



TWICE DEAD

Starring Tom Brezhahan, Jill Witlow, Jonathan Chapin, Christopher Burgard
Director Bert Dragin
Distributor RCA/Columbia
Cert 18, 100 mins

 Scott (Brezhahan) and Robin (Witlow) move with their parents to a rambling old house once owned by their uncle and, before him, by a great macabre actor called Tyler, who once murdered a mannequin. Little known to the family, Tyler's ghost still haunts the mirrors of the mansion; they have other, more pressing matters, as a vicious local punk gang is interested in the house and the ejection of the family.

One of the gang, Crip, has a morbid love for Robin, and does all he can to get her alone. Scott tries to protect his sister, and lands himself with some severe beatings before finding a way which he hopes will frighten the punks off the property and away from his family. His plan just makes them madder and, during a night of butchery, Tyler's ghost seeks revenge on Crip and the family, who are more intimately connected with his tragic story than they could ever guess.

Awash with clichés, *Twice Dead* is, nevertheless, a nifty contemporary haunted house thriller with some dark,

spine-chilling moments. You might even have second thoughts about being alone after watching it.

John Gilbert



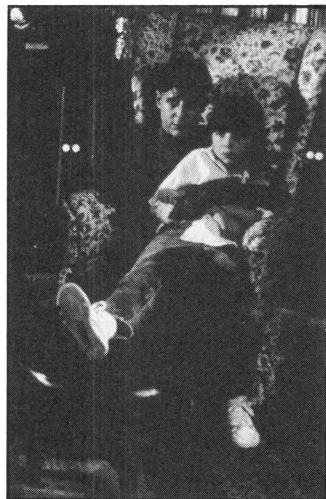
RELENTLESS

Starring Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, Leo Rossi, Meg Foster
Director William Lustig
Distributor Warner
Cert 18, 109 mins



As this movie's trailer proclaims, Officer Ike Taylor was an outstanding policeman, expert with firearms and deadly in hand-to-hand combat. He wanted his son, Buck, to be just like him, but the boy just didn't succeed in Ike's eyes.

Buck's father dies, and the boy is turned down in his application to the police academy. Stung by failure he determines to do something right and takes his vehemence out his victims, terrifying them by phone first and then dropping in to kill them. The strange connection between the crimes, as cop team Loggia and Rossi discover, is that each of the victims helped the murderer in his grisly task.



Buck eventually sets his sights on the young wife and son of one of the detectives, finding the family's address in the local phone book and travelling to their home with a gun and knife just as the facts of the case are falling into place...

Fast-paced and unnerving, this William Lustig film asks not whodunnit but, rather, why, and whether the case detectives can put all the story threads together logically. As in *Maniac* and *Maniac Cop*, Lustig manages to take a slim plot and balloon it with tension. It's another hit for this Hitchcockian master of suspense.

John Gilbert



PERSONALS

Starring Stephanie Zimbalist, Robin Thomas, Jennifer O'Neal
Director Stephen H Stern
Distributor CIC
Cert 18, 97 mins



Heather is the woman of your dreams, beautiful, sexy, available: she is also a psychopathic murderess. Selecting her male victims from the personal columns of a city newspaper, she sends her dates yellow roses, meets them in romantic locations and then leaves them



naked and knifed to death in motels. The reason? Her one big relationship was with a married man who died of a heart attack while at work. Heather began to believe that he was avoiding her calls and eventually started to go out with substitutes who she murdered in revenge for her lover's lack of attention.

Enter an investigative reporter, researching an article on the lonely hearts columns. He eventually dates Heather and is killed, leaving his wife to sort out the mystery.



An intriguing mystery thriller, *Personals* provides sharp service with a smile for even the most jaded genre viewer. The storyline, dissected, smacks of so many psycho-thriller clichés, but as a whole the film works surprisingly well, with a series of small electric twists giving the finale that extra boost. Master work.

John Gilbert



REVENGE OF THE RADIOACTIVE REPORTER

Starring David Scammell, Kathryn Boese, Randy Perlstein
Director Craig Pryce
Distributor CIC
Cert 15, 91 mins

Under starter's orders this 'B' movie spoof/*Toxic Avenger* rip-off of superhero horror films quickly degenerates with a quirky, predictable storyline, gloopy special effects and cast of 'gee-whizzers'.

Mike R Wave is your everyday kind of investigative reporter (with a name like that?!) who stumbles upon malpractice at a local chemical plant. He reveals his suspicions to his girlfriend and dorkish

■ Not so jolly? *Death Of The Incredible Hulk*

GREEN GIANT

THE DEATH OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Starring Bill Bixby, Lou Ferrigno, Elizabeth Gracen
Director Bill Bixby
Distributor New World
Cert PG, 94 mins



Dr David Banner is posing as a simple-minded janitor at a government laboratory complex, still allowing the world to believe he died in the explosion which formed the climax to the feature-length episode which began the successful *Incredible Hulk* TV series. In his spare time, he sneaks into the private lab of Dr Ronnie Platt to help him in his research into the hidden strengths and self-healing abilities within everyone. It was this line of experimentation that caused David to become the Hulk, the savage, green superhuman he transforms into when angry or hurt, and the reason he is on the run from society.

Ronnie catches David in the act of friendly tampering but David comes clean, confiding his monstrous secret. The two gifted scientists work together to speed up theoretical and practical development, with the ultimate aim of ridding David of his alter-ego. Meanwhile, Yasmin, master (mistress?) of disguise and ex-Soviet agent, is being forced to cooperate with her ex-comrades, otherwise her captured sister will die. She must steal Ronnie's research files, and happens to choose the night when he's conducting the unrepeatable experiment which may or may not rid David of the Hulk.

As a fan of both the TV series and the Marvel comic it was based upon, it was with some anticipation that I chucked this into the trusty front-loader VCR. I was not disappointed. Admittedly, it has the same inaccuracies as the series: the Hulk merely grunts and growls instead of shouting a few words, as did the original comic character, or even articulating, as the newer grey Hulk does. But as this Hulk's origin is different and it's David rather than Bruce Banner, this is really an alternative view on the character and, as such, is excusable.

The Green Goliath takes a back seat here, Ferrigno's low-brow make-up, ridiculous wig and spray-painted muscles putting in occasional brief appearances to remind you what the movie's about. *The Death Of The Incredible Hulk* is more of a thriller than the average Hulk TV episode was but, although the bad guys are the traditional, corny Russians, it's a highly entertaining one. Despite its fair share of predictable events and American sentimentality, the story is involving and well-paced, helped by Bixby's sometimes literal but generally good direction.

At times Bixby's acting falls inexplicably towards the basic but on the whole his quality performance helps hold everything together, while Elizabeth Gracen provides excellent back-up as the sleek, unpredictable Yasmin. The Hulk himself will put many people off, but this is a pleasing, viable alternative to most genre rental videos.

Warren Lapworth




NERVOUS TISSUE



BRAIN DEAD

Starring **Bill Paxton, Bill Pullman**
 Director **Adam Simon**
 Distributor **MGM/UA**
 Cert 18, 85 mins

 Fresh from their respective trips in *Slipstream* and *Serpent And The Rainbow*, Pullman plays a brain surgeon and Paxton a ruthless corporate businessman in one of the most disgusting, surrealistic movies of the moment.

Pullman stars as Rex Martin, a doctor who has discovered that by taking the scalp off a patient and probing his brain he can alter personality, emotion and, most importantly, memory. His theories have yet to be tested on guinea pigs but, through gentle persuasion, Eunice Corporation executive Paxton pressures him into operating on Dr Halsey, a once brilliant mathematician who is at the Lakeside mental hospital after having murdered his family.

Eunice wants the numbers from an equation upon which Halsey was working before his psychotic episode, and Martin manages to open him up and reawaken some of his memory, but before he can do so he's involved in a car crash which acts as a catalyst to some pretty nauseous night-

mares. But are they dreams? He begins to see visions of a white-coated, blood-spattered man wielding a knife, he starts to believe that his wife is having an affair with Paxton, and eventually discovers their naked and butchered bodies on a table at home.

Passing out, he wakes up at Lakeside and is told that his wife is dead and that *he* is Halsey. The doctor in charge turns out to be the knife-wielding maniac and he wants the answers to the equation so sought after by Eunice. If he doesn't get those answers, he might just operate.

But is even this reality? Of course not, and the finale leaves you wondering whether the whole thing was not some mental fugue on your part. The Julia Corman produced shocker is an unusual animal in the horror field, being both difficult to understand, and sickeningly gruesome. I've always managed to cope with the zombie films in which guts are wrenched out and brains surreptitiously eaten, but when it comes to cutting the skull in half and exposing the brain, I go weak at the adenoids. One for the strong-stomached amongst you, *Brain Dead* is an outrageous piece of cranium picking, but one to watch despite all reservations.

John Gilbert



■ **Revenge Of The Radioactive Reporter**

brother, before walking into the plant and dumping his facts on the company's board.

Shortly afterwards, the President of the chemical conglomerate pushes Mike into a vat of radioactive waste, and Wave spends the rest of the film trying to nail, boil and eviscerate the evil board members while attempting to protect his girlfriend and brother.

I waited till the end of the film before shouting 'This is unbelievable!' and 'Mind rape!', and only the fact that I was watching it on a rented tele prevented me from putting my foot through the screen. Unadulterated rubbish, and from a major video company that should know better.

John Gilbert



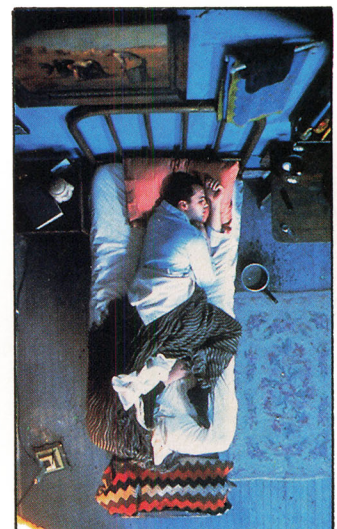
MEGAVILLE

Starring **Billy Zane, Daniel Travanti, J C Quinn, Grace Zabriskie**
 Director **Peter Lehner**
 Distributor **Braveworld**
 Cert 15, 88 mins



Palinov (Zane) is a member of the federal police force of the Hemisphere, a dark, oppressive society that shuns the materialist trappings of nearby Megaville, a competitive, opportunist conurbation. Most frowned upon are all forms of the dastardly media — freedom of speech and flow of information just aren't on — and television is the worst offender. Palinov's police work is in the

■ **Billy Zane, harrassed in Megaville**



copyright division as a 'media officer', raiding houses to confiscate illegal TV sets, until his boss, Duprell sends him on a very special assignment.

