

# FEAR

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**EXCLUSIVE!**

**TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY**

**ARNIE**  
**Talks to FEAR**

**NIGHTMARES  
IN 3D**

**LARRY  
COHEN**  
**Ambulance  
chaser**





# THE HEAVIER THEY FALL

The air was muggy and the rain showed no mercy, but the most disappointing aspect of our day at the recent Video Show Case '91 at Birmingham's International Convention Centre was the apathy shown by several of the major video companies.

The most notable absentees were Warner Home Video, which apparently had people walking around the exhibit but did not have a show stand, and RCA Columbia, of which there was neither sight nor sound. I should point out that companies such as Guild, CBS-Fox and Disney/Buena Vista did put on a magnificent show, but again let the side down by totally ignoring advances by the press.

Indeed, the generally snooty attitude of the big distributors towards the press was topped only by the insultingly bad press facilities. It was the first time that I had taken time out to visit a show and come away with just two major pieces of PR — my thanks to Guild and Palace. The rest of it was inadequate and could have been acquired with a few well-placed telephone calls.

This attitude is fostered by a belief widely held in the video industry that only the dealers matter. They buy a set number of units from the distributor and then put them on the shelves. That's where the distributors make money and for that reason the end user — the renter — does not matter.

The Big Boys might argue that the recent generic Wildebeast advertising campaign put their message across to the consumers. My response? It was an unmitigated disaster in all forms and ended acrimoniously as the sponsors argued over which titles should be covered in the ads.

Admittedly, if the distributors get their advertising promotions right, television and national newspapers will give them the biggest possible consumer pool, but by refusing even to look at magazine advertising and

treating specialist press editorial as second-rate they are ignoring a huge PR/advertising outlet. They should remember that it is the consumer who has the final say as to how many units a video rental shop buys.

Perhaps the large distributors should take a lead from the independents. It may have been some time since Warners or RCA/Columbia has had to worry about customer relations, but maybe they should take notice of the smaller independents on that score, rather than looking down their noses at them. Take Medusa, for instance. That company has grown big largely on the profits of low-budget thriller/horror/SF movies and by carefully targeting the end user. As a result, if Medusa at any time needs a favour the specialist press, as well as television and national newspapers, will always be there. The same is true of First Independent and the somewhat smaller SGE, whose recent products have included winners such as *Grave Secrets* and *Mirror, Mirror*.

Some of the major distributors may sneer at low-budget products, but I would prefer to cover solid horror or fantasy material presented with production values minus the hype. Fortunately for us, and unfortunately for the Big Boys, most audiences are beginning to distinguish good products — such as the relatively inexpensive *Dances With Wolves* — from the obsequious sequel.

More power to audiences.

All I'm asking for is less indifference from the distributors. If they don't soon take note of the growing number of disgruntled magazine editors, they may begin to witness the power of bad publicity coupled with potential audiences voting with their feet — by walking out of cinemas and passing by rental shops.

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# THE WORLD OF FEAR



**Transmogrification:** The T-1000 resembles a cop in its basic guise, but can reflect any organic system it touches.



**The Terminator is back...Arnold Schwarzenegger had vowed never to make another sequel, but the fans were crying out for the return of their favourite cyborg. The star of *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop* tells FEAR why he thinks *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* is 'the best film that has ever been made'.**

**I**n 1984, young actor Arnold Schwarzenegger and talented young director James Cameron got together to make a moderate-budget SF/horror film called *The Terminator*. Seven years later, the actor, who had

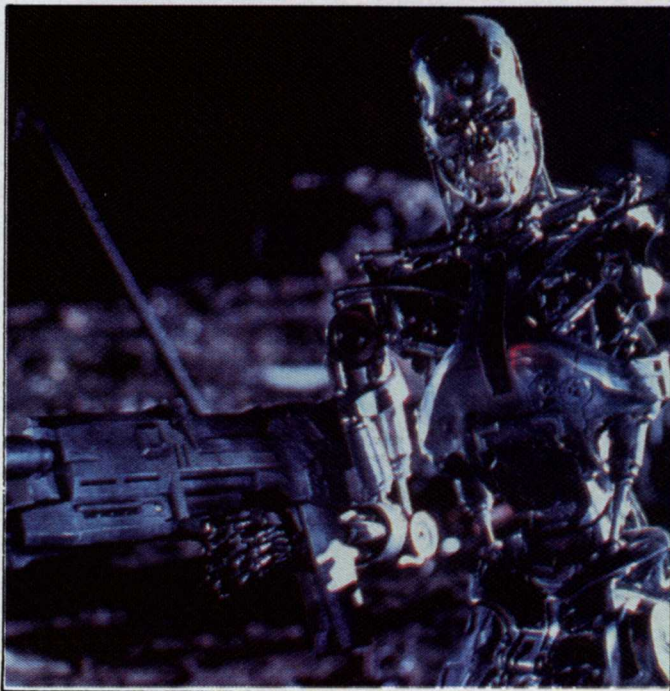
said he would never make another sequel, and the director, who had experienced a rollercoaster ride trying to bring his visions to the screen, have joined forces once again to make one of the most expensive sequels ever.

