

FEAR

👁️ HORROR 👁️ FANTASY 👁️ SCIENCE FICTION 👁️



**THE PIT
AND THE
PENDULUM**
Torquemada's
torture chamber



**TIM BURTON'S
EDWARD SCISSORHANDS**
Cut and blow dried

EXCLUSIVE

**GRANDMASTER
OF GORE
HERSCHELL
GORDON LEWIS**

**Dean R Koontz
SERVANTS OF
TWILIGHT
Fundamentalist
follies**

**RAMSEY
CAMPBELL
dissects
American
Psycho**



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FEAR

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Hailed as the grandfather of gore, this is the man who really started the splatter-movie movement. With films such as the *Gore-Gore Girls*, *Bloodfeast* and *2,000 Maniacs* he is without doubt one of America's most influential low budget film makers. Many of his films are still banned in this country, but when has that ever stopped us from getting a good story?

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Comic book critic Warren Lapworth ducks some *Stray Toasters*.

It's been three years since FEAR had its bottom slapped and finally arrived on the publishing scene crying 'I'm alive!'. A cry echoed by many fiction writers, both new and established: FEAR has become a beacon for them, and we have published countless stories. As a result quite a few new authors have come to the notice of the big publishers and are on their way to a new career.

Last year we added to the rewards of publication the very first FEAR Fiction Awards as voted for by you, presented to Mark Chadbourn and Brian Lumley at the British Fantasy Convention. The response from readers and press was great, so we're doing it again this year with a few changes. As you'll notice from the form on page 46, you can still vote for 12 months' worth of FEAR fiction, but we've changed the categorisation. The two sections are now for New Authors and Established Authors, so only the emphasis has changed to make the listings fairer. New Talent refers to those writers who have just published their first story, or near enough, while Established Authors can include people who have had several short stories or novels published. It's important that you vote for both.

We have also deleted book extracts from those lists for two reasons. The first is to give the lesser known writers a chance when in competition with major novels, while the second is to encourage established writers to develop new short stories.

Get voting, and to those whose work is represented, good luck!



**JB Macabre
and Steve
Biodrowski
steep themselves
in Stuart Gordon's
ambitions for an
Edgar Allan Poe
classic remake**

No piece of horror fiction captures the feel for the period of the Black Death and the Spanish Inquisition better than Edgar Allan Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*. And it has proven a natural for filmmakers. Low-budget king Roger Corman brought his campy treatment to it as director in 1961 with a splendor over the top Vincent Price.

Now director Stuart Gordon has taken up the challenge. Taking his cast and crew to the historic castles of Italy, he has set out to capture both the terror of the Spanish Inquisition and Poe's gripping literary style to produce the definitive version. The film features Lance Henriksen, Rona De Ricci, Jonathan Fuller, Jeffery Combs and Oliver Reed, and opens in the States in June, while up for UK distribution through Entertainment in Video.

Stuart Gordon has never been one to play things safe. 'I was 'asked' to leave the University of Wisconsin short of my graduation because they didn't like my nude version of *Peter Pan*. That's when I decided to start my own theatre company (Organic Theater) and move to Chicago, a city



IT'S THE PIT!

much more receptive to artistic freedom.' This was fifteen years ago, and from producing off-beat, innovative theatre he progressed to Hollywood to create films like

The Re-Animator, *From Beyond*, *Robot Jox*, and *Dolls*

HISTORIC GRUE

'*The Pit and the Pendulum* has always been one of my favorite stories because it's so visual and action-oriented — perfect for film. Also, the idea came out of a visit I made to the Tower of London. I realized the things that people actually do to each other are far scarier than anything you can fantasize about — the worst monsters are people. *The Pit and the Pendulum* is set during the Spanish Inquisition, a period that is extremely cruel and frightening, and a film of that could be truly horrific.

Gordon's vision of Poe's classic includes the historical character Tomas de Torquemada. Torquemada invented the Inquisition, and he approached it meticulously. He wrote, I think, twenty-eight books on the rules of torture. These rules are like something out of *Alice in Wonderland* — really bizarre. He formalized everything. He had all of the trials transcribed, so we were able to incorporate a lot into the film. To expand Poe's short story we focussed into a love triangle between Torquemada, this baker's wife, and her husband. We ultimately get to his tale in the last half hour!

INTO A VILLAIN

Lance Henriksen, who plays Torquemada, has a reputation for creating bizarre characters. He was the Civil War vampire in *Near Dark*, the father obsessed with revenge in

Pumpkinhead and Bishop, the android with a human soul, in *Aliens*. Presented with Torquemada, he was immediately obsessed with the motivation behind the change from a holy man into one of history's most infamous mass murderers.

Immersing himself in the character, he began a sheer spiral into humanity's dark side. 'At times I thought Hitler and all of history's villains were in me, and once I'd become that creature, I could not give him up. I was terrified at what I was feeling, let alone for people to see it from the outside. I'd be talking, and then suddenly Torquemada would click in.'

If Torquemada caused Henriksen torment, he would not have it any other way. 'I only take parts that will give me an adventure, and here I tried to be as ugly as humanly possible. *The Pit* was an incredible purge. I felt I'd survived something terrifying, and that my life had changed.'



BLACK HUMOUR

The torture sequences are quite horrific, but Gordon adopted a humorous tone elsewhere in the film. 'The subject is so bleak and disturbing that if you did it without humour, it would be impossible for an audience to sit through it. I think you need that release in this movie.'

One of the more bizarre bits of gallows humor is the witch who eats gunpowder so that she explodes when burnt at the stake!

'A lot of things that seem nuts were suggested by the research, like the sequence of them flogging a corpse.

During the Inquisition, they would have trials of corpses and burn them at the stake — even though you're dead, you're under arrest.'

An important facet of any remake is the comparison to the original, in this case the pendulum sequence. Gordon's is not a mere re-run of Corman's: 'Well, Corman didn't use the rats, which is part of Poe's story. That was always one of my favorite things: that the rats end up saving him. So we had to use that — although they got to be a major problem. You can't train them. At first, I was terrified of working with all those rats, not being a big fan of

them. After awhile I realized they were so terrified that, left to their own devices, they'd huddle together. To get them to do anything else took a lot of time and work. One good thing was that Jonathan Fuller, who plays the guy with the rats crawling all over him, made it a point to feed them every day, so he got to be their buddy — they never bit him or hurt him. He was fearless doing those scenes; he never complained.'

Will Stuart Gordon's version of *The Pit & the Pendulum* better Corman's Vincent Price vehicle? Seeing is believing — find out soon.

THE MECHANICS OF TERROR

Painter and sculptor Matt Falls' first challenge was to create the cadaver that gets flogged to ashes at the beginning.

'Since the Duke of Alba Molina had been buried for years, we went through a lot of mummy books to get the right 'look'. But a real mummy seems almost fake, as if constructed of cotton, latex and tissue paper. So we sculpted a face with a lot of grisly character, attached it to a skeleton from a medical supply company, and a body formed on top of it with all sorts of toxic chemicals: it was ready to be whipped a couple of days later,' Falls chuckles.

His substantial assembly was no match for the film's Inquisitor. 'The skeleton was very solid, which allowed us to disconnect an arm or a leg during cutaway shots. There was a Duke who could be completely whipped

apart, and one with breakaway bones for close-up inserts. But Stuart insisted on lashing a corpse himself, and gave it everything he had. It instantly exploded and pieces went everywhere!'

Falls ended up with the job of coming up with a way to reassemble the corpse from dust: the body emerges in front of Torquemada while hallucinating. 'We agonized, and it ended up being simple beyond belief. We got the moulds the skeleton was formed in and filled them with dust. They were then laid on the set floor and the material blown away with a fan. When we reversed the film, it looked like the skeleton was coming together from ash. Sometimes the easiest stuff looks the best'

Authentic, gruesome effects come down to positioning. 'We built a couple of mechanical hands for Mendoza that Torquemada could put his fingers

through. The armatures had holes in the palms to achieve the effect, but the hands worked as well. They were placed in front of the actor and the technicians could twist them about as he grimaced, giving them a lot of realism. Fake arms and feet were also puppeteered for the pendulum scene, also a couple of artificial rats that could be sliced in half. Our creative ability was constantly tested, and we ended up ad-libbing a lot of stuff with surprisingly good results.'

Finding inspiration for these horrid toils can be nasty: 'You have to look at pictures of accident and burn victims, which isn't pleasant, but you must go to those lengths if you want an effect that's convincing. Something stylized can be done from imagination, but it won't have that necessary 'shock' value.'

THE WORLD OF FEAR

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET VI: DAMAGED GOODS?



It's over, the monster is no more, and FEAR's Steve Biodrowski gets Robert Englund to prove it — sort of...

Freddy dead? Maybe it's hype, but there's reason to believe this will be Krueger's last nightmare: the previous instalment's US box office grosses failed to live up to expectations, perhaps indicating waning audience interest in the series.

Rachel Talalay, producer of parts III and IV, steps in as director, working from a script by Michael DeLuca and a cast including Lisa Zane, Sean Greenblatt, Yaphet Kotto, and Leslie (976 — *Evil*) Dean, plus Johnny Depp, Roseanne Barr and Alice Cooper as a Father from Hell in cameo appearances.

FEAR caught up with Robert Englund on the last day of shooting. What did he make of the project?

'It's a great script, honestly. It might even be the best — not counting the originality of Wes Craven's script and all the benefits of its being the first. Rachel, having just worked on two pictures back to back with John

Waters, is bringing a real neat, off-beat quality to it. It's not taking place in that generic small town setting: this one's set in a bleak, urban environment. Freddy's moving from a white picket fence world to a graffiti-laden one, with basically two elements to the story, one a sort of background, a centre for unwanted youths — Freddy's going after damaged goods now, instead of wholesome teens —, but the major thrust is a mystery: which one of the two characters is the child that was taken away from Freddy when he was incarcerated, Sean Greenblatt or Lisa Zane?

3-D MARES

The film had the longest production and post-production schedule of the series, due to the elaborate 3-D effects for the climax.

'Yeah, every time they change a lens, it's an hour-and-a-half. It was tricky. There's a whole finale where we go on a Mr Toad's Wild Ride through Freddy's brain, and we see what made him what he is. The girl who makes the voyage has been talking to a co-worker who dabbles in dream therapy and collects movie trivia. He gives her a pair of 3-D glasses — this prop is supposed to remind her she's in control of her dream. In the final reel, she puts on the glasses, turns to the audience, and says, "Now!". At that exact moment, audiences will put on their glasses, and the rest of the movie will be in killer, state-of-the-art 3D.'

John Buechler talks with Robert (Freddy) Englund on the set of Elm St VI

Englund probably knows more about Freddy than the script-writers or director: I know what he would or would not do or say. I'm pretty adamant about it. Every once in a while they want me to repeat something too much. I have a running count in my head of how many times I laugh or use the knife blades a certain way. Sometimes they want that, because it gives them an automatic button for a scene. There's also some leftover prejudices — superstitions, even — that are not necessarily correct, like there's always the fun of Freddy being revealed for the first time in every film: a tendency to hide me a little too much — the cat's out of the bag as far as I'm concerned.'

Having been offered to direct himself in Part III, he reluctantly had to refuse. 'It's physically impossible. What with attending dailies, putting the make-up on and taking it off: I hate to wear it when I act, so I'd hate to wear it when I direct. I would've loved to direct a *Nightmare* film if only to put in all of the things I've been missing, but as we did each new film those things got used up.'

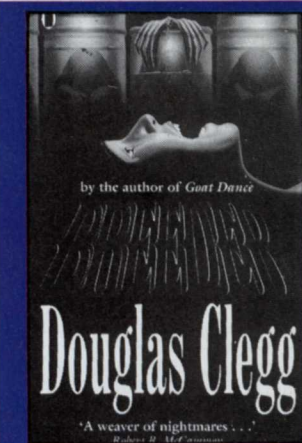
FREDDY VERSUS JASON

At one time rumours abounded that Paramount and New Line in a typical-

ly Hollywood, far-fetched contrivance were planning to team Jason and Freddy. 'When I first read all that stuff, I thought it was just a publicity thing. Then I found out there were very serious negotiations going on, about the time of *Nightmare III*. I don't know if it was a good idea, although it would have been good for Paramount's *Friday the 13th* series. Wes came up with a lot of mythology and a great gift of using the subconscious for Freddy. You can't make Jason's woods that interesting.'

As to this being Freddy's last outing, well, 'he's always getting these permanent demises, but they always have some way of resurrecting him. There's a little homage to Wes — remember how I cut the finger off in Part One? — in this one I cut all my fingers off as I enumerate all the ways I've been killed. The last night on the soundstage, John Buechler's crew had 100 cans of Ocean Spray cranberries, loading the moulds of my body to explode. Pieces went a block away. They built a full-size Freddy. I had to pose for the mould, with straws in every orifice. I don't see how they could top this one. Of course, I've said that before. I thought part V was a topper. I was at Cannes last year, thinking I could be anonymous, when the film opened in London and the British press found out I was there. I was mobbed. That European response makes me feel a little resurrected.'

'It'll be a fun way to say good-bye to this character who's been very good to me. I've always been a working actor, and made ends meet, but I'd be a liar if I didn't say I'd upped my ante with Freddy.'



Coming from NEL in July is Douglas Clegg's second novel Breeder. The author of *Goat Dance* turns his attention to a spooky old house which, of course, has recently been occupied by a young couple.

TWILIGHT DAWNS DARKLY

Christine protects son Joey from fundamentalist fatality.



Dean R Koontz has no problem selling books, but film adaptations of his work have not had much success, critical or otherwise. Now *Servants of Twilight* attempts to do him justice

ANOTHER KING



The first released still from George A Romero's adaptation of *The Dark Half* shows author Thad Beaumont (Timothy Hutton) pondering the pitfalls of plagiarism. His fight to the death with the real George Stark, a psychopathic character from one of his own books, makes for fascinating viewing and a great follow up to *Misery*. More info from our man on the inside soon

What would you do if you were a young mother whose little son is accused in broad daylight, by some wild-eyed woman in a shopping centre, of being the Anti-Christ? If you're Christine (Belinda Bauer) and your son is Joey (Jarrett Lennon), and he subsequently suffers nightmares, finds his dog decapitated and the police don't want to know, you hire a private detective — enter Charlie Harrison (Bruce Greenopwod) who advises not to confront the accusing woman (Grace Zabriskie) or the Church of Twilight she heads. He will investigate. But the cult believes Joey is about to bring the world to an end, and they'll do anything to stop him, including murdering two of Charlie's colleagues who are protecting mother and son. The fight is on to save Joey in an ever more nightmarish scenario.

As director and co-scripter Jeff Obrow states: 'I read the novel back when Dean had written it under his pseudonym, Leigh Nichols. It was about real people, in real situations and it wasn't, for me, just another supernatural piece. It had the potential to be a solid detective thriller, leaving out all the supernatural elements. I felt it could happen to anyone I knew, even me.'

The script was written without reference to Dean R Koontz.

If you do talk to an author, who's so close to his work, he's bound to be disappointed by what happens during the adaptation process. I wanted to have a pure experience of writing the script, as we saw it, and not have to worry about where Dean was coming from. The hardest part is that the material you're in love with from the novel just doesn't fit into a 90-minute film. Then, you want to write scenes you think are great, but you start to consider Dean's reaction when he realizes a scene wasn't in his book. We tried to keep all of his good stuff in: I was attracted to that book, not my screenplay — I didn't have a screenplay until I read the book.'

PLAYING WITH REALITY

The story is ultimately that of a detective protecting a woman, who is protecting her son. As you're drawn toward the end you realize there's an undercurrent running through the novel that contrasts the real people and situations. I found it totally absorbing. You feel like a runner, and there's this shadow keeping pace with you just out of the corner of your eye. Dean brings you to this fork in the road and flips reality on you. You find that everything is not what it appears to be.'

The intention has been to turn out a serious cinematic treatment, with never a wink at the audience. 'The executives complained that the film was too 'dark'. But it's an extremely dark story and the more you light it that way the more effective it will be. The whole key to Dean's work is mood. My director of photography was dedicated to keeping the film very sullen.'

JB Macabre

Servants of Twilight has opened in the States, and should hit our shores soon. The novel has just been reissued under the Koontz name — read the review this issue.

- Thunderbirds FAB, the live show featuring Gerry Anderson's action puppets opened at the Mermaid Theatre, Puddle Dock, Off Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4 on Monday May 3. Tickets cost £9.00 to £14.00 and can be obtained from the Box Office on 071 410 0000
- The second Comic Mart comes to Exeter and Devon Arts Centre on Saturday June 15, 10am to 5pm. It will include a comic market, artists/writers working exhibition, a comic quiz on the artists and writers and a grand auction. More info from: Comic Mart 1991, Exeter and Devon Arts Centre, Bradninch Place, Gandy Street, Exeter, EX4 3LS.
- The behind-the-scenes story of Arnold Schwarzenegger's blockbuster, *Terminator 2*, is told in a new Titan Book release out this month. *The Making of Terminator 2* contains 32-pages of colour photographs and 80 pages of black and white stills plus an introduction by the film's director James Cameron. Also out is Titan's *The Terminator* graphic novel.
- The boys from Troma recently trotted out seven new genre movies at the Cannes Film Festival. These titles included *Class of Nuke 'em High Part II*, *Sgt Kabukiman NYPD*, *Wizards of the Demon Sword*, *Dead Dudes in the House*, *Chopper Chicks in Zombie Town*, *Def By Temptation*, and *Strangest Dreams: Invasion of the Space Preachers*. Look out for a complete resumé in our special Cannes report next issue.
- A series of new *Star Wars* novels will appear in August from Bantam Press. Set in the aftermath of the first film trilogy, where Leia and Han are married and Luke is the first in a line of Jedi Knights, another battle is brewing between the Alliance and one of the emperor's last warlords.

WITH IMMEDIATE

JB Macabre, a man who knows what's what when it comes to prosthetics, reports on three men who know even more.

When you watch one of your favourite horror films of the late 70s or 80s, there are probably some effects in them that have been created by one of the three artists who are now working as KNB FX - Bob Kurtzman, Greg Nicotero and Howard Berger.

After achieving recognition in the film industry, KNB has decided to try to produce films and the cameras should roll this August on *From Dusk 'til Dawn*. The film will be directed by Bob Kurtzman, produced by Greg Nicotero and star Brion James, Robert Englund, Ted Raimi and Angus Scrimm.

JB Macabre: When effects first came to the attention of audiences, they took a back seat to the stars and directors. Then the slasher films became popular and effects films had their day. Have those films helped to put the art back into your craft?

Greg Nicotero: There is something to be said for a lack of showcasing and coming up with something that's different. I feel that *American Werewolf In London*, *The Howling* and *The Thing* were all films that left us sitting in the theatre with our jaws on the floor. It's always a challenge to



Army: Lab technician is attacked by one of the killer arms

come up with something that will dazzle. You want to come up with something that will give audiences that same reaction. We had the chance to do this with a gargoyle transformation on *Tales From The Darkside: The Movie*.

Are there any new technologies that you are using that you have not applied before, or any new breakthroughs?

GN: The majority of the advances are mechanical. People are designing systems that can realistically duplicate movements. The stuff we did on

Tales From The Darkside and *Dances With Wolves* was all radio controlled. In *Dances* we had an entire buffalo that was pneumatic. It depends on what works the best, foam latex, gelatin, dummy heads. There are many tried and true methods that still work well.

DISCARDING THE DROSS

Does your decision to take a project depend upon the script?

GN: Definitely. We received a few scripts that were the most offensive things ever written and the production people really wanted us to work on their film. Some are so bad. I read one

script last week that took me three days to read because it was so bad that I kept putting it down.

Perhaps that's one of the reasons that KNB is trying to produce films?

GN: Yes, with all the projects that we've done individually, and collectively, over the last six years we have made the connections, so why not do it ourselves. The most frustrating thing is to be sitting in here working and

Dances with Wolves: Skinned buffalos were made with removable fur, allowing freedom to shoot them skinned or intact



EFFECT..

have someone from a production call and say, 'Oh, we didn't think about that. We didn't realize that we had to get that actor to you five weeks before shooting'.

Bob and I sat down and talked about the idea. Bob came up with the story and he's going to direct it. We went through all the films we've worked on and came up with a list of some of the great people we've worked with. Rob Draper is a great director of photography who worked on *Halloween V* and won an Ace Award for his work on the *Tales From The Crypt* series for HBO. If we take all these great people and get them together on one project, we are going to have a great film.

THE WAY AHEAD

Have you started looking into the problems you'll face getting a distribution deal?

Bob Kurtzman: It's more than likely going to be a foreign distribution deal with a domestic video deal. The budget we're looking at will have a lot to do with it.

GN: The market for horror films is really soft at this time. We've taken some other projects we've owned and sent them down to people like Walter Hill and Joe Dante, and almost everyone wants to do a sensitive drama now. Many of the directors who sharpened their teeth on the horror genre are now saying that it's been done and want to move on.

I think, again, that someone who can come up with a new and original project is going to clean up. *Dawn Of The Dead* cost about a million dollars to make and it grossed big money because it did things that audiences had not seen before. I remember seeing the woman getting her neck bit and the head explosion. We feel confident that, given the opportunity, we can give an audience that same kind of feeling.

BK: It may not get the release you want, but the idea is to make a really good little film and show them what you have. Obviously, with small projects like that you don't get big backing on a release.

Howard Berger: What is weird is, the three films we did for Fangoria films (set up by the management of the gore mag) were originally going straight to video. They finished the first film, *Mindwarp*, directed by Steve Barnett, and New Line Cinema picked it up to distribute it theatrically. The second one, *Children Of The Night*, New Line picked up too.

GN: *Children Of The Night* looks to be the most promising. It's directed by Tony Randell, who did *Hellraiser II*. He's the one director who would treat you the same whether you were craft services or director of photography. In our initial meetings we would suggest



Children of the Night:
Czakyr impaled by a crucifix

things, he would accept them and incorporate our ideas into the film. Also, I think that *Children Of The Night* was their pet project out of the three films.

STRONG STUFF

So, at the creative end you're welcomed, but how do the studios rate the special effects shops?

GN: The studios don't want to acknowledge that there are effects people working on the film. Many times they're afraid that the public is going to feel that it's just an effects movie and they don't want it billed as one. It's real interesting, we went through this whole period of people asking us, 'What do you guys think of the ratings board and the MPAA?' It was like we still do the work and they still shoot it whether it shows up in the film or not. Sometimes it's frustrating and sometimes you just shrug it off.

It's weird what gets through and what does not, considering that *The Silence Of The Lambs* had some pretty strong stuff in it. I couldn't believe what they let pass in that film.

BK: But that's because they're not billing it as a horror film.

HB: And it's not a one-and-a-half-million dollar film.

GN: It's got some power behind it. **With the move into the mainstream, how will KNB change during the next few years?**

GN: We've reached a certain level with our work, by working on such films as *Dances With Wolves* and *Sibling Rivalry*, that people will look at our résumé and see good solid films that you can be proud of, as opposed to *Nudist Colony Of The Dead* and



Thanksgiving Blood Feast. That is going to have a lot of impact on future work, especially if *Dances* wins any percentage of the awards it's nominated for (*Seven Oscars in March wasn't bad!* — Ed.). Even though we're not up for one, if the production designer wins that's a triumph for us because we worked with the production designer.

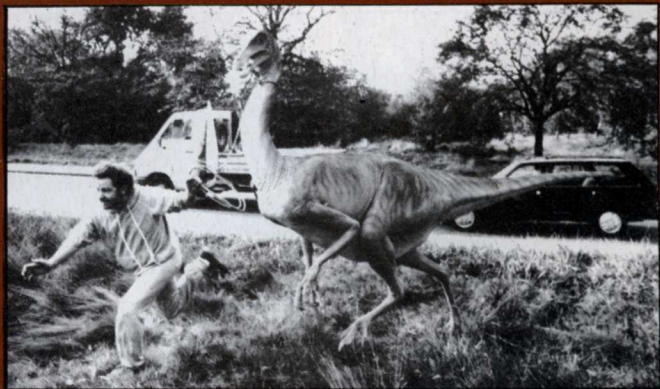
GN: We've established a reputation. Simply, the majority of films that we've worked on we've never had any problems. People ask, 'How do we know you can deliver?', and we don't ever have to worry about that any-

Misery: One of Kathy Bates' four gelatin heads for the end fight sequence

more. It's like, call Kevin Costner or Rob Reiner if you want to know if we can deliver. Plus, *People* magazine has done a piece on us. It has to do with the buffalo we did. Getting that kind of exposure makes a big difference.

HB: Since we did *Dances* we've had a lot of calls to do animal replicas. Still, I'm sure we will be busy making creatures, monsters and mainstream effects for a long time to come.

DOUBLE BILL



Our special Movie -Makers series returns next month with a double feature. Reel Two includes an interview with Robbie Braun, the animator and robotics expert who is being considered for work on Stephen Spielberg's new dinosaur movie, *Jurassic Park*, as well as photographic effects on a new medieval feature film, and Derek Meddings who created the Batmobile for

A Somethingosaurus chases our robotics expert into the brush

Tim Burton's *Batman* and the visual effects for *Neverending Story II*. Both are working on new projects, so you can look forward to reading about them exclusively in next month's FEAR.

THE WORLD OF FEAR

ART IN ILLUSION

F/X: Murder by Illusion, made in 1985, has finally spawned a sequel. FEAR's JB Macabre explores every special effects man's dream hero...

Special effects wizard Rollie Tyler once served as the patsy for a mob kingpin. Using the tools of his trade, he escaped with partner Leo McCarthy and the boss's small fortune.

Five years have passed and Rollie has used his talents to become a high-tech toymaker. However, he is enlisted by Leo, now turned private eye, to help trap a would-be killer in *F/X 2: The Deadly Art of Illusion*.

The sequel, directed by Richard (Psycho II) Franklin and shot on location in Toronto, New York and Rome, reunites the original's stars Bryan Brown, as Rollie, and Brian Dennehy as Leo.

Written by Bill (Strange Behaviour) Condon, the movie will try to capture the panache and sense of humor of the original, while packing in more action. 'Rollie Tyler is like a retired gunfighter,' Condon states. 'The challenge in writing the sequel was to devise a way to put him back in action through some extraordinary circumstances.'

The real genius behind Rollie's effects is Eric Allard, *F/X 2's* special



effects supervisor, a veteran of *The Black Hole*, *Dragonslayer* and *Ghostbusters* and *Short Circuits I and II* who also runs his own All Effects Company.

Condon envisioned a homicidal cyborg, an amazingly expressive clown robot, an automatic tennis ball machine that fires sausage, as well as a barrage of bullet shots, shattered glass, breakaway furniture and explosions that Allard was responsible for bringing to life.

SUPERMARKET MAYHEM

One of the film's highlights is a fight between Rollie and a fanatical pursuer set in a supermarket. The complex scene has ordinary items like chicken, tin foil, batteries and toilet paper transformed into deadly weapons: a completely normal place suddenly chock-full of artillery, when seen

F/X/2: Brian Dennehy (left) and Bryan Brown (right) clown around.

through the eyes of someone as resourceful as Rollie! Quick thinking, ingenuity and sharpness makes him more interesting than someone who just picks up a gun and shoots.

In *F/X* Bryan Brown and Brian Dennehy shared only two scenes — the film's final minutes — while *F/X 2* teams them up almost throughout the entire film. 'Though Rollie and Leo are very different, their mutual respect and admiration for each other makes them work well together,' says Dennehy while Brown goes further: 'Neither of the characters would chose to be friends, but they're thrown together by circumstances. They share kind of history — the situations that changed their lives.'

F/X 2 should hit British cinema screens this summer.

TO BOLDLY ARRIVE!

Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry has won the 1991 Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association.

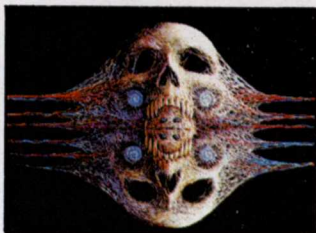
The Association found that the characters in the original series, Kirk, Spock and McCoy embodied the principles of humanity that it wishes to foster and have proven an inspiration for millions of viewers around the world.

The Humanist News states: 'Faced with all-too human dilemmas, the crew of the *Starship Enterprise* solve them through human co-operation and reason without referring to superstition or gods. In every encounter with creatures fantastic or futuristic, they express respect for life in all its many forms, tolerance of different ways of living, a healthy scepticism of the irrational, reliance on scientific enquiry, and a desire to increase happiness and fulfillment for all.'
Wow!

Congrats to Gene from all of us at FEAR.

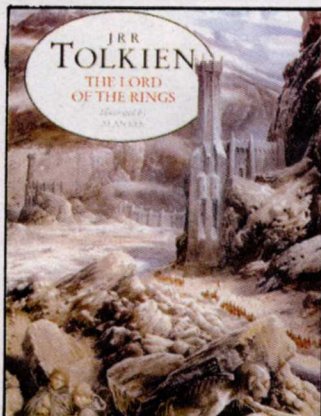
LUMLEY SIGNS NEW NECROSCOPE

Brian Lumley, bestselling author of the *Necroscope* vampire series is doing a Forbidden Planet mega-signing for his new book, *Necroscope V: Deadspawn*, on Saturday July 27 at the Cafe Munchen in London, the regular haunt for all Forbidden Planet authors. Brian will be joined by George Underwood, the talented artist of the book covers.



Of interest to comics fans is that his *Necroscope* series is getting the graphic novel treatment — more news soon.

The *Necroscope* books will feature strongly in the FEAR Vampire Special next issue, including an exclusive pre-publication extract from *Deadspawn*!



Tolkien fans will rave over copies of the fabulous new, and expensive, hardcover re-issue of *The Lord of the Rings*. It includes 50 colour illustrations by Alan Lee and will be released in September.



You have seen the future of law enforcement: pretty cops Patricia Arquette and Corey Haim, coming to your screens

in August. More on SF thriller Prayer of the Rollerboys next FEAR.

OUT TO NAKED LUNCH

Low-budget horror flicks come in all shapes and sizes. Taking a firm grip on itself FEAR penetrates the decidedly phallic art of *Liquid Dreams*...

know when, and has a certain futuristic ambiguity.'

Less ambiguous is the plot. Alluring young Eve arrives in town one night looking for her sister Tina. Her address turns out to be an ominous building on a deserted side street — HQ of Neurovid, a complex of apartments, post-modern nightclubs and a 'mysterious' satellite TV company.

Tina is in her flat, dead of a drugs overdose according to investigating cop Rodino. Refusing to accept this, Eve stays on at Neurovid to find the killer. Eve finds herself descending into the bizarre society of post-modern clubs, dance halls and residential cubicles. Her star quality quickly gains her attention. She commences her ascent through the hierarchy of the complex, in which each floor becomes more and more decadent. Landing a job at The Red Top, a weird taxi dancing hall, her figure and dancing attract the attention of 'the Major', mastermind owner of Neurovid, and the plot



tumescens.

TV sets in all rooms with non-stop broadcasts of bizarre sexual commercials, 'syphoning', 'the Ritual' and murders lead to the discovery of the terrifying truth about Neurovid: 'The Ritual' is a bizarre sexual rite used to create 'Endo-14', a drug that produces sexual pleasure without physical, fleshly contact. Booh!

Naturally, the film makers and stars make allusions to the serious artistic aspirations of *Liquid Dreams*. Mark Manos (who was assistant editor on *Lust in the Dust*) finds comparisons to David Lynch, *Wild at Heart* and *Twin Peaks* irresistible, and heroine Candice, well 'I guess I was meant to be the metaphor for Dorothy in the

If this is a liquid dream, I think I'll have a liquid lunch

modern land of Oz, which is how I see the film.'

The (female) casting director took the script home, read it and told the budding director, 'Mark, you're a sick man.'

'We got great reactions from the actors,' states he.

Liquid Dreams made its way to the Cannes Film Festival — the makers hoping it would be one of the most talked about films of the event. At time of writing no more has been heard...

JB Macabre

Welcome to the dark side of love — that's the invitation extended by first-time director Mark Manos with his futuristic vision that aims to capture a unique blend of film noir, Orwellian futurism and modern sexual paranoia. *Liquid Dreams* looks like up-market soft porn, but then as its star Candice Daly states: 'It captures everyone's dark side, it takes place in a city, you don't know where, it takes place at a time, you don't

I WANT MY DALEK!

A recent BBC auction of *Dr Who* memorabilia shows that, despite his demise, the timelord is still big business.

Top of the range were two Daleks which went for £6,800 to a professor from North London and £6,400 to an electronics engineer. A Cyberman's head was sold for £1,400. Other objects on offer during the auction at Bonhams of London included personal objects from three of the Doctors' costumes, Adric's space suit, a Time Lord costume, a Silurian, a Sea Devil,

and a Sontaran costume. The total raised was £60,533.

Fans of the Doctor who were alarmed at his passing from BBC screens will be pleased that a new film is still on the cards, and a series of novels, written by several of the scriptwriters from the series, has just been launched by WH Allen. It follows on from the instalment of the series, when the Doctor and Peri escaped from the planet of the Cheetah people, and will keep the Timelord's memory alive if all else fails:



SMART MOVES

In his continuing search for entries in his Good Comic Shop Guide, John Gilbert dropped in on Fantasy World and plied owner Bob Smart for the secret of his success.

It all started in 1975 with *Exchange and Mart*. Bob Smart had been collecting Marvel Comics since 1960, but his interest in the industry was just about to peak. Peter Lennon, a major dealer doing comic marts up and down the country, was advertising for comic collections. I knew nothing about comic values or marts, and the idea of dealers speculating in American comics was very strange indeed.

He answered the ad, stating that he had 2500 comics, mostly in mint condition from 1960-69, some of which key Marvels from the first issue: The price offered intrigued me. I didn't even realise there was a book on the market that gave prices on old comics — now known as the *Comic Book Price Guide*.

Despite the price tag, he decided not to part with his collection as he wanted to know more about their worth. He put an ad in *E&M* and was contacted by Bill Dates who 'put me in the picture'. In 1976 he started to specialize in comics and in 1979 packed in his full-time job to deal in them.

He opened his first shop, Fantasy World, in Stoke-on-Trent during 1982. 'It's not your average comic shop.

We're in the city centre for a start, and as well as comics we sell role-playing games, Rock T-shirts and merchandising, science fiction and fantasy paperbacks, TV, horror fiction, martial arts and current mags etc. Having said that, we cater for the comics side just as well as any shop that is dedicated to them.'

In 1988 Smart opened Another World in Leicester and this month he launches Another World in Nottingham. Expansion appears to be the name of the game but Bob is, nevertheless, careful to employ knowledgeable staff and stock as wide range of genre product as possible. The secret of his success? 'Well, President Harry Truman said "the world is full of educated derelicts. Nothing is more common than an unsuccessful man with talent. Persistence and determination are omnipotent". I don't consider myself talented. But I've got plenty of persistence and determination.'

Fantasy World: 10 Market Square Arcade, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

Another World: 23 Silver St, Leicester.

Another World: 11 Market St, Nottingham.

LORD OF TIGANA



Guy Gavriel Kay's novel *Tigana* is out in paperback this month. Liz Holliday talks to him about his inspirations...

Of all trilogies that have been compared to *The Lord of the Rings*, none stand higher than Guy Gavriel Kay's *Fionavar Tapestry*, so it's almost poetic justice that he was asked to help organise Tolkien's papers from 1974 to 1975.

'The books I read when I was young weren't *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the other *Narnia* books, they were the Greek and Norse myths, and retellings of Plains Indian myths and legends: and the Grimm Brothers. When I read *The Lord of the Rings*, what I loved about it were the recognitions I had that this was a modern working with things I had already been fascinated by.

'In my late teens I met Christopher Tolkien through family connections, and a few years later, when he was named his father's literary executor, he asked me to come over and assist him with the editing of the *Silmarilion*.'

Perhaps because of this connection, some critics saw *Fionavar* as highly derivative both of Tolkien and of Norse and Celtic mythology. Others felt he had made the material his own to the point where he had transcended the formula. 'I used to find it frustrating that some critics and reviewers would make an automatic assumption that if you work with a particular motif — the Norse or Celtic myths that Tolkien happened to work with —

you got it from him. I kept saying, 'Does no-one imagine other writers can go back to the primary sources?'

STRUCTURAL TAPESTRY

Tigana is nothing like his previous work. 'I think the differences and distinctions mean it's a serious departure, still within the fantasy vein, but it's a reaching out towards so many other different things. It's also so clearly non-Celtic and non-Norse in its origins and interests that I'm optimistic that this book will constitute the emergence of a completely distinctive voice.'

Set in an invented Italianate peninsula, it's political rather than mythical in tone. The area has been conquered and divided up between two tyrants, Brandin and Alberico. Both are wizards. Brandin, in revenge for the death of his son, magically erases the very name of one province from the memories of those not originally born there. This is the eponymous *Tigana*. The plot concerns the birth of a revolution to remove both tyrants: 'It's much more a political novel and a novel of relationships than a formal epic fantasy.'

If the new work is related to the old in any way, it's on a structural level. *Fionavar* is mentioned in *Tigana* as part of their mythology. The central motif in the earlier work was the idea

of mythology as a tapestry. Its structure reflected this: the narrative moved forward and back in time, like a shuttle on

a loom. In *Tigana*, this same structure is used, but here it reflects the importance of memory, as characters enmeshed in one event recall what happened in the past.

'If there is any single motif that anchors the whole novel for me, it's the idea of memory being central to your identity. You can't really be anyone if you don't have a history, where you've come from. If you don't, you can't have a perspective on who you are.'

The horror and the power of what Brandin did to *Tigana* is not the occupation and the conquest, but the additional obliteration of their name, their identity, their own memory of themselves, and anyone else's memory of their existence in the world.'

Tigana is, therefore, about people being exiled from themselves, a theme which echoes through the book. 'The two epigraphs at the beginning are true epigraphs. The one from Dante is about exile: the loneliness and the bitterness of exile. That's central to the whole story of Alessan and Baerd; and Sandre, who was exiled into the countryside from his city. So, people exiled in their own land, almost: that's a major theme.'

Another theme is one of mask and deception as no-one in the book is quite who they appear to be. Indeed, Kay admits that his attempts to create a *Dramatis Personae* failed because it would have involved either massive dishonesty on his part, or a massive disclosure of the plot. Unsurprisingly, the touchstones here are the Borgias and Machiavelli: 'The inspirations of the book were the moods and the flavours of Renaissance Italy. One of

the books I read before I did *Tigana* was Machiavelli's *The Prince*. I read that and lots of material from Renaissance Italy, to steep myself in the period.'

'I didn't want to retell a story from the Italian Renaissance: what I needed to do was to tell my story, but invoking the flavour and the ambience, the Machiavellian moods.'

EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

'I have a drive towards complexity in characters. I'm bored by characters who are sketched too simplistically, bored by people's motivations being too easy to grasp. I am fascinated when I read, and when I try to write, the layering up of the complexities of characters. If a character gets complex enough, with many dimensions to him or her, it becomes harder and harder to see them as wholly good or bad. I see as part of my purpose throwing as many dimensions into the story. That's when people become real. That's when you cry for them, when you stay up all night wanting to know what happens to them.'

That aside, I had to admit to Kay that nothing in *Tigana* affected me half so much as Kevin did when he killed himself in *The Fionavar Tapestry*. This is a much less apocalyptic book: deliberately so. I wanted *Tigana* to be more adult, because the conflict is much less black and white, good and evil. Brandin has done something brutally appalling, but he has done it out of loss and love of his own which drove him in a human rage to do something ghastly. It is much harder for the readers to peg their emotions as clearly. You are meant not to be as sure what you want to happen, because that's what happens in life.'

IT'S A MEGABLAST

Rising from the ashes of that most vibrant comics, film and video magazine, *Speakeasy*, comes what promises to be a particularly fiery phoenix. From John Brown Publishing, best known for the ridiculously successful toilet humour comic, *Viz*, *Blast!* is a combination of full colour comic strips, news and previews.

While *Speakeasy* featured a few short monochrome strips per month, *Blast!* will major on full colour stories from top writers and artists, pitting itself against other UK comic titles such as *Toxic!* and *Crisis*.

Looking at the line-up for the first issue, available now, *Blast!* has some impressive opening

shots: *Mr Monster*, by Michael Gilbert and Simon Bisley, Paul Chadwick's *Concrete*, Axel Pressbutton, by Pedro Henry and Steve Dillon, *Lazarus Churchyard* by Warren Ellis and D'Isreali... The list goes on, and with strips such as *Big Berta* and *Dog Boy* appearing soon, *Blast!* won't go out with a whimper.

And if that's not enough, each *Blast!* will contain a 16-page *Speakeasy* section with up-to-the-minute news and reviews of films, videos and of course, comics.

Blast! costs a mere £1.50 and is available on the first of every month; it's a neat partner to FEAR; so don't leave home without it.

COLLECTOR'S EDITION:

GUY N



SMITH

In the first of an occasional series dedicated to bestselling authors with a long and proven track record, Andy Oldfield talks to the estimable and amiable Guy N Smith.