Palinov must find Newman, the main supplier for the Hemisphere's media black market, by posing as Jensen, a marketer Palinov closely resembles. But it won't be easy. The latest consumer gadget has begun to sweep Megaville: 'Dream A Life', a device that fits over the eyes of the user and lets them live out a fantasy, becoming a whole new person in an exciting dream world. Newman has major dealing in it and, far worse, he's been connected to the recent assassination of the President.

While Jensen's ex-lover hinders Palinov's actions, it soon becomes clear that our hero hasn't even got a mind of his own. Unbeknownst to him, a mind-control device was implanted into his brain before he left the Hemisphere, allowing Duprell to see and hear whatever Palinov does and, to some extent, curb his actions.

Ah well, the good old future Earth strikes again. Shadowy communities, addictive devices and a favourite cliché — the thug-like police force. *Megaville* is a well thought out, if not particularly well executed, semi-psychological thriller; the plot is garbled in places, Palinov's flashbacks and identity crises clashing with the coming and goings of other characters.

Although I preferred him as the psychotic hunk of *Dead Calm*, Billy Zane performs well as the confused, put-upon Palinov. Early on, he's too hesitant, stumbling over his words. This is intentional, as he's supposed to be nervous of posing as Jensen, but Zane overdoes it somewhat. Daniel Travanti (of *Hill Street Blues* fame) doesn't convince as Palinov's evil boss, although he's onto a loser from the start because Duprell is a sick man, his increasing frailty soon confining him to bed. A few croaky, ruthless words floating up from his freshly plumped pillow aren't enough to make us forget what a nice chap he really is.

Megaville tries to be wise and moralistic, balancing the strengths and weaknesses of the Hemisphere and Megaville as if comparing them to socialism and capitalism. In reality, it's a middle of the road thriller, re-hashing old ideas yet with enough content to get by. Anyone got a 'Dream A Life' they can lend me?

Warren Lapworth



TANGO AND CASH

Starring Sylvester Stallone, Kurt Russell, Jack Palance
Director Andrei Konchalovsky
Distributor Warner Bros
Cert 18, 98 mins

The comedy alone sustains this buddy-buddy cop movie in which Tango (Stallone) and Cash (Russell) are set up for the murder of a policeman by a gang boss (Jack Palance).

As is always the case, the cops are like chalk and cheese. Tango is rich, wears nice suits and has a stockbroker; Cash wears sloppy jeans, a T-shirt and has a big SF-type gun. But both are keen to stamp out the drugs trade, and have some stunning successes, forcing Palance to do something drastic about them. He decides not to kill the dry-wit duo, and instead draws them both to a deserted warehouse where a drugs bust is supposedly going down. They bump



HORROR SHOP

SUNDOWN

Starring David Carradine, Bruce Campbell, Maxwell Caulfield, Morgan Brittany, Jim Metzler
Director Anthony Hickox
Distributor Vestron
Cert 18, 99 mins



It's taken some time to arrive in the UK, but even on video Tony Hickox's *Sundown: The Vampire In Retreat*, is worth the wait.

In the Wild West the world's bloodsuckers have set up shop in the small town of Purgatory and decided to suck on plasma rather than the human red stuff. Trouble begins when head honcho, Count Mardulac (Carradine) invites a substitute blood manufacturer and his family to town to try

and get the blood-making plant working properly. They arrive just as a clique of the vampires, egged on by newly vampirised boover-boy Shane (Caulfield), is planning to destroy the wet vampires and revolt against the Count's edict not to drink human blood. What's more, Shane had a crush on the blood manufacturer's wife when she was last in town, and intends to take her for his own once all the opposition is out of the way.

As with *Waxwork*, Anthony Hickox may have had a small budget with which to work, but he's made every cent count. The script is hilarious, the action packed, and the characterisation inspirational. Where can he go from here?

John Gilbert



into each other, and the corpse of a brutally murdered undercover detective who is wearing a microphone tapped into a police van outside. As the police move in, a briefcase full of money is shunted towards the unfortunate duo and they are framed for murder and drug-peddling.

They are sentenced to 18 months in a low security prison, but instead find themselves in maximum security with inmates who look very familiar. Escaping, and on the run from the police and underworld hit men, they go after Palance with all the weaponry and wit they can muster.

Comedy duo: Russell and Stallone

Wit is the saving grace of this Rambo-esque escapade, with Stallone, in particular, sending himself up. The mood is set from the start as Tango violently arrests two drugs smugglers. One of the uniformed cops turns and says, 'He thinks he's Rambo'. Stallone replies, 'Rambo's a pussy'.


Russell draws the short straw as far as the humour is concerned, though not by much, and this is plastic entertainment at its most effective. *Tango And Cash* is a thriller that your mother wouldn't be ashamed to watch. If you want a movie with innovative bite, then certainly go for something else. If not, and you've watched the latest James Bond movie, get this twosome in your sights.

John Gilbert



BODY CHEMISTRY

Starring Marc Singer, Mary Crosby, Lisa Pescia, Joseph Campanella, David Kagen
Director Kristine Peterson
Distributor 20/20 Vision
Cert 18, 84 mins

 Riding on the coat tails of the 'adult thriller' boom, *Body Chemistry* draws its inspiration (and just about everything else) from the 1988 box office hit, *Fatal Attraction*, a movie widely criticised for its expression of a pathological hatred of women — or a certain type of woman.

Tom Redding (Singer) is a senior researcher in human sexuality at an Ivy League university; with a successful career, a beautiful wife (Crosby) and a cute son, he appears to have it all. It is only when he encounters fellow scholar Claire Archer (Pescia) that he realises the excitement of living dangerously. On a night when they are both working late, Archer seduces him and draws him into a sado-masochistic affair. However, after her initial promise of 'no strings', his insatiable lover's obsessive behaviour begins to threaten everything Tom holds dear — including his own life.

With an eye for the main chance, *Body Chemistry* ditches all aspirations towards suspense in favour of 'steamy' sex, and chooses to play out the stereotypical male fantasy of the castrating woman (in a revealing dream sequence, Tom envisages an oral sex session which climaxes with Clare biting off his penis...). The film is overwhelmingly misogynistic in the portrayal of its female characters — masochistic nymphomaniac bitch versus saintly-but-sexy wife/mother — although it appears to have been directed by a woman, but then again, with many woman editors in charge of girly magazines, this is nothing new in the field of soft pornography.


Unfortunately, *Body Chemistry* cannot be accredited with success even on an erotic level, for where *Fatal Attraction* was stylishly seductive this film is clumsy and unprepossessing, a cliché graven in celluloid if ever you saw one.

Patience Coster



COLD COMFORT

Starring Maury Chaykin, Margaret Langrick, Paul Gross
Distributor Prism
Cert 15, 90 mins

 Hovering between thriller and horror, *Cold Comfort* provides anything but comfort in this overly long tale of terror. Stephen is a travelling salesman rescued from a cold death in his stricken car during a snow storm by tow-truck driver Floyd. Recovering from a high fever, Stephen awakes in bed to find himself being tended by Floyd's teenage daughter Dolores. All is not well in this isolated household and gradually Stephen finds himself a prisoner of the rescuer. Floyd is infatuated with his own daughter and is driven to the verge of insanity by his sexual feelings for her. Dolores knows she is trapped and that Stephen may be her only ticket to freedom.

Based on the stage play by James Garrard, *Cold Comfort* is a long drawn out piece involving three trapped characters. Maury Chaykin is excellent as the menacingly dangerous father, as are Margaret Langrick as the youthfully innocent daughter kept in isolation from the outside world and yet aware of the need to escape her unnatural situation


and Paul Gross as the detached salesman who is forcibly involved in the domestic affair. The gradual build-up of tension promises unfortunately more than the plot delivers and the conclusion is something of a let down. Despite the poor ending, *Cold Comfort* succeeds as a psychological and potentially violent thriller.

Franco Frey



LITTLE MONSTERS

Starring Fred Savage, Howie Mandel
Director Richard Alan Greenberg
Distributor Vestron
Cert PG, 97 mins

 Just when you had begun to think that kids' films were useless without a turtle, *Little Monsters* pops up, offering a spooky comedy treat for any youngster.

Under the beds of Brian (Fred Savage) and all American kids are gateways to another world full of spoofs and mutants, those things that cause bumps in the night. After a slow start the fun and action of *Little Monsters* soon gets swinging when Brian meets a playful spook called Maurice (Howie Mandel). Maurice's one aim in life — make that death — is to creep into bedrooms while the household is asleep and wreak havoc by playing poltergeist around the house, waking kids up with a loud 'Boo!' and then disappearing beneath the bed.

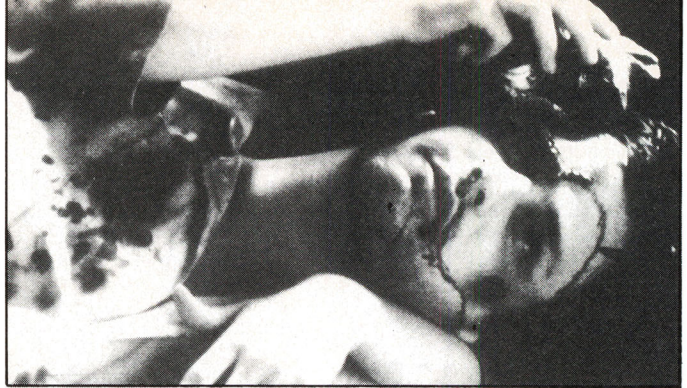
Joining forces with Maurice, Brian can play all the dirty tricks he likes too, most of them amusing for the kids — especially the one that involves pissing in the school bully's lemonade bottle. The action is a little soggy at the edges as Brian saves his parents' marriage and falls in love, but his defeat of an evil spook provides a slice of action towards the end.

Lots of fun — complete with a couple of moments that'll have kids diving for cover behind the sofa — *Little Monsters* is a great way to keep 'em quiet for an hour and a half until they retreat to the bedrooms to experiment with diving through the floorboards under the bed.