Over the course of those seven years, Schwarzenegger — who played a cyborg in the original *Terminator* — has opted for rather more human roles, starring in such successful comedies as *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop*. He has nevertheless been unable to escape the Terminator's clutches, and took time out during a busy media campaign to tell JB Macabre why.

## CHANGE OF HEART

**FEAR:** Audience reactions to *Terminator 2* so far have been extremely favourable — they really seem to love the film. Did you expect it to be such an instant success?

Arnold Schwarzenegger: We were really surprised when we saw the first reviews coming in. With an action or special effects film like *Terminator 2*, you can really never tell how it is going to go over with the audience, or with the critics. We heard the audience saying all these wonderful things



— I really believe that people like this movie. I feel that *Terminator 2* is the best film that has ever been made.

**You said that you would never make another sequel — what made you change your mind?**

I had promised myself never to do another sequel. After *Conan the Barbarian* then *Conan the Destroyer* I said that this was the end of sequels for me. But each time I went out to promote a new film, whether it was *Commando*, *Predator* or *Raw Deal*, people would tell me that they had enjoyed my new movie, but then ask when was I going to do another Terminator film. So I said to Jim Cameron 'Why don't we do another Terminator movie?' It seemed to me like the videos were selling better than ever and that whenever it was on

cable, or the networks, its ratings would go through the roof. We decided to start working on the project and Jim came up with a wonderful story. I really think that the timing is perfect and I'm very happy to have done it.

## THINKING BIG

**It's been a few years since you last worked with Jim. How was it to be doing a movie together again?**

It was totally different from the first time I worked with him. Jim's become more qualified as a director because of the big films he's worked on. He's also gotten competent at fine-tuning the actors and he catches things that he used to let go. I think Jim has become more of an actor's director. He tries to get everybody





# ARNIE TALKS



working on such a level that he can make every scene special.

**There are many stunts and special effects in *Terminator 2*. Did you have any idea while you were working on the film of what the finished product would look like?**

When I read the script for the first time, I didn't quite understand some of the stunts or special effects — Jim has such a sophisticated mind. I couldn't visualise what he was trying to do.

Then we began to prepare, and actually started to shoot the film. It felt so enormous. When I saw it coming together on the screen as it was edited together I was blown away by it. It's a huge film. I don't think anyone has ever seen anything like it.

**Do you ever worry that your performance may be overshadowed by the effects?**

With this type of film there is always the danger that people will remember the effects more than your performance, or that they will talk more about the children when you do a film like *Kindergarten Cop*. I don't really care. To me the most important thing is that the movie, as a whole, turns out to be a great movie. If it is successful, then you will shine anyway. I'm not worried about me against the machines, or me against the special effects.

## TWIST IN THE TALE

Jim has called *Terminator 2* the most violent anti-war film ever made. Yet your character is the good guy, isn't he?

Ssssh! Don't give the good stuff away. But you're right. This story has some really great twists in its plot. The audiences will see a new, kinder and more gentle Terminator. He becomes that way by trying to fit in with his new environment — he is programmed to be able to adopt patterns of human behaviour. But although he tries to make the change, he never quite gets there.

It was obvious from the first day on

the set that this was going to be a difficult role for me. It was tricky because my character shows signs of humanity and we weren't shooting the scenes in any kind of order. I'd have to find my character all over again every day, and it took a lot of time to determine where changes in the role would take place. Jim and I would constantly talk about it. I kept asking him if I was making the role too human or not human enough. It took several weeks of filming before I got the character straightened out in my mind.

**When the film was first mentioned in the trade, a budget of around 80 million dollars was talked about. Some people have speculated that the final figure comes out at as much as 100 million. Why does there appear to be secrecy surrounding the figure?**

There is no secret. In the old days of Hollywood the studios would brag about their budgets. Advertising campaigns would boast that a film was the most expensive ever made. People would say 'Whoa, we've got to go and see this movie'. I am absolutely convinced that *Terminator 2* is one of the most expensive movies ever made. I'm sure we've spent close to over 80 mil-

lion dollars. But what is more important is that people who pay seven dollars to see this film, compared with a movie that cost only a million dollars to make, get for the same price more for their money.

## FANTASY FAN

**Did you ever think you'd have so many SF/horror films to your credit at this stage in your career?**

There was a time when I didn't even think I would be an actor. Then in 1976, when I won a Golden Globe award for *Stay Hungry*, I realised that I could make it in this business. But I also realised that I needed to train like I did for body building.