Becoming an established and prolific author is staggeringly simple: step one, write a book and sell it; step two, repeat step one a lot of times. Guy N Smith is a practical man, and practicality is the philosophy he adopted to escape from the world of banking in order to finance a country-based lifestyle for himself and his family on an organic smallholding

on the Shropshire/Powys border hills. The self-sufficiency farming ethos is one that translates into his writing remarkably well. 'I didn't have an agent when I started and I don't now. I just heard that [NEL] were looking for a werewolf book for their horror list. So I put a synopsis up and they bought it. That's how it started. Straightforward horror, I enjoyed them — I thought it was great in those days.'

A lot of potential novelists spend a lifetime thinking about writing their book. Smith's approach is more fruitful. 'Putting a synopsis together took a Sunday afternoon — I still had to go to work in those days. It's all very well talking about these books, but the hard fact is they've got to be written.'

Writing from a synopsis is still his favoured method. But when writers talk about a synopsis, they can mean anything from a few notes hastily scribbled on the back of an envelope to a rigorously worked out outline. 'I'm told I write the most detailed synopses of the lot,' says Smith. 'Twenty or more pages broken up into chapters so that once I start writing it I know

exactly what I'm going to write.'

Over the years, the only change that he's made in his working practices is at the level of technology. 'For the last three years, I write on a word processor. It makes life a lot, lot easier.'

CROSSING THE BOUNDARY

With writers like Dean R Koontz and Charles De Lint, thrillers and horror are increasingly cross fertilizing each other. It's an area which fascinates Smith. 'I really do love thrillers and if I'm going to be able to do thrillers then I've got to move into it taking the horror with it until the time they say right that's fine let's just do a thriller.'

Of course, cross genre influences stretch further than this. Fantasy, horror, science fiction and thrillers are becoming increasingly difficult to separate. 'The boundaries overlap,' says Smith. 'A lot of people have called me a science fiction writer. And if you look at *The Crabs*, well that is going into science fiction.'

I came into it when pulp horror was at its peak. When I was getting my arm twisted for four book deals and the books were selling — they always used to do 60,000 on subscription. With hindsight, if I'd said no, disregarded all this and took my time to do a huge horror like you get King and Koontz doing today I'd have gone along a different path. But from my point of view they wanted the books, they were paying the money. What do you do? You write the books don't you?

HORROR EXPORTS

Today book sales are generally down. In the UK if a book sells 6,000 it's judged a relative success. A far cry from Smith's sales figure in the 70s. And a far cry from what he's doing with overseas sales at the moment. 'I've got the rights back on the older books, so they're up for grabs. The Poles are going to print the lot. They're doing four this month, two *Sabats* and two *Crabs* — the orders are just coming in, and the wholesalers are clammering for *Sabat 3* and *4* which are being published later in the year... *Deathbell*, they published last month and that's done 70,000 before publication. You're talking 70-100,000 per title. That's back to what I was doing in this country in the early 70s. They took another 26 books back with them last week to get ready. I'm going over in the summer to promote *Fiend*,

they think that will be the big one.'

There seems a development in Smith's books. From dealing with creatures through event-based stories and finally with the workings of the mind. This is partly a reflection of market requirements ('If *The Crabs* were published today, they wouldn't take off in the same way as they did in the 70s. But also, I think there I'm really just moving with the times, keeping abreast of things.') and partly because of Smith's maturity as a writer: 'There's no limit to horror, but you have to use characters people can identify with. And you get better with every book you do. And partly that's the way I've been moving on, doing bigger books...'

Fans interested in moving into the future with Guy N Smith and seeing what direction he's moving in don't have long to wait. His next book *The Resurrected* is due out from Grafton in November of this year.

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Arrow: *Abomination* 1986, *Cannibals* 1986, *Alligators* 1987, *Bloodshow* 1987, *Deathbell 2: Demons* 1987, *The Island* 1988, *The Master* 1988, *Accursed (reissue)* 1988, *Throwback (reissue)* 1988, *The Festering* 1989, *Carnivore* 1989.

Sphere: *Fiend* 1988, *Mania* 1989, *The Camp* 1989, *The Unseen* 1990, *The Black Fedora* 1991.

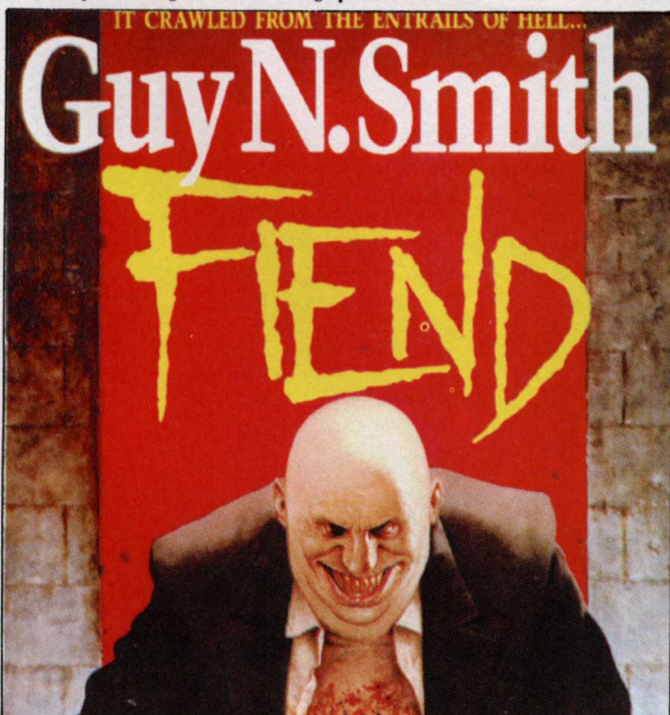
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Cover illustration by Les Edwards for Fiend



IN MY OPINION:

PSYCHO BY DESIGN

Controversy and condemnation can hype an author — and even his mediocre novel. Ramsey Campbell gives Bret Easton Ellis a piece of his mind on *American Psycho*...

I expected to hate Bret Easton Ellis' novel. I'd been made aware of its early history, which seems to be as follows. In December 1989 Ellis delivered a first draft of *American Psycho* to Simon and Schuster, who had paid him an advance of \$300,000. At an internal meeting some months later, members of staff were outraged by a sample chapter. George Corsillo, who had designed the covers of Ellis' two previous books, refused the assignment. In October that august journal *Time* extracted and regurgitated choice cuts from the novel so as to deplore them as 'the most appalling acts of torture, murder and dismemberment ever described in a book targeted for the best-seller lists'. On 14 November Simon and Schuster announced that although copies had been printed they had decided not to publish after all. It isn't clear whose decision this was; rumour suggests some paragon of Paramount Pictures, which owns the company, which released *Friday the 13th*. (Martin Davis, the chairman of Paramount, commented 'Compared to this book, *Friday the 13th* would be endorsed by the Vatican'.) Less than two weeks later Vintage, the paperback division of Random House, had bought the novel.

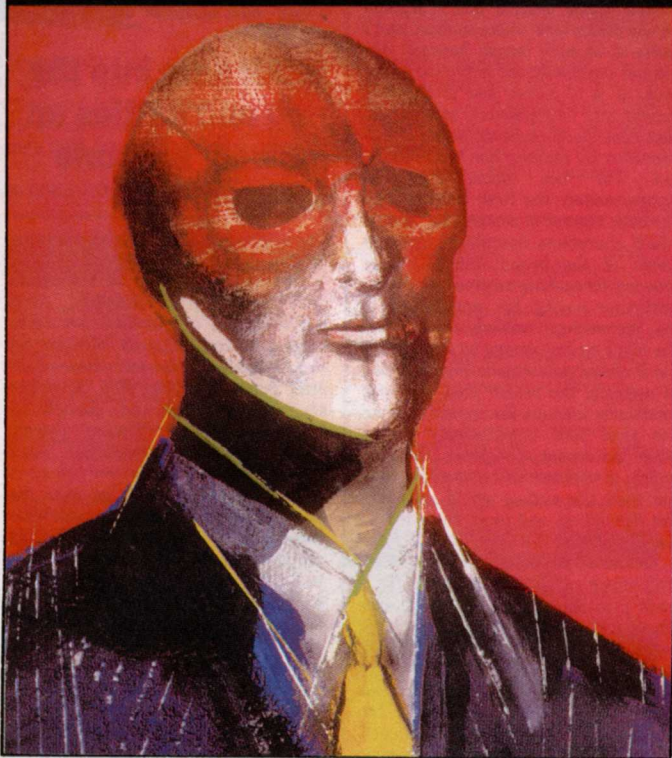
HYSTERICAL HYPE

Predictably, much of this outraged both the liberal and the censorious. The president of the Authors' Guild described the withdrawal of the book as 'a black day for American publishing', and the Horror Writers of America wrote to Simon and Schuster, rebuking them for censorship.

Personally, I wouldn't mind suffering a kind of censorship that brought me two advances for the first edition of the book, not to mention a great deal of free publicity before publication. Meanwhile, the Los Angeles co-ordinator of the National Organization for Women set up a telephone hot-line on which callers could hear some of the more outrageous scenes read aloud. If only the Christian Fundamentalists had treated my books similarly instead of just burning them! Ellis, however, told Reuters that he was shocked by the condemnation of his book — 'It looks like outside hysteria is reaching into the publishing industry' — and I wonder if he is missing the point as much as many of his readers seem to have.

I'd suggest that the readers have more justification, insofar as by the time most of us get around to the book we're likely to have been prejudiced by at least some of the above. There have been similar disagreements in publishing before — for instance, female staff members at Grafton objected so strongly to Thomas Tessier's *Finishing Touches* that the book was denied a hardcover edition in Britain — but none so well publicized. In my case I'd also read several extracts from *American Psycho*, admittedly quoted out of context by the press but so disgusting that I couldn't imagine a context that would justify them. Alongside these were the comments of Sonny Mehta, president of Vintage ('...a serious book by a serious writer... a significant writer writing in a documentary manner about a particular segment of American society') and of Ellis himself, in an interview that would have been enclosed with the Simon and Schuster review copies: 'I don't think it's a novelist's job to give little moral lessons...sequences that were very upsetting to write but (which) felt real and honest and true...very clear there is a moral tone to the book (which) lies in the direction of the author abhorring this kind of behaviour.' (In the context of this book it's unnerving that Ellis appears to think of himself in the third person.) More recently we've had the managing director of Picador claiming that 'we are not promoting the book — we are not seeking to add to the hype.' Well, few things look better on the balance sheet than free publicity, but I suspect that some readers of FEAR might respect the book more if its publishers had taken a lead from *The Wasp Factory* (the lurid literary equivalent of a video nasty) and quot-

AMERICAN PSYCHO BRET EASTON ELLIS



ed some of the hostile comments — from *Time*, say, and Martin Davis — on the cover. Admittedly *American Psycho* sounds like two Robert Bloch novels run into one, but the title is hardly enough to suggest that much of the book reads like unrestrained Shaun Hutson.

CHIC MORAL HORROR?

I mean that literally, and not as a sly dig at Shaun. On a panel some years ago Shaun described how Star Books had persuaded him to tone down the violence in *Chainsaw Terror*, reissued as *Into the Night* (the book in which a character called Ramsey gets done in with a claw hammer). The death of one victim, Amy, was considerably more prolonged, and the cut is denoted by three dots. Several chapters of *American Psycho* consist of precisely the kind of material Shaun suppressed, and in at least as much detail. Does this mean that an author can get away with it so long as he and his publishers lay some claim to moral seriousness?

Well, not any more. Fiction whose violence is comparably explicit and relentless has been published as pure unashamed horror: for instance, Richard Laymon's *Mess Hall* in *Book of the Dead*. The irony is rather that by pretending to comment on a society in which consumerism and the pressure to compete lead to amorality and mayhem, Ellis' novel ends up looking at least as much like a product of that

culture as the material it seeks to criticize. Shaun has said that his own most graphic books were written in order to satisfy the tastes of the audience which saw horror in terms of the video nasties (and presumably as a substitute for the nasties once the videos fell foul of censorship). Ellis, on the other hand, suggests strongly that horror on video is part of the problem by having his psychopath rent de Palma's *Body Double* several dozen times as an aid to masturbation, though nowhere does he acknowledge the similarities of scenes in his book to some of the sleaziest post-*Psycho* horror films — *The Toolbox Murders* and *Bloodsucking Freaks* among others. Perhaps this needn't mean that Ellis seeks to set himself above the horror genre, but the packaging certainly does; with its cover design by the Lloyd Ziff Design Group and its author photograph for *Männer Vogue*, the book becomes one more example of the brand name chic which it monotonously criticizes. Of course all fiction — all art — is a product both of the individual and of the culture within which it is created, and this seems to be my cue to talk (as John Gilbert requested) about censorship. But first...

BRAND PROSE

American Psycho isn't a book I especially want to defend, not least because I have less and less time for prose which gives me no pleasure as prose. Selecting a page of dialogue at random I find this: 'Van Patten asks...'

'McDermott follows...' 'McDermott suggests...' 'I correct...' 'Van Patten says lewdly...' 'I murmur...' 'I exclaim...' 'Van Patten cries out...' 'I shout...' 'I suggest...' 'She asks coyly...' 'I ask back, coyly...' 'She whines...' 'My voice trails off...' (and no wonder). This is from one of the book's better scenes, in which the psychopath and some of his friends spend several hours arguing on the phone over where to dine, and I quote it at such length because this kind of overstatement is typical of the book. It is of course told in the first person, and I suppose one could argue that Ellis discourages imitation of this character by making him write badly, but I'm not about to try. Approximately the first 200 pages of the book consist of scenes like this, in which characters described largely in terms of the brand names they're wearing do nothing at great length (in particular paying for, and failing to eat, increasingly unlikely meals), and the more cynical among us might wonder if all the publicity had the function of assuring the reader that the book eventually hots up. For myself, I found the first half cumulatively funny, while the scenes of violence (the kind which, in splatter fiction, tend to make me wish the author would grow up) are the ugliest and most depressing I have ever read.

If that is the book's justification, it isn't much of one, particularly for a book just three pages short of 400. These scenes do ring true as psychotic fantasies, which the book suggests at least some of them are, but both they and the length of the novel offer excess and not much else — indeed, the length looks like an attempt to compensate for a lack of plot and insight. If none of this is a reason to admire the novel, nor is it a reason to ban it. I'm increasingly convinced that censorship is a method used by a culture to deny what it has itself produced, and *American Psycho* is in every way a product of its time.

Time moves on, and so does culture. Who remembers (for instance) D Scott-Moncrieff's horror collection *Not for the Squeamish*, sold under the counter on Charing Cross Road after the Second World War? I predict that once the free publicity fades, Ellis' novel will be quickly forgotten, not least because I suspect that more hardcore splatter fans (even if they don't lose patience with the book's pretensions) lack the attention span Ellis appears to expect of his audience, while few other customers are likely to finish the book. In other words, most people are perfectly capable of censoring for themselves if they are allowed to do so, and in the case of *American Psycho* it looks as if they may be given the chance. Perhaps it really is a failed serious novel, or perhaps it is an attempt to market a level of violence beyond the scope of the commercial cinema — a development which my bookseller friend David McClintock, recalling Lovecraft, dubs the 'tickle your innards' school of writing — but in any case it seems to me to spend most of its time pretending that its psychopath has nothing to do with the author. Either that means it has less to tell us than Ellis imagines or more than he might like. Let the public decide, and have this opportunity to be honest about itself.

URBAN SPACE OPERA

FEAR gets into the ring and battles an unlikely scenario for stardom...

Hulk Hogan, star of the World Wrestling Federation, first starred in the 1989 box office success *No Holds Barred*. He's now set to repeat his success with New Line's sci-fi, action/adventure film *Suburban Commando*, aided and abetted by Christopher Lloyd, Shelley Duvall, and veteran Shakespearean actor William Ball.

How does a wrestler go from the arena to science fiction film star? 'It's weird, the script had been floating around Hollywood for a few years. It was originally written for Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito. I asked New Line to go out and get it.'

Arnold is noted for violent, bloody films, not something Hogan wanted to emulate: 'We re-wrote it to lighten up the characters. Now we shoot people with ray guns. The end result is that you don't know if they're dead or stunned. The film relies more on the audience's imagination. I really feel comfortable with it now.'

THE STORY...

Shep Ramsey is a galactic peacekeeper whose ship is damaged by a comet storm while in hyperspace: he heads for the nearest planet — Earth, conceals the ship and looks for a place to stay while making the repairs.

He finds a room at the home of Charlie Wilcox (Christopher Lloyd), a mild-mannered architect and family man down on his luck. His boss won't give him a raise and his wife, Shelly Duvall, and kids have no admiration for him. Shep, in his galactic attire and loaded with cash, excites Charlie's curiosity and he follows the stranger to his spaceship where he learns of his origins, technology and alien weaponry. As Shep toils, Charlie borrows some of his weapons to do some good for the city.

Saving a girl from thugs Charlie accidentally sends out a signal that alerts the evil General Suitor (William Ball) and his intergalactic hit man to Shep's location. Charlie fouls up again and the weapon ends up with the thugs.

Shep and Charlie find themselves hunting for the weapon and hunted by the galactic villains...

...THE TELLERS

Veteran Western director Burt Kennedy was signed up. Hogan enthuses: 'He said it would be just like

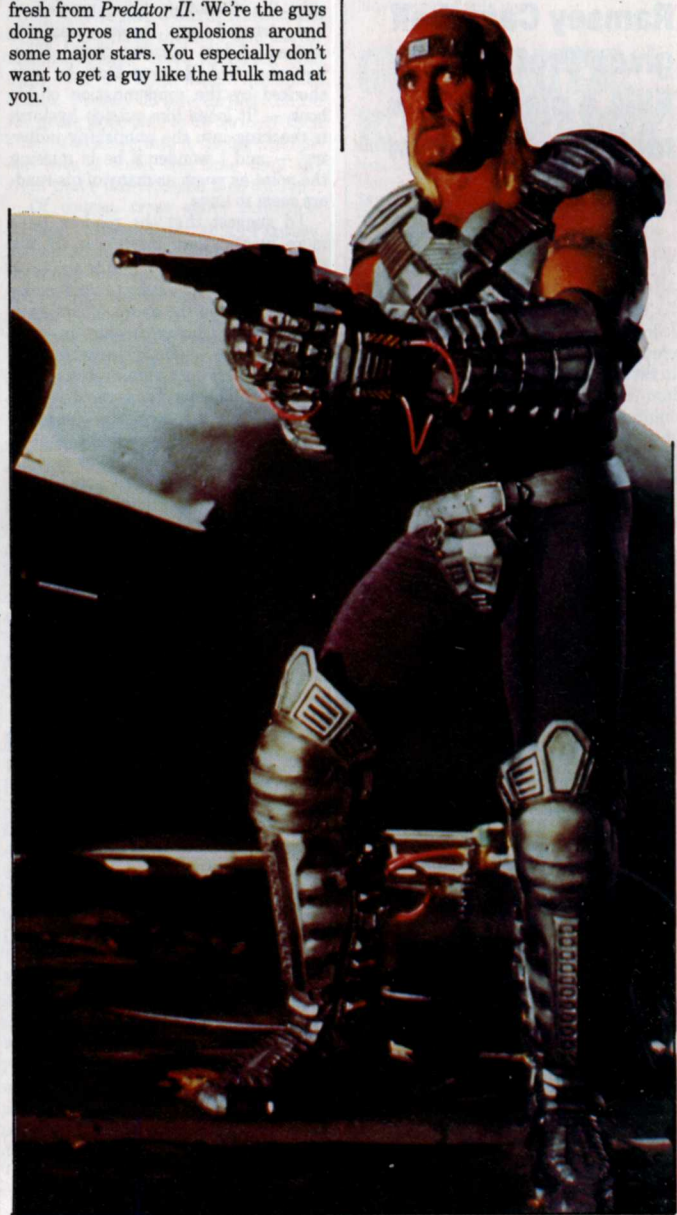
filming a western. He had great ideas for the opening. It all sounded good to me. They were suggestions that I knew worked in my business.'

There was a lot of physical work for Hogan. He decided to do his own stunts. It was important to him because he didn't want to cheat his fans. 'The stunts get me worried, I'm always trying to be the big, tough and macho guy. Unfortunately, it's not the smartest thing to do, having an actor do his own stunts but until we can find a Hulk Hogan look-alike, or a big bald guy with muscles, I'll be doing my own.' — with the help of mechanical effects coordinators Thomas Bellissimo and Charles Belardinelli fresh from *Predator II*. 'We're the guys doing pyros and explosions around some major stars. You especially don't want to get a guy like the Hulk mad at you.'

It was up to Jeff (*Die Harder*) Okun, visual effects coordinator, to come up with good looking space scenes and spaceships on a tight budget. 'We couldn't afford to build all the spaceships we needed. We canvassed the entire state looking for spaceship miniatures that were never used for past projects.'

The likes of Christopher Lloyd and Shelley Duvall promise good acting, while Burt Kennedy, getting on now, and the low budget effects point to potential pitfalls. Find out how the team's efforts fared, and whether Hulk Hogan has another hit under his voluminous belt soon...

JB Macabre and Bryan Singer



'Today is a good time to die'

MAYBE APOCALYPSE



Kiefer Sutherland in *Flatliners*

APocalypse NOW?

All that begins must end.
And since time
immemorial mankind
has morbidly predicted
its own extinction. What
more graphic way to
feed this obsession than
the lurid medium of film?
FEAR books a ride on
the Apocalypse Express
and views the subject to
end them all...

he white flower
unfolds above the land-
scape, thrusting a furnace of
heat and radiation into the air.
Like deadly seeds in the wind,
Flesh, bone, sand, dust, and
wormwood melt and meld as
the petals drift open.
Apocalypse, that rare flower
so sought after by some religious
zealots has just bloomed. Nuclear war, or the
explosion of a device of mass destruction, has
been the subject of most apocalyptic movies,
particularly in the man-made (homo sapiens
own goals) department. The most recent of
these films, *Miracle Mile*, was produced by
Steve De Jarnatt two years ago and recently
bombed theatrically because, according to
distributor Hemdale, the Gulf war was tak-
ing place. There are not, however, many
movies which deal with the process of annihila-
tion or the hours before it happens. The
television productions of *When The Wind
Blows* (a cartoon by *The Snowman* author
Raymond Briggs) and the controversial
drama *Threads* lead the field, with movies
such as *Things to Come* only hinting at the
terrors which few of us want to imagine.
Most apocalyptic movies only superficially
scan the potential for survival after the con-
flagration, playing on the one hand to audi-
ence emotions, as in the screen adaptation of
Harlan Ellison's *A Boy and His Dog*, or the
gross-out and action factor which propels
Charlton Heston through *The Omega Man*.

Similar crude emotion/action alignments can
be made with most of the well known after-
the-bomb movies. If you're into character
development, check out films such as the
Gregory Peck vehicle *On the Beach*, *The
Planet of the Apes* (Heston again), *The
Ultimate Warrior* with Yul Brynner, the rela-
tively recent *The Handmaid's Tale*, the
William F Nolan adaptation *Logan's Run* and
Roger Zelazny's *Damnation Alley* (George
Peppard in a tale of four

A world destroyed by
germ warfare: Lone
survivor Charlton Heston
battles the mutants in
The Omega Man (1971)



H.G. WELLS' THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

Color by
Technicolor

at X

**A MIGHTY
PANORAMA OF
EARTH-SHAKING
FURY!**

Produced by **GEORGE PAL**
WHO SAVED YOU
'DESTINATION MOON' & 'WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE'
DIRECTED BY **BYRON HASKIN** & **BARRE LYNDON**
SCREENPLAY BY
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY H.G. WELLS
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS (1952)

Starring *Gene Barry, Ann Robinson, Lesa Tremayne*
Director *George Pal*

George Pal directs his first HG Wells' adaptation with flair and fire. Sticking closely to Wells' plot it has the inhabitants of Earth at first being examined from afar by the inhabitants of Mars. Eventually the temptation for the Martians is too great. They drag their spindly limbs into elegant but deadly war machines and make their way to Earth where they batter the humans with their heat rays. Seemingly nothing can destroy them, but a freak accident gives humanity the way out. The greatest weapons may not have power over these cosmic gods, but the common cold is deadly. *War of the Worlds* has spawned a number of cinematic and televisual progeny, the best of which are the early 80s TV series *V*, and a Warner Bros mini-series which never made this side of the Atlantic, and, on the borderline, *The Tripods* and *Battlestar Galactica* which became a huge television and cinema hit in the late 70s. Completists may also be pleased to hear that a version of *War of the Worlds* is available as a three-hour talking book from Listen For Pleasure.



Time to look back: Rod Taylor and a Morlock of the future (above right)

20 July 1991 FEAR

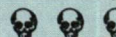


THE TIME MACHINE (1960)

Starring *Rod Taylor, Yvette Mimieux, Alan Young*
Director *George Pal*

An action adventure which sticks closely to both the storyline and atmosphere of HG Well's original novella, *The Time Machine* is set at the turn of the century when Rod Taylor rushes into the future where he discovers that humanity will continue to destroy both the environment and itself. Accidentally stopping at the year 802701, he finds a peace-loving people and falls in love. His idyllic life with this community is soon spoiled when he learns they are prey to the hideous Morlocks, underground

dwellers who use them as slaves and meat. Taylor manages to destroy the Morlock's infernal mills and rescues the remnants of civilization before returning to his own time. He tells his astonished friends the tale, finds that he has time lag and decides to return to the future. The book finished on a sour note as the Time Traveller witnessed the approaching death of our Sun, but the movie ends on a note of suspense as the Traveller's friends break into his study to find machine and man gone. Uneven pacing, and a slow start are balanced with some fine special effects, claustrophobic atmosphere, and a wonderfully ornate time machine.









THE MAD MAX SERIES

Starring Mel Gibson
Director George Miller

One of the earliest good renditions of the post apocalyptic nightmare takes place in the dusty Australian outback where motorcycle gangs and the police fight it out for control. The first movie is a bloodbath, the second sees the resumption of hostilities when petrol runs out, and number three introduces Tina Turner as the queen of a Burroughs-like futuristic society. There are, of course, fans out there, but the serious SF fraternity are hoping that there won't be a fourth. Since the making of the third film Miller has directed *The Witches*, and *Neverending Story II*, so hopefully he has learned his lesson.

Mad Max (1979)   

Mad Max 2 (1981) 

Mad Max Beyond the Thunderdome



World War Three survivors who reach safe haven in New York of all places). On the other hand, the action/terror films, though usually not as well composed, can be a damn sight more fun. The *Mad Max* movies, though totally fantastical, immediately come to mind, as do *No Blade of Grass*, the vile survivalist movie *Turkey Shoot*, and *Genesis II*, which some Gene Roddenberry/*Star Trek* fans might remember.

BIOLOGICAL ENDS

Nuclear decomposition is at number one in the modes of destruction top 10, but some movie makers have tried other methods in order to garner box office success. Chemicals ride in on the environmental ticket as second favourite with the scientists trying to solve the world's famine problems in HG Wells' *Food of the Gods*, but instead unleashing a plague of giant killer animals; or Richard Basehart threatening to wipe out civilization in Alistair MacClean's *The Satan Bug*, and researchers fighting time to stop the release of a deadly bacterium in Michael Crichton's *Andromeda Strain*. Chemical armageddon

now provokes a greater chill than nuclear destruction because of the increased media attention on such weapons and the diminished perceived threat of nuclear war. It's, therefore not surprising that film makers are moving away from Red peril movies and becoming interested in the gas and chemical weapons of mass destruction which are no respecters of country borders or politics. One such film project which has just been kicked into life again is Stephen King's *The Stand* in which America is devastated by a super-flu that becomes affectionately known as Captain Tripps: word is that a Rospo Pallenberg script will go before the cameras sometime in 1991 — Dream on.

ALIEN APOCALYPSE

The next three apocalypse movie classifications — aliens, machines, and natural disasters — can be loosely linked in that aliens often use machines to bring about their personal visions of Armageddon — which might be in the shape of a natural disaster. Undoubtedly, the most famous alien/machine

'Nuclear decomposition is at number one in the modes of destruction 10'

movies have to be the 1952 adaptation of HG Wells' *War of the Worlds* and James Cameron's *Terminator*. The former hints at almost human alien intelligences hiding within their war vehicles while in the latter Cameron has given his creature a human form but divested it of any human intelligence. The result makes the Terminator amoral while Wells' Martians are immoral. Most of the other alien films on our roster are one dimensional: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Children of the Damned*, *It Came from Outer Space* and *The Thing* all project a quasi-political message as one incomprehensible, and therefore malicious, culture subverts another. But be they glassy-eyed children from *The Village of the Damned*, the relentless pod people in both versions of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, or the amorphous consciousness in both versions of *The Blob* the monsters cannot be understood, will always go for the kill, and are therefore beyond redemption. A similarity can be drawn between the brutal unreasoning aliens who slaughter for their own logic and the deadly, all powerful, machines which just as unreasonably aim to become the masters of the Earth. The alienness of the machine is sometimes overtly shown, as in Stephen King's first effort at direction, *Maximum Overdrive*, in which a passing comet gives life to all manner of machines, or *Daleks' Invasion of Earth 2150AD* in which the metal heads intend to float our planet around the galaxy, and *Battlestar Galactica*, in which the Cylons are wholly machines.

UPON OUR HEADS BE IT

Most mechanical end of the world scenarios, however, are ticked into being by computers or other machines which have been created by humanity itself. One of the worst, but perhaps also the most memorable, is the 1969 SF shocker called *The Forbin Project* (which





**INVASION OF THE BODY
SNATCHERS (1978)**

*Starring Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Leonard Nimoy.
Director Philip Kaufman*

A mess when compared to the original 1956 film (starring Kevin McCarthy — who also appeared in the remake — and directed by Don Siegel) this movie at least retains some of the elements made famous by Jack Finney's classic SF novel. The biggest mistake was probably setting the new film in San Francisco when the earlier film was backdropped against the claustrophobia of smalltown America. Filmed at the height of McCarthy paranoia it has humans bumped off and replaced by alien creatures. These monsters hatch from sticky pods as fully grown exact replicas of their human victims. The replicas then take their place in society as the silent invasion gathers pace. Twisting at the root of a main horror nerve — a combination of the terrors of loss of control and the ordinary not being quite what it seems —, while also fuelling fears of the extinction of humanity, the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is likely to continue to be both a horror and SF classic long after its disasterous remake is forgotten.

(1956) ☠ ☠ ☠
(1978) ☠

British television viewers will have seen as *Colossus: the Forbin Project*. Eric Braden stars as a scientist who creates an American super computer which can support independent thought. When it learns of a similar Russian machine it demands a link up. Failure to comply will mean a cataclysm of the first order. The third Superman film poses a similar storyline when night school taught computer wizard Richard Pryor builds a computer which ultimately has designs to destroy the human race and take over the world. In a lighter vein teenage hacker Matthew Broderick taps into the Pentagon and turns *War Games* into near nuclear holocaust. Apocalypse does not, however, need to have any form of human or mechanical motive behind it. Film makers are quite happy to ponder the eventualities of such terrors as earthquakes, comet hits, and the extinction of the food chain. The most famous representatives of this sub-genre are *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*, in which a newspaper hack reports of a dangerous shift in the Earth's orbit, and *Night of the Comet* (1984) in which the zombies come to town. George Romero had, of course, done the Dead better

Contemplating mankind's ersatz-future: Donald Sutherland (left) in *Snatchers* '78

with *Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead* et al, and even included a comet as motivation for good measure.

Natural disasters, (ie disastrous for all forms of nature) can also be sparked off by humankind's interference with the ecological balance. Every director under the sun seems to have one of these movies boiling into production at the moment and even those purveyors of high concept SF, the crew of the Starship Enterprise managed to muck around with this idea in *Star Trek IV*:

'Most mechanical end of the world scenarios, however, are ticked into being by computers or other machines which have been created by humanity itself'

The Voyage Home. The *Star Trek* films often border on satire, but the apocalypse sub-genre has been better served by real comedians. The most memorable, as far as 60s iconoclasts are concerned, is the acidic Stanley Kubrick comedy *Dr Stangelove: or, How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Peter Sellers takes three roles — the American President, an RAF captain and a mad German-American scientist — as a mad US general launches a pre-emptive attack on Russia with potentially devastating results. A similar movie, *Whoops Apocalypse*, in which the President just can't wait to push the button, was born of a television series in the early 80s, but failed to make much impact at the box office or on video.

GODLY ENDS...

Many commentators refer to the final destruction of the human race through nuclear weapons as Armageddon but, as defined by religious sources, that particular event, in

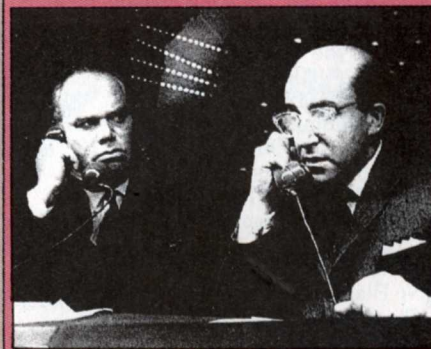
DR STRANGELOVE; OR, HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB (1963)

*Starring Peter Sellers, George C Scott
Director Stanley Kubrick*

A weird and wonderful melding of Sellers' innate comic genius, Scott's often dour personality, and Kubrick's sense of visuals won this movie Academy Award nominations for Best Director, Best Picture and Best Script — written by Kubrick, Terry Southern, and Peter George from the latter's novel *Red Alert*.



US President Peter Sellers' (below) cause for concern: the rodeo ride to death!



A mad American general launches a pre-emptive strike on Russia which cannot be recalled. Retaliation is inevitable and so the brass sit back and wait for the end of their world. Sellers plays three roles in this black comedy: an insane German-American scientist, the US President and an RAF pilot. The film is important because it voices popular early 60s concerns regarding nuclear armageddon and the survival of the human race — selfish lot, aren't we. Sidney Lumet's *Fail Safe*, starring Henry Fonda and Walter Matthau, released a year later treated a very similar plot in a serious vein and in realistic, horrifying detail.

☠ ☠ ☠ ☠





ON THE BEACH (1959)

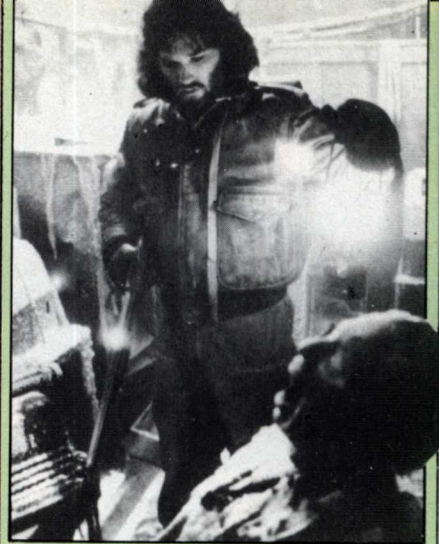
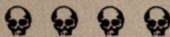
*Starring Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Fred Astaire, Anthony Perkins
Director Stanley Kramer*

One of the few films to realistically portray the end of the world due to nuclear holocaust, without the cop-out of a happy ending: Australia is the last safe haven left on Earth, but the radio-active fallout is relentlessly heading towards the continent. The movie follows the fortunes of a

small group of people and their reactions to their impending death and ends with a solitary US nuclear submarine's desultory journey to an empty and dead San Francisco.

Bleak in tone and tinged with a proper sentimentality for good things irretrievably lost, *On the Beach* lends a hauntingly memorable quality to the 'Waltzing Matilda' tune used in the film.

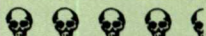
A now sadly neglected piece of prophecy.



THE THING (1982)

*Starring Kurt Russell, A Wilford Brimley, Richard Dysart
Director John Carpenter*

Proving that remakes can work, John Carpenter's reinterpretation of JW Campbell's short story *Who Goes There* uses incredible special effects, a strong cast, a constant sense of menace and an unhappy ending. Set on an Arctic research base, the movie pits Russell and his cronies against a terrifying creature which can kill and assume the identity of any living organism. The finale is a chilling piece of horror while the set pieces, which include a surgeon having his arms swallowed and a dog unraveling in its pen have had fans coming back for more again and again. It is, however, the making of the original movie (made in 1951 and starring Robert Cornthwaite, Margaret Sheridan and James Arness as *The Thing*) that provides a more interesting production story. Ostensibly directed by Christian Nyby, the real control behind the camera apparently went to either Orson Welles or producer Howard Hawks. Ain't life strange!



ARMAGEDDON: THE LIST

The following represents the most important and most popular contributions to Apocalypse cinema.

MAN MADE

■ After the Apocalypse

The Andromeda Strain (1970)
A Boy and His Dog (1975)
City Limits (1985)
Damnation Alley (1977)
The Day After (1983)
Deadly Harvest (1979)
Death Sport (1976)
Frankenstein Unbound (1989)
Food of the Gods (1976)
Food of the Gods II (1990)
Gas-s-s (1972)
Genesis II (1973)
The Handmaid's Tale (1989)
Hardware (1990)
The Idaho Transfer (1973)
Logan's Run (1976)
Mad Max: Beyond the Thunderdome (1985)
Miracle Mile (1987)
No Blade of Grass (1971)
The Omega Man (1971)
On the Beach (1959)
Panic at Year Zero (1962)
Planet of the Apes (a series of films beginning in 1968))
Radioactive Dreams (1985)
The Ravagers (1979)
Repo Man (1984)
The Satan Bug (1965)
Steel Dawn (1987)
Strange New World (1975)
Survivors (Terry Nation television series, mid-1970s)
Terminus (1987)
Things to Come (1936)
Threads (television play, 1984)
The Time Machine (1960)
Turkey Shoot (1982)
When the Wind Blows (1986)
World Gone Wild (1988)

Aliens

The Abyss (Director's cut, 1989)
The Blob (1958, 1989)
Children of the Damned (1964)
Daleks' Invasion of Earth 2150AD (1965)
Day of the Triffids (1962)
Flash Gordon (1980)
Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956, 1978)
It Came From Outer Space (3D, 1953)
Out of this World (1945)
Plan 9 From Outer Space (1959)
This Planet Earth
The Quatermass Experiment (1955)
Quatermass and the Pit (1967)
Quatermass II (1957)
Them! (1954)
The Thing (1951, 1982)
Village of the Damned (1960)
War of the Worlds (1952)

Machines

Battlestar Galactica (from late 70s television series)
The Forbin Project (1969)
Maximum Overdrive (1986)
Superman IV (1989)
The Terminator (1984)
Terminator 2 (1991)
War Games (1983)

Natural Disasters

The Day the Earth Caught Fire (1961)
The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
Night of the Living Dead (first of the Romero series, 1968)
Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home (1989)

Supernatural/Religious

Masque of the Red Death (1964)
The Omen trilogy (1976)
Rosemary's Baby (1968)
The Seventh Victim 1943)
Warlock (1989)

Satire

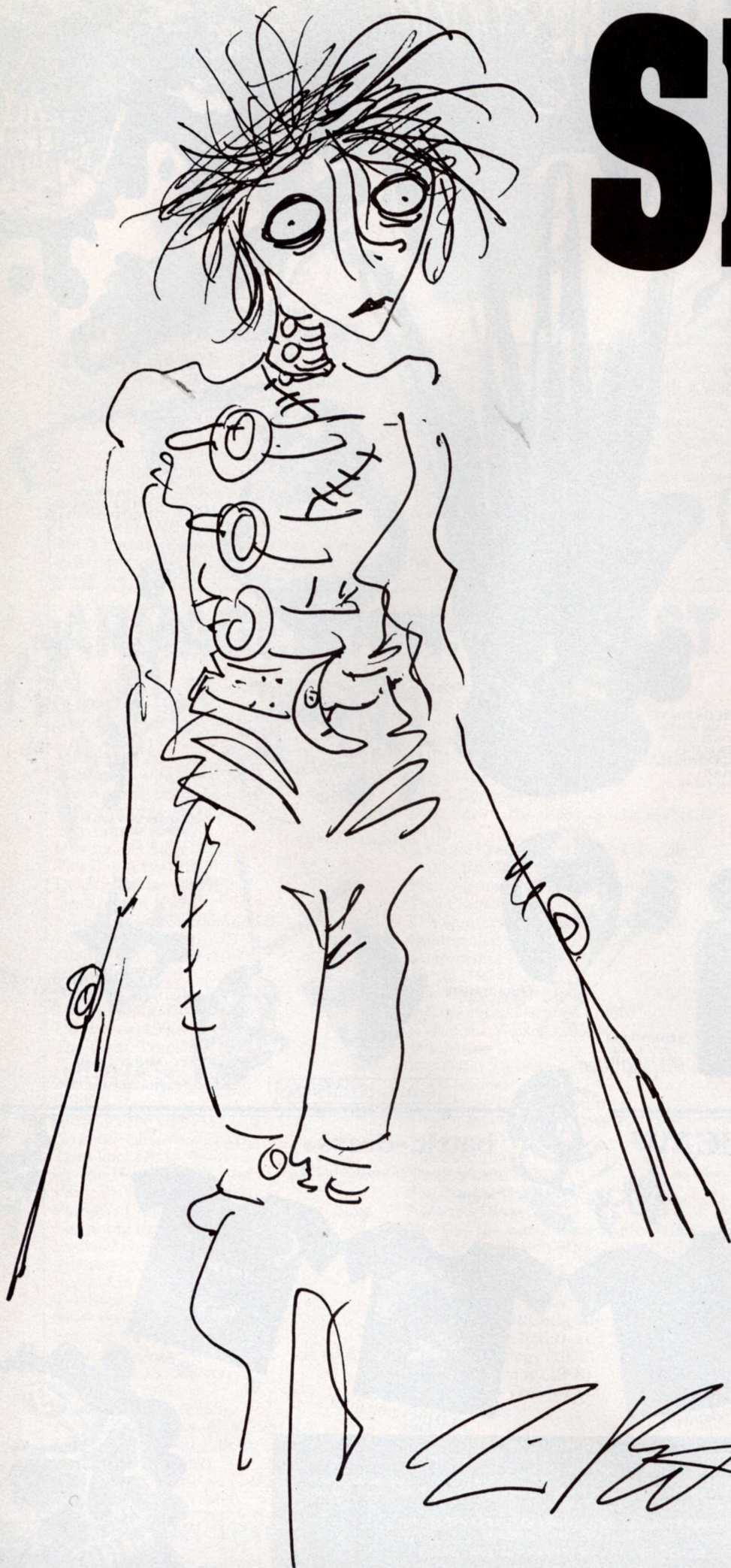
Dark Star (1974)
Dr Strangelove 1963)
Whoops! Apocalypse (from late 1970s television series)

which the Antichrist and Christ do battle, will take place at Meggido and will be a prelude to the Final Judgement. It is, of course, explored in the *Omen* trilogy of movies (see the *Omen* feature, FEAR 29) but has also been foreshadowed in such films as *The Seventh Victim*, *Rosemary's Baby* and, somewhat peculiarly, in Roger Corman's Dark Ages chiller *Masque of the Red Death*. The most recent, all-encompassing and overt, reference to Armageddon is, however, made in *Warlock* when Julian Sands assembles the Grand Grimoire which can unmake the universe. It's a pretty shoddy attempt at wholesale destruction but again shows that directors can't keep their mitts off the subject.