Richard Eddy



■ Fred Savage and Howie Mandel: little monsters



■ Cold Comfort



APPRENTICE TO MURDER




FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC



PIN



Distributor New World/Trans Atlantic
£9.99 each

 The most appetising of these self-through titles is *Apprentice To Murder*, starring Donald Sutherland, Chad Lowe, and Mia Sara. Sutherland stars as Dr John Reese, a travelling preacher with the power of healing. A young farmer's boy, powerfully played by Lowe, is drawn by the man's magnetism and eventually starts to follow him around as an apprentice. Mia Sara stars as the farm girl who falls for Lowe. She begins to notice Reese's power over the boy, which eventually leads to the murder of an apparently evil local landowner.

The film evocatively portrays a true story with a compassion for the murderous farm boy and even his

Svengali mentor. Incredibly, it was regarded as a 'B' title during its rental period, but now should be bought in all its glory.

Next up, *Flowers In The Attic*, a loose adaptation of V C Andrews' dark novel about child abuse. Victoria Tennant is wonderfully nasty as the mother who locks her children up in the attic so that her father will not see them before he dies and exclude her from his will because he doesn't like children. The wedding at the end is shocking, the child actors convincingly distressing and the setting faintly ridiculous.

Pin is the weak link in the chain, based on Andrew Neiderman's original novel about a doctor's son who puts his psychotic personality into his father's medical dummy with tragically ghoulish results. Nothing in particular happens during a large third of this film, and the players in the 'drama' are about as plastic as Pin — that's the dummy.

Despite the one oddball entry, this New World package has some strong contenders for your money on the sell-through front.

John Gilbert

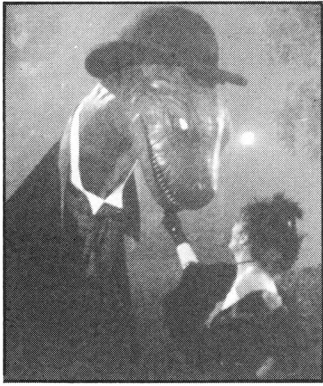
FLASH GORDON

Starring Sam Jones, Melody Anderson, Max Van Sydow, Brian Blessed
Director Mike Hodge
Distributor MCA
Cert PG, 107 mins, £9.99

 If I looked as stupid as Ming does I'd feel pretty Merciless, too, but I wouldn't go as far as he does right at the beginning of this 1980 Flash adventure. Ming bombards the Earth with all sorts of terrible weather and 'natural' disasters, the hot hail beginning just as Flash and Dale Arden board a small passenger plane. Turbulence and bright red skies greet them and when the pilots bail out they crash into Dr Zarkov's lab, triggering an unexpected rocket journey into space.

Their craft's grabbed and landed by a tractor beam and the heroes are taken before Ming. Old baldy takes a shine to Dale and adds her to his harem. Zarkov is taken by scientists to have his mind drained and Flash makes a fuss about the whole thing, tackling a few cyborg guards before being sentenced to death. Meanwhile, Ming's weather machine is causing the moon to decay. It will soon fall from its orbit onto the Earth, causing untold millions of deaths. Can even Flash save the day? (Do you really need me to answer that?)

I'm very surprised that this has only just become available on sell-through; it's rather aged now, has been on rental for years and aired on TV at least twice, once only a few months back. It hasn't got the same sense of fun or spirit as the classic Buster Crabbe black and white series, for a number of reasons. The actors don't suit their roles as well — trying to update the characters just doesn't work — and there aren't enough of the traditional cliffhangers everyone associates with the old serials. Translating Flash into glorious colour



■ Was Jack the Ripper the Loch Ness Monster? Amazon Women On The Moon

went to the designers' heads, fancy sets full of gloss, glitter and bright colours, red and yellow wherever you in look in Ming's palace. The result? Tacky.

Sam Jones is fine as heroes go — blond hair, muscles in the right places, throwaway dialogue — but he just isn't Flash. Ming has the right look but sounds too much like a lager commercial voiceover, and Timothy Dalton as Prince Baron (or is that Baron Prince?) proves he doesn't have to be James Bond to be dull. Brian Blessed is his usual 'shout on legs' as Voltan, and wearing remarkably tasteless, plastic-looking wings.

Faults aside, *Flash Gordon* is a fun, action-packed family movie whose main stumbling block is its age. If you've only seen it once and enjoyed it, or haven't seen it at all, it's well worth a try, but for most of us there are many better, less familiar, sell-throughs to buy first.

Warren Lapworth



AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON

Starring Steve Guttenberg, Rosanna Arquette, Michelle Pfeiffer, Marc McClure, Henry Silva
Directors John Landis, Joe Dante, Robert K Weiss, Carl Gottlieb, Peter Horton
Distributor CIC
Cert 15, 82 mins, £9.99



A bit of an oddity, this, as you'll have guessed from the title. It's a collection of 20 short comedy stories, ranging in length from about 30 seconds to five minutes, and as the titles indicate, starring 'lots of actors'. The stories flow on from one to another, seamless bar a burst of static to simulate television channel switching, an idea stemming from *Murray In Videoland*, a couch potato sketch reminiscent of the climax to Wes Craven's *Shocker*.

The stories, written by Michael Barrie and Jim Mulholland but with various directors, are a mixture of styles and ideas, ranging from pure slapstick humour to sit-com scenes to tweaked stand-up routines. All the stories are rooted in fantasy and most relate to modern life in a cynical, sarcastic manner. The *Amazon Women On The Moon* story itself is an exception, a dreary spoof of a Fifties sci-fi 'B' movie split into several parts.

A far superior parody is one that attacks Leonard Nimoy's *In Search Of...* 'true-life' mystery series. Called *Bullshit Or Not?*, it examines the feasibility of whether Jack the Ripper was the Loch Ness monster! Other highlights are *Two IDs* (dating was never *this* tough), *Hospital* (new parents face a mad doctor brilliantly played by Griffin Dunne) and

Son Of The Invisible Man (a shamelessly wacky spoof of the classic black and white movie series). The best running gag is Don 'no soul' Simmons, a black singer played by David Grier who insists on singing extremely corny, crass songs rather than Motown/blues ones.

Amazon Women's stories vary in effectiveness and humour, Landis's five sections working best but Dante's not far behind. As none are lengthy, the worst ones don't affect the package so the real problem is that it relies on impact and throwaway humour. That's fine on rental — the 82 minutes fly by very entertainingly — but £9.99 is too steep for something you'll enjoy and perhaps watch just once.

Warren Lapworth



DOCTOR WHO: THE WEB PLANET

Starring William Hartnell, William Russell, Maureen O'Brien
Director Richard Martin
Distributor BBC Home Video
Cert U, 148 mins, £19.99 (two tapes)



In this 1965 crusty, the TARDIS is drawn irresistibly down to the planet Vortis and drained of power. His space/time steed useless, the Doctor and indignant companion Ian investigate the planet while Vicki and Barbara stay inside. More strange things happen: Ian's gold pen flies from his hand, Barbara's arm develops a mind of its own and draws her from the TARDIS, and said vehicle is carried away by bipedal man-sized ants.

These mutant insects, the Zarbi, were once docile creatures until the mysterious Animus took control of them. They wrested power of the planet from the moth-like Menoptra who, after a shaky start, ally themselves with the Doctor, his companions and their flightless, subterranean relatives, the Optera. Meanwhile, the Doctor also keeps in communication with Animus in a bid to discover its weakness, restore power to the TARDIS and prevent Animus's web-like fortress from enveloping Vortis.

Even bearing in mind the age and budget constraints of this production, *The Web Planet* is a dubious video package. There's nothing wrong with the small sets, but the Beeb were too ambitious with costumes. The Zarbi are cumbersome lumps of plastic with stupidly humanoid legs, the Menoptra swoop around in fluffy striped pyjamas and cellophane wings, and the hopping Optera have bleached dreadlocks. Simpler, cheaper, more subtle costumes and make-up would have been less distracting, making the story easier to follow and mildly more believable.

The creatures' performances don't help. The low, Italian mobster drawl of the Optera is excusable but the high-pitched, staccato speech of the Menoptra is quite sickening when combined with their stupid over-theatrical gestures. Ian is an over-obstinate companion but William Hartnell, previously unfamiliar to me, is a great Doctor: wise, friendly but firm.

It is a shame the same can't be said about the plot. Scene-setting and character introduction is long-winded, and I had difficulty watching beyond the second episode; only die-hard Doctor Who fans will find this a worthy purchase, particularly as it could have easily fitted onto one tape for £9.99.

Warren Lapworth



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KILLER PACKAGE

TRANCERS

Starring Tim Thomerson, Helen Hunt, Michael Stefani

Director Charles Band
Distributor Entertainment In Video
Cert 15, 74 mins, £9.99



KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE

Starring Grant Cramer, Suzanne Snyder, John Allen Nelson

Director Stephen Chiodo
Distributor Entertainment In Video
Cert 15, 83 mins, £9.99



TEEN WITCH

Starring Robyn Lively, Zelda Rubinstein, Dan Gauthier

Director Dorian Walker
Distributor Entertainment in Video
Cert PG, 90 mins, £9.99



Entertainment in Video have recently released some fairly cool low budget horror/SF videos onto the rental scene and now, you may be pleased to hear, they're coming out on sell through.

Top of the class are *Trancers* and *Killer Clowns From Outer Space*. The former comes from the Charles Band/Empire stable, an outfit which has long had a reputation for good, low budget moviemaking. Here we have futuristic Chandleresque cop Jack Deth (Thomerson) who jets back from the 21st century to the 20th in order to find super-criminal Whistler.

Whistler is intent on killing the relatives of city council members who were responsible for his near death. He largely succeeds, but the seedy Deth eventually ejects him from our past to jail in the future. The finale is fairly predictable, but the moderately intelligent script contains some good ideas and Deth, despite his cardboard characteri-



sation, will run to a sequel.

Killer Clowns From Outer Space is probably the most ludicrous film I've ever come across. The basic premise: a girl and a boy see a strange flashing shape crash in a valley close to where they are snogging the life out of each other. When they arrive at the scene, they find a circus tent and, more menacingly, clowns who are not as jolly as they seem. These bozos go around killing and freezing people in candy floss and sucking their bodily fluids through straws. There are also some wonderful set pieces in which a bus queue is eaten by a hand puppet dinosaur and a vociferous biker has his block knocked off. All in all, a killer comedy.