I must enjoy SF and horror on a subconscious level. I get hundreds of scripts to read almost every day and the ones that I end up enjoying, and find myself doing, are the SF/horror/fantasy films. There has always been something about stories like *Terminator*, *Predator*, *Total Recall* and the *Conan* films that grabs my attention. If having these kind of stories appeal to me means that I'm a fan, then I guess I am.

JB Macabre



## Terminator techno task

*Terminator 2* boasts some brilliant electronic special fx, but our own Fear cover isn't lacking in that department. This month's image was made up by Roger Kean from no less than five separate transparencies from the film: two backgrounds, the motorbike, Arnie and the skeleton. These were imaged on an Agfa desktop scanner and then mounted together on an Apple Macintosh computer, using a software package called Adobe Photoshop. Each element was cut out and 'pasted' together. The edges were touched up using various 'paint' tools, and extra highlights added to match the overall lighting.

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# WOMEN OF LEGENDS



**Champion of the real woman in fantasy fiction, Marion Zimmer Bradley talks to FEAR's Liz Holliday about her past and present preoccupations...**

**M**arion Zimmer Bradley seems to have been around forever — almost as if she were one of the legends she writes about.

'I started writing in the 40s, but I didn't get published until the early 50s. I spent most of my time on a farm, and writing-school was a good way to get off it. Then I went to Texas, and writing was a good excuse not to go round socialising with the other ladies.'

The science fiction community then was a much cosier place than it is now: 'I remember the time Ray Palmer took a census and decided there were two hundred of us. The membership of the first WorldCon was something like 400. The membership of the first one I went to was 2000. Now they have upwards of ten thousand.'

Like so many of her contemporaries, Zimmer Bradley started out writing for pulp magazines. 'They didn't have many paperbacks then. My first novel was released in 1953 and I lived below the poverty line until I was well over forty, which was about 73 or 74.'

She is best known for two achievements. First her *Darkover* novels: as a series these are one of the best, and earliest, examples of world building in science fiction, with the long-awaited latest addition to the cycle, *The Heirs of Hammerfell*, published this month.

Then there is *The Mists of Avalon*, published in 1983.

*Avalon* is a strongly women-centred retelling of the Arthurian legend, and

in a world sometimes seemingly dominated by ten-part fantasy epics, the question arises why someone would want to tackle this subject yet again: 'I'm afraid when anyone says to me 'Why Arthur?' I always ask: 'Why not?' I grew up on Arthur; my grandfather gave me a book of the Arthurian myths when I was a little kid about eight years old, and I've been very familiar with them ever since. Nowadays kids don't seem to know anything about them: all they ever see is the Disney version.'

The book effectively re-mythologises areas which have become Disney-

fied and devalued: 'Every generation does them in their own way, with the things that are important to them. In the Middle Ages Mallory wanted to know why the best knight was not also the best Christian, in the nineteenth century the Victorian values of loyalty to the king and personal ethics seemed to be important, and then, of course, I dealt with the great issues of our day: I think the emergence of women from the shadows is much more important than the conquest of space.'

## STORMY WOMEN

Yet Zimmer Bradley has had a stormy relationship with the Women's Movement: 'I certainly have. As far as I'm concerned, feminists are people who write nasty slogans on walls, like: Humanity will not be free until the last man is castrated.'

To the suggestion that this is a very separatist statement, and not all feminists are separatists, Zimmer Bradley will only reply: 'Well, I've never met one who wasn't: it's like the story they tell about Mahler and Hugo Wolf. Mahler said he didn't like Hugo Wolf's songs, and someone pointed out that Wolf had written 500 songs. Mahler replied that he'd heard 333 of them, and all of those he did not like. Well

that's how I feel about feminists.'

Despite that, *The Mists of Avalon* strikes me — as a feminist — as having a clear feminist sensibility, even though this sounds like labelling.

'They keep asking me whether Morgan Le Fay and the Lady of the Lake are historical. I say they must have been, because despite fifteen hundred years of Christianity, which didn't approve of any of them, they're still there. If they hadn't been pretty real the Christians could have got rid of them.'

These women are at the centre of the book, which works at a level of emotion and spirituality rather than one of military conquest and politics: 'Men are fine in their place, but all they're worried about is war. And the whole point of the Ancient Britons was that their tribes were ruled by women. Men were kept in their place and the Queen would take a consort or have her brother or someone rule the tribe *in time of war*. In peace things went back to women, where they ran things better.'