...AND ENDS TO COME

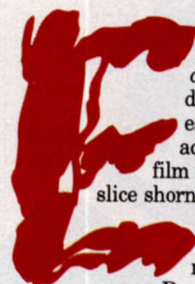
Yes, Apocalypse fans will be pleased to hear that several new end of the world scenarios will be played out before the end of next year. The first is the launch of *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* in July by Guild. Other titles include *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth* — apocalypse the Pinhead way — *Food of the Gods III*, Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*, to be directed by Stephen Spielberg, *Dracula Unbound*, the atomic sequel to *Frankenstein Unbound*, Stephen King's aforementioned *The Stand* and the Terry Pratchett/Neil Gaiman satire *Good Omens*. If the film makers know something the politicians do not, it looks as if God could have his hands full very soon.

John Gilbert



SHEA

Mark Salisbury gives director Tim Burton a short back and sides and uncovers memories and feelings that led to *Edward Scissorhands* and the fears that precede his *Batman 2*...



Edward *Scissorhands* is director Tim Burton's latest and, by his own admission, most personal film to date: a quirky, surreal slice shorn out of a suburbia where everyday reality merges with freakish fantasy to mesmerizing effect. It's Burton's masterpiece, a dazzling reworking of the Frankenstein myth with Johnny Depp as the unfinished creation of an inventor who dies of a heart attack before his work is completed — leaving his creation, Edward, with scissors for hands.

Found living alone in a hilltop gothic mansion, Edward is adopted by Avon lady Diane Weist, receptive to his unique gifts — topiary and outlandish hairdressing techniques. Soon, however, the novelty wears off, suburbia turns hostile and Edward is hounded out — returning finally to the sanctuary afforded by his former home. According to Burton, it's a film about 'memories and feelings', with the character of Edward based on a 'drawing I did a time ago, before making movies.'

Having previously reinterpreted other people's creations for the screen to much success — Bob Kane's *Batman*, Michael MacDowell's *Beetlejuice* and Paul Reubens' *Pee-wee Herman* in *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* — *Edward Scissorhands* marks Burton's first attempt at translating one of his own characters to a feature format. Working closely with screenwriter Carole Thompson (who also scripted *The Adams Family* remake), Burton has crafted a unique fable of a misfit unable to touch anything without slashing it that serves as a metaphor for the outsider in us all.

R GENIUS



There are similarities between creator (Burton) and creation (Edward): both share the same mop of unruly black hair; both fit perfectly into the image of the outsider — tolerated by a sceptical community on account of their unique talents; both wear predominantly black. Burton, however, refutes that the film is overtly autobiographical, but admits 'It was important for me to be as objective as possible about it', adding 'That's

a marvel of lyrical facial movement, and inherent tragedy, his performance characterized by a depth of understanding drawn from his own experiences. Tom Cruise was initially considered for the part. But the suggestion was more a studio (Fox) guarding against poor box office than Burton's choosing. Cruise bowed out and Edward has since grossed in excess of \$45m, amply recouping its \$18m budget. And Depp is, well, perfect.

From Burton's inspirational sketch (left) to reality on set: the director creating between Vincent Price (left) and scissored Depp

"Vincent Price was so wonderful. He was incredible and so interesting as a person in what he liked in art and all sorts of things, and supportive and understanding."

why I felt very lucky to have Johnny because he brought to it a lot of themes that are nearer his life, which when I started to talk to him I liked very much. So I could look at him and draw upon his world in a way.'

UNLIKELY CRUISE

Depp is the key to the film's success. His touching portrait of the disfigured innocent is

'They (studio executives) are always saying, here are a list of five people who are box office,' says Burton. 'I've learned to be open at the initial stage and talk to people. But Cruise certainly wasn't the idea I had.'

Burton is vacillatory over whether he would have made the film with Cruise if the studio had insisted. 'It's hard for me to say, because when you're doing a character that's like a Beetlejuice or Edward you're really

coming up with the look of the character. I remember when we were thinking about Beetlejuice, if it had been a different actor he might have looked a completely different way. I like to base it on the person a little bit, that's why I talk to these people, because you take the person and the image and kind of work from there. I don't know, I probably would have, but I wouldn't have if I didn't feel it was right.'

In Burton's visually rich and highly detailed cinematic landscapes, the real and the wondrously absurd interact with a remarkable cogency. The suburbia Burton depicts in *Edward Scissorhands* — all pastel shades and generic interiors — is, he says, the one he recalls from his childhood. 'Memory for me has a way of heightening itself. Any time you think back on something it's usually more extreme in your mind, not in the necessarily literal form, but not far off actually.'

TO BE A MONSTER

Tim Burton was created in Burbank, California. He grew up watching horror classics on television and drawing cartoons. His ambition was to be the actor who played Godzilla. 'Yeah,' he recalls with a whooping chuckle, 'as a catharsis. I enjoyed those movies and I'm only sort of making psychological guess work on this, but I think this idea of venting anger on such a grand scale — because I was quiet, because I was not demonstrative in any way — well, these were my forms of release.'

As a youngster he saw any monster movie going. 'Because I just responded to them, but the Vincent Price ones specifically spoke to me for some reason. I don't know why so much, just certain themes clicked, because of growing up in an atmosphere which was perceived as nice and normal but I had other feelings about. These kinds of movies were a way to acknowledge these feelings, and I think that's why I responded so much to certain Edgar Allan Poe themes.'

'I remember when I was young I had these two windows in my room, nice windows that looked out onto the lawn, and for some reason my parents walled them up and gave me this little slit window that I had to climb up on my desk to see out of.' He pauses for a moment. This recollection stirring up some long forgotten and unanswered query. 'To this day I've never asked them why. I should ask them. So I likened it to that story by Poe where the person was walled in, buried alive so to speak. Those were my forms of connection to my world around me.'

Burton escaped to the Cal Arts Institute on a Disney scholarship, later joining the studio as an animator working on *The Fox and the Hound* and latterly *The Black Cauldron*. The relationship between studio and employee wasn't a happy one.

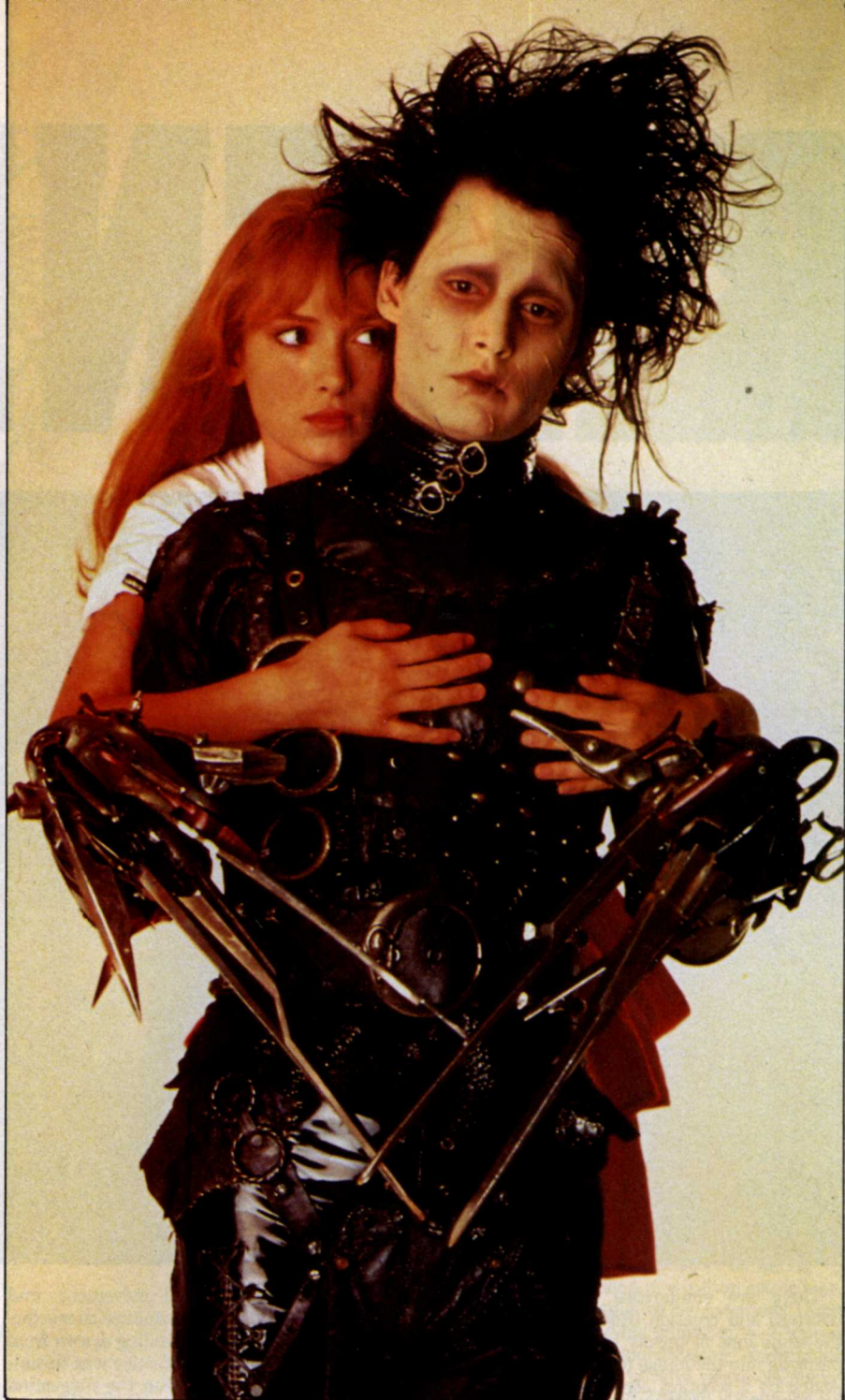
'I couldn't do it. It was very frustrating... perhaps it was just the film I was working on. Imagine drawing a cute fox with Sandy Duncan's voice for three years, it's like Chinese water torture, it's not something you can relate to very much. I didn't have the patience for it, couldn't do it, which was probably a good thing.'

VINCENT AND ME

While at Disney, however, Burton made his directorial debut with *Vincent*, an eight minute animated short for which his childhood hero, Vincent Price, provided both the inspiration and the narration. Shot in stark black and white, its images reminiscent of *Metropolis*, the film told of a young boy who wanted to be Vincent Price. Burton was 23 at the time.

'It was probably one of the most shaping experiences,' he says of working with Price on *Vincent*, 'because who knows what it's going to be like. You grow up having a feeling about someone, then you meet them. What if the guy goes, 'Get the fuck out of here, get away from me kid! What are you doing? Alright, I'll do it!'

He was so wonderful. He was incredible, and so interesting as a person in what he liked in art and all sorts of things, and supportive and understanding. I always had the feeling that he understood exactly — even more than I did — what the short was about, and understood that it wasn't just a simple homage, like 'Gee Mr Price, I'm your biggest fan' kind of a thing. He understood the psychology of it and that amazed me and made me feel very good. It made me feel that some-



one saw me for what I was and accepted me on that level.'

In *Scissorhands*, Price plays the role of Edward's kindly creator who teaches his charge poetry and etiquette. 'Even though it was a small role it had a lot of emotional impact for me because he just looks so amazing. So when I see it and see him, it just gives me a strong feeling. I was very happy that he did it...and that I got to know him a little better.'

TOWARDS THE KNIGHT

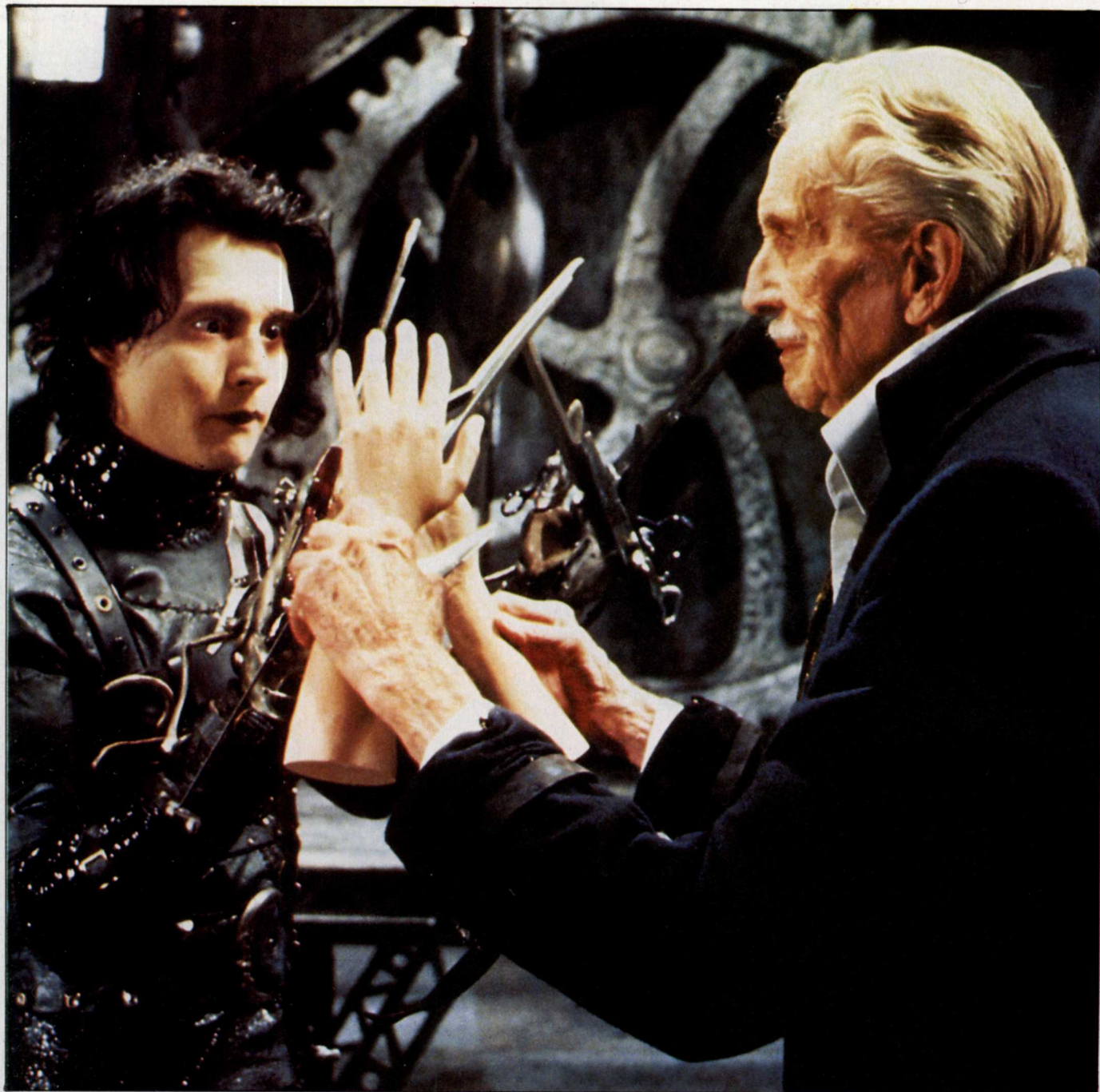
Next for Burton is *Batman 2*. A surprising choice of assignment, given that while *Batman* was the biggest box office success of 1989, many fans of the Dark Knight felt Burton displayed little interest in the eponymous character, and was guilty of neglecting the Batman in favour of the Joker, of allowing Nicholson's histrionics to overshadow Keaton's broody vigilante. So why is he doing it?

'Because it's not really true, I do love the character of Batman very much, I do identify

Differing charms: Wynona Rider (above) grabs love, Vincent Price holds out a helping hand (right)

with it very strongly. I think I can make a better movie, a more pure movie and it will still be something different. It's kinda weird, I really resisted doing it, because there are two very negative aspects to it for me. One is the hype element which, if I can control it at all I will try to control, though I don't know if I can because I wasn't able to on the first movie. The second aspect is just the perception of doing another Batman: because I basically don't like the idea. But in this case I'm interested for other reasons.'

Those reasons, Burton explains, have to do with a need to feel close to the material in a way he didn't feel about the first film. 'Plus there's some new images, new characters that I'm very interested in.'



Burton confirms that Michael Keaton is to reprise his role as the caped crusader while Danny De Vito and Annette Benning will play The Penguin and Catwoman respectively. As for Robin? Burton has finally satisfied himself of the value of the character's position in the scheme of things.

"I just love the idea of trying to do something from a dog's point of view."

'I always had trouble with that character but it feels very integrated now, but he's not cast yet.' Though Michael J Fox and Eddie Murphy have been among the many stars circulated with the role he says he's 'not interested in loading it up with names'. As to whether Robin will be male or female? 'I'm not sure. Honestly. It's not that far along really, and there's still a lot of work to be

done.'

As to his plans after *Batman 2*, Burton remains undecided. I ask about the much rumoured *Beetlejuice 2*, subtitled *Beetlejuice in Love* or *In Hell* or *In Hawaii*, depending on what you read.

'I read those things too and I go, 'I didn't

know that', laughs Burton. 'I really take things a step at a time. I can't line them up because you don't know how you're going to feel, you don't know what options are going to be exercised or not, so it's hard to really predict what you want to do. Those things are out there in some form, being worked on, and I've thoughts and stuff but I can't plan anything, and I don't think I would do that. I

think I want to do *Batman* because I have ideas about that and beyond that I'm not sure.'

While there are designs to release *Vincent* and his early *Frankenweenie* together on video (in America at least), in the meantime Burton completists will have to make do with *Family Dog*, an animated venture co-executive produced by Burton that evolved from Steven Spielberg's aborted television series, *Amazing Stories*.

'It's not something I had direct involvement with. I did some story boards and designed some more characters. So my involvement is pretty much from a design point of view because I love the dog. I just love the idea of trying to do something from a dog's point of view, I don't know why but I always relate to these...Edward's like a dog to me, I somehow relate to these characters.'

Edward Scissorhands opens in Britain on July 26.

BUDGET CH



When you first meet Herschell Gordon Lewis it's hard to believe that this tanned, well-dressed, polite gentleman once made his living by bringing the bloody excesses of assorted maniacs onto the cinema screens. Lewis today is a highly successful advertising writer/consultant and travels all over the world, giving lectures and seminars, while not making his past a secret to his clients: 'Some find it hard to believe, but they have no objection.'

Herschell, former college professor, was a master of the art of one-take, ultra-low budget film-making, although he sees himself as a mere footnote to motion picture history. With 38 film credits under his belt, many achieving cult status, he's proud of his high output and its success. 'Sometimes I bought incomplete scripts to finish myself, sometimes I bought incomplete films which I

added my own scenes to.'

His horror career began with *The Prime Time* in 1960 and ended with *The Gore Gore Girls* (aka *Blood Orgy*) in 1972, but in 1963 Lewis made his most famous film, *Blood Feast*, the bloodstained tale of Faud Ramses, a mad Egyptian who chops up young women for his Florida based catering service. It was shot in just six days, and has since spawned an endless stream of what we now call splatter films. 'If I'd been living in Florida then, as I am today, the film might never have happened. I lived in Chicago, having formed a film-making partnership with Dave Friedman, making harmless cuties and nudies pictures.

'We were totally self-contained: Dave working as producer and sound recorder, me as director and camera operator. I had an old VW van jam-packed with all the technical equipment necessary, including a giant 35mm Mitchell camera. We could shoot anywhere, any time.

'We were freezing in Chicago, so I said, "Let's find someone who'll send us to work in Florida". We made a deal to shoot a nudist

camp film for some guys in Miami. I didn't mind, I never used my own name on these flicks anyway. The film turned out to be a no-budget-whatsoever picture that would only require a couple of shooting days, so we decided to put our salary into a film of our

"Disgusting an audience requires no talent, all you have to do is to vomit into the camera."

own, which we'd shoot back to back. That was *Blood Feast*. Half the cast were pickups from the other movie, so we didn't have to worry about actors.

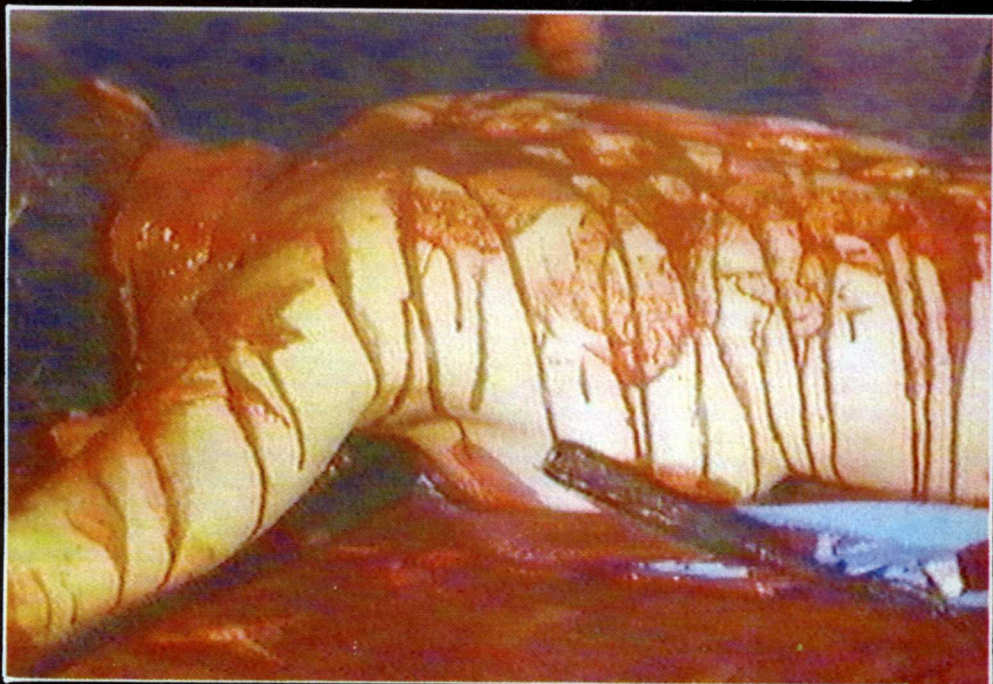
'My only intention was to shock the pants off the theatre-goers. Certainly my FX were

OPS

Hailed as the grandfather of gore movies and first of the splatterers Herschell Gordon Lewis ranks as one of America's more influential low budget film makers. FEAR's Thomas Neillson braves cleavers and pick-axes to cut through to the heart of the man...



Pictures: British Film Institute, Philip Ware, Thomas Neillson



primitive by contemporary standards, but I think it's great we started the entire splatter era, and I'm certain it was the infamous tongue-ripping scene that changed the industry forever. People fainted all over when that came up.

Most of his movies are tongue in cheek. I think *The Gruesome Twosome* (1967) is the funniest thing that's happened since the guillotine was invented! Seriously, I don't apologise for my films. I'm less likely to now than I might have been ten years ago because I've been rediscovered.

I'm no longer an outcast on the fringe. In France, *Blood Feast* has been listed as a classic horror film with *Psycho* and *Repulsion*. On the other hand, if I remind myself of the fellow who, at the age of 110, said: "If I'd known I was going to live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself", there are times I wish we'd have taken greater time doing those films — that's forgetting the kind of budget we had and the miracle of being able to make movies with that money. So I'm delighted that my films are still showing and I'm around to see it.

ALL FX, NO FUN

Humour is a vital principle to Lewis, and an element he believes missing from many contemporary gore movies. 'Some take themselves too seriously; they're too concerned with prosthetic make-up techniques, focusing

"I'm no longer an outcast on the fringe. In France, *Blood Feast* has been listed as a classic horror film."

on the mechanical aspects of FX, leaving the viewers as on-lookers, not participants. FX artists can do almost anything they want, but the horror films aren't scary anymore.

I remember seeing *Alien*, where this creature leaps out of a chest. I thought two

Miami-style catering service: juicy morsels for your delectation in *Blood Feast*

things: first, if you put every movie I made together, they didn't cost as much as that one effect; second, I remember thinking, what a well-done effect. If someone in the theatre says that, it's the wrong reaction to a gore effect. It wasn't really a gore moment, but a technical effect.

'Also, today's horror films tend to repeat themselves. Look at all those *Friday the 13th* films. And the *Halloweens*. And the *Nightmares on Elm Street*. They're almost like a pyramid set on its point — each one has less shock value than the previous. There's just a great sameness nowadays.'

Lewis admits he knows little of the contemporary and that audiences might want something different. 'Maybe I've made a harsh judgement as I'm not really on the cutting edge anymore, and my own capability for being shocked seems jaded. I like to be entertained. I loved *Total Recall*. You know, some scenes in that are my natural descen-





CHOICE CUTS

We list just a few of the prolific master's works, the better known ones:

- Prime Time* 1960
- Blood Feast* 1963
- Two Thousand Maniacs* 1964
- Colour Me Blood Red* 1965
- The Gruesome Twosome* 1967
- A Taste of Blood* 1967
- She Devils on Wheels* 1968
- The Wizard of Gore* 1970
- The Gore Gore Girls (Blood Orgy)* 1972

dants. For instance, where this fellow gets his arm chopped off in the elevator — we did that too in *Two Thousand Maniacs*. Back then, audiences were horrified, now it doesn't horrify anyone at all. The industry's become far more sophisticated over the years and I feel some of the laws that require, for example, my kind of film to be shown only in filmclubs, will eventually disappear. *Total Recall* didn't have to be shown in filmclubs.

However, he believes even die hard horror fans are becoming immune to the sort of shocks first delivered so successfully in films like *Blood Feast*. "The feeling of on-going horror one had in, for instance, the original *The Fly* was lost in the modern remake. Again it was a testimonial to mechanical FX — disgusting, but not horrifying. Disgusting an audience requires no talent, all you have to do is to vomit into the camera. Does that constitute a reason for somebody to go to the theatre?"

"Today people (not to mention kids) are so much more shockproof."

TO CUT OR NOT TO CUT

That disgust value often leads to censorship and, sitting next to the man who almost single-handedly invented the gore film, the subject cannot be avoided. "I wouldn't say we no longer need film censorship, but a system based on an outmoded concept of society is in my opinion no longer necessary. The age limits should still be there. But today people (not to mention kids) are so much more shockproof. When I was six years old Bela Lugosi scared me stiff. Show that to a six-year-old today and you'll have the kid laughing.

"We're being over-protective to kids when they're no longer protectable. They have too much input from TV, cable and satellite. When *Blood Feast* hit the theatres in '63, people fainted in their seats and the US censors were taken completely by surprise — being the very first of its kind it caught the MPAA with their pants down. They censored



obscurity and nudity, but we didn't have any of that, so those folks really got thunderstruck: "What can we say to stop this?"

"I can see today that we were actually the generating cause for some of the regulations that exist now. Yes, I take the blame."

Would it be safe to assume that Lewis has no urge to return to his former bloody trade? "Well, urge is too strong. I have the inclination that, should it ever happen, I'd be available for the right proposition. But I no longer have the economic need, which is why when somebody says: "Why don't you make a movie?", my answer becomes "You put up the money, then I'll make the film" — the same kind of film I made in the 60s. I don't see any

reason, with the reputation I have in this field, to make a movie that would disappoint all those who regard me as a cult hero. But making a conventional picture wouldn't make sense; I wouldn't get much emotional satisfaction out of it. Then again, it would be kind of nice making a modern *Blood Feast* with all the high-tech FX available these days..."

That HG Lewis touch: paying an arm and a leg to *Two Thousand Maniacs* (b/w), and bubble gum death in *Gore Gore Girls*



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THE CONFSSIONAL BOX

by STUART MORAN

Henry Tooke's windows gazed down upon the small gathering that stood around the fresh wound dug in the family plot. The house stood silent and empty, almost watching. The few mourners (who did not really mourn, but through some sense of duty saw fit to attend), stood somberly around the grave. Reverend Booth, local village vicar and sanctifier of sins, pontificated loudly as though speaking to some hidden multitudes. He reeled through ritualised incantations terminating the ceremony with a slow and stylized sign of the cross. The audience, for audience it was, echoed his actions. Of the five people that formed this audience four were local villagers, whose only connection with the deceased were the church, and advancing age. One man, standing apart from the others, was younger. Although at fifty six the illusion was only comparative. He was also not local. Bristol, the nearest large city, was his domain.

Unlike the others he had purpose here. He was the trustee and executor of the will. A straightforward enough job, there were no known living relatives, friends, or other erstwhile claimants. She had outlived them all.

Henry Tooke was solicitor to the Hawksworth family. As indeed his father had been before him. Burial in the small plot of consecrated ground being one of the few conditions of the will. Gratuities paid to the vicar and his diggers, Tooke walked back slowly towards the house, through the gardens once splendid and nurtured, now jaded and forgotten, top, his suit uncomfortable and constraining. A few pounds had added to his frame since its last outing, at his own wife's funeral. Tooke pushed the thought from his mind and looked up at the house. The once shining example of early Victorian architecture had lost its shine. Most of the rooms were virtually uninhabitable. Poverty and neglect had left it in semi dereliction. Over the years the upkeep had eaten away at what had once been the Hawksworth fortune. Tooke's directive had been clear, to sell the house, belongings and estate, and to settle all debts (of which there were many). Indeed his own payments would have to be met from the sale. All remaining proceeds were to go to a handful of obscure and slightly offbeat charities. Tooke entered the house through the large French windows, the rotting frames creaking in protest at this

unaccustomed violation. Most of the house had long been unused. Old Miss Hawksworth had confined herself to one room for the past years. The inside dimmed noticeably as he closed the glass door, time accrued grime filtering the light to a yellowing hue. The furniture, mostly pre 1930s stuff, looked stale and worn, the true colours indiscernible.

Most of the house contents had little prospective value except sentimentality, which there was no one to inherit. Two days previously Tooke had visited the house, bringing with him Morrison, an antiques dealer and sometime friend. Tooke often used Morrison's services in such circumstances. He had given Tooke a job lot price, which seemed fair. Tooke didn't worry about price, his purpose was not profit, merely disposal.

Tooke started to wander through the rooms. The house was still. Tooke realised the poignance of the phrase, 'Deathly quiet'. Indeed the house had seemed to die with the old woman. All of its memories passing away with her.

In the wake of his walk, small filigrees of dust flashed in the occasional strands of light that filtered the rooms. Crossing the hall he stopped at the foot of the stairs and looked up. All seemed in the order that he had at last left it, there was no need to bother with upstairs. Tomorrow he would return with Morrison and his men to oversee the clearance. He turned towards the door. In the act of turning, a sound, caught more by his senses than his ear. A faint hissing sound, like conspiratorial whispers. With head cocked to one side, he tried to focus upon it...it had gone. He looked back up the stairs, it sounded like people, someone, upstairs. The thought of squatters crossed his mind. Cautiously, he started to rise the stairs. At the first landing he stopped, listening intently. Tooke moved off down the landing to his right. As he did so, it came again, behind him. Stepping back briskly, he stood again at the top of the flight of stairs.

With quiet precision he pinpointed its direction. He found himself staring back down into the entrance hall. He descended and found himself looking toward the large front door. The whispers faded away. Tooke strode to the door and snatched it open. He stepped out onto the porch. Something clattered off to the left. Turning, he saw two men, the grave diggers, or was it fillers? throwing their tools of the trade into the back of a beaten Transit. The murmurings of the two



men, although distant, clearly audible. Tooke's body consciously relaxed. He felt slightly foolish. Forgetting how sound can echo around a quiet empty place. And how far it can travel, particularly in the country. Stepping back across the threshold to close the door, Tooke listened again, — nothing. He smiled to himself as he locked the door.

Tooke arrived back at the house a little after eight the next morning. Morrison had already got there, his men sitting on the tail board of the large removal van, cigarettes and a thermos already being passed around. Tooke pulled his car alongside the van and got out, looking at his watch as he did so. 'Pays to get an early start' Morrison said, noting Tooke's action.

'Right, I'll open up then,' Tooke said, pulling the large web of keys from his jacket pocket.

'Jack,' Morrison said to the gangling youth who sat at one end, 'you go around the back and find a place for a bonfire. Away from the house or any trees.' The vacant featured youth's nod signalled understanding, but little else. He stood on his cigarette and slouched off. Morrison joined Tooke in the entrance hallway. 'Right then, we'll start upstairs and work are way down. All the junk we'll burn out back. If that's all right with you?'

Tooke shrugged, 'Sure, don't suppose any new owners would mind. Is there anything I can do?'

'Not really, make yourself comfortable somewhere, we should be finished by twelve.' He turned and headed back outside. His voice yelling commands.

Tooke went to the sitting room. The one with the large French doors. Finding a comfortable chair he opened his briefcase taking the opportunity to catch up on some paperwork. The hours passed, much banging and swearing echoing through the house. Morrison and his men entered each room in turn. Morrison, clipboard in hand, would point in sequence around the room with simple commands like burn, burn, van, burn, van, van, noting the van items on his board.

Tooke could hear them now, downstairs, plundering each sad room in its turn. He walked over to the French doors and opened them. The gangling youth whose role seemed to be that of donkey, shuffled past, a large roll of threadbare carpet on his shoulder, one end dragging on the ground. He threw it unceremoniously onto the ever increasing conflagration. The bonfire popped and crackled at the arrival of new food for its flame. For the first time Tooke felt the full sadness of this finality. All of the cherished things that for so long had made a place a home, not merely a house, now wiped from existence with such casual indifference. Morrison entered the room, breaking off Tooke's thoughts. 'Found something, bit weird actually, thought you might want to take a look'

'Found...What?' Tooke asked puzzled.

'Under the stairs, come on, I'll show you.'

'George found it, a small cubby hole, the entrance hidden into the panelling under the stairs.' As they entered the hall Tooke could see the small doorway, no more than four feet high, open under

the well of the staircase. The man, George, stood slightly anxiously to one side. Morrison held out his hand. George gave him the torch he had been holding. Morrison grinned to Tooke.

'George here thought he could hear someone whispering behind this panelling, that's how he found it.' Morrison cast him an amused glance. George looked at Tooke and gave a small shrug. Tooke's already furrowed brow, furrowed more. He looked at George, whose eyes did not betray the uneasiness with whatever it was he had found.

'C'mon,' Morrison said, ducking low and disappearing inside. Tooke followed.

'Careful, it's a bit tight in here.' Morrison said, switching on the torch. It was a small place, about six feet long by three wide, but high enough to stand. The entire inside was draped in black curtains. At the far end, under the slope of the stairs a small altar had been set, a large brass crucifix and a sacred Heart of Jesus statue, bounded on either side by simple candle holders. 'Private little church, eh,' Morrison quipped.

'Not that unusual I suppose. Lots of religious people have a small place of prayers and worship in their own home,' Tooke observed.

'Yes true, but in a house this size, with this many rooms, why tuck it away down here? It's almost hidden.'

The term 'hidden' stuck in Tooke's head, it did seem *hidden*. Morrison stepped forward, crouching in front of the tiny altar. He put one knee down.

'Ouch! Christ what's that?' Morrison flashed the torch beam onto a small tray of stones and pebbles sitting in front of the altar. Tooke moved forward to look.

'To kneel on? Penance while praying perhaps?' Tooke said.

'Fucking nutters,' Morrison muttered under his breath. In front of the statue was a small wooden box. He picked it up, turning it over in the torch light as he stepped back.

'What have we here?' he mused. Ducking, he stepped back out into the hall. Tooke followed. Morrison walked over to a window,

rotating the box around in his hands, studying it carefully.

'No, it's not what I thought it might be. For a moment it looked like an early Italian music box, but it's not.' It was lined with a deep black velvet, but was otherwise empty. Closing it, he handed it to Tooke.

'Just cheap junk, yours if you want it, otherwise on the fire it goes.' Morrison went over to George.

'Nothing of any use in there. Clear it out to the bonfire then we'll start in here.' Morrison headed towards the study, picking up his clipboard along the way.

Tooke looked at the box in his hands. He had been looking for something to keep his chess pieces in for a long time. This would be perfect for them. It would only be consumed by fire otherwise. He walked out to his car and placed it on the back seat.

Tooke wandered the grounds and gardens for a while. The finding of the small altar had lent some credence to the tales his father had told him years ago about the Hawksworth family. The father, Joseph Hawksworth, was by all accounts a vehemently religious man, and a harsh

disciplinarian. The mother had died in childbirth, to their fourth child — Elisabeth, the old woman who had been buried yesterday. She'd had two older brothers and one sister. The two brothers were killed in the trenches of the Somme shortly after her birth. Her father had, apparently believed this tragedy had been inflicted upon him because of the uncleanness and lack of purity in his thoughts. At the age of thirteen Elisabeth's sister Mary, contracted polio, leaving her paralysed in both legs. The father had said it was punishment for her having impure thoughts and desires. Two years later Joseph Hawksworth, with a shotgun, committed the ultimate act of atonement. Standing in the garden, he spread his brains across the lawn. Tooke's father became Mary and Elisabeth's trustee, until Mary reached twenty one. Elisabeth had spent most of her life caring for her sister, who finally died in 1962. Neither had married. So now with Elisabeth buried, so was the Hawksworth history.

By one thirty the van was loaded. Morrison and his crew set off back to Bristol, leaving Tooke to lock up.

He sat in his car, looking at the semi derelict building. It needed much repair, but with the many London refugees now flocking into the West Country, he knew it would still command a fair price. He reversed his car out of the drive and headed home.



Home was a Georgian town house near Brandon Hill. It was large enough for his needs and, more importantly, close to his office. He would spend most of his time there, working. Work had become his life these past few years since cancer had claimed his wife for another National Health statistic. He missed her. His daughter, an only child, had gone to work in Liverpool after finishing university. Her visits brightened a sometimes solitary existence. Many evenings Tooke would play chess. His opponent, a computer, was a Christmas present from his daughter a year last. He had bought himself a board and pieces to set up games, and partly to make him feel he was playing a real opponent. But it had come without a box for the pieces. Now he had just the thing. He laid the box on the coffee table in front of the fireplace. Tooke decided to put in a couple of hours at the office; there were things, and business, that needed doing.

He closed the front door and left.

In the quiet of the room, subtle whispers, like angels' prayers, wafted on the air. The box was pleased to be out of the darkness. The empty darkness, where it had lain alone for so long. So long since someone came to visit it, to talk with it, to share their secrets with the box. Elisabeth hadn't come in a long time, her visits had got fewer and fewer, then she stopped completely. It had waited for so long for someone to come. To give unto it their secrets, and desires, their would-be sins. The box thought of Joseph, its maker, he who had fashioned it. A place to confess, and entrust, all of his darkest thoughts. Where once placed into the box, they could be kept safe, and harmless. Joseph had shown — forced —

Elisabeth into confessing her sins into the box, to consign them into it, for fear that any impure thoughts would condemn her to eternal damnation. Most days during her adolescent years she would visit. The box soon filled, so many things, so many wished-for things. The box had felt new hands on it now, it yearned to be opened again. To have someone breathe troubled passions into its dark velvet.