Teen Witch, however, is not so brilliant. A hokey teen-comedy with more flesh hinted at than shown. Jefferson High School's plain girl becomes possessed of witchy powers on her sixteenth birthday. Unfortunately, a penchant for evil is attached to her gift and, in a fiery ending, she has her revenge on all the high school brawns and their bimbos. Pedantic and clichéd, the plot for this turgid bim-bette comedy almost had me barfing all over the screen. The one weak link in EV's horror package, it leaves you wondering whether low budget companies will stop making this kind of trash.

John Gilbert

DOCTOR WHO: THE DOMINATORS

Starring Patrick Troughton, Frazer Hines, Wendy Padbury

Director Morris Barry
Distributor BBC Home Video
Cert U, 121 mins, £9.99

 You wouldn't expect any of the Doctor's holidays to pass by peacefully but this one, to the planet Dulkis, goes bad from the start. With companions Jamie and Zoe, he lands the TARDIS on the Island of Death, the site of the peace-loving Dulcians' only nuclear test. But something strange has happened. For no apparent reason, the high radiation level of the area has fallen rapidly to zero. This is as intriguing to the Doctor as it is to the recently arrived Dulcian survey team he befriends.

The radiation has been absorbed by the spacecraft of Toba and Rago, two members of the brutal Dominator race. With the aid of their robots, the Quarks, they've begun to mark points on the island's surface for some unknown but obviously dastardly reason. Unpleasant encounters with the Dominators lead the Doctor, his companions and the survey team to travel to the capital, via skyshuttle, to urge the council to take action. However, they're highly apathetic and prefer to let the Dominators go about their business, so it's up to the Doc to save Dulkis.

The Dominators is a traditional Doctor Who story and is recognised as such from the first few minutes: the Doctor lands in a desolate place occupied by nasty aliens with a nastier plan and teams up with jumpy locals to thwart them. It's all rather predictable but in a friendly, comforting manner and

the story bowls along at a fair pace, aided considerably by Patrick Troughton, my second-favourite Doctor, a jovial but stubborn character with a cunning mind. Jamie (Frazer Hines) is one of the better Doctor companions and the Dominators themselves are amusing, one trigger-happy, the other his overbearing leader, but both equally irritably and resplendent in dome-like shoulder pads. The Quarks are boxes on stubby legs but for their time (1968) are reasonably well-designed.

The biggest problem with *The Dominators* is that the Beeb have left in the opening and closing credits of each issue which can be a strain on your patience and/or visual search button. Battling through, it's great TV sci-fi of yesteryear and classic Doctor Who.

Warren Lapworth



BOOKS

CLIVE BARKER'S NIGHTBREED: THE MAKING OF THE FILM

Publisher Collins
Format PB £9.99

A book subtitled *The Making Of The Film* sounds like a behind-the-scenes look at the creative process of getting a screenplay based on Barker's novella *Cabal* from script to screen. It does not sound like a heavily illustrated first draft script with a brief introduction, which is what this is. So while it is interesting to compare the shooting script reproduced here with the final film, a lot more contextualising material would have been needed to do this properly. Similarly, a well-written magazine-style feature about a visit to Pinewood might have evoked more of the atmosphere on the *Nightbreed* set. Barker's sketches and set photographer Murray Close's excellent black and white pictures

BOOKS

Not To Be Missed



Recommended



Fair



Poor



Diabolical



HORROR

Bad Dreams

The Drive-In 2

Four Past Midnight

Midnight Sun

Reborn



SCIENCE FICTION

Chung Kuo, Book One: The Middle Kingdom

The Gate (magazine)

Second Variety, Volume 2: The Collected Stories Of Philip K Dick

The Time Lapsed Man And Other Stories

Use Of Weapons



FANTASY

The Adventures Of Tom

Bombadil

Farmer Giles Of Ham

Kalimantan

Smith Of Wootton Major

NON FICTION

Clive Barker's *Nightbreed: The Making Of The Film*

How I Made A Hundred Movies In Hollywood And Never Lost A Dime

Writer's Workshop: Plot

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The quotations Salisbury and Gilbert have culled from Barker and several of his talented creative team are reasonably interesting: sound man Myznik's rationale for the abstract noises used in a throat-slashing scene is especially illuminating, as is Barker's rationale for casting David Cronenberg as psycho-killer Decker. But why no interview with the formidably articulate Cronenberg himself? The problem here is one of initial conception: as a publishing project this just has not been thought through.

Nigel Floyd



compensate in part, but even these were displayed to better advantage in Titan's *The Nightbreed Chronicles*.

The introduction by Mark Salisbury and John Gilbert (journos of this parish) plugs some of the remaining holes, but by no means all. Written some weeks before the end of the initial shoot, supplemented later by a three-week 'enhancement shoot', it does not see the film through from start to finish. Hamstrung by the publisher's deadlines, their interviews with Barker and several members of his talented crew are therefore a provisional report on a work-in-progress, not an account of the making of *Nightbreed*. Given the subsequent developments, including the shooting of extra scenes and a different ending, this is a serious weakness. Presumably for the same reason, a cast list and detailed technical credits are conspicuous by their absence.

CHUNG KUO BOOK ONE: THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

David Wingrove
Publisher New English Library
PB £3.99



After his marvellous performance with Brian Aldiss in the non-fiction history of science fiction, *Three Billion Year Spree*, David Wingrove makes an impressive start to his massive science fiction series, *Chung Kuo*.

The first book, *The Middle Kingdom*, begins its ascent on Earth, where the world community has been ruled by the Chinese Empire of Han for three thousand years. Its Council of Seven has controlled all aspects of life, ensuring its citizens peace and comfort and claiming that the Great Wheel of Change has stopped turning.

How wrong they are. The Empire has not crushed all opposition as it once thought, and there are people who think not only that change is possible, but that it is preferable to stagnation. They look to the conquest of Earth...and that wheel of change starts to creak around.

NEL is obviously taking a huge chance with this mammoth series, and Wingrove has yet to convince me that it warrants more than a trilogy without becoming as bloated as the L Ron Hubbard *Mission Earth*. But *The Middle Kingdom's* style and characterisation are such that I will be reading the second in this series, *The Broken Wheel* and, really, that's all you can ask of a book.

John Gilbert



THE TIME LAPSED MAN AND OTHER STORIES

Eric Brown
Publisher Pan SF
Format SB £3.99



This book could as well be called the Interzone's Eric Brown collection as anything else, with five of the eight stories previously being printed in that magazine. All but one of the stories share a similar universe, one where telepathy is taken for granted and faster-than-light travel is achieved via an ecstatic man-machine interface. The men concerned are called Enginemen, and as the collection progresses the side-effects of their occupation become progressively worse. In the eponymous

first story an Engineman begins to suffer the time-lapsing of his senses. The first sense to be damaged is hearing, so an hour after he's dropped a glass the Engineman hears the sound of it shattering. The story is given emotional weight by the man's doctor being his ex-girlfriend. It's a rather soap opera relationship, but the time-lapsing becomes somewhat evocative of a more conventional breakdown in communications between people, and is touching on that level.

Another story focuses on the Near Death Experience and the widely accepted phenomena where the dying believe they are going to a bright light. This has a hard, logical edge as does a story about a complex relationship between a human colonial society and the weird, insect-like natives. But the casual acceptance of telepathy, faster-than-light and resurrection ask a lot of the reader in the jokey *Krash-Bang Joe And The Pineal-Zen Equation*. The *Pithecanthropus Blues* turns on a fairly awful joke, but the funniest story is the last and most straight-forwardly enjoyable. *The Inheritors Of Earth* is set in the Victorian era where Charles Wootton strives in his stately home to invent Alternating Current! He is soon visited by a grimy scientist, his simian female companion and, soon after, H G Wells brandishing a wooden pistol. A routine time travelling story is enlivened by a romance between the very Victorian Wootton and a Neanderthal woman!

All in all, this is a very readable collection, but the shared universe of many of the stories isn't all that interesting or convincing. It's too bland really, and this weakens the collection so that, while the stories would read well individually in a magazine such as *Interzone* or *FEAR*, together they fail to make up an essential purchase.

Stuart Wynne



SECOND VARIETY, VOLUME 2: THE COLLECTED STORIES OF PHILIP K DICK

Philip K Dick
Publisher Grafton
Format PB £5.99



This, the second of five volumes chronicling the history of Dick's short stories is, regrettably, inferior to the first. Considering that the previous collection was depressingly short on quality, this can be taken as bad news for discerning Dickophiles. One only has to read Norman Spinrad's introduction to realise that we are dealing with an anthology of turkeys here. The 27 stories selected, first published between 1952 and 1955, all

WEIRD AND EXOTIC

THE DRIVE IN 2

Joe R Lansdale
Publisher Kinnell
Format HB £11.99

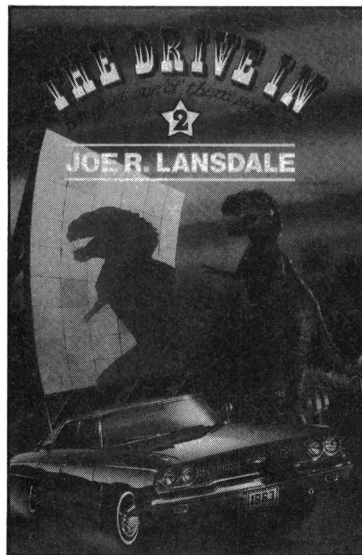


In episode one of this spooey tale of blood and popcorn, a gaggle of guys and gals were trapped by unseen aliens at an American drive-in movie theatre, from which nobody can escape.

For the sequel, Joe Lansdale steps back, taking Bob, Jack and Crier out of the pyramid in which the aliens' specimens are now kept and into a room filled with cameras, sound systems and other equipment. They are about to become stars in an intergalactic horror film that will shock the known universe.

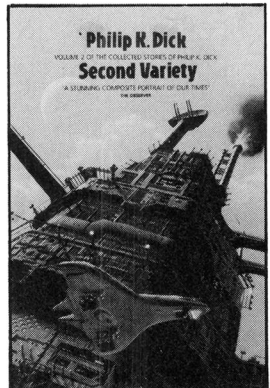
The book moves from a relatively 'safe' environment, the drive-in, through a series of weird and exotic filmic escapades in which they find some interesting 'extras' (the film world's use of the term). These include some incredible mechanical dinosaurs, a martial arts expert called Grace, and a television serial killer.

Proving that *The Drive-In 2* is 'not just one of them sequels', Lansdale pours just about every sequel cliché you can think of into this slender volume. My only quibble is that the book isn't long enough, though I'm sure that even Lansdale would lose some of his narrative punch if he went too far



up the trail of laughs. Good work from one of America's finest genre writers. Don't forget to buy this and take it along for him to sign at this year's British Fantasy Convention.