## REAL WOMEN

Zimmer Bradley was known for the *Darkover* series long before she wrote *The Mists of Avalon*. Having read them when I was very much younger, I had been left with an enduring image of swashbuckling heroines, an impression Zimmer Bradley was at pains to deny: 'I can't think of any. Women are not given to that sort of thing. From the very beginning I've been trying to handle women as a real part of the human race. I was one of the early women writers who started in science fiction without the backup of a husband or brother or something like that. But women tend to be tough: the female of the species is more deadly than the male.'

The *Darkover* books are pretty much on the edge between science fiction and fantasy: 'That's just part of growing up when I did, because fantasy stories were not yet a fashion in the 40s, and so you had to give the whole thing a sort of veneer of science. If you have a magician you can't just have him say: Zap, you're a frog! You have to figure out how he could turn something into a frog — the physiological mechanisms involved and so on.'

Despite, or perhaps because of this, fantasy remains her true love: 'If I started writing now, I wouldn't write science fiction. I liked the milieu of the magazines then, the friendships involved.'

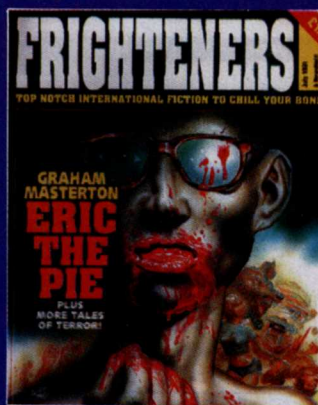
One of her latest ventures is not a writing project at all: it is *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine*, fast gaining a reputation in the US as a breeding ground for new fantasists as well as more established names. However: 'People keep sending me science fiction, so I wonder if they're trying to tell me I should be publishing science fiction!'

'I've always wanted to edit ever since I was a young girl. When I was in high school I started an alternative high school newspaper, and I've wanted to edit ever since. Back in the days when I first started writing for *Startling Stories*, Sam Merwin was about to quit as editor to do some writing. And I remember I kept wondering why in the world anyone would write if they could edit.'

## IN DEFENCE OF ERIC

Issue one of **FRIGHTENERS**, Newsfield's latest venture into the horror genre, was withdrawn from sale after legal advice. The short story magazine got off to a controversial start by publishing *Eric the Pie* by Graham Masterton, which includes a scene in which a live calf is raped while being eaten. While agreeing that it was controversial Graham is keen to explain the meaning behind the story, which appears to have been taken at face value by many people.

He told FEAR's John Gilbert: '*Eric The Pie* was written as a satire to show the grisly realities of human diet. The story is no more disturbing than the meat counter at Sainsbury's. The reality behind those neatly-packaged pieces of veal and lamb is pain and death and the extinction of one life for the benefit of another. The scene with the calf is, I agree,



extremely disturbing, but it was meant to be. It depicts in real terms the rape of a lesser species by a superior species and the subsequent degradation of that superior species. There is nothing in the scene that tends to deprave or corrupt, but it should rightly evoke outrage. *Eric The Pie* is a serious story with a serious purpose. I hope very much that it will be taken as such.'

Readers interested in judging for themselves can order a copy of issue one at £1.50 (incl. P&P) from Newsfield, Case Mill, Temeside, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1JW.



# PUTTING VOYEURS IN THE PICTURE



**Have we changed so much since the days when gladiators fought to the death in the name of entertainment? John McNaughton, director of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, thinks not. He talks to PHILIP BLINKO about the dark side of human nature.**

Michael Rooker (Henry) with director John McNaughton.

## 'X' RATING

It had been a long wait. *Henry* was initially shot on 16mm for distribution by Chicago-based MPI Home Video in 1986, but MPI had decided to seek a theatrical distribution. Several attempts to bring the film to the silver screen were blocked by the MPAA who insisted on classifying it as an 'X' (the 'X' rating is normally reserved in the States for pornography). A proper theatrical release in America was granted last year, but this was still greatly restricted. And although the film has seen some special screenings in Britain, chiefly at the Scala, this month brings *Henry's* first wide distribution at three London venues.

It is not the content of *Henry* that is so chilling, but the manner in which it is presented. The plot is simple. To escape her abusive husband Becky arrives in Chicago to live with her brother Ottis, a petty criminal and major slob. While Ottis treats Becky with scant respect, his flatmate Henry manages to charm her despite his inarticulate manner and grubby vest. Becky duely falls for Henry, not put off when she learns that he killed his

prostitute mother. What she doesn't know is that since his release from prison Henry has continued to murder, his motives formless. Henry does, however, share his secret with Ottis, who takes to murder like a natural, videotaping and constantly replaying their slaughter of a family of three. When Henry returns home one day to find Ottis raping Becky he kills him. If Henry's subsequent escape with Becky suggests a happy ending, hope disappears when we see Henry discard Becky's body on the highway.