Darkness had fallen by the time Tooke returned home, a little after eight. He switched on the lights as he moved through the house. A cool chill permeated the air, it seemed colder than it probably was, in contrast to the warmth of the day. Removing his jacket and tie as he entered the living room, a shiver spread down his spine. He lit the gas fire, which ignited with a whoosh. After pouring himself an unusually, for him at least, large whisky, he stood in front of the fire, warming himself, listening to its hiss. The hiss was not a constant one. It undulated rhythmically, changing pitch and pace, in and out of perception, like whispers. Tooke instinctively looked down upon the table where the box lay. Bending down till his face was mere inches away from the box. The sound seemed to increase. He turned his head back towards the fire, unsure. He released the little catch, and with both hands opened the lid. The sound stopped. If there had been any sound, Tooke wasn't sure. He stared into the darkness of the box. The matt black velvet swallowing all light that strayed upon its surface. He stood, shaking his head from the illusion. He took a large swig of the whisky, and walked over to the chess board. Tooke picked up one of the pieces, a knight, and perused it. The set was a stone cast ornamental type, fashioned in Medieval style. It had appealed to him. The armour suited knight was intricate in its detail. Cautiously Tooke lifted the board and placed it alongside the box on the table.

One by one, pawns first, he placed the pieces in the box. They fitted perfectly. It was almost as if it had been tailor-made for them. He downed the last of his whisky, and carefully snicked the lid closed. Pleased, he refilled his glass and sat down to read the evening paper.

Thoughts ran through the darkness inside the box. These things now in its confines were not wishes, desires, these were things of substance. Empty things, without need or passion. The box felt confused, but deep within its darkest fabric, uneasy whisperings stirred.

Over the years all of the seven deadly sins had been placed into the box. One by one, in their many guises. Here they had lain unfulfilled, without consummation. Now with this intrusion of the hard, physical world into their domain, old needs and purposefulness rippled in rebellion against the box. It was Anger, the many accumulated angers, that made the first move. Anger drifted through the chess pieces. It stopped within the knight, finding its form pleasant, befitting Anger's mood well. But there were four forms of this knight. Anger, with a mere thought of will, pulled them together, merging and

amalgamating their forms into one.

The box creaked. Tooke looked up, around the room. With a mental shrug, he went back to his paper. The other sins followed Anger's lead. Avarice took the queen, Pride the king. Envy and Gluttony had the rooks and bishops, leaving the pawns to Sloth, who by nature came last. Each pulled their pieces into a singular form, like to like.

The box that had for so long acted as gaoler to these darkest of things, could no longer hold them back now. They wanted escape. Freedom to follow their aspirations.

"A slit like mouth opened and sank its tombstone teeth into Tooke's trapezius. Other tiny sword wielding arms sprouted from its warped torso."

Roaring under protest, the lid began to buckle and twist. The noise drew Tooke's attention. He looked awestruck at the box, its shape distorting before him. The paper slipped off his lap. With a final crack the catch broke. The lid snapped open like a steel trap in reverse. Tooke sat unmoving, his eyes in a state of fixation. The knight, now several inches high popped up out of the box. It stretched its arms and rolled its helmeted head from side to side like some woken sleeper. Tooke's glass dropped from his fingers. His mouth dropped open in unison. Blinking in disbelief at the spectacle unfolding before him as each overgrown piece popped up into view. Tooke, with the reflex of a man sitting on a fire, stood bolt upright, and backed towards the fireplace, transfixed by the animated fantasy before him.

Lust, the most potent of all sins stayed deep within the box, contemptuous of the others, who stood jostling for position, flexing their new found forms. Lust had no use for mere stone. For its use it required flesh, a truly living host. It had a plan. With swiftness of will it entered the other pieces. They raised little objection, for Lust was always at the root of the other sins, it was the underlying passion that gave birth and meaning to the others. Lust took control, like a general over his soldiers, it willed and pulled them together.

Tooke stood staring down, his mind withdrawn back inside his skull, not even trying to rationalise this lunacy before him. He pressed back towards the fire. The acrid smell of smoldering cloth rose in the room. Reddening skin on the backs of his legs screamed for notice. He was oblivious.

The animated caricatures began to huddle together in the box. Squeezing tighter and tighter until, their tiny limbs

flailing, they merged into one grotesque and impossible corpus. This surreal figurine of hell's abortions stood, some eighteen inches high, swaying on its myriad new feet. The six baying heads amassed into the singular. Two spindly shafts extruded from its sides armlike, other tiny arms forming where fingers should have been. Lust and the other sins fused into one, a riot of seething passion and desires. With soulless eyes they gazed up at the man before them. Only with flesh could their wants be sated.

With a small hop it jumped from the box to the surface of the table. Its worm like arms swayed, rose up towards Tooke, the finger-arms clasping as an infant seeking succour.

Tooke screamed, a releasing scream that snapped him from mesmerism. He threw himself sideways, crashing, ironically over and across the chess board. Tooke rolled onto his back, kicking frantically into the carpet. Pushing himself away from the thing on the table, that now turned to look upon him, finger-arms still clawing.

'No, no, fuck off, fuck off,' Tooke muttered feverishly. He was a man rarely given to such profanity but, in the circumstances, it was all his brain could muster. Rolling again onto his stomach, the kitchen door lay, open and bright, before him. He drew his legs up ready to stand and run for it. In the action of standing, searing pain shot from his red blistered calves, up his spine and into his cortex. For a fleeting moment it caused him to pause. Then steeling himself against the pain he made his move. If he had not paused he might have made it.

Tooke stumbled towards the doorway. His arms outstretched to grasp the door frame. It was the thump in the back, between the shoulder blades, that propelled him through. He screamed as the worm like tentacles strapped themselves around his torso. Tiny arm-fingers burrowed their way into the flesh of his armpits. Screaming, Tooke flailed his arms over his head trying to reach the thing upon his back, but bereft of the suppleness of youth, grasping only the air behind his head.

A slit like mouth opened and sank its tombstone teeth into Tooke's trapezius. Other tiny sword wielding arms sprouted from its warped torso, shredding the shirt and flesh beneath. Tooke felt the warm blood, his blood, run down his back. Flowing into the cleft of his buttocks.

'Help meee..' Hysteria, reached its peak, and the frightened child within all men, brought forth its voice.

'Holy Mother of God help me,' it sniffed. Tears streamed and dripped off Tooke's nose.

'Please, Please, Someone help me. Please, help...meeee...' the voice pleaded, sobs punctuating its despair.

Tooke fell to his knees, whimpering.



The sins squirmed with pleasure at the supplication of their quarry. Lust gave the command. Stone and tissue began to merge. Tooke arched his back, mouth open in a silent yell, as flesh calcified and blood ran in stone.



Tooke's top lip drew back across his dentures causing them to fall to the floor. The lip formed a sneer as he became host to legion. Tooke, or the man who had once held that name rose slowly. He stood, a stooping hunchback. Raising his hands, the sins viewed them with their new found eyes. Although the fingers were short and stubby, they were soft and genteel. His tongue licked over them with loving caress, a wanker's foreplay. His left hand slid under his shirt, running the fingers through the fine grey hairs of his chest, the right moved down to his crotch, pressing rhythmically with its palm against the hardening bulge. The delights of his own hand had grown more infrequent as the years had progressed, but now with a new fervour he unzipped, and with the practised hand all males possess, flicked out his cock. It steeled in his hand now, harder than ever in his most youthful years. He worked upon the member, gripping harder against hardness. Tooke's strangled breath echoed around the kitchen as hot fluid splattered on cold tiles. The sins cooed in unison as spasms of pleasure jerked his muscles against conscious will.

Lust subsided. With it Tooke started to rant.

'Fucking bastards, I'll show them!' raged Anger.

'I want it and I'm going to have it. Why shouldn't I? I deserve it all. They're nothing compared to me!' Avarice and Pride threw in their thoughts.

'All, lets have it all. Everything!' Gluttony and Envy followed.

'I don't give a shit,' muttered Sloth.

Tooke staggered back into the living room, his cock still dangling limply from his fly.

'I'm going out,' Tooke said petulantly, 'even if daddy doesn't want me to.'

His mind seethed with teeming thoughts and confused personae.

He turned to face his reflection in a mirror.

'Fucking whore! Should be horse-whipped. That would teach them.'

Tiny flashes of other times, other places, flitted within Tooke's mind, unsure of their ownership.

Tooke put on his overcoat. Pulling it snugly over his newly acquired hump. He stalked out into the night, murmuring to himself as he walked, every now and then pausing to yell obscenities at some individual misfortunate enough to cross his path. Occasionally treating some passing car to a flash of his flaccid cock.

Darkened shop windows returned his toothless sneer as he shuffled along. One window, the lights left on, caught his eye. A white party dress, low cut and laced, filled his gaze. He pressed his face against the glass.

'Ohhh, it's so pretty! I must have that. Susan would be so jealous.' He squealed. Some long lost desire rising from some long dead past. Aided by the strength of Anger he wrenched a convenient litter bin from its lamppost and hurled it through the window, shattering glass giving rise to ringing bells. Tooke scrambled in, shards of glass embedding themselves in his knees. He wrestled the manikin for his prize, leaped out. He discarded his coat and pulled the dress over his head and hump. Its seams ripped as

he wriggled the crumpled lace down over his rotund torso. A couple stood watching incredulously across the road. Tooke noticed them. 'Mine' he spat. 'It's fucking mine, not yours you cunts.' The whispers hissed in his head. 'Don't let them catch you being naughty. Daddy will put you under the stairs' again.'

Tooke scurried off down the street into darkness. He trudged for miles. Staying in the shadows, and deserted alleys. Two youths sauntered up a side street towards him. He shrank into the cover of a doorway. In passing, one youth, still boy-like, turned, sensing Tooke's presence. He nudged his friend. The two of them stared at the ridiculous sight in the doorway. Tooke stepped out into the light. The boys smirked. Tooke looked at the younger one. He reminded him of that nice altar boy who sang in the village church. The nice boy with smooth soft skin whom he had touched in secret games.

'Billy,' Tooke coaxed. 'Billy, see what your uncle Joseph has hidden. Want to see it? Come and touch, I'll show you how nice it can feel.'

Tooke stepped towards the youth, lifting the ragged lace of his dress to reveal the semi-hard cock which he stroked. The two youths glanced at each other, the older looking pursing his lips with disgust.

'Fuckin' pervert!' He snarled at the old man. The younger stepped forwards meeting Tooke's slow advance. The illusion of boyishness drained from his features.

'C'mon let's have the old cunt,' he hissed, malice afire in his eyes.'

Tooke mistook their advances. The younger youth brought his fist from low behind him, in a sweeping arc, until it terminated in the middle of Tooke's face. Tooke recoiled. Red leaked from his nostrils. The older youth's hand slipped under his leather jacket to the small of his back. A short bladed knife glinted in his hand.

'Lets cut the bastard. Cut him good.' He moved towards the stunned Tooke.

'Go on Stevie, stick the purve,' the other prompted, stepping in to pull Tooke's right arm up behind his back. Stevie swung overhand with the knife. Tooke ducked slightly. The knife sank, full blade length, into his hump. Tooke rose again suddenly, breaking free the youth's grip on its handle. A seething hatred, spurred by Anger, welled up within Tooke. He began to shake. 'Oh Billy, you'll pay for that. Bad boy Billy.' Stevie sneered, and threw an uppercut towards the old man's chin. With blurring swiftness Tooke's left hand caught Stevie's wrist, cancelling contact. With machine-like force he straightened the arm held at his back, the younger youth could hold it no more. Tooke cupped Stevie's head in his hands. Stevie beat upon Tooke's arms for release. With a deft push-pull movement he snapped the youth's neck. He let the body fall. The head, turned impossibly far, stared back across its shoulder.

The boy-youth stood wide eyed, making short gasping noises. He started to back away. Tooke spun round, catching him by his tee-shirt. He wound the cloth tightly into his clenching fist, pushing the youth back up against the wall.

'Please mister, let me go. please. I

won't tell, promise I won't' A frightened child's voice broke through that of the adolescent. 'No Billy boy, you're not going to tell, you'll not go telling tales now,' Tooke whispered between blood spitting lips.

He pushed the heel of his hand under the youth's chin and, with steam-hammer action, smashed his head back against the wall. It lolled limply. Tooke smashed the head back again. And again, and again, until it no longer thumped with impact, merely squealed. Tooke let the carcass slide down. The rear of its head a wet, red, pulp.

'No, Billy boy you won't tell.'

He lurched off once more down the deserted streets. He realised how steel hard his cock, had become again. The gossamer touch of the lace teased its exposed end. He felt the ache. The physical ache in his guts and balls. It needed to be sated. But his own hands would not suffice. He moved, furtively, towards the docks.

Down in the back streets he found his quarry. On the corner of a row of terraced houses, a working girl. A tight white sweater with matching white knee length boots, the ensemble divided by the shortest of red leather skirts. They advertised her trade like neon lit billboards.

Tooke was only thirty feet from her when she spotted his approach.

'Shit, what the hell's this?' She turned away from him, looking distractedly down the street. He stopped at her back.

'I want you,' Tooke panted in matter-of-fact tone.

She ignored him, flicking her cigarette into the gutter with disdain.

'I bet you've got a lovely cunt.'

Obviously not taking the hint, she turned, frowning as she looked him up and down. She'd known some strange ones, but nothing like this.

'Fuck off! I don't do kinks. Okay?' She doubted he had any money anyway.

Tooke licked the blood on his lips. He liked the taste.

She sneered at him, thinking it lipstick. 'Go on, get lost before I shout for my man to come and take care of you. You queer bastard.'

Tooke stayed his ground. She turned and started walking down to the other corner, where Helen worked, these types never liked approaching two. She didn't hear him follow. He'd taken the hint, she thought.

The knock to the ground came so suddenly, she hardly had time to register it, her scream stifled before it was begun, by the sweaty hand closed tight over her mouth and nose. She clawed frantically at the brickwork, as she was dragged backwards into an entry between the houses. The knife Tooke had salvaged from his hump flashed in the half light from the street. She felt it against her cheek.

In the darkness she heard the rustle of lace. Thoughts ran in her head. 'Okay, the guy wants a fuck, let him have one, stay alive girl, stay alive.'

'Your not going to scream are you whore...are you?' A voice whispered.

She shook her head. The hand cautiously released its grip. 'Go on you bastard, get it over with,' she thought. 'I'll have your balls for earrings after this, I swear I will.'

She felt him between her legs. He pushed up her skirt to reveal her knickerless cunt. Rough fingers probed and delved. He entered her, his thrust powerful and deep. Pain shot in spasms through her gut. Lust reached fever pitch within Tooke's head. A thousand voices of dreamed desire screamed with hunger. He plunged the knife into the girl's neck, ripping sideways savagely, severing jugular and larynx. The girl writhed and bucked, gurgling as hot blood flowed down her throat into her lungs. Tooke slashed at her stomach, opening slit-like wounds that oozed the last of her life. With added vigour Tooke plunged his cock into one of the gaping slits, thrusting with a new passion. He came as no man had ever come before. Spasm after spasm racked his body. The pleasure overwhelmed him. Passion, if that term could be placed upon such brutal depravity, subsided. Tooke prostrated himself across the moist warm corpse.

"The knock to the ground came so suddenly, she hardly had time to register it, her scream stifled before it was begun."

"That'll teach you, you wicked, wicked woman."

He whispered into the now deaf ear. 'God told me to punish you. Now I will pray for you. Yes, that's right I must go back to the house. To the box, and I, we, will pray for your soul.' His voice started to snivel. 'Must pray, pray for...' The word seemed reluctant to reach his lips. Then with a sob he moaned. 'Meeeee'

Suddenly a light flicked on at the back of one of the adjoining houses, with the sound of an opening door.

'Who's there....? I've got a knife.' The middle aged voice said with shaky threat into the darkness.

'I've called the police!' The unseeing voice yelled.

Tooke didn't like police. No, not since she had been caught stealing sweets from Mrs Grover's shop. Daddy beat her, made her stay under the stairs for days. She couldn't come out till she had confessed all her wicked, bad thoughts into the box. No, Tooke did not want the police. Didn't want to be beaten again.

With the thought, came action. Tooke was out of the entry and running. Running home. A car swerved to avoid him. The screaming banshee of a figure flashed briefly in its headlights, then disappeared off into darkness, across parkland.

A thousand thoughts raced in Tooke's head. One word pounded away above them all: Home. With gasping breaths as he ran, he mouthed it to himself: 'Home!'

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Dorothy Whittingham had spent most of the morning giving apologies to people. After eighteen years in the job she had learnt how to lie and cover for her employer with convincing authority. It was strange though, Mr Tooke always rang in if he was ill or something. Such occurrences were rare. She rang his home again, for the fourth time. She let it ring. She began to worry. After all, she knew he lived alone. He could have had some kind of accident, or be too ill to get to the phone. It was twelve thirty. She would close the office and go round to his house.

Driving the urban mile to Tooke's she listened to the local radio news. Further details of last night's savage murders unfolded. Police believed the killing of the prostitute and the two youths to be connected. They issued a description of a possible suspect: hunch-backed, average height, middle aged, and possibly transvestite.

Dorothy shook her head. 'The sooner they catch this weirdo the better. What's the world coming to?' She turned into Tooke's road.

Tooke had awoken that morning to the sound of ringing. He'd been lying curled up, in foetal position. He clutched the box, as a child might a teddy bear, to his face. Sleep had claimed him as he lay whispering into its soft dark velvet.

He had then sat for hours in the kitchen, on the floor with his back to the fridge. He listened to the voices in his head. The turmoil of sins occasionally using his mouth for expression. 'I can do what I like! If I Want to!' Pride spouted. 'Give it to me. All of it. — Fuckers! — I'm a good girl. — Who are they calling a queer. — I never did it!'

So it went on. A thousand secret confessed sins and desires fluxed and waned in Tooke's brain. The personalities of their creators inflecting Tooke's ramblings.

The door bell rang. Tooke cowered and crawled into a corner. No, it wasn't me! I won't go under the stairs. I hate the box. No daddy.' His voice shifted tone. 'Shouldn't have told Billy, it was our secret. Now we must pray, pray into the box, keep it safe.'

Dorothy rang again, longer. No answer. She called his name through the letter box. Tooke sat frozen listening. 'Fuck off, Fuck off... you whore.' The words formed in his head. He bit his lip to prevent their escape.

Dorothy felt sure someone was in. She walked to the window, peering in to the dimness. She could see the overturned furniture. Something was certainly wrong. Burglars perhaps? She would ring the police. They could break in.

Tooke heard her heeled footsteps recede. He began sniggering again. The gibberish continued. It was a good fifteen minutes before Tooke heard the noise. Someone was approaching the back door. He slid and ducked beneath the sink unit just as a face peered in through the window. The face moved off to peer through other windows. Tooke scurried off on all fours into the hallway, the remnants of his trousers falling around his ankles in the process. He tugged and ripped at them, pulling them off over his muddy and bloodstained shoes. He stood, bare legged in his stained and crumpled dress, a grotesque

ballerina.

Two silhouettes played on the frosted glass of the front door. The letter box flipped open. The policeman blinked, looked at Mrs Whittingham, then looked back through the slit. 'Jesus Christ!'

Tooke ran back into the kitchen. The face was back at the window.

'Mr Tooke?', it queried.

Tooke grabbed a carving knife from its wooden block. He ran to the back door, thrashing at the locks before finally wrenching it open. The young policeman, helmet too big for his fresh faced head, stepped up to greet the opener.

'Are you Mr Henry To?' His words trailed off at the parody that that emerged. He saw, too late, the knife as it swooped up over Tooke's head.

'No! We won't go back. We'll never go back to the box.'

Tooke yelled, his mouth foaming. He let out a piercing shriek as the knife slurped into the young cop's chest. He fell backwards taking the knife, firmly wedged, with him. Tooke carried on running down the garden.

'Bastards! Bastards! You'll not stop us know.' He raged. And with uncharacteristic agility, he was up and over the fence.

The young cop moaned, turning his head to his radio. 'I've been stabbed, some nutter...in drag...'

Sirens wailed through the city. Police cars raced, lights flashing.

The hunt was on.

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Inspector Meekin, in charge of the previous night's murder investigations, was at the scene within minutes of hearing the news of the stabbing. He approached the sergeant outside Tooke's house. 'Looks like this could be your man from last night.'

'Looks like it. Who is he anyway? Anybody know?'

'Guy named Tooke. A solicitor. That's his secretary over there.' He nodded towards Mrs Whittingham, who stood crying beside a police car. 'Seems he didn't turn up at work, so she came looking for him.'

Meekin expelled a long breath.

'Shit! I know the guy, I've seen him in court. I tell you, Frank, sometimes it scares me. So many nutters walking the street, you don't know who they are, then wham! something snaps. I want him found, and I want him found quick!'

Tooke stumbled along, his mind raging. He tried to avoid being seen, but it was impossible in busy, broad daylight. He ignored the stares of people as he passed. On he ran through Hotwells. Until he stood looking up at the bridge tower before him. Across the other side of the gorge he could see woodland.

A place to hide, to rest. How he yearned to rest.

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'We've sighted him, sir.' The uniform shouted to Meekin from inside the police car. Meekin got in.

'Where?' He asked, starting the engine.

'Clifton Bridge. A couple of our lads have blocked off the other side. He's not going anywhere.'



Meekin wanted to be the one to feel his collar. Within minutes he was at the bridge. Driving along the outside of the queue of cars he reached the tower. Two police cars straddled the road, stopping traffic. He got out.

'Where is he then?'

'In the middle sir, knows he's trapped. He's standing on the parapet, looks like he might jump.'

'Does he now? Well, we can't have that now can we?' Derision soured Meekin's tone.

He turned to the one of the older looking officers.

'You come with me. The rest of you stop back here, okay.'

With deliberate lack of stealth, Meekin marched up to where Tooke stood on the parapet. Tooke clung to one of the steel support cables. Meekin stopped a few feet away.

'Come on now, Mr Tooke, show's over. Are you going to come quietly?'

'Bastards, go'way. Wasn't us. Fuck off, fuck off, fuck, fuck, fuck,' Tooke screamed out obscenities. Then giggled, whispering to himself.

'Why Mr Tooke, what are you going to do?' Meekin sneered at the aged transvestite. He took a step closer. The image of the mutilated corpse in the entry still burned on his retina. He had seen so much public money wasted in the courts over the years. So much money spent in defence of psychopaths like this. Where guilt was was never in doubt. A little summary justice was called for. Meekin moved towards the swaying Tooke.

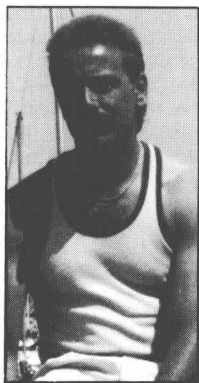
'Now Mr Tooke, what are you going to do!' Meekin's voice mocked. 'Not Tooke!' Tooke spat back. He released his grip on the cable and flailed his arms over his head. Gravity tugged upon the hump on his back. 'Not Toooo...' His voice squealed as he disappeared over the edge.

Tooke felt the rush of air as weightlessness seemed to lift him. It was only an illusion. The muddy river accelerated up to greet

him. The sins felt cheated, robbed of their opportunities. But at least they had escaped the box. The impact with the water ripped apart Tooke's abdomen, spilling his guts. His lungs filled. The water and injuries sapped away Tooke's life. The sins deserted the lifeless corpse, merging with the river. Maybe something within the murky depths could serve as a new host.

Henry Tooke died as he had never lived: a schizophrenic, hunchbacked psychopath, with transvestite tendencies.

Indeed, he died a man full of sin.



Stuart Moran is 34, married, and lives in Coventry (Someone has to, he notes.) He's been writing for a couple of years and *The Confessional Box* marks his first venture into short horror fiction, having caught the bug reading the works of Ramsey Campbell, Iain Banks and Clive Barker. He is currently about to complete a horror novel, which he hopes to have published in early '92.

FICTION FILE 44

ROBERT MCCAMMON



A mental film-maker who rates books above movies and reckons he'll never stop learning: JB Macabre tunes in on one creative writer's concerns

Child abduction and abuse have featured large in recent news reports and, although American horror author Robert McCammon did not intend to exploit any particular situation in his new novel *Mine*, its imminent publication fits uneasily with current concerns. 'It's about a woman who belonged to an organization like the Simbianese Liberation Army in the 60s. She's been living underground since 1972, as a result of a shoot-out in Linden, New Jersey. Insane and yearning for the past she kidnaps another woman's baby. The woman goes on a cross-country search for the kidnapper because she decides that the police and FBI can't find her child.'

The storyline plays on a particularly new fear for young mothers, but the majority of McCammon's books have used old myths and horror stereotypes in innovative or unusual ways. Yet, he has never consciously analysed how he has updated these myths. 'It would be scary to think, how do I do this?' If you sit down and say I'm going to do this from A to Z, it's really difficult. I just go by gut instinct. It may get you into trouble. I've had instances where I've been working on a book, written about 200 pages, and realized it's not working, it's not what I want to do. You have to put that aside and start on something else. So much for me is just instinct, feeling. Where am I going, is it right or wrong?'

He is, however, concerned about the other side of the coin, the reading end, and the apparently decreasing standards of American literacy. 'You have to be aware of the problem, and you have to make your books thought provoking and literate. I think it's unfortunate that most people have given up reading in favour of films and television. There is so much more to be gained from reading, it's such a total experience, whereas the others are superficial.'

The same might be said of books on cassette, though McCammon is a little more cautious in his appraisal of these products as his short story *Nightcrawlers* is available on one of them. 'I'm really glad it's come along because it does give people who don't have the opportunity to read a chance to listen to it on their car system while driving. I hope the quality will be kept to a high standard. Like everything else, there will be good and bad products. The trend is good. Anything that exposes people to reading and books is great.'

Although McCammon does not favour film over books he writes his novels using a very visual technique. 'When I write a book I approach it as a film maker in a way. I do the sets, the costumes and I cast the thing. Sometimes I even do the sound effects. I'm a mental film maker, making films you see in the mind, but I don't think any director could capture what I create.'

McCammon's magnum opus has yet to flicker on his interior silver screen: by his own admission, he has yet to write it. 'The book I most want to be remembered for is still out there. I don't think I've reached it yet. I don't think you ever reach where you want to get to. When you do feel you've reached that place then there is nothing more to learn. I think I will always have more to learn, and with each book I learn more about writing. But it doesn't get easier. I guess it's just a matter of trying to keep going forward.'

David FitzSydney

MOODER

First Fitte — Blue Fall

I brought the climatic late in the third fitte after a build up of entwined, single shot emotions: I ended the fitte with a down beat enclitic, what the buffs call a 'blue fall'. It wasn't very subtle but then the Vachin Club on Beja isn't the Metropolis or even the Colline. The buffs responded with complete silence.

If they'd done anything else I would have been worried. They were in a state of almost clinical depression. Some mooders don't plummet as deep as I do but try to pitch higher. It's a waste of time: I go deeper, get a greater span and don't waste much energy on euph effects.

I paused before starting the last fitte, looked around. The club stank of money and bad taste: the furnishings looked as if some idiot had selected them at random for the museums of Old Earth. With Beja's money that was even possible. The buffs themselves were as bad in their gaudy silks though now their heavy, fleshy faces were damp with the cold sweat of fear. It was time to complete the catharsis — the second rate mood job — with the final fitte. I was on the point of beginning when I noticed the girl at the best table take out and light a cigarillo. She shouldn't have wanted to do that; she ought not to have been able to do it unless she was one hell of a deep dye buff.

She puffed away at it frenziedly and I recalled who she was — Kelshay's 'secretary'. Kelshay owned the Vachin Club, among other things. Many others. He was one of the Bejan Syndics. His 'secretary', Anelyn something or other, as well as being tall, slim, pale and beautiful was also capable of taking a pit deep plummet without stupor...

I began. I rested my hands on the box, thought at it, hit the level of the plummet, explored its depths a moment then euphed a secondary, peaked and diminished it, upscaled the primary a fraction, held it, and euphed it. Already they were gasping with relief. At the *Colline* I'd have given them the plummet again but these buffs hadn't the stomach for that so I euphed a secondary really high — olfactory stimulation, Summer's day type — and held it there. The contrast with the still deep primary was nearly as good.

I froze it for three full moments then began raising other secondaries, not without a bit of synaesthesia, to just

above the final plateau point. Then it was just a case of mechanically raising secondaries and subprimaries, weaving them into a pattern, hooking the pattern to the mood plateau and sending the buffs back into reality mildly euphed. The height of the plateau above median mode is a burning question in the profession: some mooders assume moral postures about it. I do it at a modest two points. That fades gradually without anticlimax. I like my performance to finish when I'm there, not days after.

I was feeling pretty expansive — it hadn't been good but it had been consistent — so I gave them a bright, mazy coda instead of the usual simple enclitic. There was a pause as they came back, then the club burst into a riot of applause. I bowed mechanically, my eyes slipping back to Anelyn. She was still smoking. I considered joining her but Kelshay had just entered so I went to the bar instead.

'Whisky?' the barman joked. 'Just water and bitters,' I said and leaned on the bar, waiting. What I was waiting for is another matter. The next boost was an hour off and mooders tend merely to exist between boosts, so I suppose I was simply existing.

'Excuse me,' she said.

I turned and saw her. Close up she looked even better.

'I'm Anelyn Visco, Mr Kelshay's secretary. He'd like to see you.'

'Now?' I'll come over to his table.'

She shook her head. Her long, shaped hair bounded prettily about her ears. 'Not there, in the office.' I also noticed the pleasant contrast between her warm brown eyes and the fashionable pallor of her face.

I nodded. My mooder's instinct warned me to refuse; so did my common sense; most of these exiguous states are little more than time jangled skeins of crass and hairy plots. But fighting down the sensation of being buffed by one of Mother nature's best mood jobs, I followed her.

Second Fitte — Stereotypes

The office suite was suitably opulent but without the graceless richness of the club itself. Kelshay rose and came out from behind a carved wooden desk to greet me for all the world as if he hadn't only beaten me there by seconds. I noticed his eyes on my mood box. That was nothing unusual. For all it had no

value aside from the few decis worth of my personal diasymbolic circuitry it was something he couldn't buy and that fascinated him.

'I once experienced you in the *Metropolis*,' he said.

'I've improved since,' I said ironically.

'I'm sure you have,' he said,' he said, and meant it. I could read his mood: he liked my present series: he much preferred the second rate, it was easier to appreciate. He was also nervous. He lit a cigarette, took a swift drag and the nervousness diminished.

'But it isn't exactly an artistic matter I wish to discuss with you, rather a matter of business. Tell me, do you know anything about the politics of the Vachin?'

"I decided on a mood of projected childishness to play on the inherent brood mother instinct and keep the pressure off that trigger."

'Just the usual con trick, I imagine.' He was beginning to irritate me. The Vachin — the real thing, not the club named after it — is that odd wheel of planetoids in the Procyon system that caused a lot of excitement a century back. Our first acquaintance with the work of an extra-solar intelligence and all that — six planetoids shaped in a circle about a seventh and all holding that shape as they orbited at right angles to the primary while turning on their axes every twenty nine hours. Physicists got hot under the collar trying to explain it but the colonists moved on in anyway and now seven tiny independent states exist under plexiglass and on hydroponics and make a hell of a lot of money in mining, trade — and tourism. Sun ships beat and tack about the wheel and it's supposed to be the best of fun. That's interrupted slightly by the endemic wars between the planetoids but not too much: it even adds spice, especially as the combatants are very, very careful not to hurt the tourists.

'No, no!' he said with sudden vehemence. 'An important struggle is being played out here!' He puffed harder on his cigarillo and launched into a little speech on the need for unity, topping it off with a little sociological speculation on the 'Tiger's Tail Effect' — the tendency of linear arrangements of states to be endemically at war with their immediate neighbours and allied with their neighbours but one. Odds and evens seemed a better name for it but I kept my own counsel. The point of the discourse was that here on Beja, the central planetoid, they were in a position to break the tie. Unfortunately the six other states had realized as much and had achieved a kind of unity in denying Beja any part in their wars. As a temporary Bejan that



seemed an ideal arrangement to me; Kelshay, a permanent Bejan, thought otherwise.

He lit another cigarillo and launched even more vividly into his plans. He intended to break that unity and needed high placed sympathisers in the governments of the three states of the Yellow Alliance — it's really called that — to do it. Now it so happened that a delegation consisting of just such were due in the club for my second boost. Now if I were to put them in a highly receptive mood...

Such requests are not unknown but are invariably refused. As a professional we might have a deplorable taste for punning but never for artistic suicide. I said: 'No.'

It was the wrong answer: a small gun appeared in his hand. I wasn't for him; I was ipso facto against him. His fellow Syndics might not understand his dealings; I couldn't be allowed to tell them.

'Last thing I intend, chum,' I said, but my flippantly perfect truth wasn't convincing enough and I realized he was going to kill me — and also just what kind of cigarillo it was he was smoking. A top contains a metabolism quickening drug, one which particularly affects the brain. It temporarily increases the measurable intelligence of the user and is illegal as hell — for one very obvious reason: it makes the stupid think they're being intelligent when only being more consistent in their stupidity. It explained a lot of things. But it wasn't explanations I needed. I'd been very stupid. I should have guessed the point of the conversation and bowed out long before. Now I had to extricate myself.

I euphed him. He didn't suspect: he thought a mooder had to touch his box to work because we all do when performing but it's only a device to increase projective empathy.

I broke the mood with a vicious suddenness and reached out to slap the gun from his hand. He fought back but he was a flabby little man and I sent him skittering noisily into the furniture. I turned to leave; the door opened; Anelyn entered, gun in hand. She pointed it at me but spoke to Kelshay who was just picking himself up off the floor.

'He wouldn't agree?'

'Kill him!'

She shook her head. 'You give up too easily, Manolo, much too easily.' She looked at me. 'I'm sure we can come to some arrangement, can't we?'

'Perhaps,' I said, looking at her afresh. She was obviously the dominant personality. Why otherwise would a rich nonentity like Kelshay risk his prerogatives as a Syndic for the dubious pursuit of power in a united Vachin? I also noticed that her too perfect bone structure now looked vaguely reptilian. An euph would be dangerous. Instead I decided on a mood of projected childishness to play on the inherent brood mother instinct and keep the pressure off that trigger. I gave the secondary impression of a different kind of interest and empathized a certain reciprocity. Naturally: she had to be bored with Kelshay.

Taking his place in her affections was no cheering prospect, though; like all mooders I assiduously avoid power cripples. Besides, their little top dream was like all such — logical but not rational.

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Mood is nothing if not transient. In fine, they were simply top crazy. But even in crazy conspiracies you can end up dead — dead, and my career on the downbeat!

'Only perhaps?' she asked sweetly, fiddling with the gun.

'For certain,' I said and began to project total compliance, mooding with a rare passion.

Third Fitte — Euphing It

For the first time in years I began with a prelude, a mishmash of tangled emotions, all unresolved, of high achievements lost, seemingly irretrievably, and all constrained by external threats. I looked at the pair of them chain smoking at their table so as not to be overcome by my mooding, their guns put away but no doubt with buttons in plenty to call the staff of the club down on me. They would understand the emotions of the prelude; those about them would feel them. If they had really appreciated that...

I introduced a note of certainty, of style, first as a minor strand then gave it secondary status, raised it without euphing it, plateaued it a moment, raised it again but with euphed subsecondaries, raised it higher yet, higher than they could bear —

And callously dropped them back to base state. The buffs gasped: the two conspirators merely puffed away.

The first fitte I made quite conventional, basing it mainly on auditory and olfactory stimulations and puerile associations. It was the epitome of my decline, so much so that I noticed somewhat less than perfect stillness in my audience. All to the good.

I ended it a point over base state, started the second a fraction lower then jumped it moderately high: I had already decided to limit myself to three fittes, unencumbered with envois, codas and enclitics, so the second had to prepare the ground for the finale. I gave them the full barrage of nameless, uncomfortable emotions, making them feel as though haunted by recallable nightmares; then I dropped them deep below base state.

They were dazed for a moment, then looked about them with haggard faces, only the conspirators taking it with anything resembling equanimity. They were noticeable.

I started immediately on the third fitte. For the first time in years I felt the pull power in me, the essence of rightness. I quickly built a powerful secondary based on it — on power. I let them feel it, fear it, love it... An idea of Kelshay's came to me. A tiger burned through the club.

The next part was the most difficult — to transmit an idea by means of mood. Difficult, but by no means impossible for a great mooder...

I let the mood play indicate the political arrangement only briefly, but with primary power: the idea would reverberate about their minds until understood. Then I used mood to full advantage: a sudden plummet, deep as I could go, and let them feel the desperation of being in the power of others, of losing well loved rights and privileges, of pain and death...

The conspirators were nervous now but not too much. Topped, they had not

felt the raw force of the fitte and they were certain I couldn't indicate their identity by mooding. Mood is impersonal — that's one of the *données* of the buff. Besides, I'd already convinced them I'd do what they wanted though of course I'd no such intention. I developed a strong secondary, plateaued it low so that it still seemed to be straining upwards. It was a secondary of revenge.

The room throbbed with raw power but the vast force I had let loose in it was still undirected, almost undirectable. I didn't know yet how even I would direct it, only that I would. And sure enough the inspiration came, exactly on cue.

"The two smokers still didn't know their fate and for a moment the room held still, in shock."

A minor secondary coiled wispily up, uneuphed, almost lazily; another joined it, and another, and they were like smoke ascending. Keeping the secondaries in perpetual motion I went down to their starting point and wove about it a web of utter contempt and disdain, overlaid it with a raw greed for power...

I had done enough. I ended the fitte abruptly. The two smokers still didn't know their fate and for a moment the room held still, in shock. Then it erupted.

As I walked out only a roiling mass of humanity could be seen about Kelshay's table: the screams were almost drowned out by the animal grunting of the assailants.

I would leave Beja immediately: there would be no appreciation for this performance. I decided to take a sun boat and beat sunward for Procyon Main, a nice conventional world with transshipment facilities for Earth.

There would be time for reflection in the sun boat. I could work on this new technique of immediacy and raw energy, refine it until it was suitable for the *Metropolis*.

I felt high. I had been among the best: now I would be the best. I was in mooder's mind again and I wondered how my fellow mooders would take the news. But what really mattered was that I had regained my inspiration, felt again the essence of rightness as I worked.

Nothing else mattered.

David FitzSydney adheres to the ancient creed that a writer should be read, not read about: that any attempt to make himself seem interesting when he's not, being merely a copy typist without an in tray, endlessly improvising, risks de-emphasizing those same improvisations which, ultimately, are his reason for being.

Julian King

HEADSTONE

I found out I had it on Christmas Eve.

'We've a range of drugs nowadays,' the doctor informed me. 'No cure yet, but...'

I wasn't listening. I stared out over the doctor's shoulder and watched the snow flutter past the window; all the time thinking, 'God, this will be the last time I see the snow. Forever.' And I thought of Sabrina, and our last Christmas together. And the last time we'd made love in front of the fire, the last time ever.

'There's no possibility of a mistake,' the doctor was saying, from a hundred miles off. 'The tests are ultra-accurate. We've got them down to a fine art, these days.'

These days? I recalled all those TV ads. Christ, I'd grown up with the bloody things. All through the eighties, the nineties. The monolithic tombstones which I'd first thought were Black and Decker commercials; the icebergs, the stockinged girls; the mainliners; and after all these had elicited only damp response, the Fear-Of-God-inducing, Wake-Up-And-Bloody-Listen, Don't-Mess-Around-With-Aids commercials had hit the screens, inspired despairingly by the Government's private and overwhelming panic.

I hadn't listened. Nor had thousands it seemed. You saw them on the streets. Outside hospitals, clinics, churches, counselling agencies; at the bus stops.

Wan, wasted, birdlike individuals with vacuum eyes which absorbed all the lights but gave none out.

Now I was going to join them. Their faceless, underground collective. I had only one question to ask the doctors: 'How long?' Even this wasn't good news. I wondered if I shouldn't dispense with the last-minute Christmas shopping.

'You've got a particularly virulent form of encephalitis, Mr Veitch,' he advised me blandly. 'Prognosis in such cases is poor for long-term survival.'

So, tell me the good news, Doc. 'How long?' I persisted.

He made a moue face. 'Two, three months. I'm sorry.'

'Don't be,' I informed him, as he scribbled out my prescription.

'You want me to book you an appointment with our Robo-Counsellor? It's on the NHS, of course.'

I declined.

He wished me a good Christmas 'under the circumstances' and I left for the snow-lined streets.

At least the city hadn't changed. Festive holograms and dancing laser beams illuminated shop windows, partly compensating the smog-laden-gloom, partly apologising for it. Kids smothered in ridiculously bright knitwear tugged at Daddy's arm, eager to show him the latest KillBlaster Robo-DeathTank with real traction and flashing lights proudly showcased safe behind glass fronts.

So who had given it to me? As I

trudged on against the tide of happy, weary people, feeling like an invisible ghost, the killjoy at a party, I mentally ploughed through a retrospective roll of names, faces. Anyone of them could have passed it on to me. Citing a specific vector was impossible and in any case, unbeneficial. Besides, there were too many other things to consider in the distressingly short time I had left. There was Sabrina, of course. She would have to be...informed. Before or after Christmas was the only dilemma there.

And my future? I tried valiantly to stem the bitterness but it was no use. Tears of anger and hate dissolved my eyes. I didn't deserve this. Alright, so I hadn't heeded the bloody advice but I didn't deserve this. At only twenty-seven I didn't, I groused in bitter silence to the darkening, opaque sky. I didn't. The dawn of a brand new century mere days away and I was going to miss out. I bit through my lip vehemently.