John Gilbert





THE KILL OFF

REBORN

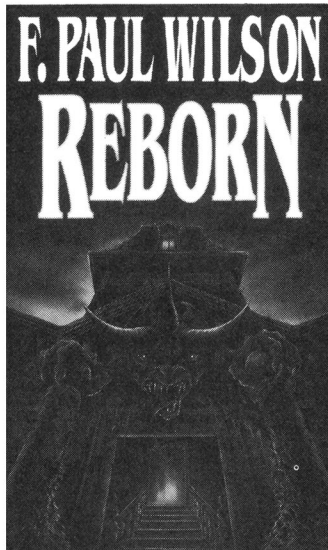
F Paul Wilson
Publisher New English Library
Format HB £13.95



The sequel to Wilson's Second World War vampiric novel *The Keep*, *Reborn* is the second in a trilogy and, unfortunately, it tells. Despite a strong, emotional narrative and a wonderful sense of mystery, the story is sheet thin, slow moving — in fits and starts — and promises more than it delivers. Wilson also manages to break what is usually one of the cardinal rules in fiction — don't kill off a major point-of-view character halfway through the book. That said, you can see that the story will evolve into an intelligent and interesting entity.

Jim Stevens, a down-on-his-luck-writer, inherits the huge estate of Dr Roderick Hanley when Hanley is killed in an air accident. He discovers that the doctor might have been his father, but soon learns that he is, instead, the product of a genetic experiment in the 1940s. A group of Pentecostal Catholics called The Chosen are also interested in Stevens' past. They believe that he is the Anti-Christ and do their best to announce his presence to the world.

When he is killed in a gruesome accident they begin to think that the unholy danger is over, but Stevens' wife is pregnant with a force that will, indeed, threaten the future of humankind. End of



book two.

F Paul Wilson is an accomplished writer but, I suspect that readers of this second book will have to see the third before being truly satisfied. Let's hope those promises are realised.

John Gilbert



ordinary folk, not academics.
John Gilbert



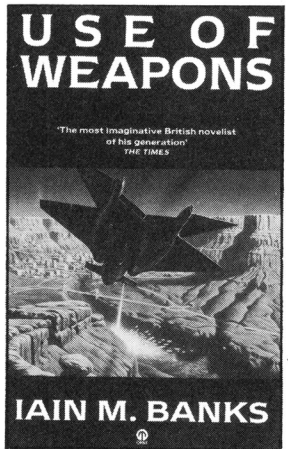
USE OF WEAPONS

Iain M Banks
Publisher Orbit
Format HB £12.95



Iain Banks is virtually unique in being a serious literary writer — 'the great white hope of contemporary English Literature' according to Fay Weldon — and also a genuine SF enthusiast. But whatever the subject of his writing, there's no doubting Banks is a natural. His prose is inherently readable, burnished by an obvious intelligence always aware of the wider implications of his ideas. The SF Culture series of novels isn't as serious as his mainstream work, but his pulpish, soap opera universe sparkles with good, generally liberal ideas.

The first Culture novel, *Consider Phlebas*, performed the memorable stunt of having the main character start out by fighting the Culture, an extremely liberal society ruled over by intelligent computer Minds, which was recognised as the 'goodies' by the end. A clever inversion for a SF book, especially set against the anti-machine prejudices of,



say, *Star Wars*. But character interplay was a little bland, and the more tightly focused *Player Of Games* used the same universe for a much more involving tale. Now the third 'Culture' novel has arrived revolving around a single character — Cheradenine Zakalwe. One of the most appealing aspects of the Culture series is the revelation of Banks' ideas on the civilisation, which is essentially a utopia. In *Use* we learn humans have augmented their ability to feel sexual pleasure so Zakalwe's first tryst with a Culture woman terrifies him into thinking he's killing her. But utopias are almost invariably dull settings for novels, so Banks always moves us onto the edges of the Culture — its morally gray, often bloody interface with less developed civilisations.

In *Use* a cluster of solar systems is on the brink of war. The only man who can prevent this is the legendary Zakalwe, an action man more Bond than Sean Connery. Unfortunately Zakalwe has somehow given the Culture the slip, concentrating on his own plans for reforming uncivilised societies. So his old associate, the beautiful Diziet Sma and her intelligent drone Skaffen-Amtiskaw are dispatched to find him.

The early stages of the book intercut chapters showing Sma's bantering pursuit, Zakalwe's fortunes in a planetary war, and Zakalwe's memories.

preceded his first full length novel, *Solar Lottery*. Spinrad cannot help but admit that this conspicuous flurry of activity was an unselfconscious attempt to pay the bills and get noticed. Dick barely succeeded fulfilling either motive. Whilst these short stories plot the origin points of his major themes, the occasionally abominable, but predominantly poor quality of writing here meant that Dick was only noticed as a new author with ideas above his station. No character, plot, alien civilisation or motive is anywhere near close to being fully developed. No theme is adequately explored.

Spinrad tactfully suggests that reading this collection 'one is struck by a certain sameness, a certain repetitiveness, a certain sense of of reoccurrences...' and it is an honest observation. The prevailing themes — post-apocalyptic Earth, artificial beings, terrifying existentialistic perceptions of reality — are all here as testimony to what Dick would achieve in his great works of fiction of the future. But not in 1952. Spinrad's analogies between Dick's themes and the social climate (Cold War tensions, nuclear apocalypse fears, McCarthy witch hunts), equally apply to most pulp science fiction of the period, and do not elevate the qualities of the individual works. Dick's 'bravery' in speaking out against common hysteria of the period was not unique to one writer.

Human is and *Imposter* preceded *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep* with its primary question 'Am I human?', as *Small Town* predates the quintessential 'underground man' of much of Dick's later works. Nevertheless all three blend forgettably into this collection. The cardboard cutout characters speak cardboard words to each other — talking but rarely communicating either

to their fellow cutout characters or to the reader. Furthermore, and most damaging, Dick's difficulties in finding a solution to his need for multiple viewpoint writing technique, is evident here much as in his previous collection, making many of these stories not just pulp, but badly written pulp.

I await volume three with little enthusiasm if it is to be compiled with as little artistic or intellectual integrity as this collection. One for completists and scholars only.

Stuart Wynne



SMITH OF WOOTTON MAJOR

FARMER GILES OF HAM

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM BOMBADIL

J R R Tolkien
Publisher Unwin
Format HB £3.99



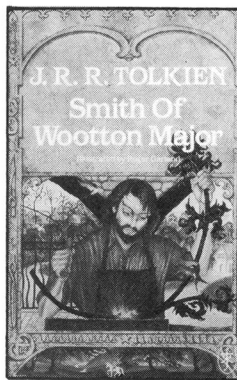
The Hobbit and *Lord Of The Rings*, right? Well, yes, but this modern father of high fantasy also wrote several lesser works, poetically styled fairytales, ostensibly for children, which have existed on Unwins' lists for decades and have recently been republished.

Readers of the Ring saga might remember Tom Bombadil, and *The Adventures...* expands upon his character in a series of rhymes, songs and poems. The thin, woodcut illustrated volume charts his meetings with such supernatural beings as the River-woman's daughter, Old Man Willow, the

Barrow-wight and the Badger-folk. There are also tales of elves, dwarves and trolls, all from that legendary Red Book.

Farmer Giles Of Ham will also be a familiar character for Tolkienites. The fat, redbearded yokel might not be the contemporary idea of a hero, but when sniff comes to punch, he's a dab hand at dealing with dragons.

And so, finally, meet *Smith Of Wootton Major* which regales its readers with a story so strange that only children will understand it. Every 24 years, a



huge sweet cake is baked in the village of Wootton Major, in order to celebrate the Feast of Good Children. But the ingredients are highly suspect, for they transport those who partake into the Land of Faery.

Each of these slender books provides an enchanting folk tale which children, and adults who've reached their second childhood, will enjoy. They also show Tolkien in a different, if simpler phase to his Middle Earth writings, and further the idea that his stories, like those from Shakespeare, were originally meant for





VISIONARY HORROR

MIDNIGHT SUN

Ramsey Campbell
Publisher Macdonald
Format HB £12.95



When I spoke to him last year, Ramsey Campbell, then still hard at work on his new book, referred to it as a 'visionary horror novel'. His aim was to produce a kind of homage to the writings of Lovecraft and Blackwood, who provided, arguably, an early inspiration for him to try his own hand at concocting tales specifically designed to unsettle his readers. The only other author who springs readily to mind is, of course, M R James, whose *Whistle And I'll Come To You* receives a gentle doff-of-the-cap as early as page 31 in *Midnight Sun*.

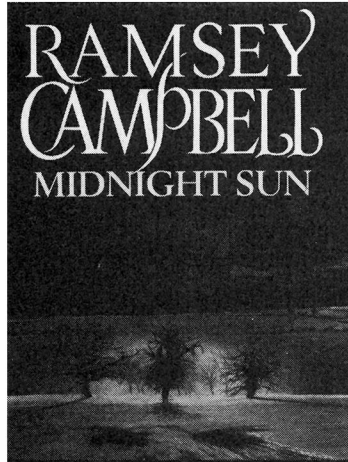
The art of disquiet is one that Campbell, of all the contemporary writers in the field, has made his own, even over the likes of the more prolific Stephen King whose folksiness and astounding ear for dialogue and dialects have made him more of a latterday (though infinitely scarier) Mark Twain, a chronicler of his country's public and private personalities, warts 'n' all.

Midnight Sun is a fascinating amalgam of thematic approaches. Its similarities with King's *The Shining* are inescapable but quickly recognised — so don't fear that the revelation, such as it is, could spoil your enjoyment. Equally, don't expect either Jack Torrance, or Jack Nicholson's hamfisted portrayal of him, to show up. It's not that kind of party.

No, Ben Sterling is a far quieter and infinitely more well-adjusted individual, despite the pressures of being orphaned as a child following a mysterious car crash, the circumstances of which are, regrettably, never completely explained. As a consequence of the accident, Ben is taken from his family home overlooking Stargrave, a sleepy hamlet nestled in the North Yorkshire moors, to live with his aunt in Norwich.

It is there that the ancestral home and the full scope of Ben's family heritage begin to exert an influence. He recalls a story about a boy in almost prehistorical times, whose role in life was to maintain a fire to prevent the onset of a winter so cold, bleak and merciless that none would survive. He also learns more of his great-grandfather, Edward Sterling who, when only recently returned to the family hearthside following a close brush with death while exploring the icy wastes of the far north, wandered away from the house only to die from exposure.