## FEWER DEATHS

There is probably little more violence in this film than in, say, the *Halloween* series. Fewer people die than are shot in *Rambo*. In terms of sadism and torture, *Henry* is far less explicit than *Hellraiser* and its sequels. But what does shock is the unremitting psychological terror. There are no good guys around to save the victims. The murders are random and cold-blooded, the only emotion high excitement on the part of Ottis.

The film is loosely based on the crimes of Henry Lucas Lee, an American serial killer who claimed to have killed many people, only to recant much of his confession later. Says McNaughton: 'It wasn't so much what (Lee) did as the idea of this human being so absorbed in thinking of murder and talking of murder. And that the public was so hungry to hear about him.'

It is the public's fascination with violence that *Henry* seeks to explore. Why is horror so enticing? McNaughton says: 'Why do we stop when we see car wrecks? Last night I was out with these crime scenes' people and there was a call saying there was a body in a bag in a run-down neighbourhood of the city...When we got there there were at least 100 or 150 people waiting and it was a dog in the bag. I asked the police later if they thought the people had been disap-

pointed and they said 'Oh definitely.' And these weren't bad people.'

## WAR GAMES

McNaughton points to the media's desensitising effect: 'Human beings have changed very little. In Rome they staged gladiator battles, had lions eating Christians and so on. It's only that our level of civilisation is such that we now have a technical medium, so it's one step removed. I mean, we just staged a war that was the greatest TV series ever. America was at war, we all might have died and it became like a giant video game. You're bombing people but it's on TV so it's 'Ha ha, watch this!' I think we become less barbarous only in that we insulate ourselves with some sort of technological curtain.'

But what of the criticism that films such as *Henry*, just by their existence, incite violence. 'I don't think you're going to be able to purge violence from the human creature. It's a violent universe. If you look at the dark side and bring it out to light maybe you can exorcise it and neutralise it in some way. If you deny it, it will bubble to the surface. Art is a very good way of challenging our violent urges in a non-violent manner.'

## PURE HORROR

Fans of the *Omen* movies will be able to see the first British public screening of *Omen IV: The Awakening* at the Festival of Pure Horror's Night of Horror which takes place on September 13 and 14 in Leeds. The festival also includes horror guest appearances, special effects and illusions and horror exhibition stalls, and members of the audience are invited to attend in appropriate costume. More information can be obtained from Alucard Promotions, Athlone House, Athlone Grove, Leeds, LS12 1UD, West Yorkshire.

**A** viewing of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* is not for the faint-hearted. It's more than a horror movie, it's a social document which turns the genre on its head. There's no comforting resolution, no easy moralising — it takes the audience into the confidence of a mass murderer and forces them to question their own security. How entertaining is violence? When does the voyeur become an accessory to the crime?

Given that John McNaughton is the director of *Henry* his answer to my opening question, concerning preparations for his new film *Mad Dog and Glory*, has a suitable blackness. But McNaughton doesn't seem to be a man who lusts after the macabre — his attitude is purely pragmatic.

'Things are pretty good. I spent last night in the morgue doing research and it was fairly intensive.'

Produced by Martin Scorsese and starring Robert De Niro, *Mad Dog and Glory* is McNaughton's first major film, offered to him after the critical acclaim and public controversy surrounding *Henry* brought him to Scorsese's attention.

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# THE MAN WHO CREATED MONSTER MAGIC



**Forrest J Ackerman is the man who set the genre ball rolling in movie journalism. He's still an avid horror fan, but nurses a secret ambition to literally turn the clock back to the golden age when Kong was King. He tells PAUL WOODS why.**

**A**merican Forrest J Ackerman was the world's first genre journalist, and the brains behind the legendary *Famous Monsters* magazine. Today, at the age of 75, he finds himself sharing the spotlight with all those classic horror flicks he admires so much.

Ackerman has become a star in his own right. Genre fans all over the world hang on his every learned word...as was obvious when he held court recently at London's Scala Cinema.

He's clearly delighted that *Famous Monsters* has spawned a host of other fantasy and horror magazines over the years. 'The influence we had is an

almost daily bonus to me,' he says. 'In 1958, I knew we would gain the attention of very many malleable young minds. Maybe it's strange for a magazine whose subject matter was based around death, dismemberment, disfigurement, but I wanted to sneak in the idea of Boris Karloff as a role model...you know, behind the mask of the monster, there was always Santy Claus.'

'Years later, I met men who told me *FM* had helped them find their way in life, had been an inspiration. They admitted they'd been more likely to listen to Forry Ackerman than their parents, if I'd told them to behave themselves. Guys like Joe Dante, Jon Landis, Stephen King — he sent me his first ever story when he was 14 years old. Nowadays, he commands something like ten million dollars before he starts writing a word. I should have got him when he was cheap!'