**"Pen and paper,
five minutes; and
you've bought
yourself eternal
Utopia. Simple."**

I didn't even believe in God, I reflected despairingly. Priests, pulpits and Songs of Praise on Sunday, I'd banished from my personal ideology years ago; the vacuum replaced by a kind of cynical iconoclasm.

So what future had I now? What was I going to do?

◆◆◆◆

'One hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds,' the man from the cryonics company informed me blandly, across the desk. He wore a white coat, glasses and a dark moustache, and had a stethoscope wrapped around his neck: he looked like a doctor. But I wasn't fooled.

'How much?' I replied, staggered. 'I can't afford that.'

The man shrugged. 'What price your life?' he said simply.

'Impossible,' I said. 'I just haven't got that kind of money.' Despair flooded through me; a raging Niagara.

'You don't have a life insurance policy, Mr Veitch?' inquired the man, raising an eyebrow.

'Yes, yes, but it won't cover me for that much.'

'How much?'

'I don't know,' I sighed wearily. 'I wasn't sure if this was a good idea anyway. Thirty-five, forty thou?'

'Oh,' said the man pessimistically, sitting back in his high, black leather chair again. 'I'm sorry, Mr Veitch but you understand we don't grant credit. If you want your body frozen after death, you must first satisfy us you can raise the necessary funds.' There was an interminable silence as the man rocked gently to and fro on his chair, steelily contemplating my seemingly unsolvable plight. After a while, he said: 'Are you absolutely sure you've no other means of



raising the capital? What about savings?

'None.'

'Property?'

'A joint tenancy with my girl-friend,' I told him gloomily. 'When I die, it all goes to her. Lock, stock and barrel.'

'Nonsense,' the man snorted. 'You can give written notice to sever the joint tenancy and become tenants in common. Leave your share of the house to us in your will. Pen and paper, five minutes; and you've bought yourself eternal Utopia. Simple.'

'Mmm,' I considered. 'I didn't realise.'

'You owe this girl favours?'

Certainly not, I reflected. For one thing, there were those late evening fitness classes still to explain. The dirty tramp had looked just a little to revitalised afterwards for mere callisthenics.

"The only other thing I remember about dying was that I was petrified right till the end."

'Alright,' I said, 'but that'll yield only about another ten grand at a stretch.'

'Mmm, plus forty thousand makes fifty thousand,' the man swiftly calculated, with a glint in his eye.

'Still nowhere near enough,' I said, my depression deepening. The man leaned forward and rested his elbows on the desk. 'There is a cheaper alternative,' he said, in an almost clandestine voice. 'An optional but still highly regarded service we can offer you for the price of fifty thousand.'

'What is it?' I asked, drooling for the slimmest sliver of hope. 'Neuropreservation,' he said grandly, relishing each syllable as it rolled off his tongue.

'Neuropreservation?'

'Head only suspension,' he affirmed.

I shivered. I wasn't about to ask what happened to the body. He told me anyway.

'We isolate the head — the seat of the mind — from the body and freeze that only. It's a popular option.'

'What's the idea of that?' I asked, mystified.

'In hundreds of years time, when science will have caught up with death and we'll be able to reanimate you, we'll clone you a new body from just a single one of your cells.'

'You'll be able to do that?'

'Of course.'

It sounded just a little bit Star Trek but who was going to argue in my predicament. 'You've sold me,' I said.

He said: 'Sign here.' (I found out then his name was Jim.)

Everything deteriorated pretty rapidly after that. Sabrina whipped herself into a frenzy of terror when she found out what I was dying from; knocking down the tree, tearing down the dekkies, smashing all the crockery, bolting from room to room like the

Christmas turkey who'd just spied the slaughterman. She finally collapsed upstairs on the bed, breathless and sobbing and was fine after that. Just walked about like she carried an invisible book on her head, with a pale far-away face which was almost fetching. Sabrina had always had a tendency towards excitability and the transformation was not unwelcome.

I won't bore you with all the legal delicacies surrounding my demise. Jim, in conjunction with my solicitors, drew up all the paperwork; the contracts; the small print.

By this time I was in hospital, fading fast and didn't care much either. Those last few days passed by like a dream. Propped up on a bulwark of pillows, gazing out through a fisheye lens as men in white coats leant close and peered at me and nurses smiled and frowned and took my temperature.

Jim came too. He was there on the last day. He didn't as much hold my hand as shake it firmly, whispering good luck to me and smiling like an uncle right until the moment his moustache dissolved in my fading vision like warm liquorice.

The only other thing I remember about dying was that I was petrified right till the end. Here I go, I quaked as the life seeped out of my drug-numbed body like dew evaporating from a field. What about this beatific peace I'd heard about that overcame the dying during their very last gasps? The spellbinding visions at the foot of the bed? There was none of that. Only the fear. It's over, I thought.

And then I was entering a long, dark tunnel with a blinding light as bright as a star at the end. And behind the light, I sensed a new world. A gateway to a hidden paradise. And there was an angel at this gateway I could see as I neared the end of the tunnel.

But he wouldn't let me through.



It seemed like one subjective second later when I awoke. The year was 2774 AD but I could know nothing of this at the time. I didn't know who I was, where I was, or even what existence was. It was my mouth and my nose and the tubes protruding from them that formed my first impressions. Nose. Tubes.

Gradually though, after a few minutes, my brain began to galvanise after its defreezing; thoughts began to spark along my cerebrum, and my memories flooded out from their long captivity like birds released from a cage. It was really me! After all those years asleep like some late twentieth century Rip Van Winkle, I was alive — thinking... seeing. I couldn't move my head but I reckoned I still had to be a little stiff from so many years in frozen quietus. The main thing was that I'd survived. Cryonics worked!

From what little I could perceive of my surroundings, it would appear that I'd woken in a hospital room: the walls were bare and shimmered white. I didn't care. The rush I felt then; it could've been a dank, filthy sewer and I wouldn't have wished to be anywhere else. You can't even imagine a shiver of the intense exhilaration that seized me right there and then in that room.

Patiently, I waited for a doctor or nurse to enter; after centuries, I wasn't about to begrudge a few more minutes. But I wasn't prepared for the face, minus glasses, that entered the room then and presented itself warmly smiling to me.

It was Jim! Alive and well; he and his moustache, trimmed a little neater than how I remembered it, had taken the same lifesaving journey.

'How are you feeling?' he asked, looming over me like the benevolent uncle.

'A little stiff,' I joked — my first words. The sound of my voice surprised me. It was unnatural — thin and electronic, like a cheap vox-synthesiser. It simmered my ebullience a little. 'But under the circumstances...'

'Good. It's only natural you'd feel a little wasted but the Surgeons will keep you here on life support until your condition stabilises.'

'Jim,' I said, not hearing, 'it worked for you as well. Cryonics, it really worked.' I gave a metallic laugh that sounded embarrassingly louche, like a kid's toy robot.

'Yes,' he said, a touch smugly. 'It worked. I had the whole-body programme. The Surgeons cured my myopia and I got them to throw in a new nose for me as well.' He tapped it.

I thought there was something else different about him. 'How many others?' I asked.

'Millions.'

I gasped. 'Millions?' Then laughed again. I don't know why; it seemed funny at the time: arrogant old Death finally being booted out on his ear after so long. Millions. Imagine. 'So what's it like, Jim,' I said eagerly. There was so much to catch up on. 'The world. What's it like?'

'Different.'

'How, how?'

'Well,' he said. 'There's no more war. We're all one nation: Global Earth. There's no more disease; no more disability; no more decrepitude. And of course, no more death. The ageing process has been halted. We're all young; sexually active.' He winked at me. 'Well, for the most part,' he added.

'What about space exploration, Jim? Are we out there amongst the stars?'

'For the lucky rich, travel to anywhere in the galaxy is possible.' He added soberly, 'Something that hasn't changed. Money's still very important. Surgeons now live like emperors.'

'Something's worrying me, Jim,' I said. A vague disquiet had been needling me since the moment I had awoken and now demanded outlet. 'I can't feel my arms or legs. In fact, I'm completely numb below my neck. Is it the anaesthetic?'

'There's something you must understand.' Jim looked like he was wrestling with the uncomfortable prospect of sharing bad news with me.

It was like a dark cloud above him had suddenly thrown its shadow across his surgically unfurrowed brow.

'You can tell me, Jim. You're my friend.'

'Well, there's good and there's bad,' he said awkwardly. 'The good is that we managed to cure your Aids and bring you back to life. The bad...well, the bad is that we cut it so fine the money didn't

FICTION FILE 45

REX MILLER



Vietnam bore some deadly babies, but none more grotesque than Rex Miller's straight-razor wielding man mountain of a psychopath, Chaingang. John Gilbert reviews his birth

Already the blood-greedy psycho has claimed lives in books like *Slob*, *Frenzy* and *Slice*, but he was created in Miller's first, a novel about the Vietnam war called *Profane Man*, written in 1986. 'I carried that baby about for 11 years, it was a painful delivery and one that obsessed me terribly.'

'I had wanted to write it since 1971. Then I came into contact with Harlan Ellison and imposed on him to take a look at a small treatment for the book. That's what led to Harlan introducing me to his, and now my agent, Richard Curtis.'

Curtis felt he could sell the book but pointed to a glut of Vietnam novels on the market. One character, however, stood out from the rest and he suggested Miller write a book about him. Chaingang was the character and he has become infamous for his unrestrained violence. 'When I did the first book I looked upon it as one of three Chairgang novels, but now it could be an infinite number as the monster ultimately becomes something else.'

Miller had not always intended Chaingang to be the preternatural monster we face in *Slob*. 'Those preternatural aspects were emphasized for the market place, my original take was of a straightforward human monster.'

During his early career, Miller appeared to play the hermit, and several genre commentators began to believe he was a

pseudonym for Stephen King. 'I think its a terrible thing to say about Stephen and I expect he got a wry chuckle out of it. There's a pretty funny explanation though: my lack of craft. I made so many mistakes (with the first book) it sounded like a jam. One learns writing at one's own pace, and one's own way, in my case just by writing.'

Nevertheless his talent is outstanding in many ways and his books have garnered the unwholesome attention of the so-called moral majority who are scandalized by the levels of very realistic violence in them. 'They are shooting at the easiest target, shooting the messenger. The tough target is the guy who is selling a baby now, or the dog catcher tying up 50 pups and selling them to labs. Right at this moment there are guys roaming around in vans kidnapping little kids, boys, and making them their slaves.'

'Censorship is a very deep subject, but there are those who want to stop what they see as the slide down the sewer, and the way to do it is to impose censorship on pornographers and sleazebags who have contaminated the literary field! This is so flawed and specious and salaciously conceived. There are many reasons for the complex social problems we have, and they're not solved by half-baked censorship. We need to get back to the serious issues.'

Miller is not about to be put off and intends to continue the Chaingang novels, changing and deepening the monster's character until he effectively becomes the novels' protagonist. 'If you put a monster in a field by itself then he is the antagonist, but if you put an even less redeeming mutant in the same field the original monster becomes the protagonist.'

That's what Miller intends for Chaingang and, with such an inventive turn of mind and *Slice* about to appear in paperback from Pan, it wouldn't be surprising to see this author's UK audience grow by the ton.

quite extend to cloning you a new body. A very costly procedure. Clonicians demand exorbitant fees.'

'What?' I exclaimed, the horror insinuating itself into my mind. 'Wasn't there anything left? What about all that interest accumulated over the centuries?'

'Your bank balance reads eight thousand dollars.'

'So, I said feverishly. 'Can't I use that?'

'Won't buy you a packet of nuts today,' he said. 'No, your only option is to join the ten...fifteen million others in your plight in one of the Head tanks.'

'Head tanks?' A shadow was cast on the ceiling by the door opening and a beautiful young girl entered the room and put her arms amorously round Jim's waist. With astonishment, I recognised Sabrina under the cosmetic surgery.

"It was like a dark cloud above him had suddenly thrown its shadow across his surgically unfurrowed brow."

'Jim, there you are,' she purred. 'I've been looking for you all over the place. What are you doing talking to a Head? Come on, let's go for a swim.'

'Just coming, Darling.' He turned back to me. 'A Head colony is really the best place for you, Mr Veitch,' he said, as he was playfully tugged towards the door by Sabrina. 'There's no shortage of company: a hundred Heads to each tank, and the nutrients solution is kept topped up and changed regularly.'

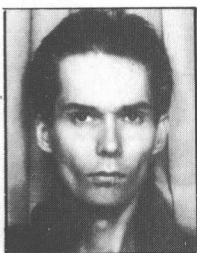
'Jim,' I said, horror-struck. 'Don't go. Don't leave me. You're my friend.'

'I've booked you into a tank for tomorrow, in fact,' said Jim, edging towards the door. 'It's really for the best. You've got to remember the overpopulation problem we have here; the proles having to live in skyscrapers. Your Heads help to relieve that. And anyway,' he added, framed in the doorway, 'it won't be forever. We've still got the remnant of a national health Service left. They manage to do a few body clones each year. But there's a waiting list, of course.'

'How long?' I stammered, as Jim was closing the door.

'113,666 years,' he called out in parting.

'JJJJIIIMMMMMM,' I screamed, alone again.



Julian King lives and works in Norwich and is a 'keen, as yet unpublished writer who thrashes out words on his typewriter each evening in order to compensate for an utterly mundane day-time job'. He is working on a horror novel with a scientific flavour.

DIGGER

By Malcolm K Twigg

Casey always had this morbid fear of graveyards. Which was a bit strange for a gravedigger's son. Casey himself always said it stemmed from when his dad dug up a family plot for the next coffin, and the lid of the last one to be buried gave way, leaving his old man ankle deep in ooze and swearing fit to bust. He was just delivering his dad's lunch-time sandwiches at the time. The stench was awful, he said, and he got splashed with some of the gunge as his dad wiped his boot off on the grass. That's what he said.

I didn't know whether to believe him or not. Whatever, even so much as mention a graveyard after that and Casey ran a mile. It was always a source of amusement to us kids, and poor old Casey never had much of a look-in when the whole gang of us got together. The graveyard was just about the only playground we thought worthwhile bothering with. Rog and Philip anyway and, being the eldest, their opinion always held sway. The rest of us just followed like sheep. Except Casey. It got right on the old vicar's wick, I can tell you. I can't remember how many times he chased us off.

To be honest, I got on all right with Casey. We were about the same age, and close neighbours. I suppose we were thrown together, in a way. Our folks were pals from way back. Lived in each other's pockets almost. Until whatever it was that happened to Casey's dad happened, that is.

It was a funny thing that. One minute he was his usual self, scaring everybody to death with his stories of graverobbers and stuff — he had a macabre sense of humour — half an hour later he came back from wherever he'd been, white as a sheet, shaking like a leaf, and never spoke a word from that day to the day he died. Just sort of sat there, twitching, with his eyes staring into space. It upset Casey a fair bit, did that.

Doctors never could get to the bottom of it. The sight of kids seemed to set him off worse. Even Casey. Anyway, he

didn't last long afterwards. Just sort of faded away. Which was a good thing, I suppose, he was no more than a vegetable anyway.

Casey wouldn't go to the funeral. Can't say I blame him really. Funerals aren't exactly everybody's cup of tea and what with Casey's fear of graveyards, it was hardly surprising. I didn't go either. He and I stayed in the back garden until everybody got back. He didn't feel like playing much, which was only natural, I suppose. He just stared over the fence, sort of wistful-like, across at the church in the distance. It was a lot less built-up in those days and you could actually see the graveyard from the back of the house. Like little dolls, the funeral party was. From a distance they looked just like the figures in those old penny machines you used to get on the end of piers, and just coming back into vogue. You know, pay a penny and watch a man hang. That sort of thing. I always used to like those.

He cried a bit. Not as much as I'd expected though. But, I expect, with his old man being the way he was, it was a relief more than anything.

The gang felt a bit sorry for him after that, and started clustering around a bit more. They hardly ever went up to the graveyard, out of deference. All except Roger and Philip. They weren't going to change their routine for anyone, they said.

It couldn't last, of course. Rog and Phil soon talked the rest round to joining them again. Even me. I felt a bit bad about it, but Casey was getting more and more withdrawn and not a lot of fun to be with sometimes, so it wasn't surprising, really. We still kept best mates though and I did knock around with him more than the rest, even if he was turning a bit strange.

The vicar turned a blind eye to us eventually. There was never any damage — well, except later on and that wasn't us although no one believed us... but that's running on ahead now.

We even volunteered to mow the grass on occasion, by way of rent, I suppose — I enjoyed that, finding all the old grave-

stones and things — and the graveyard was still the gang's most favoured base. Until Rog disappeared. We kept a bit of a low profile after that. Well, we were more or less made to, actually.

That was another funny thing. According to Phil, he and Rog had gone up to the graveyard for a crafty fag. Phil'd had to blow his nose on the way up and must have pulled the matches out of his pocket. Anyway, they weren't there when they needed them, so he went back out of the gates to look for them. He reckons he heard a moan, on the way out and thought that Rog was trying to scare him, like we all used to do to each other. Of course, he takes no notice, picks the matches up and goes back to find Rog gone. Nothing there but the fags. So, he has a quiet smoke waiting for Rog to come out from wherever he's hiding and then beetles off back home when he doesn't show up. He was a bit thick like that, was Phil.

'Half the jurors on the Coroner's Court threw up at the photographs apparently'

Rog's disappearance even made the news, and Phil and Rog's brother did one of those reconstructions for the telly. Phil never mentioned the fags, though. They never did find out what happened to Rog. He just vanished.

Well, that put the kibosh on the graveyard for a bit. Even if we'd wanted to go up there, our parents wouldn't have let us. Not with some maniac on the loose, they said. It meant Casey had a bit more company, though. He started to come out of his shell a bit, then. He didn't half get boring about the graveyard, though. 'I told you you shouldn't play around up there,' he'd say, with that strange, intense expression of his. 'There's funny things happen in graveyards. Rog wouldn't listen. Now look what's happened.' Phil pooh-poohed him, of course.

'Just 'cos you're a wimp, doesn't mean the rest of us are,' he said. He never ventured to go up there, though, I noticed. Not for a long time.

It took ages for all the fuss to die down. Meanwhile Rog's parents had left and a new family moved in. By then we were all hanging around our old haunt again — the bravest first and then in ones and twos afterwards. All except Casey. He was hanging around the new family. Or, to be more precise, the daughter.

I know he was a friend, and all, but what Yvette ever saw in him I don't know. I would never have thought Casey was her type in a million years. She was just coming up to fifteen then, and looked older. Blonde. Nice knockers for her age. A bit of a goer, Phil reckoned, but I don't know what he knew about it. Anyway, chance would have been a fine thing. Her parents kept a close reign on her. Perhaps that's why they didn't object to Casey hanging around. He was always mild mannered and visibly not a

party to the excesses of the rest of us. What her parents might have termed excesses, at least, they were a bit strait-laced.

Actually, they were a pain in the arse to live next door to. Always complaining about something or other. If it wasn't kicking a football against the fence it was playing records too loud. Yvette was all right though. I even tried my hand a couple of times but got nowhere. Casey, see? Eyes for no one but Casey. Weird, if you ask me. Still, good luck to him.

Phil had to come sniffing around, of course. He was a bit of a tearaway, by now. His brushes with the law had been confined to a few good rollockings up to then, but he was on a warning. That was the only time I ever saw Casey stand up for himself. He tore into Phil like a demon. Phil wiped the floor with him. Didn't cut any ice with Yvette, though, but Phil wasn't going to take no for an answer.

The inevitable happened. Somebody tried it on. Grabbed her as she walked home by the churchyard, one afternoon, dragged her into the bushes... and made a botch of it. Phil was following her, as it happened, out of sight — trying to stick his nose in again if truth were told — and he went wading in when she squealed. St Phil to the rescue, just in the nick of time.

The would-be-murderer — that's how Yvette's parents described it — shambled out through the back of the bushes and legged it away down the lane. Neither Phil nor Yvette got a look at who it was... it was pitch black in those bushes. Whoever it was smelt, though, Phil said. Couldn't have washed for years.

That put Phil well in, didn't it? She switched her attentions to him then. Well, what impressionable young girl wouldn't? Froze poor old Casey out good and proper. Phil wasn't bad-looking and both she and her parents were grateful to him. Had he caught up with her five minutes earlier, the boot might well have been on the other foot, but that's how it goes. Some people can't see as far as their noses. They even let Yvette out with him. Strictly in daylight and right away from the graveyard, which the local fuzz now had well and truly on their beat patrol.

Funny things did seem to happen up at that graveyard. Casey's dad had been there before he came back a shattered wreck. At least, that's what the local paper said. Some bright reporter trying to make something out of nothing, I expect.

Coincidence is how I saw it.

That's how Phil must have seen it too. However he persuaded Yvette to go back up there is a mystery... except that the bushes at the bottom of the graveyard used to be the local knocking shop, so everyone had a fair idea. I won't dwell on it. The facts were reported in gory detail on the front pages of every newspaper in the country. Half the jurors on the Coroner's Court threw up at the photographs apparently.

I was off camping on a weekend fishing trip so I missed all the buzz, but it seems they dragged Casey in for questioning pretty sharpish. Motive, and all that. Prompted, no doubt by the discovery of Phil's severed 'tackle' in Casey's

back-yard. They had to let him go though. He had a watertight alibi, as it happened. Witnesses and everything as to where he was at that time all this was supposed to be happening. And anyway, no one could see Casey venturing anywhere near the graveyard. Somebody was trying very hard to put him in the frame, though.

Yvette's parents were pretty well cut-up about it all, as you might expect — and I don't mean that as a pun. Look, you've got to be realistic about these things, haven't you? They happen. More of them at that graveyard than at most places but it's a fact of life... or death, which is more to the point.

I suppose that might appear callous to some. I call it fatalistic, myself. You've got to go on, haven't you? It's no use looking over your shoulder all the time.

Well. That just about finished off any shenanigans up at the graveyard. None of the gang would go there for love — not even for that — nor money. What was it? Casey's dad, Rog, Yvette's attack and then Phil and Yvette carved up? What next we all wondered?

I'll tell you what. Grave robbing. Almost as if Casey's dad's stories had come to life. That's when they blamed the gang again.

It was all a patent nonsense because there hadn't been one of them anywhere near the place since they buried what was left of Yvette. I can vouch for that.

I ask you. It's gruesome. What would kids want with a pile of old bones? Well, not so old some of them... Yvette's actually. And Phil's. Someone had put them, you know... together. Even then poor old Phil never got to get his end away. I don't know what they'd done with that. Probably pickled in some chemist's lab. Somewhere.

That made the front pages again. 'Devil Worshipers desecrate country churchyard,' they said.

Yvette's parents went spare. They were all for mounting armed guard on the Churchyard, night and day. Her dad was a local parish Councillor and he really got the Chief Constable stirred up. There was wall to wall law as far as you could see for months. All to no purpose of course, things went as quiet as the grave (sorry, they just keep popping out) for months.

Phil and Yvette were put away again. Casey came in for some more stick. Prime suspect number one. The fuzz really made him squirm. Even took him to the graveyard to view the 'scene of the crime'. What they hoped to gain by that I don't know because it really set Casey back, what with his fear of the place. He all but had a nervous breakdown. Give him his due, though, he hung on and, in the end, they couldn't pin a thing on him.

Mud sticks though. Everyone shunned old Casey from then on. They made him a total outcast. The strain of it all put his own mum in the grave... except he had her cremated, he didn't seem to mind that. All the family had disowned him by then and there wasn't anyone at the funeral except Casey — and me, of course. You've got to stick by your mates, haven't you?

He went away after that. I thought he'd never come back. I wouldn't have. Everyone thought that he'd gone

for good and everything started getting back to something like normal. The Fuzz stood down a bit, despite Yvette's dad's efforts. The Vicar sprinkled Holy Water all over the place. People actually started walking down the short-cut around the back of the churchyard again.

Then Casey came back. He'd just taken himself off for a long break, he said, trying to pick his life up again. He really made an effort to join in, but people weren't having any. I felt sorry for the guy, but he was used to being on his own so I think it really bothered him all that much.

He did pick up this dog, though. I suppose everyone has to have something to care for. He brought it round sometimes. My folks had moved away by then. My old gran had just died and left a big house to them a couple of miles away so they just up and left. I chose to stay in the village and paid them a nominal rent for the old place. We hadn't got on for years so it was the best thing all round, really.

'She was just coming up to fifteen then, and looked older. Blonde. Nice knockers for her age. A bit of a goer, Phil reckoned'

Especially for them.

It was a noisy beggar. Used to howl at the full moon. I don't know where he picked it up from. Anyway, come the full moon one month soon after Casey came back, and this dog was howling his head off all night, apparently. Folks were cursing Casey. It wouldn't shut up, not until about 3am, somebody said, then it just clammed up and started whimpering and whining until first light. Casey probably didn't hear it. He always slept like the dead. He takes pills you know. Nerves.

I remember the incident particularly because of what they found the next day. That would be enough to stick in anyone's memory. It stuck in the Churchwarden's wife's right enough. She was just on the way to the Church to do the flowers when she found them. She lost interest in doing anything at all afterwards. She lost her breakfast as well. So did everyone else who shot up there as soon as the word got out. Serves 'em right. Some people can't wait to seem something unpleasant.

Whoever it was dug them up must have been there half the night — super-human. There were six of them lined up on the main drive. Stood up, if you please, supported by stakes. Like some ghastly guard of honour. Filthy, rotting corpses, some so decomposed that limbs had fallen off, liquid flesh writhing with maggots. In the midst of death there was yet life. Philosophy!

They took Casey away. It was all pretty circumstantial, if you ask me.



Someone, probably disturbed by the dog, said they were looking out of their bedroom window and thought they saw a figure flitting down the back lane by Casey's house and soon after that the dog shut up. I mean, that back lane leads to more places than Casey's. They might just as well have pointed the finger at Yvette's dad – that's where the lane ends. But they were convinced it was Casey.

They banged him up for life in a mental institution. By all accounts, he's gone just like his dad did. Not surprising, really, with all he's had to put up with.

'Filthy, rotting corpses, some so decomposed that limbs had fallen off, liquid flesh writhing with maggots'

I got to look after the dog. It didn't like me. Wouldn't have anything to do with me, in fact, so I let it go. It still hangs around somewhere. You can hear it howling at the full moon.

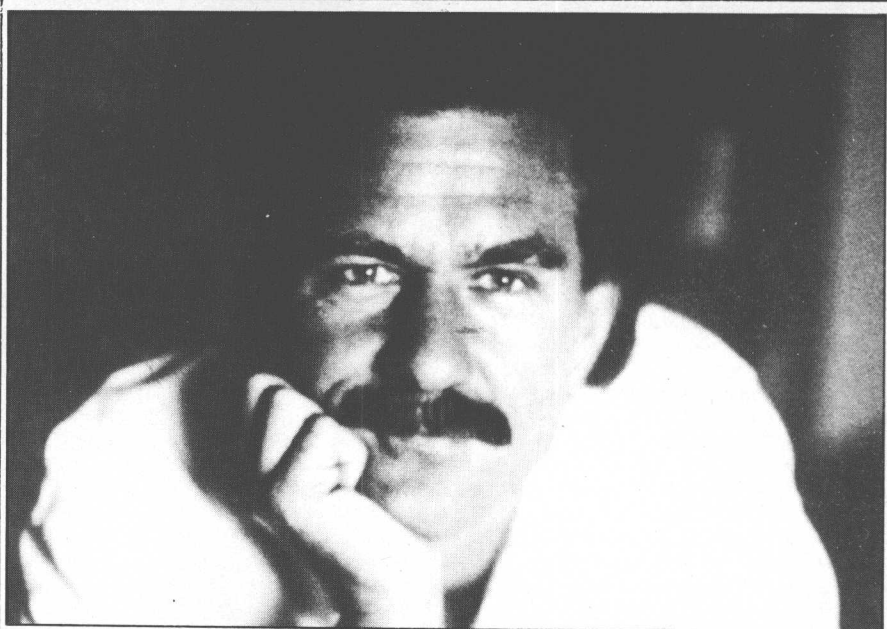
Everyone had to admit that Casey was innocent, though, when the next incident took place, although it didn't do Casey much good. The local beat copper very nearly caught someone... something... in the graveyard. He was new to the area and either overzealous or foolhardy because he happened to patrol the graveyard on his own one night and disturbed a figure which shambled away over the wall, dropping bits and pieces as it ran. He chased it without success, with that bloody dog howling in the background. It wasn't until morning that they discovered what the bits were that had been dropped. Arms and legs and odd bits of half-chewed body, green and stinking.

That damn dog didn't let up all night, not even at dawn. Sat outside the back wall, it was, howling, and yammering for all it was worth. It was the dog that left that rotting arm in the garden. It was. It was, I tell you. Just you loosen these straps if your don't believe me. Get Casey. Go on. He'll tell you I'm not mad. It's my graveyard, anyway. No one else's.

MALCOLM TWIGG is married, and lives in Torquay with his wife, his son, four goldfish, a budgie – and a psychotic cat. His writing is similarly eclectic, while a working background in local government imbues it with a sardonic cynicism. Writing for only three years, he has a number of published articles and broadcast radio stories to his credit. This is his first horror story. He is currently working on a romping novel of 'Sharpe' proportions.

FICTION FILE 46

GRAHAM JOYCE



John Gilbert discovers how a dream to write came true on a Greek island

Dreams. You might think the likes of Freddy Krueger have played out that particular field, but Graham Joyce's first novel *Dreamside*, published by Pan this month, looks at lucid, controlled dreams and, as in *Flatliners* and Ramsey Campbell's *Incarnate*, the only villain is the human mind and its fantasies.

'I'd written a few things about dreams before, but not in a disciplined way,' says the writer who threw up his nine-to-five job and settled on a Greek island to produce his first book. 'I wanted to look at ways of putting weird shit into novels: it's just not good enough to write a straight dream sequence. I stumbled across an article about lucid dreaming and it played on my mind that someone could seem to wake up and then wake up again and again.'

Joyce himself had a lucid dream when he was 'five quarters of the way through the book. I started to have moments of lucidity in dreaming, and I wanted to make things happen as the dreamers could in my book.'

'It was so exciting to take that first step. I remember being incredibly energized in this dream, but every time I took a step towards changing a scenario it was as if I was chasing that change down a narrow tunnel and never getting there.'

Unlike the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, *Dreamside* uses subtle shifts into the dream experiences which link cleverly into reality so, by the finale, the readers wonder 'whether it was all just a fantasy the characters had constructed'.

It's difficult to categorize *Dreamside* as horror, fantasy, or SF, but for Joyce the book's refusal to fit neatly into any hole is

not a problem. 'I think fantasy and horror have actually been mainstream from the year dot but have been marginalized in the last couple of hundred years, since the advent of the novel.'

'Homer's *Odyssey* is out and out fantasy, English literature such as the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* contain elements of fantasy as do Chaucer, Spence and Shakespeare. The strong tradition is continued by Johnathan Swift, and people who have read the adult version of *Gulliver's Travels* will very much know he was into fantasy and horror.'

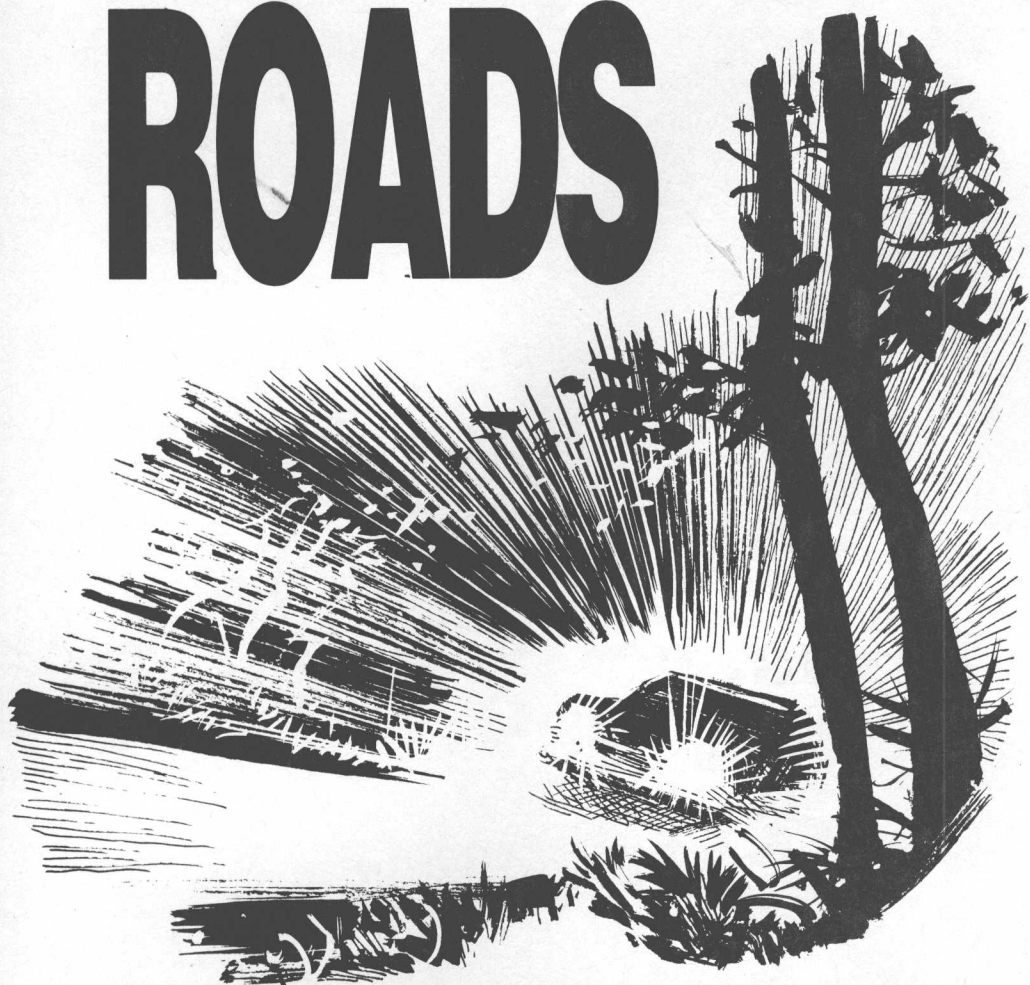
So, why has that categorization process run amok? 'It's all to do with academia and snobbishness. They do the genres of fantasy and horror a disservice by trying to marginalize them. There are also publishing pressures to be commercial. After all, it's easier to publish rubbish at the bottom end of any genre.'

Joyce is, however, content to be considered a fantasy or horror writer and intends to stick with the genres, at least until he feels the urge for difference. His next novel is another dark fantasy, concentrating on the occult sub-genre which again seems to be coming back into vogue. 'It's about black magic and dovetails with real events in 20th century history. A group of people practising black magic crops up at nodal points in history, such as the 300 day siege of Leningrad: so there are fictional horrors and real ones.'

His black magic is not simply a matter of muttering over sigils and raising spirits. It's about the human mind, a subject which he feels is under-exploited in fantasy fiction. 'I'm always going to be interested in latent powers: how people find them, how they use them, and how they behave when they think they control them.'

As a writer there is no question: he has his power well under control and we can look forward to as adept a novel as *Dreamside* this time next year.

COUNTRY ROADS



By Martin Plumbridge

The road twisted her around corners, only to reveal more of itself. At either side, yellow-white in the headlights, trees rushed forward but were sucked back into darkness before they could ever begin to snatch at the car, to be replaced, instantly, by identical corners. She might almost be trapped in a videotape loop, the victim of a cheap special-effect.

This stretch of road certainly seemed to have grown since last she came this way. Perhaps she'd taken a wrong turning back there and was even now shooting happily off into the Twilight Zone. She hoped so; anything would be better than actually having to believe that she was speeding through miles of repetitive countryside in the middle of a winter's night, towards her mother's death.

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Really, she did hope that it was over before she got there. She didn't want to have to sit through it. It wouldn't be anything tragic and profound, just banal, drawn-out and squalid, relentlessly squalid (a phrase she had used in a review of something back in the sixties — what was it now?)

Elizabeth, interrupted a stern voice in her mind: Elizabeth you callous bitch, she's your mother!

Is she?, she replied coolly, choking on a giggle as she saw herself in black and white as Bette Davis, twisting her lip-stick mouth into a sneer. That sick, withered husk of a body containing a child's brain? Is that her? I'm very sorry but I can't make the connection.

They'd replaced her. She was being played by someone else. She didn't care what they said. They could call her mad but it was the only explanation that

made sense.

This road, this road was approaching the miraculous, really it was. It just kept drawing her on and on, into nothing else but more road. Any minute now it would simply end, and there would be nothing ahead but trees, monstrous living trees, moving forward to crush the car. She could see the windscreen shatter under the pressure of earthy, snaking roots.

She saw a little girl.

Pale face, blonde hair, eyes open wide with shock, sucked under the vehicle before she could stop. A waking dream, a vision born of fatigue, said a calm voice, but the dull, soft thuds against the car's underside seemed to contradict her.

She was outside then, the dull, soft thuds of her heartbeat the only sound. The darkness swirled and shifted, unsteady. She clutched at the icy metal of the car, into the shadows. In the red glow of the car's rear lights, she thought

"Too many horror-movies, her mind said but she couldn't allow herself to even conceive of feeling relief yet."

she could just make out a shape dragging itself painfully across the tarmac towards her, blinded by the blood streaming into its eyes.

Her hand closed around the cool plastic casing of the torch. She pulled it out of the glove compartment and made her way back to the rear of the car, a shivering circle of light on the road in front of her. The twisted, whimpering thing that she expected to find stood out so vividly in her imagination that she could almost sense it in the area of darkness that the torchlight was always on the verge of uncovering.

But the hesitant glow disclosed nothing to her but twigs, and leaves.

The torchbeam swept the road again and again. It directed her gaze into the trees, but confronted her with nothing but blank grey surfaces of bark.

Too many horror-movies, her mind said but she couldn't allow herself to even conceive of feeling relief yet. The frozen white face of that child still stared into her, pleading. She turned back to the car, and the shadows beneath it.

Walking over, she crouched down and directed the torchbeam into the space underneath the vehicle.

Nothing. Not even the glittering eyes of a fox to give her a jolt, a false start.

A vivid dream, after all.

The night seemed to come to life around her then, in the rustling of leaves, the hum of the car's engine, the clacking of tree-limbs knocking against each other in the sighing breeze.

Crouched there, she thought of the trees, saw them reach down to the road in the darkness to snatch that broken little-girl doll from the ground with stiff,

creaking grey arms, sweeping the lifeless figure up into the seething mass of branches. She thought of them all around her in the cold night, moving together, conspiring against her in the dry clatter and hiss of their secret language.

She stood up in a sudden, breathless flood of panic.

There was a house.

How could she possibly have missed it? The trees had stood back to make room for a perfect cottage. Shadows moved over its pale face; a lazy ghost of smoke stretched up from the chimney, reaching vaguely for the night sky. Light flickered behind curtained windows and poured out of the front doorway to bask on the doorstep.

Her first impulsive feeling was one of hatred for the house, since it implied a solid background to her vivid dream. She saw herself shrilly, hopelessly, denying the girl's existence to the incredulous faces of her parents: 'Where is she then? Show me. Show me!'

Her torchbeam caught the white-painted garden gate, on which a sign read: LILAC COTTAGE. She felt like laughing, Lilac Cottage! Her own childhood home. Wouldn't you just know it?

It could pass for her old home, in fact. Yes: it could.

The front door was moving slightly, slowly, to and fro, as if beckoning her.

She pushed her hand down on the wooden latch of the gate, and there was a click, loud in the suddenly hushed night. Opening the gate, she stepped into the front garden and began to tread over the separate stones that made up the path leading to the door.

Each step brought the friendly little cottage closer. She would just walk straight in and explain about the girl, ask...whoever was there...about the girl.

Around her, trees crowded in the night, their branches forming a thick cobweb of black against the deep blue sky.

She pushed open the door and, swallowing nervously, stepped inside. The door closed behind her, all by itself.



The kitchen was empty.

She stopped and stared, stupidly. This wouldn't solve anything. You're just putting it off.

But now she began to explore the room, treading softly, carefully, as if any sudden sound would disturb something, or break something.

In the centre of the linoleum-covered floor stood the stout, blocky wooden table, scored by knife-marks. Two rough, splintery beams descended on either side of it, sprigs of dark green holly attached to them. A clutter of pots and pans crowned the stove. The rusty hot-water tank clung to the wall, blotchy and looming, faintly sinister; and she knew that when the water inside it became too hot it would hiss and roar like a genuine demon.

The feel of plastic was, she realised, gone from her right hand. The hand closed, when it closed, on itself.

Brown curtains screened the window above the ridged wooden draining-board. She knew that when they were parted, and the morning sun shone outside, its

ray would ignite the stream of water pouring from the hands of a woman washing clothes, so that it burned with a pure white hypnotic light. She could sit at the table, and watch, and feel calm wash over her.

Except you can't, muttered a sober voice, you know you can't. The light in here, now, came from a paraffin lamp, hanging from a metal hook screwed into the ceiling. It bathed everything in a warm, golden glow, much of whose substance was shadow. Darkness lay in cracks and crevices, and clung to every object. It was stored in bulk inside the pantry, the door to which was half-open. She pulled it wide, and surveyed the well-stocked shelves from which, concealed in the cool darkness, a child might filch biscuits, slowly levering the lid off the tin so as to make no sound, frantically trying to hide the evidence of her theft when, alerted by a stealthy noise, she looked up to see the door pulled wide and a silhouetted figure standing there, towering above her.