In the eyes of the young Ben, Edward had been a writer producing 'books of old legends and stuff that hadn't been written down'. Ben's grandfather had given him a copy of Edward's last book, 'Of the Midnight Sun', and the boy takes it with him to



his aunt's house where he pores over its pages of 'unrhymed verse', a supposed magic poetry which he is unable to follow. But his aunt is uneasy about Ben having the book and she gives it away to a woman collecting for charity.

The years pass, Sterling marries Ellen, they have two children, Margaret and Johnny, and begin work together as a writer/illustrator team. By the time Margaret is ten years old and Johnny seven and Ellen is preparing to start work again, Ben's aunt dies and they inherit the house in Stargrave.

Once back in Stargrave, Ben is attracted to nearby Sterling Forest where he discovers a solitary glade within the trees which, he realises intuitively, is where Edward Sterling died. And, as Christmas looms closer, Ben becomes increasingly introspective, obsessed with the uncharacteristically cold wintry chill and vague luminosity emanating from the woods.

Throughout *Midnight Sun*, Campbell's pacing is even more languid than usual, with less of the usual but-surely-it-couldn't-actually-be-alive-and-walking-towards-him device so brilliantly — if, perhaps, unintentionally — self-parodied in last year's fun-filled *Ancient Images*.

Campbell tackles the slow establishment of a man's alternate mental reality with taste, credibility and a painstaking affection, while the ambiance of the Yorkshire setting — which becomes increasingly inhospitable towards the end of the book — recalls the countrified gentility of Holdstock's quasi-mythological *Mythago Wood*.

Midnight Sun has re-established the horror novel as a literary art form. It's thick with description, long on atmosphere and impressively short on gratuitous action and unnecessary scene-setting dialogue. Campbell has succeeded in his goal, achieving the dizzy heights first truly realised by William Hope Hodgson's *The House On The Borderland*. And he's done it beautifully.

Pete Crowther



The planetary war is grippingly portrayed, but once Zakalwe leaves it, the battle to save the star cluster from war never takes on the same compelling drama. It's too big to be easily portrayed sympathetically, and Banks never really tries. One single planet eventually becomes the focal point, but what keeps you reading are Zakalwe's memories. As they develop, chairs become

something to be afraid of — a weird phobia that obviously symbolises some dreadful event in his past, which he is very reluctant to remember clearly.

There's still plenty of action though, superbly portrayed, although Banks has a tendency to tell you its result before actually spelling out the details. It defuses tension, as do the flashbacks, but it draws attention to the prose which

is impressive. On the other hand, Zakalwe is never really completely sympathetic; 'He loved the plasma rifle. He was an artist with it; he could paint pictures of destruction... using that weapon.' Several pages detail his practise with the gun, but his relationship with Sma is soon reduced to chatting on the radio. His decision to sleep with a prostitute earns only a

sentence, leaving Zakalwe something of an enigma. This is all part of investing more tension in the slow progression of the flashbacks, but means the whole emphasis of the book revolves around the meaning of chairs. In the event the chair does have a serious meaning which resonates through the whole of the book once uncovered near the end, but I wasn't completely satisfied with it. I didn't find the twist original enough to be genuinely shocking, rather than simply interesting. Less cynical readers more sympathetic to action man Zakalwe might find the book a lot more satisfying, but I was disappointed. It's certainly impressive seeing such a great talent and mind develop a space opera. The Culture is a superb creation, with its smart drones and Mind-controlled starships christened with names such as 'Size Isn't Everything', yet *Use* lacks the story and character interplay which made *Player* a hit. Definitely worth buying, but the emphasis on a twist ending makes it disappointing for Banks.

Stuart Wynne



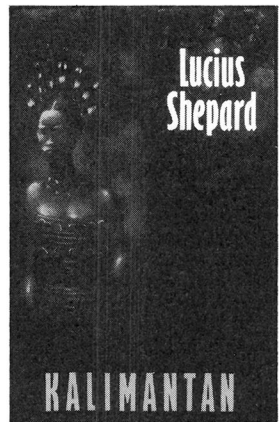
KALIMANTAN

Lucius Shepard
Publisher Legend
Format HB £4.99



A mouthful of title with a weird, complex storyline to match, Shepard's novella is set in the wild jungles of South America where rogue adventurer Curtis MacKinnon has discovered a native drug that will alter reality.

Outwardly, he plans to use the drug to keep the jungles fresh and clean from human interference. But the drug's powers, which include the conjuration of the creatures of the mind, also take the user to a strange, primitive unpeopled land, and can bestow immortality. It is for this reason that MacKinnon continues to synthesise the drug, but the immortality it bestows is that of the ghost whose existence is as shortlived as human memory.



A richly written, though quickly-paced novella, *Kalimantan* investigates not only the dangers of chemical abuse but also dissects the way in which we view reality, showing that what is beyond our understanding might not be as wonderful for us as we believe. Shepard's book is the longest of the Legend novellas so far and, in my estimation, comes a close second to Carroll's *Black Cocktail*. The others in this incredibly successful series, Campbell's *Needing Ghosts*, and Bear's *Heads*, are of comparable quality.

John Gilbert




BAD DREAMS

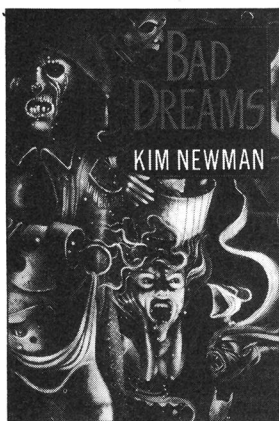
Kim Newman

Publisher Simon and Shuster

Format HB £13.95

 Some horror fans might regard it as downright immoral, but I'm sporting enough to see the acerbic wit of film critic Kim Newman. *Bad Dreams* is his second novel, and here he shows that he can take the tormentedly mysterious strands of his short fiction, and map them into the broader novel format.

As director David Cronenberg says of the Decker/mask character in *Nightbreed*, those strands singly taken might reek of cliché, but taken together, they become obstreperous monster condemning the current use of stalk and slash while also, in a perverse way, celebrating the genre to which all these clichés flock home.



The story: American journo Anne Nielson searches the sin city side of London in an effort to find out why her sister Judi has died in such mysterious circumstances. Drawn into a corpse-filled wardrobe — a sort of amalgam between a sequence in *Hellbound* and the Narnia portal in *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe* — she becomes embroiled in a dream world, a fusion of London's most immoral nightlife, the dream vortex of a nightmare killer, and threads from the lives of her own family.

Naturally, some readers may deem Newman's second novel as an attack on the horror genre, but others will no doubt rightly place it as a complex satire of a not always complex subject. Several recognisable plots, from film and literature, have been woven together with more subtle subplot fragments to create a new chaos' out of now pedestrian horror fare. A warning to the schlockier of horror creators? Whatever, Kim Newman proves that it's possible to produce inspiration from repetition. *Bad Dreams 2*, though, would be a let down.

John Gilbert



WRITER'S WORKSHOP: PLOT

Ansen Dibell

Publisher Robinson

Format PB £5.99

The first in a series of guides aimed at writers aspiring to be published takes a calculated, if rather general, look at the principles of plot.

Dibell initially raises questions that you should ask of yourself in order to test whether a plot has the texture to survive the telling. At first sight, these appear to be little more than common sense; there's no instant-mix magic for seekers after divine inspiration. And that's what makes this book such a

breath of fresh air. It promises nothing, but once you think about and act upon the simple guidelines laid down by the writer, they start to work and become very important. You can suddenly see the traps into which you've already fallen and identify those which will, no doubt, appear around those folios.

Dibell puts the emphasis on experimentation, portraying the writing of short stories and novels as a fluid process in which the words and structure can change until it is perfect and seamless. If only some of the hopeful contributors to **FEAR's** fiction section could follow this simple philosophy, we would all be much happier.

As to this *Plot* book, those who do not believe in miracles but believe they have some talent, go out and get it, along with the others in the series. Those who expect an immediate conversion to super-creativity, invest in a good glossily bound Bible: the tears won't leave stains.


John Gilbert



THE GATE

Publisher W Publishing

Format A4, 44 pages, £1.50 (£6 UK subscription rate, 4 issues)

 After launching in small paperback form, the second issue sees a redesign in the familiar *Interzone* A4 format with a colour cover and dabs of spot colour throughout. The sub-title 'Science Fiction & Fantasy' is borne out by the genre content, six short stories plus film and video reviews, all accompanied by not always entirely relevant, but generally good monochromatic artwork. This issue's short stories are okay, if not outstanding, including a first-person monologue on the South American enthusiasm for 'surfing' on top of trains transplanted to England — 'Well London is just as bad as Guatemala City'. Sean Bayley, son of Barrington and here his co-writer, provides a novel 'aliens are coming' story with a bizarre twist. Kim Newman contributes buckets of gore in *D & D*, and also writes the film and video reviews. An impressive celebrity for such a new magazine, but there aren't any accompanying movie pictures. The reviews are also inevitably



a bit late, something *Interzone* compensates for by adopting an intellectual and in-depth approach which can border on pretentiousness, but is always unusual and provocative. Kim Newman certainly knows his stuff, but the style is familiar (indeed you could have read similar reviews by Kim in *Empire* a month or so before). Also disappointing is the lack of book reviews or features. Perhaps as the magazine evolves it will generate a stronger editorial presence to accompany the