#### TOP TEN

Ackerman admits that it was his aim to bring a whole generation into the world of genre movies. 'While I can't say the outcome fulfilled my wildest hopes, we did encourage a lot of talent. Some of my 'pupils' became a little too gory for my liking, though. And I still haven't found anyone with the imaginative gift of Tod Browning or Fritz Lang.'

It's obvious that the golden age of horror is sacred to Ackerman. Besides *Frankenstein* and *King Kong*, his professed favourite films are Cheney's *Phantom of the Opera*, Lugosi's *Dracula*, Karloff's *The Mummy*, and the British ghost story compendium *Dead of Night*. But he also has some modern movies to add to his personal top ten.

'*The Exorcist*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Lair of the White Worm* and, though

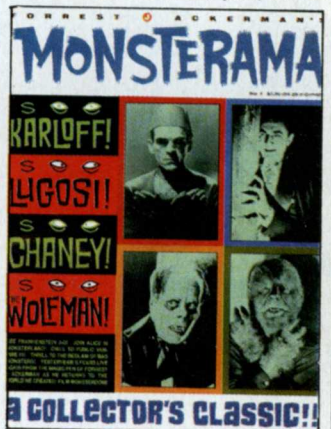
I'm not sure if it's 'horror', *Silence of the Lambs*. Maybe *Misery* too, one extra. That's the best King adaptation.'

Despite his love of horror, Ackerman declares that he's 'not much of a person to scare'. It's not difficult to understand why — this is the man who watched *The Phantom of the Opera* when he was just eight years old. However, he will admit that certain movies had a 'noticeable effect' on him. 'When I first saw *Alien* I jumped many times. Ditto *Wait Until Dark*, the murder mystery in which Audrey Hepburn plays a blind girl. On a deeper level, there's Val Lewton's original *Cat People*. They experimented with sound on that one, enhancing everyday noises to frightening effect. And back to *Silence of the Lambs* — that's a deeply unsettling film.'

#### NEW MAG

Ackerman's regular itinerary still incorporates conventions and festivals all over the world, allowing no more than two weeks at home in any one month. When in Hollywood, 1.30pm to 3pm on a Saturday is open-house time for the fans. His work schedule appears to be as busy as ever — the

first annual issue of *Wonderama* (an encyclopaedic SF and fantasy work that's been planned for some time) should be published this year, and an



**A COLLECTOR'S CLASSIC!!**  
anthology of *Famous Monsters* is due, reprinting all 191 covers of the magazine. And there's a new mag due for regular publication. Titled *Monsterama*, it's 'a return to the original principles of *Famous Monsters*,' says Ackerman. 'We're hoping to put the clock back 30 years...'

## TIME TO BANQUET AND BITCH!

In late June The Horror Writers of America met in Redondo Beach in California for their Annual Meeting — a time to slap each other on the back, bitch and moan and give out some awards. The event was presided over by Harlan Ellison, and according to FEAR's JB Macabre the proceedings were of a jolly nature, only marred by Clive Barker who decided to strike a critical note by asking all present to take a close look at their craft.

He suggested the genre was suffering from an absence of theology and mythology and that most of the writers were missing the point of why they write — they write because it's what they love to do and not for the money (!). Their duty was to go beyond the bounds of what was being demanded of them by publishers and market place,

back to the roots of what had made them writers in the first place — else the genre dies out...

Getting over this cold shower, the revellers proceeded to dish out the coveted Bram Stoker Awards for excellence in horror.

And the lucky winners are:  
Non-fiction: FEAR's Stanley Wiater, 'Dark Dreamers': Conversations with the Masters of Horror'.

Collection: Stephen King: 'Four Past Midnight', 'Short Story: David B Silva: 'The Calling'.

Novelette: Elizabeth Massie: 'Stephen'.

First Novel: Bentley Little: 'The Revelation'.

Novel: Robert McCammon: 'Mine'.

Lifetime Achievement awards went to Hugh B Cave and Richard Matheson.



# THE HOUSE OF RUBBER

**John Gilbert bounced in on Blackpool's latest tourist attraction — only to find all his old horror movie cronies lying in wait...**

**B**lackpool is as famous for its conventions and conferences as for its pier, Golden Mile and glossy beaches. It's not surprising then, that Bob Keen, Britain's most successful special effects wizard, and local businessman Francis Heeley should locate their exhibition of Movie Magic there.

It's also only natural that the horrific beings from Bob's Image Animation workshop should take the spotlight. The gathering includes the Mark-13 from *Hardware* (amid a mass of wires and a colour monitor displaying sequences from the movie), the werewolf from *Waxwork* which rises to its feet and snarls as you approach, Pinhead and Frank, behind the shuttered walls of *Hellraiser* and Chad from Stephen Gallagher's television series *Chimera*. On the way round you can also catch the massive full-size figure of Baphomet from *Nightbreed*, yet more figures from the Clive Barker monster movie, all frozen in a fearsome moment of time, and a specially gremlin-esque laboratory sideshow with a surprise for anyone who strays too close to the wire mesh.