She felt the need to move, prompted by a vague sense of urgency which trailed off, even as she left the kitchen, into the distant hum of an engine, growing fainter, fading fast.

The long dining-table was set for three. Cutlery glinted on the white cloth that covered it, and rose-patterned plates waited patiently to receive the brussel sprouts, sliced carrots and roast potatoes that steamed in bowls set out in the middle. A joint of beef, ready for carving, oozed pinkish juices onto a silver tray placed at the head of the table.

That sober voice mumbled, but she no longer understood what it was saying. She looked at the empty plates and their familiar pattern and, briefly, she saw them shut up, unused for years, in a dusty cupboard in another, colder, house. The plates that gleamed, bright and clean, here in front of her.

She felt, then, that something was expected of her. She reached over and picked up a roast potato and bit into its crisp shell, into the softness inside. There was a moment of dizziness, threatening nausea, then she chewed, swallowed, and felt the food slip down to settle, comfortably solid, in her stomach. It tasted smooth and buttery, just right.

She found herself reaching into bowls and pulling out vegetables, hot and soft in her hands, piling them onto one of the plates as if possessed by a sudden, fierce hunger.

At the far end of the room, paper-chains formed dull inverted rainbows against the walls. Holly and mistletoe hung from the ceiling in separate clusters and the Christmas tree, bright with candles, cast wavering, feathery shadows onto off-white paint. In the fireplace, flames licked at the dimness.

Kneeling on the hearthrug, she felt the fire's warmth envelop her as she ate mechanically from the plate in front of her, felt the food radiate its own warmth through her from inside, bathing her in a golden glow of contentment. She stared at the silent wireless, stroked the smooth back of a brass salamander that stood frozen into a stance which fixed its gaze on the fire's glowing heart, and her thoughts resolved themselves into a

series of images, like illustrations. Christmas morning, waking up to lolling dolls and frost on the windowpane, creeping downstairs, in the early morning quiet to the waiting presents, the crisp brown skin of the turkey, blue flames crowning the pudding, her tiny hand enclosed in the warmth of her father's as snow crunched under their boots.

A shape at the edge of her vision interrupted the flow, turning her head around to see a dark brown coat hanging from the door that led to the stairs.

Abandoning her empty plate, she stood up and approached it, and grasped the thick, warm material, breathing in the familiar rich, dark smell that clung to it. She saw, as from a distance, a dismal group of people standing around a grave under an empty white sky, like uneasy actors in a scene from a film in a dream.

"Around her, trees crowded in the night, their branches forming a thick cobweb of black against the deep blue sky."

There was a sound of rapid movement on the stairs.

'Father?' Her voice shook. It sounded cracked and hoarse, like the voice of an old record, crackly with static.

She began to ascend, clutching the banister. It was too dark to be certain if anyone was ahead of her. At any moment she might bump into a solid unyielding shape that forced her back, made her fall back into space. Each step appeared to materialise under her feet just where it should but there was nothing, whispered a quiet, insistent voice, nothing to stop the next step giving beneath her, to nothing.

I know this house. This is my house.

A group of doors, outlined in light, rose up before her. The landing; she smiled, relieved. There, she thought, what did I tell you?

She heard something moving above her.

Squinting into the darkness above, she saw a square of deeper blackness: the entrance to the loft, of course, where old furniture and other things not wanted in the house nestled among cobwebs. Something quivered in this darkness, solid and alive.

She squinted up into the hole, and realised that it was increasing in size, rapidly now, eating away at the surrounding gloom; in fact, she understood, it was coming towards her, fast. She was going to fall head-first into the void that was rushing at her.

Instead, she fell into the warm light of her parents' room, stumbling through the door to surprise a grey figure sitting at the dressing-table, a blurred shape which resolved itself, when she had



finally collected herself, into nothing, nothing at all. A bottle of perfume, open and lying on its side, was all the evidence that remained of its presence. Now perfume pooled on the dark wood, trickling over the side onto the floor before she could stop it.

She righted the bottle. The overwhelming sweet fumes stung her eyes, making her want to close them. Sitting down on the big double-bed, she found herself looking into the dressing-table mirror. The room reflected therein was exactly right but the face staring back at her was her mother's young face. She was brushing her long golden hair. She wore a white nightdress, and her skin was as smooth and as pale as wax.

"She ran out into the icy night, hearing the muffled pounding of its legs over the ground just behind her."

Now she was turning to greet some movement behind her, in the depths of the mirror, putting down her brush, getting up and walking away, disappearing as she did into what seemed to be some sort of flaw in the glass; shrinking smoothly into a white bird, a butterfly, nothing at all.

The perfume was like a mist in front of her eyes. Her breathing drew it inside her head to cloud her brain and muffle her senses, and she lay back, her head falling into a hollow already dented in one of the big, soft pillows.

A warm, breathing bulk nestled next to her. She sensed it rising, shifting over to settle itself down on top of her. As its weight pressed down and its limbs began to slide around her, she felt the mattress disappear from beneath her, dropping her into an empty, yawning chasm.

She fell, spinning. panic tugged her eyes open.

The room settled down to become still around her. It seemed unchanged; she went to the door.

On the dim landing she hesitated for a moment, then opened another door, revealing dolls which sat still and expectant on shelves, staring blankly with eyes of cotton or glass. Their names spoke themselves in her mind as she lifted and touched each in turn, briefly caressing faces of china or cloth.

On a little desk in the corner sat a paint-tin, and a thin, scraggy brush, and a jar of water which a muddy mixture of colours swirled. A picture, its paint not yet dry, showed these wobbly figures and a tiny house underneath a spidery yellow sun.

She turned to the bed. A candle stood in a saucer on the table beside it, to ward off night-monsters contained in the wardrobe. A paper angel, coloured-in and stuck awkwardly to the wall, smiled uncertainly down at the little pillow on which her head should rest. On the dark brown coverlet lay a pink nightdress,

tiny and fragile as a doll's.

A book also rested on the bed, open at a page which showed a plump little girl eating from a bowl, unaware of a monster dropping down from above. The spider stood out blackly from the page, and it wasn't too difficult to see it squirming free of the book to scurry across the bed, straight into a childish nightmare. She turned the page, to see Jack Horner beaming with stupid satisfaction.

A deep sadness welled up in her. She could no longer dam it back; her body felt heavy, saturated with it.

Staring at the bed, she thought: it looks so small because it's so far away.

None of this could help her; this was the realisation which she had been trying to avoid. None of this had anything to do with her, not any more. She felt a fierce desire to smash things, though the thought of such destruction brought sudden tears to her eyes. Look at yourself, she told herself. Just look at yourself.

She went to the window and pulled the curtains aside, violently. She saw fields stretching away into the dim distance, a few isolated trees on the horizon. She saw the garden shed, full of rusty, rattling tools, the neat vegetable plots, and the hollow, red-brick circle of the well. All were quite visible, in spite of the darkness, and the snow.

The snow, light at first, soon began to fall in thick, heavy flakes, accumulating rapidly on the ground. She pressed her hands against the cool glass, and her gaze fastened on a single flake, traced its slow, dream-like fall, then selected another. Gradually, she felt the ache of anger and sadness in her dissolve, as if soothed away by a stroking hand. By tomorrow the view would be covered in crisp, untouched white, silvering the patch of morning light that glimmered above the curtains when she awoke, a cold, calm surface waiting to receive and absorb the bootprints of herself and her laughing father.

Already she could feel an irresistible drowsiness come over her, blotting out all traces of thought.

The view disappeared from in front of her, and she relaxed into the care of strong hands, who undressed her, and settled her into the soft, receptive depths of the bed. She pressed her cheek into the pillow's caress and felt herself falling, like a snowflake in darkness, down to cool, white oblivion.



She awoke to a familiar feeling of alarm.

She'd been tricked into this. This wasn't her house. A harsh clinical brightness lit up the room, clearly pinpointing the small deformities and absences which marked it as alien. The blankets held her tight.

In a far corner of the room, something fell with a cold, hard crack. She thought: it's starting.

She knew what she had to do, because she'd done it before, in dreams that went back and back without end, dreams like this one. She had to get out, before the real changes happened.

Forcing a frozen calm on her actions, she eased herself out from under the blankets, knowing that to struggle in panic was to trap herself.

Her bare foot touched the carpet. Something bumped inside the towering wardrobe and it shifted towards her. If she gave way to the terror that scratched and clawed inside her, it would only give the room power to change more quickly. She forced the screaming urgency back as she walked slowly, carefully to the door.

At the corner of her eye she glimpsed a web of cracks spread like black lightning over the china face of a doll. Something was moving above the ceiling, coming awake. None of this could hurt her.

Her hand closed on the door-handle as around her things cracked and twisted out of shape, trying to call her name in voices choked with dust.

They were only distractions.

She pulled open the door. From above the ceiling came a sound like muffled thunder. She remembered then what was settling itself at the black mouth of the loft, crouching to watch, and wait.

Panic broke through the icy surface of her mind. She ran for the stairs, but her first step slipped down too far. She fell.

She was falling through space, flying, until the bottom of the stairs struck her, jolted her upright, gasping, to face the shape that was dropping silently onto the landing above her.

She stared up at the spider, which was raising itself up on its bristly legs, eyes glinting coldly. It stopped quite still for a moment, its huge body poised and tense, and then it launched itself into a scabbling rush down the gloomy tunnel of the staircase at her.

She threw herself away from it, into the living-room. The Christmas tree, grey and wasted, toppled towards her, its branches stretching, like thin tentacles of plasticene, to entrap her. She struggled free of its sticky embrace and ran, wrapping-paper twisting itself about her legs, trying to trip her, as, behind her, the dark rumble of movement grew rapidly louder.

Paper chains fell away from the walls and neck like rustling snakes. She continued forward and they broke easily, disintegrating into fragments which fluttered about her like confetti, spinning as they fell.

The movement behind her ceased abruptly.

She couldn't allow herself hope. She could sense the shape crouched there at the foot of the stairs, holding itself perfectly still, confident in its ability to outrun her any time it wished. She struggled over to the door, certain that the spider was going to rush forward as soon as she had taken another step.

White noise seethed, hissing in her ears, drowning the sound of her own harsh breathing. Muffled voices shouted hoarsely from the depths of the static. Sudden snatches of music blared and vanished.

The static was a white blur in front of her eyes, blinding her to whatever was heaving itself up off of the dining-table, collapsing back as it tried to reach for her with shapeless limbs. Beyond it, she could just make out the entrance to the kitchen and, beyond that, what seemed, unbelievably, to be an open doorway to the night, and freedom.

Hardly daring to hope, she ran into

the kitchen, steadying herself on a beam that crumbled to powder beneath her fingers.

The walls of the room were dissolving, turning to something like fine, glittering sand, leaving the basic structure, like the skeleton of a leaf, fragile and trembling under the night sky.

The thing in the living-room twitched into life, was scuttling through the doorway behind her within seconds.

She ran out into the icy night, hearing the muffled pounding of its legs over the ground just behind her. Her feet slapped against cold, wet mud which grew steadily thicker and stickier, sucking at her footsteps. She had a familiar sensation of everything slowing down, everything except the spider's progress. It loomed at her back, unhampered by the mud that clung to her. A loud, sickening rattle came from it, the sound of its gloating at her distress, of its hunger to seize her.

She fell forward, complete despair overwhelming her. Her face hit the mud.

She tried to struggle up and felt her pursuer halt over her fallen body and lower itself down onto her, bunching in its legs to enfold her to it.

In a last desperate movement, she hurled herself away from it.



Into silence.

She lay, quite still, on a cold, hard surface.

Slowly, warily, she stood. Apart from the road beneath her, there seemed to be nothing but trees all around; silent, black and unmoving. No house at all.

She raised a hand to wipe the mud from her face. There was none, but the sight of her hand arrested her, and gave her the cold feeling of not having escaped the dream, not yet.

There was a sound, behind her.

She turned, and light splashed her face. Headlights were rounding the corner, blazing as they rushed towards her. It was too late to do anything; they were inches away before she had even thought of moving.

In the second before the car hit she saw the face behind the windscreen.

She saw a little girl.

Pale face, blonde hair, eyes open wide with shock, sucked under the vehicle before she could stop. A waking dream, a vision born of fatigue, said a calm voice, but the dull, soft thuds against the car's underside seemed to contradict her.



Martin Plumridge was born in Brentwood, Essex in 1965 and has lived there all his life except for three years at Bangor University in North Wales, studying English. He worked as a bookseller at Foyles' and (in a part-time capacity) elsewhere, devoting the rest of his increasingly spare time to writing. He's currently, officially, unemployed. This is his first published work, although it was shortlisted for the 1990 Ian St. James Awards for new writers.

FICTION FILE 47

RANDALL BOYLL



Rising authors can get a helping hand from the cash-in-quick world of movie tie-ins as JB Macabre and John Gilbert discover

Cannibalism and family ties make an uneasy plot alliance in American author Randall Boyll's first British published novel *After Sundown*. Combining the fury found in *The Shining* with the compulsion of life after death in *Audrey Rose*, it transcends both novels with its ruthlessness of character. 'I knew I wanted a character who could commit one of the most heinous crimes: to turn cannibal and eat your son. I felt that would be pretty revolting and built the whole book around that.'

'It took seven months to write. At one point I quit because the story was getting too long and I really didn't know where it was going. After putting it aside for about three months I was ready to trash it. But I'd already penned over 300 pages, so I figured why not at least finish it. I may have had a sleepless night or two, but it didn't affect my appetite.'

He began his professional career in 1981. 'It was end of May. My wife had given me a collection of short stories by Dave Clark. Every day I'd drive to work thinking about stories of my own. I'd written several short stories and started a number of novels. Finally I decided, why not give it a really hard try and see what happens. I found it takes a lot of discipline. It wasn't an easy road.'

Boyll admits he took a few writing lessons from the books of Stephen King. 'I

mimicked my characterizations after *Cujo*. My favourite King character was Gary Purver, the guy who hammered his bronze star into an ash tray. He's funny, but at the same time essential to the plot.'

'King's characters tend to be either very bizarre and funny or dead serious, like in *The Shining*. Most important of all they feel real. If I could create characters like his and surround them with a solid story idea I'd come up with a novel that would work.'

He has also had the opportunity to play tag with other writers' storylines through his film tie-in novelizations of Wes Craven's *Shocker* (published by Corgi) and Sam Raimi's *The Darkman* (Titan). 'Since *Shocker* was my first novelization, there was something exciting about it. All of a sudden I had these people from Universal calling me up. I was on a first name basis with some big-wig executives. Sometimes you feel like you toil away in the lonely dark of the early morning hours with no hope of redemption. Then you start getting all these calls from Hollywood and New York.'

'I enjoy the novelizations because they're giving me a foot in the door. I'm getting to know people higher up who'll hopefully give me a chance to write an original screenplay. I'd like to write a screenplay for my second horror novel *Mongster*, out early next year. I'm really hot on this, and at least at this point I think the opportunity is there to get someone to read it and maybe see it produced.'

After all this success does he have another novel in the works?

'Believe it or not, there is. I've already sent Berkley a hundred page proposal for a new horror novel, which will be my third book, titled *Deekaye* — the name of the main protagonist, and she is in a lot of trouble.'

FEAR FORUM

Letter writing has a long and noble history. Do your bit to make sure it doesn't die out - write to FEAR FORUM, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1JW.

HORRIFIC INFERENCES

Dear FEAR

I am writing to discuss the negative view of the horror film which many people seem to hold. I was prompted in this by the interview with Rob Reiner in *FEAR* 29. While not wishing to have a go at Mr Reiner (*When Harry Met Sally* is one of my all-time favourite films), I must say he appears to have a very limited view of what a horror film is. He states: 'I'm not particularly interested in horror films, I'm more interested in character,' and '[a psychological chess match] was what I was interested in, rather than making a horror film.' This implies that he thinks a film with realistic, believable characters, no matter how dark its content, cannot be regarded as a horror film - which is merely an exercise in blood and gore.

Although it has to be said that many horror films produced today are distinctly lacking in characterization, to think that this defines horror films is a very condescending attitude. Jodie Foster, talking about *The Silence Of The Lambs* has said 'This is not a horror film, this is a thriller, a psychological drama, a relationship piece.' It seems sad that people within the film industry feel it necessary to disassociate themselves from being involved in a horror film, obviously regarding horror as somehow second class.

I subscribe to the view of Douglas Winter, expressed in his introduction to *Prime Evil*: 'Horror is not a genre... horror is an emotion.' If this attitude was more widely held, there would be an extension of the boundaries of horror, and horror, in all its forms, would I feel become much more respected.

Alan Gairey, Cardiff

KING-SIZED TREAT

Dear FEAR

Having just read Stephen Player's letter in issue 28, I feel compelled to write an appreciation of my favourite novel. I'm referring to

that gargantuan book *IT* by Stephen King.

I read *IT* in July 1988, enjoying ten days of pure entertainment. Perhaps it was the fact that it was the very first Stephen King book I had read, or maybe it was the satisfaction of successfully reading a novel of over a thousand pages, but I couldn't believe how frightening, memorable and nostalgic this tale was. Pennywise and *IT*'s other guises practically summed up for me the ultimate monster - the monster which pulls your little brother's arm off, then systematically attempts to kill all your friends, and more besides. But the horror element isn't in every chapter, leaving room for the brilliant parts detailing the Losers' summer holidays and their less sinister adventures, which endear the characters to the reader so that by the 200 page long climax you care about what's going to happen to them (this is my view anyway. I cared quite a lot).

For anybody who hasn't read *IT* (you poor deprived souls), it could be compared in style and atmosphere to the film *Stand By Me* with extremely effective and tense horror sequences woven into it. What with psychopathic clowns, lepers, werewolves and photograph albums, there is enough gore and tension to keep the most demanding horror fan satisfied, and the no-less enthralling 50s nostalgia trips should keep readers with less graphic tastes thoroughly happy. I would be interested to see if any other readers could mention a better book, and if one did I'd be down at the book shop buying a copy in an instant.

Peter Etherington,
Rotherham

SHAMELESS PLUG

Dear FEAR

I really dig *FEAR*, it's getting better as time goes by. It's without doubt one of the best horror/fantasy magazines around. I think that's quite enough sucking up for one letter, don't you? (*Not really, I quite like that sort of thing - Letters Ed*). Let's move onto other things.

Having sat on the sidelines for a while I've decided it's time I took to the field and gave something back to the genre. Over the past year I've co-produced a successful play-by-mail fanzine called *The Voice* and I've now decided to move onto pastures new and do a horror based one

with the aid of Darren Jones.

I'm searching for budding writers and artists. It's an ideal chance for would-be writers to get something into print. If there's anyone out there with more than a passing knowledge of the scene willing to help out then they could please get in touch immediately? I'm also on the look-out for an established printing firm with decent prices. If you could print this I'd be eternally grateful.

John Overall, 19 Glenridding,
South Benfleet, Essex SS7 5XQ

ENGENDERED SPECIES

Dear FEAR

With reference to your *Halloween* competition in the May issue, I just thought I'd put you and one or two other genre magazines straight about the director of *Halloween 5: The Revenge Of Michael Myers*. Unless he has undertaken a sex-change op since 1986, when I worked with him on a film called *The Hospice* (or *Horsepiss* as it was affectionately known among the staff), Dominique Othenin-Giraud is quite definitely a man, and not at all the lady you seem to think he is.

He may have some way to go in his development as a director, but even then Dominique struck me as someone with a keen and deep appreciation of cinema fantasy. Even if his English was terrible, he is *definitely* a man.

Jon Older, Bristol

STRONG STOMACHS

Dear FEAR

I felt compelled to voice my opinion on certain issues that have arisen in *FEAR FORUM*. The issue in question is on film censorship in Britain. As an avid collector of horror films for some years I must put my mind to this matter and I am sure that many readers will agree.

Do the censors really believe what they see in horror films? I have been watching horror films for over ten years now and still cannot see anything that resembles the realistic. The first horror that I saw was Fulcis' *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, it was neither scary nor mind twisting as I knew that dead people do not come to life and rip the guts out of innocent people. The censors must have been wetting their pants when they saw this one. I was about 11 or 12 when I saw it and it has had me addicted to horror films ever since.

Now as any collector/fan can see, the effects are far from realistic. If the censors were to view a post mortem that might give them pause to stop and think. Then they could watch the news and see real horror like the people in Iraq. But they don't ban these scenes from us. I was eating my fish and chips the other night only to see a half-burned child on the telly, which put me right off my dinner. Later that evening, I watched a film from my collection, eating chocolate and not being put off of it. The facts speak for themselves, the television and film censors are crap. These people are the ones who need treatment so they can distinguish fantasy from reality and not deprive millions of fans from what they want.

Could you confirm the rumours that the censors are going to be no more in 1992? Keep up the great work and let's see some sections on the so-called video nasties in future publications please.

Adam Harris, Berkhamsted

NARROW MINDED

Dear FEAR,

Earlier this year, I went into my local video rental shop. It was a slow night and there was only a middle-aged couple browsing through the shelves. The Gulf War was proving a far greater pull.

On reaching the horror section, the male half of the couple proclaimed: 'These are for sick weirdos', and they moved swiftly on to the next section. Pity really, that means they don't get to see *Dead Ringers*, the sort of film which could alter their outlook on horror as being just about gore and bodily fluids. So, who's to blame? Is it the couple for being narrow-minded? Or is it the people who promote horror with numerous posters and video covers presenting us with snarling, spitting monsters, each one nastier than the last. These are usually associated with low budget efforts, and when you actually glimpse the monster it possesses the ferocious intensity of a mouse on sedatives. Whatever happen to subtlety?

The majority of horror fans probably like being part of a movement that repels almost everyone, but I believe the intelligent horror film can't survive in that form. The major studios will eventually shun the genre and we'll be left with the straight to video films which can only be thoroughly enjoyed after 15 pints of Buddies and a bottle of Thunderbird.

Horror is charged with repeating itself, yet have not we already seen *Presumed Innocent*, *Working Girl*, *Pretty Woman* in other guises? But this is the sort of cinema line-up I see in the future, or maybe I'm getting paranoid.

A POUND OF FLESH

Fortunately for me, criticism of our legal system has yet to become a treasonable offence. I've spoken out about censorship many times during the past three years and mostly within the context of film ratings and the absurdity of allowing one contentious film through while holding back another which contains roughly equivalent measures of sex and violence — but there is another side, and it's one in which the judiciary are directly involved.

Channel Four recently ran a season of programmes under the *Banned* banner, each of which explored an aspect of censorship. Interviews were conducted with, amongst others, the directors of the BBFC, and sequences of many a banned film were run as illustrative backdrops to the talking heads. The season was informative and generally subtle in its approach to all subjects covered, but also showed a certain degree of political naivety or, perhaps, ignorance as far as the British legal system was concerned. Recently it was suggested that C4 supremo Michael Grade, amongst others, could be liable for a three year prison sentence due to some of the material shown during the season. I refer, in particular, to the discussion on pornography in which viewers were treated to some clips that had to be cut by the BBFC and the willy-waving episode during the Derek Jarman interview. The screening of such sequences was not only risqué but, in my judgement, risky given the current temperament of the law and the growing thirst of self-appointed moral protection groups for the heart blood of those who would flaunt statute.

Having said that, and admitting that Michael has the power over a wide audience, I must leap to his defence, in an albeit limited fashion, and chastise our incredibly weird legal system in which the sentencing structure seems to have gone to pot. Take, for instance, the recent case of a convicted sex attacker. On numerous occasions these individuals have been given six month suspended sentences and told to behave themselves.

There are numerous reasons for such judicial pronouncements, not least, I suspect, the age and sex of the sentencers. We have, however, taken another step down the slippery 'rape is okay' slope now that one judge has set a rapist free on the understanding that this man sees social workers, who are supposed to show him how he should treat women. If the case were not so serious I would be on the floor laughing but, when you compare it

with the recent two-year sentence doled out to a purveyor of (adult rather than kiddie) porn, the scales of justice seem to be balanced in favour of physical violation. Sentences seem to be higher for crimes against property and state morals than physical attack, and maybe that's a reflection on our society's mores.

Given that fictional horror of all forms, pornographic or not, interprets, rather than affects, our society — which I believe it does — the emphasis of our crime and punishment system is surely somewhat misplaced. If we can threaten a man with a long term of imprisonment for a crime of the mind, such as broadcast of illegal material, and then affectionately (sic) turn free another who has committed a physical act of violence then I believe our moral system is out of kilter and that the pound of flesh is coming off the wrong arm. It's about time we paid attention to what really matters. Let fiction chronicle our era's apparent

moral degeneracy unhindered, and let the judiciary punish those guilty of physical abuse of the state and the individual.

I let my views on this engrossing subject skitter onto the page for two reasons; the first is the amply evident, and admittedly egotistical, need every editor has for self-expression while the second is that they act as an introduction to a new 'season' of articles, essays and interviews on the theme of censorship and the banning of controversial subject matters. Each is being written by a prominent member of the three genres — the first, in this issue, looks at the *American Psycho* controversy and is from Ramsey Campbell, while upcoming features include an unusual look at sex within fiction from *Dreamside* author Graham Joyce — and all will cut to the very bone of contention.

I've never been one to hold back my views, and it's a pleasure to discover that many genre figures have similarly strong opinions which they're willing to voice. I disagree with some of these opinions intensely but would never muzzle even the roughest of halfbreeds. If that annoys a sullen few of the moral majority then put any of us in the dock; but don't expect us to hold s'ill for that noose which would probably snap anyway if the trapdoor were dropped.

John Gilbert

Something must be done to bring horror in from the cold and I haven't got the answers. Have you? Hailing frequencies closed.
CT Nicholls, Stretford,
Manchester

Low budget horror films don't necessarily have to be unintelligent or gaudy, but your sentiments regarding Presumed Innocent and films of that ilk are most enlightening.

DEATH DAY

Dear FEAR,

I'm writing in reference to D Arguile's letter (FEAR 29), just to clarify that Jane Mansfield was indeed involved with Anton Le Vey's 'shenanigans'. It was actually April 31 1966, Walpurgis Night, that La Vey announced the foundation of the Church of Satan, and as Jane Mansfield was not killed until July 29 1967, then all the dates add up. The 1969 date that Mr Arguile's thinking of is possibly the publication of La Vey's book *The Satanic Bible*. These facts are taken from Colin Wilson's book *Witches*.

Just as an afternote, Sam Brody, Jane Mansfield's

lawyer/manager, hated La Vey and warned her about the bad publicity and embarrassment it could cause, she being involved in the sect. When Brody threatened to conduct a newspaper campaign, La Vey retaliated with a ritual curse, that Brody would be dead within a year, warning Jane Mansfield not to share Brody's car. Not long after, Brody's car collided with a truck, killing him and decapitating Jane Mansfield. La Vey later commented that 'she was victim of her own frivolity'. Make of it what you will.
P Thomas, Peterhead,
Grampian

John Gilbert feels vindicated at last. Our Black Arts issue continues to draw favourable — and a few unfavourable — comments, so we've decided to produce another special, this time for the fantasy contingent, which will cover Folklore. It will appear in October.

QUICKIE

Dear FEAR,

Here is my short story:

THE WEREWOLF TRAIN

'All change,' said the conductor.
Craig Mitchell, Newcastle

FEAR

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FEAR REVIEWS

- Excellent

- Very good

- Good

- Fair

- Poor


BOOKS

THE BOOK OF CONQUESTS

Jim Fitzpatrick
 Publisher Dragon's World
 Format Large format PB, £8.95

 Celtic mythology, especially that brewed from the mists of Ireland, has always been popular with artists so it's not surprising that Jim Fitzpatrick should choose this well-worn path for this book.

The seven-part text thrusts through a series of separate mythic episodes, starting with the conquest of Fir Bolg and bowing out with the Last Battle and the death of Eochai, which together form a loose legendary cycle. Fitzpatrick pieced these stories together from original manuscripts and they make for an adequate read. Unfortunately, I cannot gather the same enthusiasm for the illustrations.

On first sight, the book is a symbolic powerhouse, but, once you've got past the colourful boldly wrought cover, it degenerates into a garish display more befitting that in a wall paper shop. While

many of the major illustrations are a beauty to behold, the border artwork buries the text. It's a shame because Fitzpatrick is a good artist when he wants to be, but his creative eye must have been wandering when he came up with the idea for all those gaudy patterns.



The Book of Conquests fails as an illustrated story, as there is no balance between text and picture, but it may be of interest to scholars who are colour blind. It would do Fitzpatrick a world of good to look up from his art board and study his readers. Until then, he's liable to make the same mistake again.

Mark Kent



A TIME OF EXILE

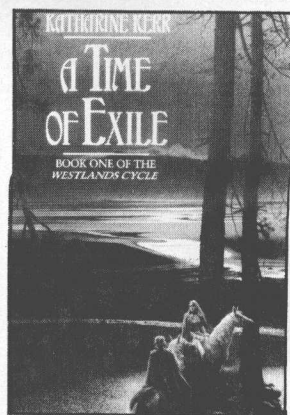
Katharine Kerr
 Publisher Grafton
 Format HB, £14.99



Sometimes it's difficult to be objective. Take this latest book *that's lying in front of me* for instance: *A Time of Exile, Book One of the Westlands Cycle*. Katharine Kerr is one of my favourites in the fantasy field and one of the few writers — along with Stephen Lawhead and Robert Holdstock — who have been able to grasp the true essence of Celtic myth.

Katharine has set most of her novels in the land of Deverry and in this new series she explores the history of the Elycion Lacar, a race of elves who live to the west of Deverry. She begins with a character her fans will recognize, Lord Rhodry who, years ago, took the throne of Aberwyn. Yet he remains a young and vital man because of his half-elven lineage and, when his lost lover Jill reappears to tell him he must accept his elven blood, he stages his own spectacular death to travel to the west with his elven half-brother. Only then can he begin to investigate his mysterious lineage and his link with the Elycion Lacar.

One of the most notable aspects of this book — as is the case with most of Katharine's others — is that she shows her tales rather than tells them. She's



one of the few writers I know (Ramsey Campbell, Charles L Grant, Ursula Le Guin and Tanith Lee also being amongst them) who uses all five physical senses to the greatest effect. When you open one of her books, there's a great rush of sensory detail, which is more often than not lacking in a great many of the fantasy sagas put out by contemporary authors. It's largely for that reason, combined with her wolf's nose of a sense for storytelling, that I read Katharine Kerr: and you should too.

John Gilbert



CRY WOLF

WULF

Steve Harris
 Publisher Headline
 Format HB, £14.95

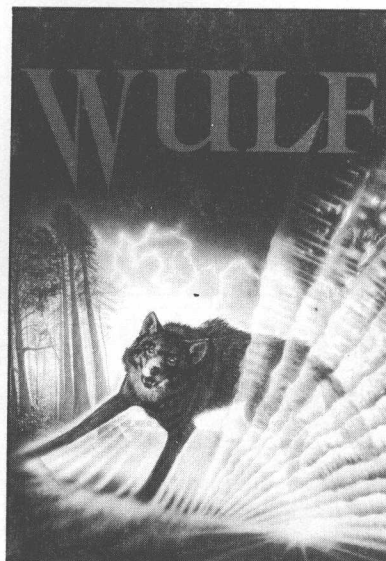


Steve Harris' first novel *Adventureland* put the horror community into a spin at its launch last year. As a first venture onto our bookshelves it was received with adulation, not least by this critic. His new novel *Wulf* contains all the same enthusiasm, and shows that the author can control a lengthy narrative with his obviously sharp blue pencil.

Centred on a plot of barren land called God's Teardrop, on which something awful happened in 1942, the story spins out to encompass the small English country village of West Waltham with its hallucinogenic terrors. The villagers are stricken with a terrible plague which is more than skin deep, and, according to old Moses Walker, anyone who doesn't suffer from its ravages is an agent of the evil. At the same time, young Timmy goes into a trance and sees his parents being killed by wolves, as does Edith Fairburn who finds Christ crucified in her garden before she's paid a visit by Mother Nature and her whispering grass.

There are remedies to this creeping, unnatural, pestilence, but the most unlikely characters carry them, and, until the villagers let out the dark secrets which they all hold, it's unlikely that even these defences will be enough to stop what's about to come through from the barrens of God's Teardrop.

Superbly laid against a gentle background of apparent reality, Steve Harris' novel tempts the read-



er with the malevolence and taut power of the author's muscular imagination. It looks as if Harris started to run his literary marathon the moment Headline landed him on his feet. If he fails to complete the particular course I've set up for him in my head, I won't mind. He'll still be a bloody good writer.

John Gilbert



FANTASY

- A Time of Exile
- The Book of Conquests
- The Dragon in the Stone
- The Paradise War
- Prince Ivan
- Reaper Man
- The Tower of Fear



HORROR

- Greeley's Cove
- Lovecraft's Legacy
- Wulf



SCIENCE FICTION

- Charon: Dragon at the Gate
- Facets
- Reunion




THRILLER

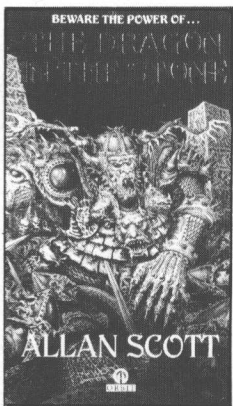
- Chicago Loop
- The Servants of Twilight
- White Lies

THE DRAGON IN THE STONE

Allan Scott
Publisher Orbit
Format PB, £3.99

 Norse mythology is under-used in the fantasy genre, and when it does interest writers it is usually the Viking aspects that find their way into books.

Allan Scott, however, is a pleasant exception who has drawn on the surprisingly wide wealth of Norse lore in his efforts to give *The Dragon in the Stone* an authentic feel. The story initially centres around an oddly shaped granite stone which lies in a graveyard on the outskirts of Copenhagen. It is a time gate, as Erik Larssen finds to his cost.



Searching for his missing wife and son, Larssen enters the gate only to return terribly wounded and aged beyond belief — as if he has taken part in a great battle and time on the other side of the gate runs faster than it does on this side. He is discovered by American archeologist Peter Brockman who helps him to a nearby farmhouse, and it is there that both of them learn the history of the Dragon in the Stone and of the constant battle between the Light and Dark Elves.


As dark and dreadful as anything that Grendel could throw at Beowulf, *The Dragon in the Stone* shows that many of the myths we use in contemporary fantasy are, indeed, culled from Norse myth. Scott is obviously enthusiastic about Scandinavian culture and it shows through this lively tale and its intriguing characters. It's ace from a sorely underrated author.

John Gilbert



CHICAGO LOOP

Paul Theroux
Publisher Pan
Format PB £3.99


 Parker Jagoda may not be the *American Psycho*, but neither is he Mr Cheerful — 'He was always happier among strangers. Many people who knew him wanted harm to come to him — and some wanted him dead.' A strange perspective for someone who simply scouts for development sites, however Parker is an unusual man. He begins the novel apparently wandering aimlessly, yet it turns out he had a date with a woman he met through a personal ad. Quite why a wealthy man married to an attractive wife would want to do this is mysterious. Although *The Sunday Times* describes Loop as a 'blunder to disaster through emotionless,



PARADISE LOST

THE PARADISE WAR SONG OF ALBION BOOK 1

Stephen Lawhead
Publisher Lion
Format HB, £13.99

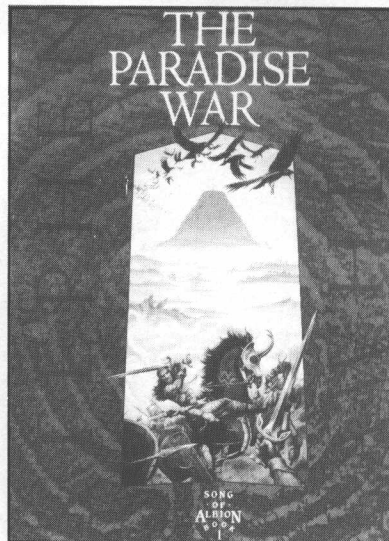
 Fresh from his battles in the *Pendragon Cycle*, Stephen Lawhead continues his quest for the font of Celtic wisdom in *The Paradise War*, the first in a series of novels which form the *Song of Albion*.

Set in this and the Celtic world of myth, it launches into a marthon narrative as Oxford academic Lewis Gillies endeavours to stop the two worlds colliding and rescue his friend from the glamour of the Celtic Otherworld.

As the veil between worlds begins to dissolve, as wolves appear amongst the environs of Oxford and mythological beings, such as the Green Man, stride into our world, Gillies finds himself trapped, a Celtic warrior sworn to defend a legendary king. As he struggles against what could be a particularly bloody fate, he must also try to stop the imbalance between the worlds and thus avoid a potentially dangerous situation in which cosmic anarchy rules.

Elegantly written and speedily paced, the massive first part of this trilogy keeps teasing until the very end. It is a mystery, a thriller, a psycho-physical adventure which will please almost every shade of fantasy fan.

Fresh and exciting, *The Paradise War* is a mis-



tral wind amongst so many dull breezes. As well as a vast knowledge of Celtic mythology, Lawhead has the power as a writer of fiction to make it believable. It's little more than a year before the next one arrives in hardback and if it's of the same calibre as, someone please find me a time machine.

John Gilbert



anonymous sex' it's one of the many ironies of this novel that Parker's most off-beat, impersonal sex is with his wife. Two chapters detail him arriving in a hotel and admitting a stranger who, after some oddish sex, turns out to be his wife.

His meetings with a string of lonelyhearts lack any such erotic charge, he is cold and bitter, a bellydancer dancing in a restaurant enrages him. He imagines her thinking 'I push this at you and you want to snatch it. He hated her and hated being a man.' When his date reacts warmly to being bound up Parker is enraged at her sluttness and kills her. The murder scene is completely lacking in gore and the method is recounted only later (Parker Jagoda, AKA Wolfman, bites her throat out). What is described in detail are Parker's feelings, the lethal build-up of mixed emotions; repulsion, desire and anger. As the scene develops the narrator disturbingly drops her name and simply refers to her as 'she' or 'her' — everywoman.

The murder affects Parker strangely — the cold, stand-offish prude outraged by Mapplethorpe photographs becomes haunted by his deed. He is filled with remorse and visits her apartment hoping to find her still alive. The shattering of this illusion drives him into finding ways of atonement. He becomes drawn to women's clothing as a means of humiliation. Because he thinks himself unworthy of being caught and imprisoned, he must devise his own, worse punishment.

Perhaps the key to Parker is a college story which he keeps retelling, about a man who each week invites up a new girl who he then rapes. The story is told so you don't realise it's rape until the end, the girls are not described as

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sobbing, or bruised, but rather they come out 'pale and sort of dreamy and rumpled'. When Parker says they were all threatened with violence you don't quite believe him, the tale rings hollow, like a porno story where the girls secretly enjoy being raped. When Parker observes 'People get a certain look in their eye after they've really had it — a kind of vacant, empty look, like they've been punctured' he seems to be speaking about sex, not rape. When the transvestite Parker overtly seeks abuse by the book's end you wonder if that wasn't what drove him to kill in the first place. In the lonely hearts he was seeking the dreamy look of the raped girls for himself, when he failed to find desires he could not admit to, rage was the result.

It's an odd story, a dispatch from the frontline of the conflict between the sexes which is never simple. There are many outlandish asides, for example; 'Most men spoke to women as though they were transvestites: men too feeble and pathetic to wear men's clothes.' - Later Parker adds disturbingly 'but in dressing this way (as a transvestite), looking outlandish and vulnerable, like a puppet, he had asked for it.' It being contemptuous remarks from men but obviously there are more ominous overtones. *Chicago Loop* is too subtle to ever be easily summed up, unlike *American Psycho* you're left rather wondering what the author's intention is. Parker's behaviour is too bizarre to offer serious insight into other killers and the ambiguities make it unsatisfying as an overview of the sex war. Nevertheless this curious book is always an interesting and often compulsive read which is well worth considering.

Stuart Wynne

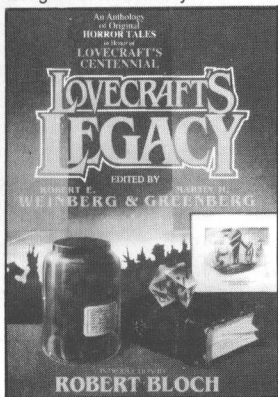


LOVECRAFT'S LEGACY

Edited by Robert Weinberg and Martin Greenberg
 Publisher Tor
 Format HB, \$18.95



Commemorating the centennial of HP Lovecraft's birth, this collection gathers 13 tales from authors who were inspired by HPL. It's important to note that the stories are not all Lovecraftian pastiches; rather, there is a good deal of variety to the contents, with subjects ranging from astral projection to voodoo. As with many anthologies, there are both hits and misses here, but overall the collection is one of the best to come along in recent memory.



Ray Garton's *The Other Man* is the astral projection story. It's an outstanding tale that raises the possibility that, even if we could project our consciousness onto an astral plane, we might not like what awaits us there.