DISCOVER the new worlds

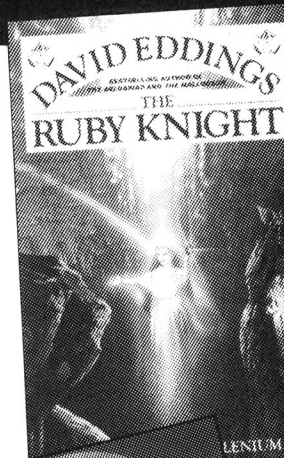
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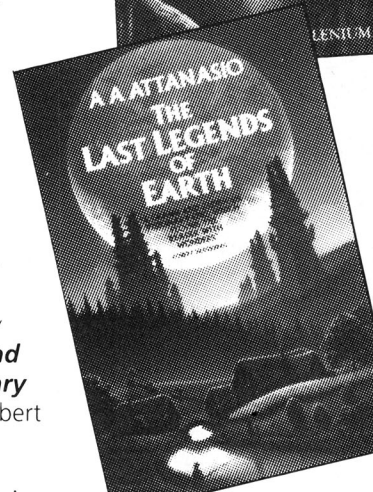
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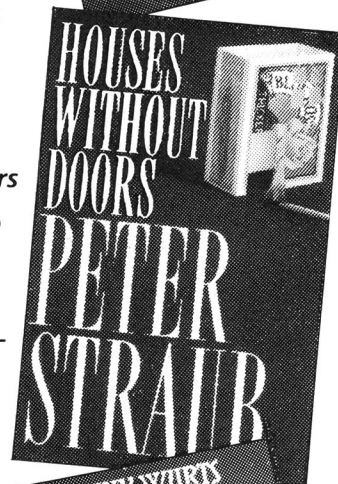
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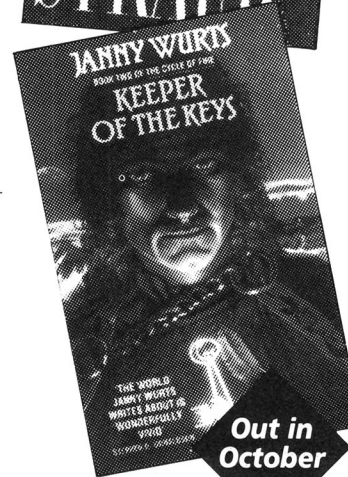


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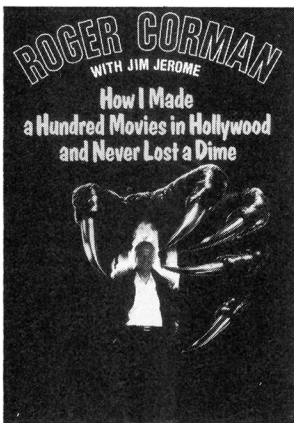
stories. As it stands, this is an impressively presented SF&F mag which deserves to do well, certainly worth a look from all short story fans and writers — submissions are welcome.
Stuart Wynne



HOW I MADE A HUNDRED MOVIES IN HOLLYWOOD AND NEVER LOST A DIME

Roger Corman, with Jim Jerome
Publisher Hutchinson
Format HB, £13.99

The revered elder statesman of low budget independent filmmakers has written a fast-paced, often revealing, sometimes infuriating, but always entertaining autobiography. Corman would sometimes rip out the first ten pages of a script, cutting out dull exposition to get straight to the action. He does the same here, deftly sketching in his middle class background — father an engineer, read Poe as a child, moved to Beverly Hills aged 14, first job as a runner at Twentieth Century Fox — before getting down to business. His father's engineering background left Corman with a talent for problem solving and an eye for detail; both are evident in his amusing tales of nightmare shoots and his precise analyses of favourite sequences.



From early sci-fi pics like *Monster From The Ocean Floor*, Corman moved on to celebrated Poe adaptations like *Masque Of The Red Death*, then tuned in to hippy counter-culture in *The Trip*, before abandoning direction in favour of producing in the early Seventies.

As the head of New World Pictures, Corman encouraged young actors and moviemakers eager for their first break: Jack Nicholson, Robert DeNiro, Francis Ford Coppola, Joe Dante, James Cameron, John Sayles, Jonathan Demme, Dennis Hopper, scriptwriter Robert Towne (*Chinatown*) and producer Gale Ann Hurd (*The Terminator*). Many of these have their say, in the quotes that punctuate Corman's story. Martin Scorsese — whose debut feature, *Boxcar Bertha*, was made for Corman — sums up his mentor best: 'Roger, despite himself, is the most remarkable kind of artist because, while not taking himself too seriously, he was able to inspire and nurture other talent in a way that was never envious or difficult — but always generous.'

Later, Corman pioneered the distribution of foreign art films, one year releasing both *Tin Drum* and *Humanoids From The Deep*. But as drive-ins gave way to multiplexes,

Corman got bogged down in seeking new cable TV and video outlets for New World product.

These passages are a little stodgy and other minor gripes include: a slight air of self-congratulation, the fact that

some of the best Corman productions (*Ride The Whirlwind*, *Jackson County Jail* and *Piranha*) get short shrift, and the occasional intrusiveness of co-writer Jerome's spliced-in interviews. Otherwise, it's like watching a Corman

film, with so much energy, action and humour, there's no time to spot the holes in the script.

Nigel Floyd



HIS MASTER'S VOICE

FOUR PAST MIDNIGHT

Stephen King
Publisher Hodder and Stoughton
Format HB £14.99



I must admit that, although *Night Shift* had a profound influence on my appreciation of short stories, Stephen King's recent collections, *Different Seasons* and *Skeleton Crew*, had very little effect on me. Only 'Apt Pupil' (about which I ranted and raved for several months) and *The Body* (over which I shed a tear) hold any lasting memory for me, but those are the exceptions rather than the rules. Not so with *Four Past Midnight*, in which King is again at the height of his skills, following a rather droopy performance in his last novel, *The Dark Half*.

King's introduction to the collection of four novellas compares favourably with the excellence of that found in *Night Shift*. He describes the way in which the stories were written, admits that he couldn't stop writing during his enforced two-year retirement from publishing — if not authoring — and his constant love of horror despite others' attempts to demean the genre. As you start the introduction to the first story, 'The Langoliers', you know that the old Stephen King is back in the saddle and 'has a ways to go yet'.

'The Langoliers' obviously stems from King's fear of flying. It begins as a tired airways captain becomes a passenger on a red-eye from Boston to L.A. He falls asleep and wakes to utter chaos. The aircraft has apparently flown through a hole in the normal space/time continuum and into a place where reality is flat, and sensation is dying. It would be unfair to spoil the story's major revelation, so suffice it to say that the aircraft and its passengers have broken out of reality in a rather novel way and it will take ingenuity and a sacrifice to get back into the 'normal' pattern of reality.

King uses the story to confront his fears of flying head on, even inserting himself as a character — a mysterious, sleeping, bearded man at the back of the aircraft. Here he is dreaming his horrors and unable to stop them. When this stranger on the edge of the story eventually wakes, he handles the dangers in a way that most of us fear — with uncontrolled terror itself — and goes to pieces.

Fear of a very different kind is evoked in the next novella, 'Secret Window, Secret Garden', when King goes back to the exploration of the writing process that he started in *Word Processor Of The Gods*, and continued with *Misery* and *The Dark Half*. He transposes the latter's storyline, evoking that bane of an author's life, plagiarism. Divorced and alone at his countryside retreat, writer Mort Rainey is visited by John Shooter, a man who claims that Rainey stole a story from him some time ago. When our hero protests his innocence and determines to show the man a copy of his story, printed way before the alleged plagiarism was supposed to have occurred, Shooter retreats.



Shortly afterwards, Rainey discovers that the mysterious man has apparently killed his cat and burned down his town house.

Rainey has great difficulty in finding an original copy of his story, and also in finding reference to a writer called John Shooter. Madness might be involved here. But whose, and when did it begin?

'Secret Window...' is a brilliant deception on King's part, beautifully plotted and peopled with mundane oddities.

The flavour of fear again changes, this time to that borne in the big, bad world of childhood, as we encounter 'The Library Policeman'. Small time businessman Sam Peebles visits his local library to obtain books on public speaking. There he meets a rather strict librarian, who informs him that if the titles are not returned on time, she will send the library policeman, that grinning, lispng creature of childhood terror, to recover them and extract a fine. The books go missing, as does the mysterious librarian, so Peebles can either wait to get his library cards in the most final and fatal of senses, or find some way to combat this force from the past.

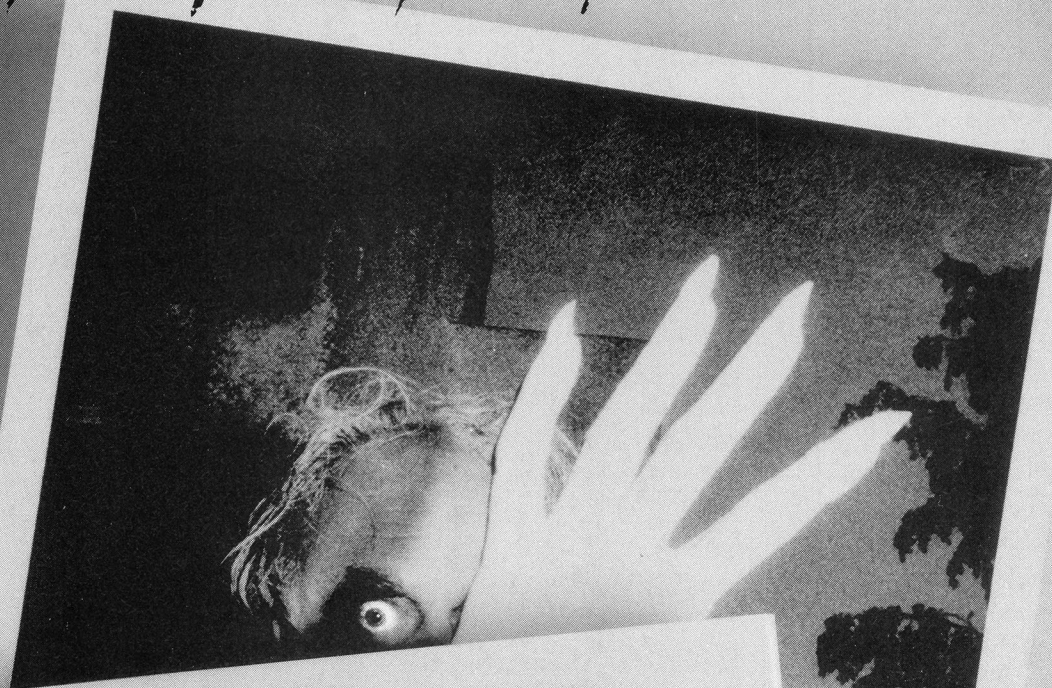
Initially, 'The Library Policeman' asks us to believe in several kinds of supernatural creature before bedtime, but in a stunning finale, it is the real world that raises the hackles on the backs of our necks and makes us shudder. This third story is without doubt the *coup de grace* of the collection. The fourth, 'The Sundog', comes as something of a disappointment, with shallow characterisation and simplistic suspense plot. Fifteen-year-old Kevin Delevan receives a Polaroid camera for his birthday. The camera takes pictures of the same scene (though not the one it's pointed at) in which a ravening dog gets closer and closer to the photographer. Kevin takes steps to destroy the instant picture machine, but he has not banked on the greed of an old man out to thwart his plans.