The main hall contains a poster/postcard/stills shop which is surrounded by more examples of Image Animation work — a beautifully-crafted ship and a fascinating step-by-step display of make-up effects, including a fully-animated green-spotted creature which throws insults at you at the end of the production line.

## INSTANT EFFECT

It's an exhibit which took just ten weeks to put together, so Bob and Frank are justly proud of the results so far.

The two met after Frank had seen Bob on Granada TV. 'I thought he was absolutely unbelievable,' says Frank. 'I arranged to meet him the day after, and visited Pinewood Studios. I've never looked back since.'

The exhibition is unique and certainly has not been attempted before in Britain. 'It's something I've been wanting to do for some time but I've never been able to put the pieces together,' says Bob. 'Then someone like Frank comes along and says 'Let's do it — immediately'.

'We get about a thousand calls a year from people who want to come down to Pinewood and see the stuff, but that's not practical: you'd never get any work done. People are fasci-



nated by special effects and this is a good opportunity for them to see how they're achieved.'

The exhibition's horror theme stems not only from Bob's connections with writer/directors such as Clive Barker and Anthony Hickox. 'Horror is something people are interested in,' says Bob. 'It gets a bad press, everyone gets knocked about horror, but it's fun. People still go to horror films to have a good time.'

## CLASSIC STUFF

Bob and Frank were spoiled for choice when it came to deciding what to include in the exhibit. 'Obviously, the stuff from *Nightbreed* I'm very proud of,' says Bob. 'We decided to include the werewolf stuff, and we had to have something from *Hellraiser* because it was a turning point for us and a clas-

**Above, characters from Barker's *Two Men and a Baby*, better known as *Nightbreed* and, top right, Chad from *Chimera*.**

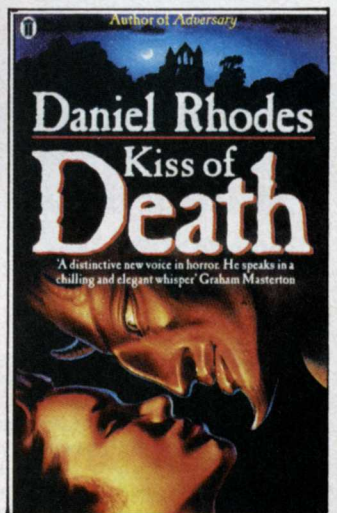
sic.

'We still have lots and lots more stuff at Pinewood, and we'll go on to use it in other ways: to expand this exhibit, to keep it updated, but also to take it elsewhere, because this is an experience.'

But what about Bob's film work? 'We've started on *Hellraiser III*, shooting in North Carolina, and we're also doing *Children Of The Corn 2*. For *Hellraiser* they've got Tony Randall back as director, a good script which works with the other two films very well — and that delivers.'



Find out more on *Hellraiser III* when Bob returns from the States. Meanwhile, if you want to spend some time amongst your favourite horror movie stars, go to: Movie Magic, 93 Central Promenade, Blackpool, telephone 0253 752215.



**Kiss of Death, Daniel Rhodes' new novel of modern witchcraft, appears in paperback in November.**

**A festival of PURE HORROR**

**THE BIGGEST HORROR FESTIVAL TO BE STAGED IN THE UK BOOK NOW AND BECOME PART OF IT**



## THE WORLD OF FEAR

# THE ORIGINAL WILD BOY

Writer of such fantasy cult classics as *The Wild Boys* and *The Naked Lunch*, William S Burroughs is becoming known as something of a prophet. PETER BURTON takes a tour of Burroughs' landscape of fear and listens to the voice behind the vision.

**R**arely do books come complete into a writer's consciousness; themes and ideas and characters need time to mature and grow until that final part of the process, the putting down of words onto paper. It is interesting, therefore, to chart the progress of a book or a group of books through the recorded conversations of a writer; often the period of gestation for a given book can stretch back over a long period of time — perhaps over a lifetime (Proust) or ten years or more during which, co-incidentally, other works may have been written.

William S Burroughs had described 'every word' he has ever written as 'autobiographical' — a statement which shouldn't be taken too lightly, even though much of his work is best classified as science fiction. For Burroughs' fiction, from *Junky* (sometimes *Junkie*) published in 1953 to the fragments published as *Interzone* in 1989, has been an exploration of a highly eccentric and highly personal interior life which inhabits a landscape of fear every bit as startling as anything ever created by Hieronymus Bosch.