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HARBOURING HORROR

GREELEY'S COVE

John Gideon
 Publisher Headline Feature
 Format PB, 4.99

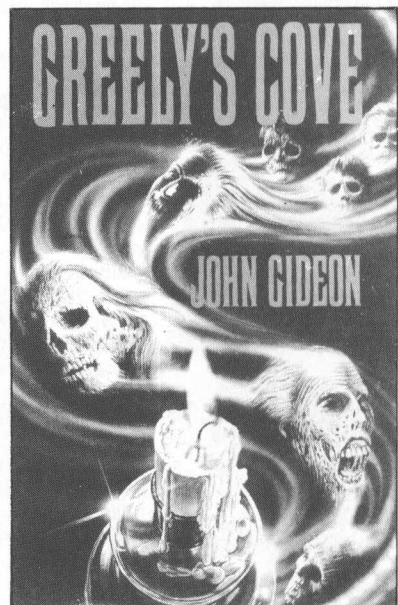


Black magic and a greedy Lovecraftian anti-god come to smalltown America in John Gideon's latest damn fine horror story.

Jeremy Trospher used to be an autistic child but, with the help of the mysterious Dr Hadrian Craslowe, he make an astonishing recovery. Everything appears to be going just right for his mother until, one night, she steps into her garaged car and dies of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The boy's father Carl, an important Washington lawyer estranged from his wife, returns to take care of Jeremy, but the boy's aunt is determined he will not have custody. As they both fight for control, Jeremy's loving character undergoes a dramatic change. He wanders out of the house without telling anyone, becomes interested in the black arts, and is vile to his nearest and, supposedly, dearest. At the same time, his visits to Craslowe increase in frequency and duration until Carl begins to believe that the old man is at the heart of the boy's strange behaviour and, perhaps, the cause of a rash of local disappearances. He does not, however, realize just how old Craslowe is, and what he is protecting — nay, nurturing — in the basement of his rambling old house.

Headline has hit onto a winner with John Gideon. *Greely's Cove* is an ambitious, well crafted horror novel with fascinating characters, all of whom have secrets, and a storyline which builds



like a pyramid of cards, each one with a different face but all with blood red backs. This book contains something for everyone, including some of the most distasteful necrophiliac scenes I've ever read. Let's hope it marks the reintroduction of vitriol in an emaciated horror market. We could certainly do with it.

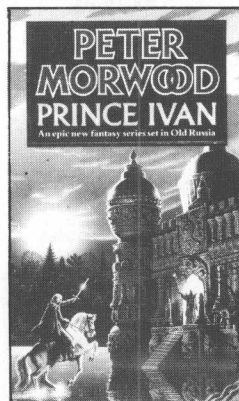
John Gilbert



Graham Masterton's *Will* is also a high point, distinct evidence of Lovecraft's Great Old Ones in a most unlikely place — the ruins of the Globe Theatre. *Big C* by Brian Lumley comes close to destroying the reader's suspension of disbelief on several occasions, but this tale of Cthulhu and cancer manages to walk the tightrope of credibility. Chet Williamson's *From the Papers of Helmut Hecker* is a wonderful tongue-in-cheek piece about a pompous author who looks down his nose at the horror genre, only to find himself possessed by the spirit of Lovecraft and penning just the kind of stories he used to badmouth. The best story here, however, is F Paul Wilson's *The Barrens*. The title refers to an area near the east coast of the US where the urban sprawl of New York City suddenly gives way to thousands of acres of dense, mostly unexplored forest. An outsider who ventures into this creepy backwoods setting in order to investigate a local legend soon comes to regret his curiosity.

Gahan Wilson, Joseph Citro, Hugh B Cave, and Gary Brandner also offer worthwhile tales, and there is an interesting introduction by Robert Bloch. You don't have to be a fan of the Cthulhu Mythos or HPL's Eldritch horrors to enjoy the varied tales of terror which are *Lovecraft's Legacy*.

Robert Morrish



PRINCE IVAN

Peter Moorwood
 Publisher Legend
 Format PB, £3.99



Peter Moorwood has always been an engaging, surprising, and original storyteller, whose tales don't always quite fit into the consensus definition of fantasy or SF. His latest paperback, *Prince Ivan*, is a case in point.

Set in the depths of a Russia besieged by eternal winter, its hero, Prince Ivan of Khorlov triggers a deadly series of events when he marries the enchanting sorceress Mar'ya. Moving

into her opulent castle, he discovers a mysterious door in the dungeons which, once opened, unleashes the evil, immortal, wizard Koshchey. This wizard kidnaps Ivan's wife, and the Prince discovers that the only way he can get her back is to travel to the land of the man-eating Baba Yaga where he must capture a horse which can outrun even Koshchey's dark magic.

Renowned for the historical perspective he gives to his fantasies, Peter Moorwood's career has simmered along nicely for some time, but he has never been given a big break by a publisher. Yet, as this book proves, he continues to be one of the foremost talents in the British fantasy field. Give him the attention he deserves: go pick up *Prince Ivan*.

Andy Braille

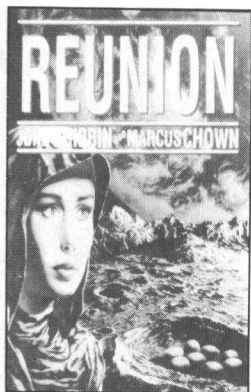


REUNION

John Gribbin and Marcus Chown
 Publisher Gollancz
 Format HB, £14.99



Following on from the events in their last joint novel *Double Planet*, *Reunion* takes place more than a thousand years after a group of scientists sent a comet into our Moon in an attempt to turn it into a life-supporting world with its own



atmosphere.

Comets continue to shower the Moon, bringing with them the life gases which propagate the atmosphere. The resultant human colony is a post-technological society which is ruled from the City by the powerful Eye cult. As the regular supply of comets diminishes, the power of the cult increases. Its priests claim that only the Eye's rituals will see a return of the comets and that all the peoples of the Moon must obey them.

As the seeds of revolution against the priesthood are eventually sown, a young Tuela stumbles across a secret that will ensure its success. She determines to help but, at first, does not realize that her contribution will take her way beyond her home, certainly to the Forbidden Zone, and, perhaps, even off the Moon.

Although *Reunion* is a co-operatively written book, it is difficult to distinguish the styles of Gribbin and Chown — I'll just have to say they work well together. Packaged like a Gollancz classic, it is indeed likely to become one of those ageless SF books which appear to have come from the Golden Age but which were, in fact, written at a much later date.

Mark Kent



DEATH TRIPS

REAPER MAN

Terry Pratchett
 Publisher Victor Gollancz
 Format HB £13.99

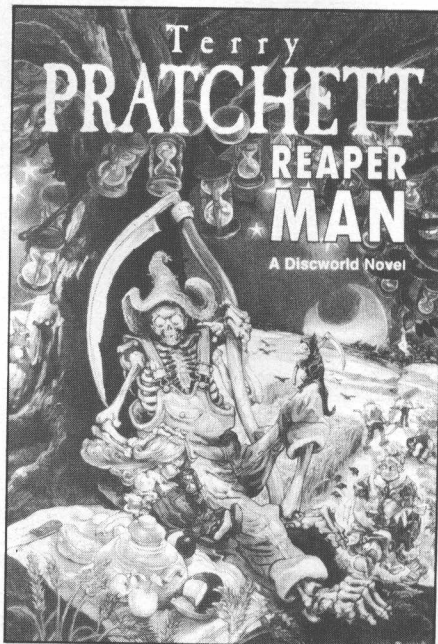


Another Discworld novel, and just as you may have thought the world that's carried by four elephants riding on the back of a turtle was about to be tiresome, Pratchett springs into life once more and continues to impress with his originality.

Reaper Man is the novel a lot of Discworld fanatics have been waiting for — it's Pratchett's second to revolve around Discworld's Death, as logical and polite as always. Death has discovered his own life-timer and the sands of time are draining away. Quickly, worryingly quickly. Death decides to whoop it up for his remaining time and takes a holiday... a working holiday, on a farm at harvest time (he's quite good with a scythe).

Meanwhile, in Discworld's most visited (well, no one actually stays longer than they can help it) city, Ankh-Morpork, the consequence of Death's absence becomes apparent. Especially for wizard Windle Poons who has just died and was ready to meet his maker. Problem is that Death didn't turn up to escort him. Windle awakes in his coffin to find he's come back as a corpse. This isn't a problem, he feels better than ever before.

That's the basis for the story. Or rather, the stories. The novel flips between Death's work in the fields (which includes his blossoming romance with his employer Miss Flitworth — as much as a walking, talking skeleton with no emotions to speak of can be romantic) and the further adventures of Windle and the other members of Ankh's rather un-frightening group of undead as they try and discover what's going on. As the stories progress the plot doesn't get as chaotic as some



Discworld novels: it gets slightly 'cosmic' and, ever so often gives the reader something to Think About.

Both stories don't really intertwine as much as one might have expected, it's almost like two separate novels. But that's not a put down. The humour is as fresh as any other Discworld novel, while remaining in that wonderfully easy Pratchett style that's apparent in all his novels. Loved it.

Richard Eddy



FACETS

Walter Jon Williams
 Tor Books
 Format PB, \$3.95



Walter Jon Williams is a good, very entertaining writer who's perhaps best known for his epic *Hardwired*, a novel packed with spectacular scenes. He's not always the most innovative of authors, but he's got a great feel for action and *Hardwired* earned comparison to *Star Wars* for its set-piece confrontations. Unsurprisingly then the *Facets* short story collection doesn't really show off Williams at his best, the short stories don't crackle with stunning new ideas and action scenes usually lack the emotional resonance a novel usually provides, but it's still got

plenty of entertaining writing.

The first story is *Surfacing* which at 112 pages isn't the sort of snappy opener one hopes for in a collection. It is however an ambitious work of ideas, a story about communication, complete with various illustrative diagrams. Despite the awkward length — an introduction by Roger Zelazny suggests it would be a good novel — it's fairly intriguing.

Video Star by contrast, is like a sketch of a novella, whipping through a hospital robbery in a series of short, snappy scenes which have a real *Neuromancer* feel — stylish, street-tough cybercrime. In the end you wonder if plastic surgery and video trickery don't undermine the intended impact of a 'shock ending' but once again it's an enjoyable read.

No Spot Of Ground sprawls over seventy pages, a trip back in time to the Civil War with Edgar Allan Poe, no less, as a Confederate general. His experiences compel him to reconsider some of his more romantic sentiments about war, an interesting speculative adventure.

A different kind of war fills the eleven pages of *Flatline*, an underground war against the vast intelligence of molecular computers. A neat little aside on the broader function of conflict. *Side Effects* could perhaps do with similar brevity, a somewhat leaden tale about medical corruption. As for *Witness*, written for the shared-worlds series *Wild Cards*

concept: we see a superhero under McCarthyite investigation. Similarly *Wolf Time* is a well-executed little drama, kicking off with the murder of the central character from William's *Voice Of The Whirlwind* novel. The plotline isn't incredibly original or at all thought-provoking, but there's plenty of violence and cynical asides. *The Bob Dylan Solution* is even more cynical, this time about the pop industry, while *Dinosaurs* is an impressive finale — funny, tragic and, of course, cynical.

Overall then an interesting collection, not brilliant, but well worth getting for

fans and not bad for short story enthusiasts.

Stuart Wynne



THE TOWER OF FEAR

Glen Cook
 Publisher Grafton
 Format PB £3.99



For many years the evil wizard Nakar ruled the city of Qushmarrāh, until the Herodians came along and with the

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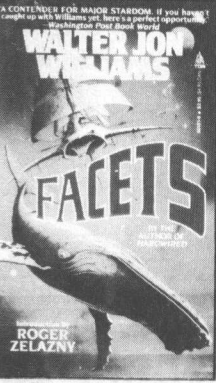


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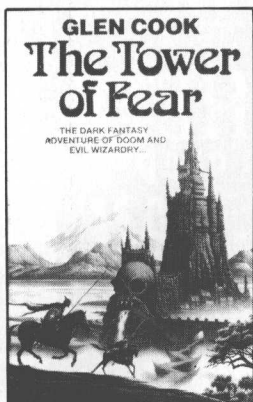
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sacrifice of their greatest wizard Ala-eh-din-Beyh conquered the city. Only he could negotiate the defences of Nakar's fortress and battle with the powerful wizard — but, witnessing the battle, Nakar's wife (a powerful witch) cast a spell that sent them both into limbo.



The Herodians are hated, but they have the aid of the Datars, a group of nomadic mercenaries, so there is little the citizens of Qushmarrah can do. None of them would welcome back Nakar, but admit they would prefer the devil to rule them than the Herodians. And so the Qushmarrah resistance league hatch a cunning plan to revive Nakar and remove the Herodians from the city. This is where our hero comes in: Aaron Habid is a full time carpenter and part time war veteran caught up in the resistance plans. Glen Cook is an author new to me, but if his previous books are as good as *Tower Of Fear* I'll be searching them out. The world he describes is an interesting one, plenty of colourful characters fill the pages with intrigue, battles and adventures galore. And unlike some other authors he takes the time to develop his characters so they actually seem three dimensional rather than just part of the two dimensional text. Now where's my broadsword, I fancy a quick hack at a few limbs.

Mark Caswell



SERVANTS OF TWILIGHT

Dean R Koontz
Publisher Headline Feature
Format PB, £4.99



While I've always separated the pseudonymous Koontz books from his latter works, at least in terms of quality, there are exceptions, and *Servants of Twilight* is one of them.

Originally launched by WH Allen under the Leigh Nichols by-line, it plays



an Anti-Christ chord but with a significant difference: Joey, the little boy victim of the accusation is, apparently, innocent. His mother, Christine, takes him out on a shopping spree and they are approached by a sweet little old lady. Without the slightest provocation, she starts to accuse him of being the Anti-Christ and tells Christine he must die.

After an escalating series of violent incidents, Christine calls in a private detective agency whose boss puts them into hiding. But, no matter where they go, the old lady and her fundamentalist sect, The Servants of Twilight, are able to follow.

Filled with the tension, dramatic action, and tender characterization that Koontz has come to represent, *Servants of Twilight* should be treated as a new novel by those who have never heard of Leigh Nichols. Forget that the book's seven years old — it doesn't show it's age — and dig in.

Mark Kent

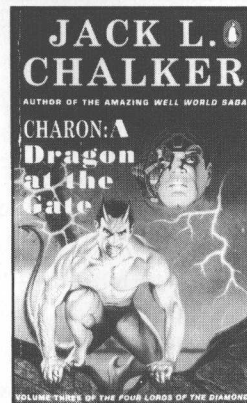


CHARON: A DRAGON AT THE GATE

Jack L Chalker
Publisher Penguin
Format PB £3.99



Two of the four 'Lords Of The Diamond' are dead, now it only remains for Park Lacooh on Charon and Taran Bull on Medusa to complete the task. *Charon: A Dragon At The Gate* carries on from *Cerberus: A Wolf In The Fold* (FEAR 29) and follows the fortunes of the third body controlled by our friendly neighbourhood Confederacy assassin. Charon is the nearest planet to its sun making it a desolate hell hole, and it's here that Park Lacooh, a mentally as well as socially adjusted mass murderer, is dumped. The Lord Park must kill is in fact a lady called Aeolia Matuze, but that doesn't make his job any easier.



On Charon as with the other planets in the Warden Diamond a bacteria invades all living matter and shapes the host cells to its liking: the Warden Diamond is a prison because if the infected person tries to leave the organism dies, as does the host. On Charon the Warden organism allows the inhabitants to perform almost magical feats, and indeed there are many sorcerers on hand to punish errant inhabitants. Most of these are turned into changelings, half human and half animal creatures who are cursed to live the rest of their life as outcasts.

Through a turn of events Park becomes a changeling and meets up with the person most likely to help him in his task, Tulio Koril the ex-Lord of Charon. Sadly I didn't enjoy this book as

much as its predecessor, where there was a more involved plotline with the character taking an active part in the proceedings. Here our hero seems to wander aimlessly around and almost literally fall into situations, although thankfully Chalker is able to make the characters fairly interesting. So what *Charon: A Dragon At The Gate* lacks in action it almost makes up for in character interest value, — almost.

Mark Caswell



WHITE LIES

Christopher Hyde
Publisher Headline
Format PB £4.99



Not since the Second World War has the codeword Romulus been used, at the time President Roosevelt was dying and a plan was hatched in the corridors of power to move him closer to God, quicker than nature intended. Now President Tucker, the youngest man to hold office since JF Kennedy, has been diagnosed as having the early symptoms of dementia. Within six months he will be dead, but before then an important economic summit meeting is planned. The government sees that there's no choice but to call in the Romulus committee, and the man at the head of the operation is Hudson Cooper, Deputy Director Of Operations at the CIA. The doctor who diagnosed the President's illness has already been silenced, so it just remains to find an assassin to do the main job.

The man chosen is freelance mercenary Eric Rhinelander, a German with a certain style. On his last hit he wiped out his six targets with a rocket launcher, no faffing around with sniper rifles for this guy. But this will be Rhinelander's toughest assignment, the White House is out of necessity one of the most heavily guarded buildings in the country. Or is it?, especially when the Romulus committee is headed by some of the President's closest aides. The author claims the research for *White Lies* is accurate, and I can quite believe it: the detail with which the situations are described are little short of amazing. A very involved plot — fans of tense political thrillers will love this.

Mark Caswell



VAMPIRE IN VENICE

Starring Klaus Kinski, Christopher Plummer, Barbara De Rossi, Anne Knecht
Director Augusto Caminito
Distributor First Frigh/Frist
Independent
Cert 18 106 mins £10.21



For centuries Nosferatu the Prince Of Darkness has stalked the earth, and Venice seems to be his favourite haunt, especially the household of Princess Helietta. Legend says that when a great plague swept the city in the 18th Century Nosferatu contaminated the Helietta family with his bite and

VIDEO AND TV



HORROR

Arachnophobia
Chimera
Don't Panic
The Face of Fear
Flatliners
Frankenstein Unbound
Intruder
Vamp
Vampire in Venice



FANTASY

The Neverending Story II
Red Sonja



SCIENCE FICTION

Eve of Destruction
Captain Planet
Captain Power



THRILLER

Impulse
Jezebel's Kiss
Last Call

disappeared. Now a letter from the Princess summons Paris Catalino (Plummer), the world's foremost authority on Vampires, to Venice and a lot of trouble. During a séance to discover the whereabouts of the old bloodsucker Princess Helietta for reasons unknown summons Nosferatu.

He arrives to claim the love of a virgin, the only way he can die. Although various members of the cast try to destroy him, the most impressive is the large calibre rifle incident that leaves Nosferatu with a well ventilated chest!

I'm not really a great fan of the Vampire genre, but until now Christopher Lee has for my money played the character most convincingly. After watching *Vampire In Venice* I have to say that Klaus Kinski easily equals if not surpasses Lee as a quiet but infinitely evil character. The rest of the acting doesn't quite come up to this standard, but is competent. The cameraman has a field day filling the movie with moodily lit shots of the city, which alone should help the Venice tourist board! Fans of Vampire films will no doubt enjoy this. While a bit heavy in places, it's an entertaining hour and a half amid the garlic, sharpened stakes and crucifixes.

Mark Caswell



INTRUDER

Starring Renee Estevez, Sam Raimi, Ivy Moore
Director Scott Spiegel
Distributor Bad Taste
Cert 18, 83 mins, £10.21



Infamous in its uncut form, *Intruder* is now, unfortunately, like a ginger tom with its nuts cut, an operation which was performed courtesy of the BBFC.

That said, there's still plenty to enjoy as an untiring killer walks around a supermarket where the night shift have just clocked on. The suspense starts when the boyfriend of ace checkout girl Jennifer (Estevez) appears in the store and makes trouble for the staff. He's just



LITTLE BLEEDERS

VAMP

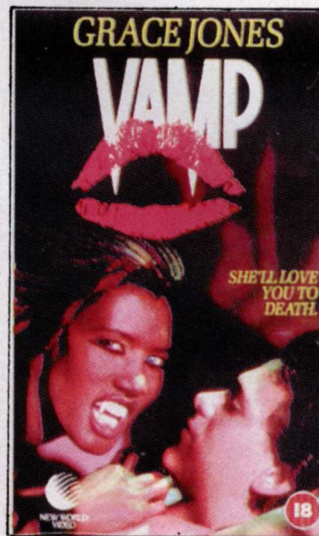
Starring Grace Jones, Chris Makepeace, Sandy Baron, Robert Rusler
Director Richard Wenk
Distributor New World Video
Cert 18, 90mins, £10.21



When young Keith and AJ, and unwanted sidekick Duncan take a ride off campus to the nearby town to look for a stripper to grace a fraternity bash, a violent, whirling city centre skid of the car mysteriously throws them into an unknown, squalid neighbourhood. A check of the 'what's on' pages for a likely source of strippers had pointed to the After Dark Club — and lo and behold here it is, before their very eyes! They enter, not realising just what they've let themselves in for. The staff are strange, the girls mighty toothsome. The club's highlight is the strip show which culminates with white-faced, red-lipped and exotically body-painted Grace Jones strutting her stuff! She's the vamp of the title and her seductive tongue power is soon unleashed on hunky AJ, who laid out on her boudoir couch stripped to the waist is expecting the suck of his life. He's not disappointed: Grace sprouts a forest of teeth and gorges herself on...his blood — the vamp has bred a vampire!

From here on in things take a turn towards the horrifically chaotic as the remaining youngsters try to avoid the attentions of the denizens of the After Dark Club and its sinister vaults — the way out is not as easy as the way in!

Wildly underrated when released in 1986, *Vamp* is a true precursor to the likes of *Fright Night* and *The Lost Boys*, and an intelligently, funnily well-conceived Gothic extravaganza. From the very start, the look of the film is premeditated to progress to the garish neon-green and magenta lighting scheme that so effectively pushes the pro-



ceedings into the sustained grand-guignol of the last two thirds of mayhem.

Like *Fright Night*, *Vamp* achieves the perfect balance between humour and out and out horror — so much so that I was convinced director Richard Wenk is a pseudonym of Tom (*Fright Night*) Holland. As to Grace Jones, well, her presence is all powerful, and even if she's not on screen enough, this is her most effective role to date: she should grace more movies of this ilk with her sensuous evil.

A masterpiece in its chosen field — suck it and taste it yourself.

Oliver Frey

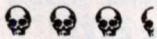


out of jail, so when the phone lines are cut and members of staff go missing, he's obviously the first one to be blamed.

At first, we are the only ones to see the carnage as the inhabitants of the store are sliced up and dumped in the most original ways and locations. But, as Sam Raimi ends up on a meat hook, the others catch on and the gruesome cat and mouse game continues.

No pint of blood has been spared in this excellent and grittily made example of the slasher sub-genre. Die hard horror fans should find a place for this movie in their cabinet — if they haven't already got a black market uncult version. Even here it's worth watching and deserves your support.

John Gilbert



CAPTAIN PLANET AND THE PLANETEERS VOL 1

Starring Whoopi Goldberg, Sting, David Coburn, Edward Asner
Distributor First Independent
Cert U, 48 mins, £10.21



Well, not exactly *starring*, because as you probably know, *Captain Planet* is a children's cartoon, but it does feature the voices of the aforementioned stars.

Whoopi Goldberg is most important, initially, as she puts the words into the mouth of Gaia, Mother of the Earth. In the first of the tape's two adventures, *A Hero For Earth*, Gaia wakes from a hundred-year slumber to discover Man has polluted the air, sea and land and killed plants, trees and animals in his eagerness to 'progress'.

She sends out five magic rings to teenagers across the globe, which give them power over the elements: from Africa, Kwame controls Earth; North America, Wheeler's power is Fire; Gi of Asia commands Water; Wind is the servant of the Soviet Union's Linka; and from South America, Ma-Ti's power is Heart. Together, the five teenagers are the Planeteers, dedicated to saving the world from the harm foolish and evil men do to the environment.

The oil-hungry Hoggish Greedly is the first villain, and to defeat him the Planeteers have to combine their powers, which summon Captain Planet. He has all their powers, amplified, but the rings don't work when he's around.

A forest fire is the immediate problem in *The Conqueror* but the cause is far worse. Zarm, a planet guardian like Gaia, is back on Earth and he seduces all but Ma-Ti with the promise of vastly



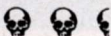
increased power — if the Planeteers will follow his lead. Naturally, he's not as well-meaning a chap as they believe.

It's all well and good — and admirable — that an animation team should create a cartoon series designed to make kids aware of environmental issues and encourage them to be ecologically minded — so why did give Captain Planet a raff costume, early Eighties hairstyle and diluted goody-goody voice?! He hardly commands admiring looks, although the selection of teenage Planeteers is a sound one, despite going over the top in assembling such a diverse range of ethnic groups.

Like most TV cartoons these days, the design (bar Planet himself) and definition of characters is good but animation isn't particularly smooth or natural; producing so many 20-minute shorts takes its toll on quality.

Though action-packed and well-intentioned, these stories don't justify their price tag, particularly as Captain Planet can be seen on TV and is unlikely to become as popular here as he is on the other side of the pond.

Warren Lapworth

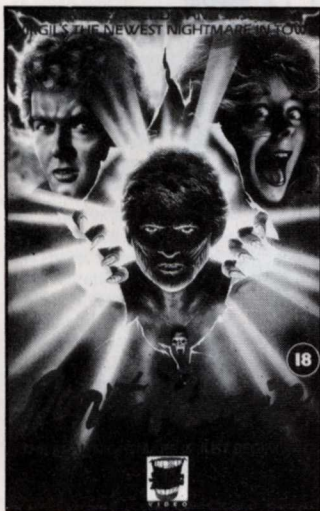


DON'T PANIC

Starring John Michael Bischof, Gabrielle Hassell, Helen Rojo
Director Ruben Galindo Jr
Distributor Bad Taste Video
Cert 18, 90 mins, £10.21



Ouija boards don't exactly inspire me with terror when they're brought out for a quick session during low budget horror movies. They usually hail a succession of not too special effects delivered against a mewling crew of hapless adolescents. And, what a surprise, *Don't Panic* jumps with both feet into the same swamp of clichés.



After a long night of partying down at Michael's (Bischof) house, his gang of friends whip out the Ouija and coax him into a few spins round the alphabet. His best friend, Tony, tries to summon up the spirit of Virgil, a name he's apparently conjured from thin air, — with apparently no results. In the days that follow Michael becomes a psychic, experiencing the deaths of several school mates, and the pleadings of a discorporate entity to try and save them. He soon realizes that Virgil has possessed Tony and is engaged on a totally senseless killing spree.

Peppered with clichés insulting to the viewer and lumbered with a naffly dubbed soundtrack, *Don't Panic* is a sentiment that must have been shared by the distributor when this video landed on the launch list. It joins the likes of *Witchboard* and *Ghost House II* in the dumpster. Don't even consider getting that tenner out of your pocket.

John Gilbert



RED SONJA

Starring Brigitte Nielsen, Sandachl Bergman, Paul Smith, Ronald Lacey, Arnold Schwarzenegger
Director Richard Fleischer
Distributor Warner Home Video
Cert 15, 85 mins, £10.21



Curiously put under the Men of Action series — no doubt because it has Arnie's big footprints all over it — *Red Sonja* was producer De Laurentis' attempt to cash in on his highly successful Conan series. It didn't work, though Brigitte Nielsen did her best to coax life out of Clive (Poirot) Exton's unusually inane script.

The storyline is equally inane but deserves a mention, if only to show that even fantasy die-hards should avoid it

68 July 1991 FEAR



■ Looking Suitably Red, Sonjal

like Arborean plague. Red Sonja is out to avenge the murder of her sister, but in the meantime, she must also follow the trail of the miraculous atomic Talisman which, when in the hands of her decidedly evil adversaries, could destroy the lands of Hyborea.

RE Howard never wrote it like this, and one wonders why Arnold Schwarzenegger appeared in the movie

— as Calidor the barbarian, rather than Conan. I suspect it wasn't the money, but fortunately, the experience hasn't tarnished his towering career. As for *Red Sonja*, fans should note that, for what it's worth, the film looks good and contains some wonderful locations. If that gets you going it's out on the sell through shelves now. Personally, I'd let it pass.

John Gilbert



RENTAL VIDEO

LAST CALL

Starring William Katt, Shannon Tweed, Joseph Campanella, Matt Roe, Stella Stevens
Director Jag Mundhra
Distributor SGE Home Video
Cert 18, 87 mins



When will SGE ever learn that erotic thrillers should include more than a weak plot and plenty of formulaic bonking.

William Katt wrecks his reputation by playing Paul Avery, a real-estate broker whose partner is out to ruin him. He meets the beautiful Cindy (Tweed) at a party and follows her to a club where he learns she's an exotic dancer. He also soon discovers she is his partner Jason Laurence's (Matt Roe) PA.

After a steamy romance, in which they take their clothes off at least twice in the oddest of locations, Avery finds out that his partner is about to run off with his loot. He involves Cindy in a ludicrous revenge scheme which ends, not so unusually, in murder and twist which is just not worth the wait.

It's certainly not my idea of an evening's entertainment and, to be honest, you'd have to be very sexually frustrated to rent this aimless, brainless and directionless video romp.

John Gilbert



THE FACE OF FEAR

Starring Lee Horsley, Kevin Conroy, Pam Dawber
Director Farhad Mann
Distributor Warner Home Video
Cert 15, 89 mins



Dean R Koontz acted as writer and executive producer for this film adaptation of his novel, so from the start you know it won't be the disaster that was *Watchers*.

The storyline is interesting, if a little

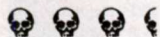
■ Video Romp in Last Call

out to lunch. Mountain climber Graham Harris (Horsley), who recently suffered an almost fatal fall, begins to see visions of a mass murderer, Frank Bollinger (Conroy), at work. He tries to help the police with his paranormal knowledge but they start to believe he could have been involved in the murders somewhere down the line.

Our murderer, in the meantime, has decided to stop Harris' visions before the psychic climber discovers his identity. He traps Harris in a high tower block of offices with girlfriend Connie Weaver (Dawber). The finale is a cat and mouse game of the highest order, with Harris finally having to overcome his fear of heights and Bollinger proving to be more cunning than your average brand of psycho.

In some ways, the movie version of *Face of Fear* is better than the book, which tends to overstretch its slim plot and sometimes offers the reader too many unbelievable coincidences to swallow. Horsley and Conroy are the stars of this show and they put up a good job, though sometimes the hero is a little too pure for his own good. Koontz fans will obviously welcome the chance to see a solid movie made from one of his books. As a big screen production it doesn't work but as a television or video thriller it's a gem.

John Gilbert



FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND

Starring John Hurt, Raul Julia, Bridget Fonda, Catherine Rabett
Director Roger Corman
Distributor Warner Home Video
Cert 18 83mins

There can't be many people who haven't heard the story of how Lord Byron, Percy Shelley and Mary Shelley competed with one another to create the ultimate horror story, one result being Mary's Frankenstein.

Frankenstein Unbound however starts in New Los Angeles in the year 2031 where scientist Joseph Buchanan is experimenting with a new laser weapon codenamed Project Safeworld, which literally displaces its target to another location. But there are side effects, not least the strange disappearance of people and unnatural weather phenomena. Buchanan himself soon becomes the victim of a time slip when he is transported to nineteenth century Geneva to meet the real Doctor Frankenstein.

He also literally bumps into the monstrous creature created by him and barely escapes with his life. Frankenstein's brother isn't so lucky, he is murdered by the monster, although a young girl is accused. In court Buchanan meets Mary Shelley and tries to convince her to help the girl. But he soon realises that Mary has only just started writing her book, so she can be of little help. The girl is hanged and Buchanan becomes obsessed with stopping Frankenstein and his monster. He renews contact with Frankenstein just as he's preparing to reanimate his fiancée (murdered by the monster) as a mate for his creation. Realising that Buchanan has greater control over electricity than himself, Frankenstein forces him to help out.

Frankenstein Unbound is one of the best genre films I've seen for a long time. John Hurt is brilliant as the unwitting time traveller who faces both the author of one of the greatest novels



■ A heart-stopping moment for Kevin Bacon in *Flatliners*

and the reality of her creation in Frankenstein's monster. And a note of praise must go to the monster make-up as well, I'm fed up with the square headed, bolt through the neck type creatures. This monster, apart from looking a little like a Klingon, is a quietly menacing figure whom you can't help feeling sorry for, despite his nasty habit of ripping people apart. Unreservedly recommended.

Mark Caswell



FLATLINERS

Starring Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, Oliver Platt
Director Joel Schumacher
Distributor RCA Columbia Video
Cert 15, 112 mins

The line between life and death is a thin one, just as the road between good and bad movies is as narrow as a bicycle track. Fortunately, director Joel Schumacher for the most part manages to keep his feet off the ground and his wheels out of the pot holes in this fantasy thriller about a group of medical students determined to find out what happens to the human consciousness on the other side of death.

Kiefer Sutherland is the strong leader of the group who take it in turns to have their hearts stopped and brain activity nullified through a process of refrigeration. Each is confronted with a sin from their past which haunts them when they return to to the land of the living. Sutherland, for instance, is clobbered by a young boy whom he taunted when he was a kid, while Baldwin is driven almost insane by nightmarish recollections of amorous liaisons which he secretly filmed, and Roberts is terrorised by the fear that she might have caused her father's suicide.

Always tense and occasionally

■ *Frankenstein Unbound*: Well, I don't like your mug either!

tender, *Flatliners* is a fabulous commercial fantasy. Director Schumacher makes obvious allusions to his other successful fantasy film *The Lost Boys* right from the first scene in which the camera sweeps across water during the daytime to find Sutherland at the quayside, and it continues with the gothic interiors, fine mists and thick fogs. It's suspense and mystery in one innovative, adventurous, package, a fantasy fan's favourite meal. Go feed.

John Gilbert



Excellent



Very good



Good



Fair



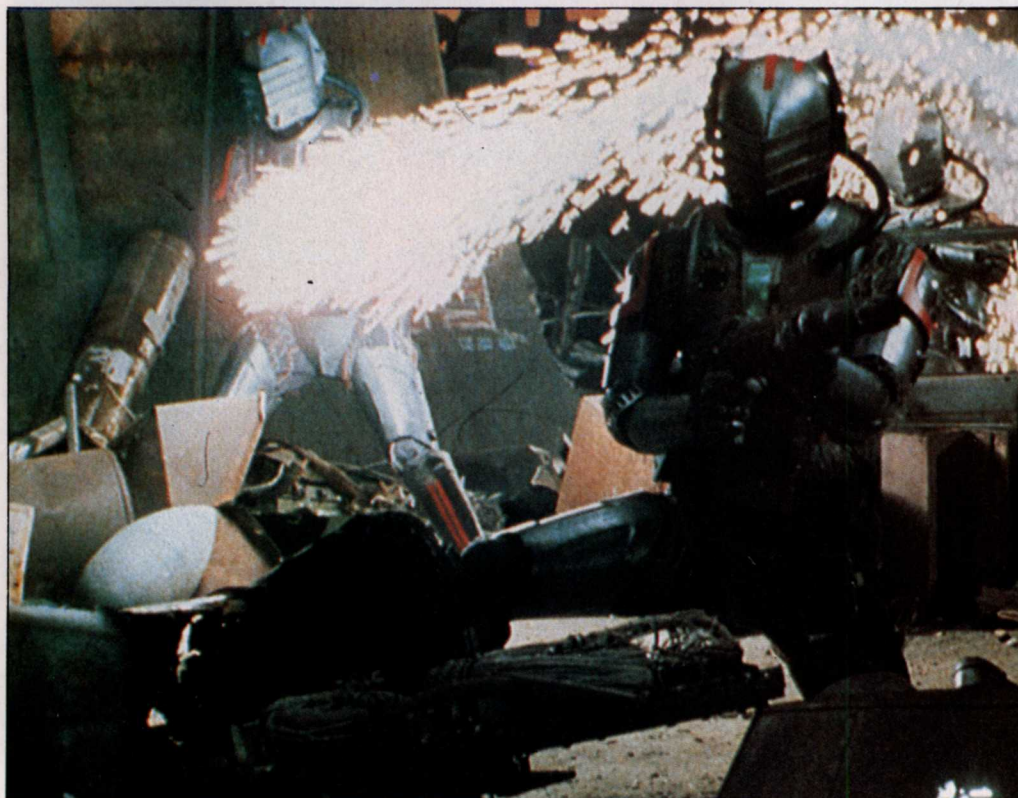
Poor





CYBORG DREAD!

■ Metal mayhem sparks in the future.



CAPTAIN POWER AND THE SOLDIERS OF THE FUTURE

Starring Dylan Neal, Bruce Gray, Tim Dunigan, Peter MacNeil, Sven Thorsen
Directors Otta Hanus and Jorge Montesi
Distributor Genesis
Cert PG, 93 mins



As this children's adventure movie begins, the world is already in turmoil, still at war with itself after years of fighting. Robots and bionic soldiers were built to bring peace but formed an army for Taggart, a tyrant who rules from his Volcania base.

Pockets of resistance are led by Professor Stuart Power but his struggle worsens when Taggart and his computer, which contains the digitized minds of thousands of his victims, creates Soaron, an intelligent robot with regenerative powers. Soaron captures Power's son, Jon, and when he rescues him, he's killed in an explosion. But Taggart survives in cyborg form, under the title of Lord Dread, to go from victory to victory.

But there is hope. Using the battlesuits invented by his father, Jon becomes Captain Power, and with his friends' help — code-named Hawk, Tank, Pilot and Scout — keeps Taggart on his toes.

Captain Power was originally an innovative American series many parents objected to: using various light effects, it allowed children to pseudo-interact with the programme using special toy guns and so help Captain Power's cause. *Captain*

Power and the Soldiers of the Future appears to be several programmes knitted together, with the majority of the special combat scenes edited out — they had little or no bearing on the story.

The result is a pleasant surprise. Although derivative good versus bad, man versus machine SF, a lot of thought and a hell of a lot of action has been squeezed in. The first half-hour is almost a self-contained story — and an enjoyable one at that — yet is mostly a plot device to set up the Captain Power/Lord Dread attack/counterattack that occupies the rest of the tape.

Some sets, costumes and effects are on the dodgy side but on the whole *Captain Power* looks as 'authentic' as a TV production could. My one complaint is that in dark scenes, the armoured Captain and Co can easily be mistaken for Dread's soldiers — who's shooting whom?

The Soaron robot and his similarly metallic fighting partner, Blastarr, provide the most pleasing scenes of the movie. Both are impressive computer graphics, produced by Arcca Animation, which look and move more than menacingly enough to fulfil their roles in the story.

Captain Power does more than it need do, as little over an hour into its running time, a complete, satisfying, adequately concluded story is told — yet there's still 30-odd minutes to go. But you can't complain at getting rental value out of this amusing children's film — especially as you're likely to sneak a look at it yourself.

Warren Lapworth



ARACHNOPHOBIA

Starring Jeff Daniels, Harley Jane Kozak, John Goodman, Julian Sands, Henry Jones
Director Frank Marshall
Distributor Warners
Cert 15, 101 mins



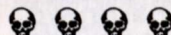
The movie they refused to promote as horror, is one of the best creature features I've seen during the last decade.

Dr Atherton (Sands) takes a trip to the Venezuelan jungle in search of a particularly vicious bunch of arachnids — that's spiders for those of a less scientific bent. He finds them, and his photographer is bitten by one of the not so tiny terrors. The beastie clings to the body, slips into the man's makeshift coffin and travels all the way back to the States where it decides to propagate in a small town environment.

Naturally, the local inhabitants aren't too hot about having these creepies in their basements but there's not an awful lot they can do about it until Sands turns up. Even the local pest control agent, played with juicy overkill by John Goodman, has a bad time with the long-legged crawlies and, right up to the finale, it's uncertain as to whether Sands and the local doc (Daniels) have destroyed all the critters.

At once humorous and very, very nasty, *Arachnophobia* is a tarantella dance of a film where the actors take second spot to the eight-legged hairies — can you imagine one of those beasties sharing space on a casting couch? Unrelenting in its action, the movie is likely to be one of this summer's biggest rental titles, but, if you should take it out, keep that bug spray handy and take a peek into your TV dinner before you eat it.

John Gilbert



NEVERENDING STORY II: THE NEXT CHAPTER

Starring Jonathan Brandis, Keny Morrison
Director George Miller
Distributor Warner Home Video
Cert 15, 101 mins



The oddly named Bastian Balthazar Bux (Brandis) is on his way back to Fantasia with a fresh set of problems in both that world and this.

In the first movie his fight with The Nothing, a vacuum that ate into the dreams and visions of humanity, helped him to come to terms with his mother's death while in this sequel his fight with an initially faceless scarlet sorceress (Burt) allows him to overcome his cowardice and regain his fathers attention.

The sorceress intends to do what her master, The Nothing, could not, utterly destroy Fantasia, and to do that she has to suck all the dreams and memories from Bastian's head. One of her minions builds a machine which will extract the memories every time he makes a wish using his magical talisman, called the Aurn, while another crony, a strange looking bird called Nimby (Umbach), gains Bastian's confidence and tempts him to make wishes.

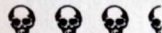
Fortunately, Bastian can count on the help of his old friends Rock Biter, Mudwart, Lavaman, Windbride, and of



meets assistant District Attorney San Harris (Fahey) who wants her to help him with a drugs bust and wants her body too. She falls for him, but just when her life takes a turn for the better he becomes involved in the murder of a drugs baron and the proud owner of some dope money. This moral dilemma she faces is interestingly worked out during the rest of the movie with a series of plot twists that'll leave you reeling.