The last story aside, *Four Past Midnight* serves as a nexus point between reality and fantasy and the terrors involved in a transition from one to the other. King is back with that familiar supporting hand and his aim is obvious... once more to help steer us into the darkness.

John Gilbert



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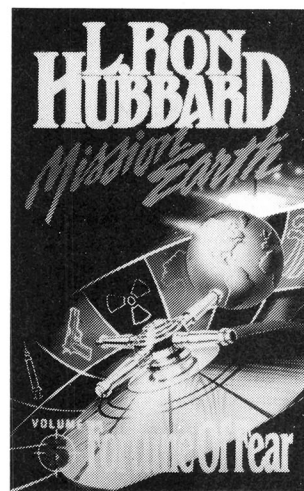
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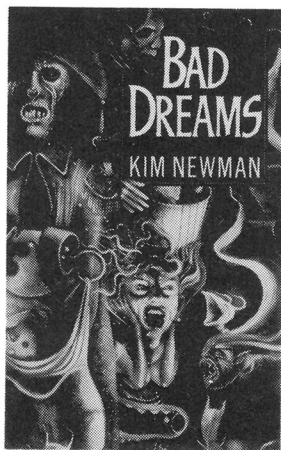
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"She was delicious. He stroked her side, his nails turned to bony scalpels. He opened her at the hip, and scraped the bone.

He fed off her for hours, until her heart burst."

BAD DREAMS by Kim Newman. Published on 24 September, £13.95

NIGHTMARES

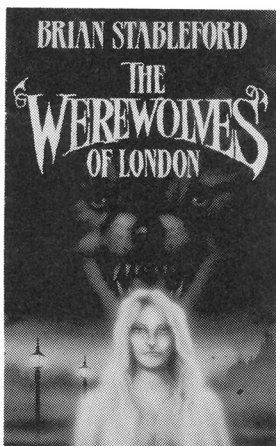
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FEAR FORUM

Two missives about the merits — and demerits — of 'serious' horror film criticism open the letters' page this month.

LIGHTEN UP

Dear **FEAR**
 Re: The Exploitation Game by Julian Petley, **FEAR 18**.
 Being one of the 'main offenders' (along with *Fangoria*, *Gorezone* and *Starburst* magazines) in contemporary genre criticism according to author Julian Petley, I feel compelled to respond to several of the charges levelled at me and the books I've been involved with for the last five years.

Petley says my description of *Dr Butcher, MD* 'tells you all you need to know' about my writings. Having discussed, reviewed or analysed close to 750 modern horror films in my short writing

career, I fail to see how my obviously campy, tongue-in-cheek appraisal of *Dr Butcher* bears any relevance to my comments on such contemporary classics as *Videodrome*, *Monkey Shines*, *Dead Ringers*, *The Beyond*, *Opera*, *Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer* etc.

Why approach a harmless, simple-minded, *stupid* (but fun) film like *Dr Butcher* with a hardened, pedantic assault that takes all the enjoyment out of the viewing experience? Excuse me, but I refuse to play 'genre scholar' when I shamelessly whoop and holler over such films as *Humanoids From The Deep*, *Forbidden World*, *The Boogens* or *Dawn Of The Mummy*. I really am unable to take these films seriously — but that certainly doesn't mean that they're without a certain degree of capricious, empty-headed charm.

Petley also complains that the *Deep Red Horror Handbook* rates films according to my own version of a 'Gore Score' 'which concerns itself with nothing but the quanti-

ty of blood, brains and guts' spilled during the film. The 'Gore Score' is merely a *supplementary* rating to be used in conjunction with the standard 'stars/skulls' designation usually employed by cinema critics. For Chrissakes, man, *Cannibal Campout* got a '10' on the 'Gore Score', too, but if you'll check its main rating (no stars/dog) — what's that going to tell you about the film? Right — it's a piece of shit, but it's gory as all get-out.

Lighten up, Petley, the problem with the modern horror film lies not with arbitrary criticism but with the product itself.

Keep the faith,
Chas Balun, Westminster, California

BUT SERIOUSLY...

Dear **FEAR**
 In reply to Charles Thompson's letter (**FEAR 21**), while I agree with the points he makes in defence of Barry Norman, I feel I

must comment on his closing statement that horror films cannot be expected 'to be treated with the same respect as Woody Allen or Meryl Streep'.

Surely an intelligent horror film such as *Hellraiser* did not deserve the sarcastic dismissal it received from Mr Norman? Though I agree that 'serious' critics are well within their rights to deride or ignore exploitative sequels (ie: the tedious Elm Street saga) and low budget tosh such as *Witchtrap*, this is no excuse for ignoring any film, or book for that matter, simply because it has horrific elements in it. I find it strange that Mr Norman should fail to hand any praise to Clive Barker while not taking exception to Peter Greenaway. Both directors deserve credit. Why should the genre's best efforts be judged by standards set by cinematic trash and not works of cinematic art?

To draw a literary comparison, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* are not viewed as the best ghost stories of their period, but as literary greats. A quick inspection of books such as the Leonard Matlin or Halliwell Film Guides reveals that even films such as *Taxi Driver* or *Blue Velvet*, though obviously outside the expected parameters of horror movies, receive less than their critical due simply because they

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portray the ugly side of reality. Similarly note the controversies caused by scenes in Dennis Potter's *Brimstone And Treacle* and *The Singing Detective*. Such examples show that there is a trend in criticism that will not fairly judge films simply because they reveal a side of life some would ignore.

The best horror movies are about facing and examining what frightens or repels us; they are no more exploitative trash than *Macbeth* is. Surely a film such as Cronenberg's *Videodrome* which examines contemporary attitudes towards television and video content is as worthwhile as Woody Allen's comic explorations of our social hang-ups? It is high time people stopped dismissing horror and fantasy as of having no literary worth. True, a large percentage of material produced in the genres is trash, however this is mostly because film companies and critics regard the genres as trash. If a film is horrific, but intelligent and well made, it should be praised. More open-minded criticism would encourage filmmakers to create better movies. I mean, how hard do you try to create a worthwhile horror movie if you know that it is likely to be passed off as worthless?

More credit where credit is due. An attitude such as Mr Thompson's which does not demand anything of the genre except hollow entertainment will encourage nothing else. Here's to more encouragement and higher standards for the genre.

Jon Burnside, Lancaster

AND WHY NOT?

Dear FEAR

I read the August Dark Playground column with a wry smile: my sentiments exactly. Barry Norman does pay scant attention to anything featuring horror, fantasy and sci-fi to some extent. He doesn't even try to disguise his loathing either. His treatment of *Society* was simply a case of 'I'm not reviewing this objectively because it's a horror film and we all know what those are like, don't we children?' Words

to that effect, anyway.

Norman is in a respected position, his programme is watched by many who take note of his reviews and are possibly influenced by them. That is why he should deliver reasoned and unbiased critical comment. But in the end, people have to make up their own minds and not be swayed by one reviewer's observations. Maybe Barry Norman can be coaxed into the dark, brooding offices at FEAR for an interview and he can give us his reasons for blatantly ignoring genre movies. I, for one, would like to know what his problem is.

Colin T Nicholls, Stretford, Manchester

FLOGGED TO DEATH?

Dear FEAR

Am I alone in finding the 'debate' on censorship that has recently clogged up Fear Forum annoying and more than a little pathetic?

A psychotic with serious delusions of grandeur is creating havoc in the Gulf. The government is flushing the country down the toilet (or allowing it to be flushed). Several thousand children die each day from starvation when, if properly distributed, there is enough food in the world to prevent their deaths. Yet some of your readers prefer to complain that they are not allowed to watch large amounts of tomato ketchup (or whatever it is they use) being splashed over nubile actresses or spurting out of prosthetic severed arms. Come on, wake up and smell the cappuccino!

I am, of course, not suggesting that your august organ should become a forum for opinions on any of the above problems, but I believe the editor has a duty to attempt to keep things in perspective by restricting the number of letters published on this subject which has, to my mind, been flogged to death. I can already envisage beads of sweat appearing on the pimply brows of your adolescent readers as they realise that I am advocating a form of censorship; the perspiration may, of course, be due to images conjured up by the phrase *flogged to*

death.

There are a number of topics, applicable to the genre, about which I would enjoy reading other peoples' opinions. What about the tendency of the mainstream media to ignore genre fiction? Is the quality of horror, fantasy and science fiction *really* inferior? Can Stephen King and Martin Amis be compared? Jeffrey Archer and Guy Smith? It has proven interesting reading reviews of James Herbert's new novel. A week ago, the *Times* reviewer savaged *Creed* with such fanaticism that I pray Mr Herbert does not read it, even though I am sure he is used to such behaviour. But in FEAR 21 I note a *four skull* review. Who is right? Is there a right? Can we please get rid of those stupid skulls?

Do any readers buy limited first editions: the ones signed by author, artist, the author's accountant, the artist's pet cat, numbered, lettered, bound in hamster fur, slipcased and inlaid with a titanium crucifix? Are they worth owning? Are they worth the cash? Do some people have far more money than sense? Readers should experience little difficulty answering the last question.

Finally, I notice that the letters editor pledges: 'We, of course, will continue to be disgusting.' The only disgusting item I can find in FEAR is the truly nauseating photograph of Mr Gilbert that scars the Dark Playground section. Please delete.

Yours affectionately
'C D Ward'

Thanks for your views, and for raising some interesting issues, we trust that some of the items you mention will turn up in FEAR in due course. Meanwhile we have passed your letter on to New Statesman/Society and The Spectator which, we are sure, will be able to solve the world crises you mention in a flash. Ahem, pass the Gold Blend...

**FEAR FORUM,
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FEAR

● **DROPS IN ON DARIO ARGENTO** as he promotes *Two Evil Eyes*, his new film, codirected with **George A Romero**. An **Edgar Allan Poe twosome**, it is the first time these two monster horror talents have cooperated on a project. Also, watch out for our Italian horror extravaganza, coming soon...

● **MEETS JACOB'S LADDER** director **Adrian Lyne**, who talks about what has been described as the best unmade script in Hollywood. Is it the best movie? Find out with our exclusive **J B Macabre** set report.

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● **LOOKS AT CHILDS PLAY 2** and the long-awaited return of doll and mass murderer, **Chuckie**. Does the sequel match the original? We find out from our man on the set.

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