Uncompromising, intelligent and savagely paced, *Impulse* is a superior thriller and an absorbing drama. This is certainly one video you won't have to rent on impulse.

John Gilbert



EVE OF DESTRUCTION

Starring Renée Soutendijk, Gregory Hines, Michael Green, Kurt Fuller.
Director Duncan Gibbins
Distributor Guild Home Video
Cert 18 96mins



This movie gets off to a normal enough start: a beautiful young career woman commutes into New York and enters a downtown bank. This is promptly raided by two hooded figures, one of whom is shot by a security guard, while the other is faced by the young woman. After warning her to back off the robber shoots her — only to be hurled out of a reinforced window by her two seconds later! The woman promptly picks up a gun from the dead robber and makes her exit. She's no ordinary lady, but in fact the government's best kept secret. Her

■ Bottled menace: Julian Sands ponders Arachnophobia



■ Neverending Cuteness again

course Falkor the luck dragon and Atreyu — although the latter is held within the wicked witch's clutches for some time. Bastian not only has to regain his memories but must also defeat the sorceress: he does, of course, but in a most surprising way.

Derek Meddings' visual effects put *Neverending Story II* ahead of the original film, but the storyline is a bit of a rag tag. As a result, these two very different films will appeal to two different types of fan. If you prefer good storyline and deepish characterizations go for number one, which is now on sell through. If the special effects are your bag the second movie will satisfy your needs. But, my advice is to watch both. They're still in the tree-tops of fantasy film-making.

John Gilbert

half

IMPULSE

Starring Theresa Russell, Jeff Fahey, George Dzundza
Director Sondra Locke
Distributor Warner Home Video
Cert 18, 104 mins




At first, I thought *Impulse* was just another sleazy exploitation flick in which a female cop works as a prostitute. But I was oh so wrong.

Teresa Russell turns in a fine performance as undercover and under pressure cop Lottie Mason. She's on the vice squad, walking the streets and encouraging men to proposition her. Once they do, of course, she snaps on the handcuff and books 'em. It's a tough job, made worse by the sexual harrassment doled out by her boss Lieutenant Joe Morgan (Dzundza), and a number of short-lived affairs with other officers.

Her problems are doubled when she

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AND FORTH COMING FUTURE
(IF YOU DARE)**

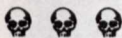
CALLS CHARGED AT 34P PER MIN, 46P AT ALL OTHER TIMES INC. V.A.T.

name is Eve VIII and she is the latest in android technology. Built by research scientist Doctor Eve Simons (Soutendijk) in her own image, Eve VIII's main function is surveillance, but if needed she/it can become an efficient killing machine.

Which is what happens: the bank robber's bullet has acted as a trigger and Eve VIII has gone into 'battle mode', a very dangerous state of affairs indeed. Dr Simons is called in to help stop her psychotic alter ego, along with Colonel Jim McQuade (Hines) an anti-terrorist expert. It turns out that in battle mode Eve VIII is stripped of all inhibitions and cannot be easily stopped, indeed the only way to 'kill' the android is to shoot it in the eye. And stopping Eve VIII soon becomes imperative because she's also armed with a nuclear warhead that could wipe out half of New York!

The tin plated anti-heroine in *Eve Of Destruction*, not surprisingly, reminds one of the menacing android in *Terminator*, indeed Renée Soutendijk is excellent as both the good Doctor and the maniac android who blows away all and sundry. The action is fast paced enough to keep you on the edge of your seat until the end, which I felt was a bit of an anti-climax after the earlier rip, mangle and maim fun. But I didn't let a small thing like that spoil my enjoyment... What happens at the end? Well, you'll just have to watch and find out.

Mark Caswell



JEZEBEL'S KISS

Starring Meredith Baxter-Birney, Meg Foster, Everett McGill, Katherine Barrese, Malcolm McDowell
Director Harvey Keith
Distributor SGE Home Video
Cert 18, 98 mins



The big names don't save this erotic thriller from the fan.

Starting with an interesting premise in which a mysterious young girl called Jezebel is involved in a motorbike accident and becomes entangled with the steamy affairs of a small American town, it soon develops into a facile romp during which each of the main men in the movie bonk the brains out of Katherine Barrese.

Jezebel's first victim is the local sheriff, played by *Twin Peaker* Everett McGill. He has his violent way with her just once and she tells him it will never happen again. Then she's dorked by the son of local landowner Benjamin Faberson (McDowell), also telling him she will only do it once and never again, and then, finally she does it with the landowner himself.

The normally placid relationships between these townfolk slowly begin to boil. Faberson's wife suspects he's having an affair with Jezebel and the increasingly horny sheriff is not exactly chuffed either. Violence spawns violence, which is fine with Jezebel as she's extracting revenge for the way in which the townies did away with her folks when she was young.

It's a pity a lively idea for a good story has been turned into an excuse for a series of badly choreographed sex scenes. If director Keith had concentrated on either characterization, plot or the sex he would have been half way to movie maker's heaven. Unfortunately, the pace and depth is so uneven he never gets to the gate.

John Gilbert



72 July 1991 FEAR



HYBRID HORROR

■ Kenneth Cranham bemused by the Genetic Pollution of Cumbria



CHIMERA

Starring John Lynch, Christine Kavenagh, Kenneth Cranham
Director Lawrence Gordon Clark
Distributor Anglia Television



The long-awaited four-hour television adaptation of Stephen Gallagher's first novel *Chimera* gets its ITV airing during the first two weeks in July and, with a few reservations, I'd say it's a corker.

Extending the scope of his original storyline, Gallagher starts the series with nurse Tracy Pickford leaving London and her estranged boyfriend Peter Carson (Lynch). She soon discovers that the Jenner Clinic, which is buried in the middle of the Cumbrian countryside, is not the simple baby farm it appears. But, before she can find out the truth she is brutally stabbed and left to die by a mystery assailant, while the clinic goes up in smoke.

Fortunately for the viewer, Tracy left a frantic message on Carson's phone asking him to urgently come up to the clinic. He arrives, to discover a

police dragnet around the area which is under the control of government spook Hennessey (played by under-rated, quite wonderful, Kenneth Cranham). At first, Carson gets nowhere, but soon he links up with Alison Wells, who was in London on the night of the conflagration. She hints that Jenner was working on genetic experiments, and it becomes obvious that one of his projects escaped and is lurking somewhere in the valley. Could it be that the two children at Ravens' Crag farm know something about the 'monster'? And just where are their parents?

All is revealed in a surprisingly graphic style, which is aided by Image Animation's powerful creature make-up, and through a script which is at once dark and terrifying, while at other times Gallagher uses humour to highlight the pomposity and double-dealing of governmental agencies. This series may not make Stephen Gallagher a household name, but it will ensure the continued rise of his books in the bestseller charts. Just make sure you're around when it screens. Cancel your holidays and pull up the armchair.

John Gilbert



FEAR competitions

BLOOD MOON

rises on the horizon, spilling the body fluids of many a young college student. Yes, gore gets back into season as Capital Home Video releases its latest serial killer shocker. Set at a private Australian school, the story revolves around the students' sex lives and what they get up to in the woods behind the campus — and what a deadly strangler does to them with knives and a wire noose.

There's not a werewolf in sight, but we guarantee it's a howl. If you haven't got an apple for your teacher, try to win one of the ten copies we have of *Blood Moon*. The question this time round is: the company that produced this movie also made *Total Recall*. Name that company. Prick your finger and write the answer on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope. Send it to B-HELL COMP, FEAR, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1JW. All answers should reach us by July 11, 1991, and no employees of FEAR, Newsfield, or Capital Home Video may take part. There are plenty of wire nooses to go around.

Fight for the Future with CAPTAIN POWER

Son of the late lamented Professor Stuart Power, Captain John Power continues the fight against his father's old adversary Lord Dread. Protected by his unique armoured suit he storms through a universe with an increasing array of laser weapons and in pursuit of an ever decreasing number of alien foes

Ideal for the kids, this \$12 million special effects extravaganza packs a similar punch to *Star Wars* and *Battlestar Galactica*, but that doesn't mean adults won't appreciate its production values.

To enter enter this power-packed mega-comp, tell us the name of the man who produced the first *Star Wars* movie. Put your answer on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it straight to POWER COMPO, FEAR, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1JW. All entries should be in by July 11, 1991. Employees of FEAR, Newsfield, or Exalibur Video (and their relatives) are barred from entry...unless they enjoy laser burn.

Pray that day doesn't end on the EVE OF DESTRUCTION

Tougher than Terminator, crueler than a Cylon, deadlier than a Dalek, Eve is the ultimate nuclear weapon: a robot in female guise. And if you don't believe all that militaristic press spiel then Guild Home Video is offering ten copies of the video that puts her through her paces.

The first five prize winners will also receive a special Eve of Destruction desk set which will blow away all your letter writing and literary troubles. It's a mighty fine prize for all admirers of robots, or robotic admirers. And all you have to do to win these sumptuous gifts is tell us which company produced the Terminator robot and give us Arnie's model number. Put your answers on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it to the ADAM AND EVE COMPO, FEAR, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1JW. All entries should be in by July 11, 1991 and, as usual, no employees of FEAR, Newsfield or Guild (or their relatives) may take part or our android could give you a serious headache. It's not easy living without a brain.



Destructive Eve

**ALIEN PRIVATE EYE
DEATH STALKER 3
GRAVEYARD SHIFT
SCARECROWS
THERE'S A KILLER ON THE
CAMPUS
THE VIDEO DEAD**

Polygram Video presents a series of seriously sinister sell-throughs, each of which is guaranteed to have you sitting on the edge of your seat. *Alien Private Eye* goes on a very unusual case, *Death Stalker 3* has guts by the bucketful, while the vampires of *Graveyard Shift* can strip the blood from a body in short shrift. *There's a Killer on the Campus* for the thousands of slasher fans who we just know will be interested and *The Video Dead* are starting to beat a way out of their boxes.

We have five sets of this wonderful budget label line for a lucky five winners, and if you want to win big in this totally mad bonanza just clue us in on who wrote a short story called *Graveyard Shift* which has since been turned into the above video prize!

Answers on the back of a postcard or envelope to POLYGRAM BONANZA COMPO, FEAR, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1JW. All entries should be in by July 11, 1991 and, remember, employees of FEAR, Newsfield, and Polygram cannot enter. Their relatives are likewise disqualified.



Deathstalker

Become a part of
**THE
NEVERENDING
STORY**

The original adventures of Bastian, a little boy with a big heart and the friendship of the inhabitants of Fantasia, have so far spawned two films, with a third on the way, and now they're both on Warner Home Video.

You can see the original, in which Bastian defeats *The Nothing* on sell through, while the sequel, in which Bastian conquers fear, is about to be released on rental video. We have ten copies of this double bill and all you fantasy fans have to do to win them is tell us who wrote the original novel.

Pop your answers on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it to FEAR, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1JW. All entries must be in by July 11, 1991. No employees of FEAR, Newsfield, or Warner Home Video I (or their relatives) may take part — or we'll think of a few names to call you (Neverending Story in-joke — ED).

**Savour the static in
FRANKENSTEIN
UNBOUND**

Those wonderful people at Warner Home Video have introduced us to a guy we know you'll just wanna meet: Frankenstein's monster. He's a deadly depressed kinda dude and needs cheering up. He won't beg you to win one of the 10 copies of Roger Corman's *Frankenstein Unbound* but, with a bod like his and those huge hands — capable of rending flesh on even a bad day — we recommend you at least try to get the answer right. And the question is:

Wait for it, wait for it:

Who wrote the original novel behind this Corman adaptation.

Jot the answer on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it to COR COMPO, FEAR, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1JW. All entries should be in by July 11, 1991. Employees of FEAR, Newsfield, or Warner Home Video (and their relatives) may not take part. Failure to comply with this directive will result in a severe wrenching of bones — your's.

NIGHTSTYLE



Whitley Strieber, author of *Communion* and *Majestic*, has a rival in the alien contact field, but he need not worry about this phenomenon eating into his sales: it's heavy metal group **Megadeth**. John Gilbert tunes in to Megadeth drummer **Nick Menza**...

THE SECRET OF HANGER 18

One of the most powerful tracks on their latest video compilation, 'Hanger 18' reveals their vision of what lies in the top secret hangar, guarded by the American military since the 1950s. Drummer Nick Menza was the inspiration for the song, written by lead singer Dave Mustaine. He's a science fiction fan who has a huge collection of press cuttings and books about close encounters and the secret Shadow Governments (made up of world leaders) that keep public awareness at a minimum. 'I got most of

the stuff from research books, magazines and clippings that have been around for a long time, since the '50s.

'I don't know where these hangars are located, it could be either Nevada, Colorado, or Dayton in Ohio. I do know that something is going on with the government, and I do believe there are aliens on these bases and that they're testing them. I've heard about *Majestic*, and there was an operation called Maji: where information on UFOs was gathered and evaluated in con-

junction with data from the CIA and Defence Intelligence.

There's a whole Shadow Government running this thing, and in 'Hanger 18' we've tried to bring it across that there are aliens, and that the government is involved. I have a lot of magazine articles about cattle mutilation by aliens, where the techniques to cut them up were very advanced, suggesting a type of laser was used.

'The aliens use the cows' DNA to bring up foetuses, which sounds a bit far fetched, and it's

also connected with these stories of men in black.'

Isn't he worried that these 'men in black' might come after the band members if they stir up too much public attention on the subject of alien encounters? I'm not really scared about it. We're a rock band, and how seriously are people going to take it if we do things like 'Hangar 18'?

The whole of Megadeth's most recent album, *Rust in Peace*, is evocative of a government that hides the secrets of the universe from the ordinary population, right down to the cover which shows their skull-face mascot peering into a cryogenic chamber where an alien lies inert and ready for testing — and are those George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev seated in the background? The album cover shows all the heads of the Shadow Government. And we're saying that when we see all of these problems and crises, such as floods and famine, they might mean nothing in the scheme of things because of 'the greater plan'.

Megadeth's message, be it based in reality or not, is strong and uncompromising, and their videos are equally culture shocking — with clips of war, blood-bathed babies and civilians shaking with the effects of their dreadful wounds. 'We write about the things people don't want to hear about. Here we have MTV© and they tell us that we can't have stuff in a particular scene. The unedited version of 'Hangar 18' has stuff in it of a guy pulling out a heart.' Fortunately, the new British compilation of their videos is largely uncut.

DOWN TO EARTH

The band's outspoken views have also hit upon more down to earth concerns, and one incident during a tour of Northern Ireland shows just what power a rock band can invoke. 'A couple of years ago, Dave Mustaine asked someone what the IRA stood for, and apparently the guy gave him the wrong answer: he went on stage and said 'Give Ireland back to the Irish'. They kicked us out of there and we even had a bomb threat. That's why Dave makes reference to 'Fools like me' in 'Holy Wars'.'

Such misunderstandings certainly make for good, controversial, lyrics and, according to Nick, Megadeth intends to continue to grow in voice and influence. 'We're coming to a point where we're still metal but we're coming into our own. We're not getting commercial but we're taking Megadeth to the next level. We don't want to sell out, but we want to pull in more fans who'll see us as a thinking band. Even if they don't like our music they'll like the lyrics.'

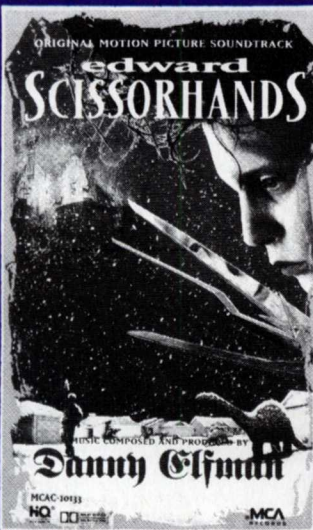
Megadeth has just started a headlining two and a half month US tour. They'll then lay a new album, and next year will see them in Britain for a massive tour.>f20

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

Danny Elfman
Label MCA

The Tim Burton film is already a fairytale success in the States so it's not surprising that Danny Elfman's complementary soundtrack is such a masterpiece.

After his disappointing showing with *Darkman*, Elfman's latest offering includes all the drama, joy and poignancy of the movie. It starts with a waltz-like main theme, then slowly builds in the fun, showing all those pointed and soft sides of Edward the fans love so much. Triangles ring out as the man with the scissors melds into society, trimming peoples' hair and helping out at their barbecues, but the bass section is never far away and comes into its own when Edward, on the run, goes back to his castle for a final showdown with his enemies. Choir, percussion and brass combine during an emotional finale which, like *ET* has had many a grown man weeping into his jeans.



Elfman's magical score is a passionate reminder of a masterful movie. It shows that he is the most skillful musical maestro currently working in Hollywood, and take my advice, if you've never bought a soundtrack album before, make this one the first.

John Gilbert



RUSTED PIECES

Megadeth
Distributor PMI
Cert 15, 45 mins
Megadeth's new video compilation, *Rusted Pieces* illustrates six of their very best tracks, including two from the relatively new album *Rust in Peace*. All of them are irreverently introduced by members of the band just as all have been restored to their uncensored glory.

The theme appears to be the evil of war and government. Each message is blasted home by lead vocalist Dave Mustaine and a combination of band shots and often gruesome video clips. The play list is 'Peace Sells', 'Wake Up Dead', 'In My Darkest Hour', 'Anarchy in the UK' (which most fans of the now defunct punk movement will appreciate), 'Holy Wars...The Punishment Due'



HAMMERED

Metal Hammer, one of Britain's most popular hard rock and heavy metal magazines, has changed format. It now boasts 146 colourful pages, cassette tape on the front and mega-posters inside. It has also taken up FEAR's genre lead by including a nine page section

which reviews the latest horror, fantasy, SF films, videos, comics and games. If you're a metal fan you won't want to miss this relaunch and, if you're a FEAR fan get down to your local newsagent and check out what you're missing.

and 'Hangar 18'.

My picks of the month are 'Holy Wars'... and 'Hangar 18'. The former is particularly brutal in its images, showing pictures of real war, the weapons, the leaders and, most prominently the bodies old and young. 'Hangar 18' takes a different, though no less controversial approach. Set in a large aircraft hangar, the band imagine the savage treatment and testing of alien beings by the American government. Megadeth's skull-headed mascot takes control of the military operations, cute and odd creatures are sliced up before the camera, and the band members, who obviously know too much for their own good, are put into cryogenic suspension.

Sparky, pulsing, and intelligent, *Rusted Pieces* is an accomplished video record which will boost

Megadeth's ratings amongst fans. It proves they are a major band and can only get bigger.

John Gilbert



ROCK 'N' ROLL OUTLAW

Rose Tattoo
Link Records
This is classic hard rockin' Aussie metal. From the minute the needle hits the vinyl, it's party time: solid riffs, great rock 'n' roll lyrics, an unbelievable slide guitar and drumming as solid as the rock of Gibraltar.

A martial racket that never becomes too noisy for its own good, but certainly has the hairs on your



back well and truly up. From *Rock 'n' Roll Outlaw* to *Nice Boys don't play Rock 'n' Roll* — admittedly, all the Heavy Metal clichés are here: loose women, loads of alcohol. But what great tunes! If only heaven were a Rose Tattoo party — dying would never be a frightening proposition. Play it loud or don't bother.

Evo (Warfare)



BEAUTIFUL DISASTER

Cheap and Nasty

Label China Records

This kind of stuff is sleazy bar rock, a mixture of punk and a dash of metal. Nasty Suicide (ex Hanoi Rocks) and Alvin Gibbs (ex Iggy Pop Band and UK Subs) team up to bring you a collection of tunes that are basically riffs beefed up: King's Road ditties and a bottle of Thunderbird, and flick the volume into oblivion. The thing that nags the hell out of me is the very weak production. For all the years these two guys have been in the biz, I'd have expected a more ass kickin' in the face mix. That aside, the songs are all very enjoyable — and the cover on the cassette is really well thought out and very pro, courtesy of China.

Evo (Warfare)



DRUGS, GOD AND THE NEW REPUBLIC

Warrior Soul

Label Geffen

The second album by a band who are going places, *Drugs, God and the New Republic*, like its title suggests, deals in depth with some heavy subjects.

Twelve melodic tracks, starting with 'Intro', moving through the title song, 'The Answer', 'Rocket 88', 'Man Has To Live', and the finale 'Children of the Winter' niftily evoke views on drugs, the cold war, religion, 'the dark side of America', and freedom of

Warrior Soul



Cheap and Nasty

expression. There are also reinterpretations of 'Interzone', a song from the Joy Division album *Unknown Pleasure*, and 'Wasteland', which is described as a '90s Chuck Berry'.

It's spunky stuff that registers as an odd combo of hard rock and classy funk. The masterly brew is instrumentally well controlled and the message of 'survival and fighting back' is indefatigable in Kory Clarke's strong vocals. It's all clever stuff in a neat wrapping.

John Gilbert



SCAPEGOATS

Green on Red

Label China Records

Lay back and relax: it's the kind of thing you need on your Walkman on

the 125, with a very Blues type feel to it, which on certain numbers ('Blowfly') reminds me a little of early ZZ Top. This is guitar orientated, with a lazy, hard-rocking snare drum pumping away like a heart beat. *Scapegoats* is extremely well put together, but will almost certainly find more success in the States rather than Europe: songs you hear through the night, US style.

Evo (Warfare)



SANITY OBSCURE

Believer

Label Roadrunner

Believer is a first rate example of a musical trend which has grown its own brand name: White Metal.

What's that? And is it really as good as thrash and death, or is it just another marketing ploy by an-on-the-

ball record company? Well, Believer thrash as heavily as any band but they're also clean living Christians. Their most recent album is a perfect instance of this new movement, which is full of right thinking sentiment. All right if you like that sort of stuff.

Andy Braille



COMPETITION WINNERS

MONSTER-MOSH winners: M Lesbirel, Liverpool; J Perfect, Surrey; N Oram, Newton Abbot; G Parker, Ipswich; C Granger, South Glamorgan; P Aldritt, Wolverhampton; S Ford, Suffolk; T Davey, Crediton; R Judd, Tyne & Wear; S Collins, Durham; W Cooke, Dorset; I Ward, Ashford; A Jones, West Midlands; A McKay, N Ireland; W Collins, Willenhall.

LET'S GET BUZZY winners: P Allison, Cleveland; I Ward, Ashford; J Marston, Dorset; N Weston, Chatham; D Ayre, Sunderland.

POSSESSION winners: E Ives, Cambridge; D Ball, Basingstoke; M Grove, Evesham; N Burrough, Bristol; N Fulwood, Nottingham; J Williams, Grimsby; G Webster, Hull; P Johnson, Leicester; N Oram, Newton Abbot; A Locky, Leamington Spa.

DRAGON WINGS winners: S Stapleto, Nottingham; D Geoghegan, Surrey; T Richardson, Leeds; M Grove, Evesham; S Knott, London.

IN A STATE winners: K kan, Malvern; I Carney, Merseyside; P Newton, Warrington; S Knott, London; G Houghton, Northants; P Fleming, Cleveland.

MOONSHOT winners: B Fielding, Keighley; P Williams, Ramsgate; C Boyle, Herts; N Waddington, Halifax; G Webster, Hull; D Crabbe, Lancaster; B Chaloner, Boston.



GRAPHIC DE

Warren Lapworth walks the line between good and evil, taking shots from either side as more comics and graphic novels enter the fray.

The horror movie business has created a number of unlikely anti-heroes, Jason, Michael Myers, Freddy, Pinhead. And then there's the more obscure cult hero, *Leatherface*. Northstar's comic (£1.85, import) opens with the chainsaw maniac claiming another victim and making a new mask from her skin.

The real story is of Ryan and Michelle, who are driving cross-country to Deland, Florida, to deliver the car to her father. As luck would have it — as far as creating interesting reading is

concerned — the journey takes them into a part of Texas where more than 60 decomposed corpses have been found in a series of body pits. But before they can get within cleaving distance of *Leatherface*, they're in for an unpleasant experience at a gas station.

Kirk Jarvinen and Jeff Austin's artwork is excellent, smooth and stylish, which was a very pleasant surprise — I expected a lot less of a horror comic from a minor publisher. A strong palette enhances its look and makes it reminiscent of Dark Horse's various colour limited series.

The story isn't award-winning stuff but is a remarkably accurate and entertaining translation of a gore horror movie. There are enough plot elements to ensure it

isn't a tedious stream of killings, characters are clearly defined and the pacing is spot on. One for all horror fans; highly recommended.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT?

The 1991/92 *The Official Comic Book Guide For Great Britain* (PGP, £6.95) is here, so it's time to put your copy of the second edition into retirement. Its A to Z sections for DC, Marvel, independent and British comics each begin with potted histories of the appropriate publishers and market trends for various titles and specific issues.

While independents have only 'N Mint' prices and British comics

only 'V Fine', Marvel and DC comics are listed with three grading categories (Good, Fine and N Mint), but all issues from all producers have extensive annotations. Limited or no official UK distribution, printing quirks, key events, first character appearances, issues from notable writers/artists, reprints...

Every last detail that does or could affect price and collectability is noted.

The guide also includes sections on comic storage, grading, 'did you know?', buying and selling comics, a first appearance index, artists' gallery and more.

The Official Comic Book Guide has only two faults. The first is a minor design problem: the appropriate letters of the alphabet aren't marked on the top or side of the pages, so it's easy to skip past the title you're after if you're in a hurry. But bear in mind 'more haste, less speed' and it's no problem.

The other is that the guide lives in an ideal society. It lists what comics are worth and how much *should* be paid, but these are often below (sometimes far below) what specialist comics shops would charge. They'd buy the comics from you at the listed price but of course have to sell higher to make an honest(?) profit.

Quibbles and cynicisms aside, *The Official Comic Book Guide* is of great interest to even the casual comics fan, and invaluable to collectors — my copy's already well-thumbed and I've only had it a day. Very few things I read in the comics field can be classified as a must, but this is one of them.

If you have difficulty obtaining a copy, they're available for £6.95, plus £1.80 postage and packing, from: Stateside Comics PLC, Mail Order Dept, 125 East Barnet, Barnet, Herts EN4 8RF. Tel: (081) 449 5535.

HOME APPLIANCE HELL

One of the strangest limited series ever has now been gathered into the *Stray Toasters* graphic novel (Epic, £8.50). It's based around a series of bizarre murders, in which young boys are drained of all body fluids, and the only consistent clues are residues of jam and toasted bread products left on the victims' faces.

At the head of the investigation is Egon Rustemagik, an alcoholic and part-time writer of children's books who's recently been released from a mental hospital. Complicating his life are Dahlia, his lover, Abigail, the psychiatrist who institutionalised him and bore his only son, Todd, and

SCHOW • CASTLE • JARVINEN

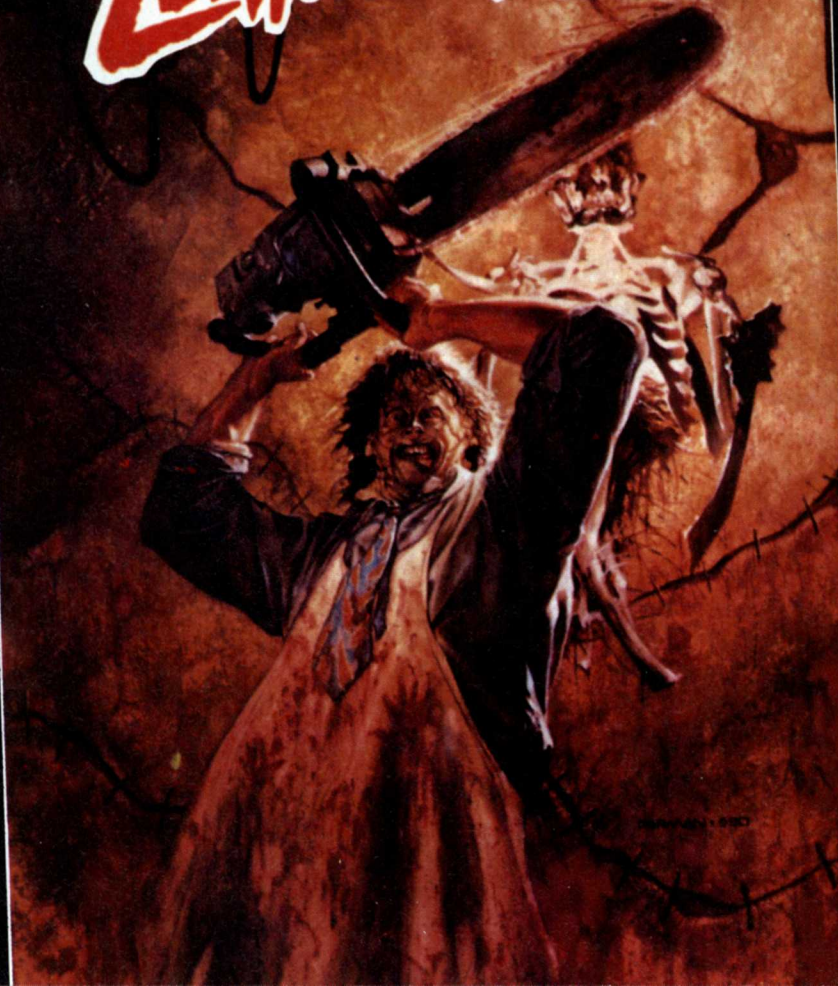


LEATHERFACE™

\$2.75
April 1991

MATURE READERS # 1

LEATHERFACE



TAIL

JUSTICE LEAGUE

Harvard Chalky, an assistant DA to whom Abigail is giving radical sex therapy.

Bill Sienkiewicz is close to the top of my (ever-expanding) favourite artist list. His mixture of styles and expert use of all kinds of art materials is stunning, and the collected *Stray Toasters* is a great example of his skills.

It clearly isn't only in visuals that Sienkiewicz has a remarkably vivid — and twisted — imagination. He also wrote *Stray Toasters* and, other than the perverse, psychotic tendencies of various characters, he's given himself the ammunition to illustrate a plethora of bizarre situations by making Egon a half-insane alcoholic suffering flashbacks from recent drug treatment. Egon's alcohol-, drug- and mentally-induced hallucinations are surreal, obscure and hard to absorb, but nevertheless intriguing to read and examine.

Looking at it at base level, *Stray Toasters* is a whodunnit in graphic novel form, but its artwork, characters, subplots and outlandish scenarios prove it's infinitely more. It's the sort of thing graphic novels were born for and is an essential part of any collector's library.

SILVER SPECIAL

Jim Starlin certainly doesn't rush his storylines. Back in FEAR 23, I reviewed *The Thanos Quest* in which the infamous Marvel demigod went in search of the all-powerful Soul Gems, to help him destroy half the population of the Universe. As yet, he hasn't begun his wholesale massacre, nor has he been anywhere near defeat.

The Silver Surfer 50 (60p) is a prelude to *The Infinity Gauntlet*, a prestige format limited series in which the fate of Thanos and the Universe will be decided. In this anniversary issue, the cosmic-powered Surfer battles a re-animated stone Thanos (the state he was left in when he was defeated by Warlock and Co in *Giant Size Avengers 2*, if memory serves me) and faces memories of his earlier life.

In format terms, this has to be the best value comic around at the moment. Comics have used gold- and silver-effect ink before, but *Silver Surfer 50* has striking embossed silver logo and artwork on a thick cover and has 16 extra pages — yet is the usual newsstand price.

The content isn't outstanding — the Surfer's past isn't that shocking — but Ron Lim's artwork is always appealing (although it's below par here) and Marvel followers will lap it up. Its anniversary status and striking cover ensure it's something collectors should pick up, too.

UNLUCKY FOR THEM

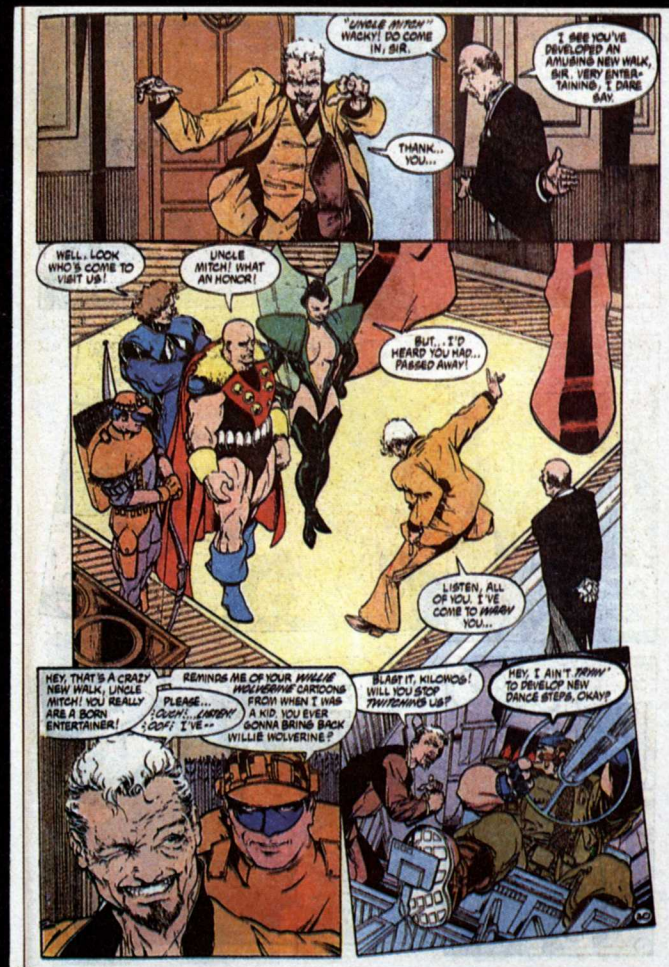
Duke Togo, leading hit man and hero for hire, allegiant only to himself and his latest client, to whom he is usually known as Golgo 13. To Leed/Viz Comics, he's also *The Professional* (£3.10, import), and the first issue takes us back to 1982 and the Falklands conflict.

Golgo's hired by the British government to assassinate the ex-President of Argentina, Juan Domingo Perón; the world believes him dead since 1974, but they know different. They also know he has eight billion dollars and is sure he will donate it to the Argentine army, tipping the Falklands war in their favour. Which if course is where Golgo comes in.

Are there any Japanese comics that are written and illustrated by two or more people? *The Professional* is a translated reprint of a comic produced by Takao Saito, and although it isn't quite all his own work, assistants are only significant enough to be put under the 'Saito Productions' catch-all.

The Professional is visually unappealing: it has the traditional Japanese comics (or 'manga') look but with shifty, harried-looking people and garish yet sometimes moody colouring. The story is very James Bond, with a splash of *The Punisher*, and is only worth reading on a rainy day.

One odd irritation: nine times out of ten, all that's in a 'thinks' bubble is '.....' If the bubble



supplies no information, why bother with it at all?

KILOWOG'S HOUR

It's the third and summer *Justice League Quarterly* (DC, £1.20) and the JLI are holding a typically casual conference. The banter soon gives way to a potentially catastrophic situation. Unbeknown to the rest of the JL, associate Mitch Wacky convinces Kilowog to build a time machine.

They travel not just back in time but also in space, to the home dimension of Mitch and the Sorceress. His aim is to prevent the detonation of the bomb which created the Extremists and eventually brought about the destruction of his home planet. Changing this could alter the present and future, so the JL go after Mitch and Kilowog to try and stop them.

One problem: a miniature Imskian pulse regulator was used in the time machine so anyone using it comes out only a few inches tall at the other end of the journey...

The story concept is nothing to write about, *Terminator/Back To The Future* (Part whatever) mixed with *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids/Land of the Giants*, but as usual with JL titles, there's enough action, chatter and silly situations to make it an enjoyable little read.

Where else have I seen Mike McKone? With Bob Smith's delicate inking, he's produced

some brilliantly precise work here, with some of the most natural poses and facial expressions I've ever seen. Very nice.

THE MIGHTY ATOM

Another varied selection of stories and artistic styles for A1 Book 5, from Atomeka Press (£4.45). Of the 15 strips, my favourite is probably Bambos Georgiou's *Elvistein*, a two-page comedy in which a half Frankenstein's monster, half Elvis creature battles Bruce Lee; mediocre art but fantastically stupid story. A close second is *The Boy Who Defied Gravity*, which begins light-heartedly but soon introduces serious observations.

Other highlights include *Party Piece*, which is very *Love & Rockets* but with a British feel, *Take One Capsule Every Million Years*, a plain time travel adventure but with brilliant Jim Sullivan art, and a moodily painted adaptation of Ramsey Campbell's *The Proxy*.

As usual, A1 has something for everyone, and several things for most. As usual, a mass of talented artists and writers have contributed to the book. As usual, it's superb value for money.

I've one big regret: there's only one more issue to come before A1's run is over (sob). All good things must come to an end, he sighs to himself, ruefully.

FEAR

● VAMPIRE SPECIAL

FEAR gets its fangs into the **Lord of the Night**: the extravaganza will include all of his friends, haunts, habitats, and, of course, enemies. We'll have important recipes for that night when you just have to wash your hair and don't want unwelcome visitors, a guided tour of that labyrinth the publishers call vampire fiction, interviews with authors responsible for many a vampire sighting, and we even chat to a guy who runs a New York-based vampire society and was once top of the suspect list in the **Son of Sam** killings.

But let's not forget the films: **FEAR** has coverage of *From Dusk 'til Dawn*, *Night Tour*, *Subspecies*, *Vampires and Other Stereotypes*, *Flesh and Body Parts*, all of which are in production this year and guaranteed to get your blood pumping.

If sucking's not for you, **FEAR** also has its usual mix of news, views, interviews, reviews, and a Cannes report on what's new in Hollywood. Yes, all that and more from the hot, steaming veins of Newsfield.

FEAR ISSUE
No.32
ON SALE
JULY 13

FEAR, guaranteed to make vampires weep tears of blood...

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

While it's the norm to have special anniversary editions of comics every 50 issues, it's becoming the norm for Marvel and DC to celebrate every 25 issues of a title. This seems fair enough — it does represent two years' work (excepting those comics which have a bi-weekly summer schedule) — and I appreciate the producers having to put more effort in, in terms of plot and quantity.

In *Hawk & Dove* 25 (DC, 80p), a sub-plot that's been bubbling under for some time is now a gusher. Hank Hall — alias Hawk — is haunted by the memory of his brother, Don, the original Dove. Recently, it's become literal: Don's ghost has spoken to him.

The ghost said that Don could live again if Hank steals the Soul Sapphire. He does so, and then things get *really* difficult.

I find Hank and Dawn (the latest Dove) an affable duo, both in and out of costume, and this 38-page issue gives them more serious and personal problems than usual. It's only the beginning, too; I'm sure there's much more to the ghost, gem and Hank than meets the eye.

Having said I approve of celebrating every 25th issue of comics, the extra pages obviously caused the editor of *Hawk & Dove* a few problems — no less than 11 artists worked on the issue! But despite varying

quality and, to a lesser degree, style, *Hawk & Dove* doesn't look anywhere near as odd and indecisive as you'd imagine. A worthwhile effort.

FUTURE IN THE FIFTIES

1957 Earth, and a Drone from a world called The Helix is searching for part of the Mother Cell, a tiny fraction of which is present in every Drone. These Drones are slaves to The Overseers but if the two free parts of the Mother Cell are destroyed the Drones will find eternal peace in death. Epic's *Atomic Age* limited series, now concluded, mixed a reporter, colonel and slave-catcher in with this premise. A stylishly designed package, Okamoto and Williamson's art is greatly enhanced by Christie Scheele's excellent use and choice of colour — like *Dick Tracy*, the palette sets the mood and time period of the story.

Atomic Age appears as a Fifties sci-fi B-movie when humans interrelate, either conflicting or agreeing over the action that should be taken toward the aliens, but, appropriately, takes a modern, philosophical attitude when dealing with the scientifically advanced aliens. Overall, it has a low budget *Wild Cards* feel — in the same vein but with fewer plot threads, fewer characters and less significance to the world.

UPDATES

Following considerable and irritating delay, the fourth and final part of Miller and Gibbons' *Give Me Liberty* is here. Things just keep getting worse for the divided US but Martha Washington is doing her best to defend the latest President — a brain floating in a small, robotic tank. Inevitably, the climax is a(nother) showdown with long-time peace corps rival, Moretti. Although the closing scenes are a little hurried, this series has been an entertaining read and highly appealing to look at. Now's the perfect time to buy all four episodes... The second issue of Dave McKean's *Cages* sees the 'hero', Leo, become acclimatized to his home, visit the local jazz club and meet a fellow tenant, who happens to be a writer whose work he admires. *Cages'* domestic drama is very well told, both in pictures and dialogue, and has an intimate, 'fly on the wall' feel that pulls you through the issue and leaves you wanting more. Shame it's bi-monthly... *The Venus Wars 2* mostly provides character development of Ken Seno and background information on the wars. It's slow going and must pick up soon else I won't pick it up anymore... *Angel and The Ape* was fun while it lasted but focussed too strongly on Gorilla Grodd, who gets sufficient coverage in *The Flash* and *JL* titles. Sam, Angel and her sister, Athena, are a fun, endearing trio and I'll miss their style of humour. A second limited series, DC?

ATOMIC AGE