### WEAPON OBSESSION

Part of the genesis of *Cities of the Red Night* (1981), the first of a trilogy completed by *The Place of Dead Roads* (1984) and *The Western Lands* (1988),

can be found in a 1973 interview with Burroughs which appeared in the American magazine *Gay Sunshine*. Burroughs' obsession with weaponry (which had led to the accidental slaying of his common-law wife in 1951) has been much commented upon; Burroughs' fascination with the concept of biological weapons is very evident in his writing. Thus:

**INTERVIEWER:** What sort of biological weapons do you envisage?

**BURROUGHS:** Well, biological and chemical weapons are, of course, chemicals, gases and germs or bugs. They need not be indiscriminate. It is within the range of biochemistry now to create selective pestilences that would attack, say, only whites, only coloured, only females.'

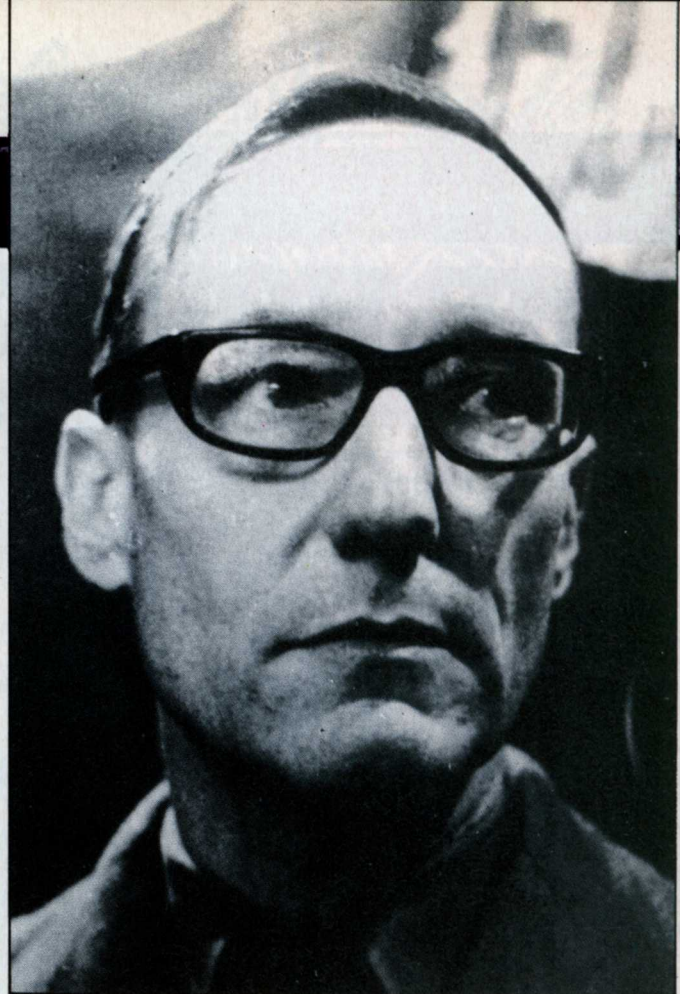
In an interview which appeared in *Paris Review* in 1965, the interviewer suggests that sex seems equated with death frequently in Burroughs' work. Burroughs replies: 'That is an extension of the idea of sex as a biological weapon. I feel that sex, like practically every human manifestation, has been degraded for control purposes, or really for antihuman purposes.'

These two themes — discriminate biological weapons and sex as a biologic weapon — predominate in *Cities of the Red Night*, Burroughs' first major piece of fiction since *Exterminator* in 1974, and in the two successors. But like so many writers of science fiction, Burroughs' autobiography of his imagination also proves him a prophet in the same mould as H G Wells. For in *Cities*, the nightmare landscape is made even more nightmarish by the existence of a sexually transmitted biologic weapon — the manifestation of which prefigures AIDS.

### ALIEN WORLDS

Science fiction is a distinctive literary form; it should also be remembered, however, that historical novels are a form of science fiction — for they share an essential element with science fiction: They represent alien worlds and cultures, people who are different from us. In *Cities of the Red Night*, Burroughs has adroitly married the two literary conventions (historical and science fiction) to create a phantasmagoria of compelling fascination during which the reader is in a constant state of uncertainty which demands close attention to the events on the printed page.

Leaping back and forth between a homoerotic historical past, a menacing present and an appalling future which may well be an appalling past beyond historical reckoning, Burroughs details a world in which biological weapons have caused individuals to



become sexual biologic weapons capable of bringing about destruction and death through paroxysms of orgasmic pleasure. This linking of sex-pain-pleasure-death has been evident in Burroughs' fiction since his masterwork *The Naked Lunch* (published in Britain in 1964) — but it was not until these three late major works that it had been used to such devastating effect.

Burroughs' trilogy is especially difficult to classify — for Burroughs uses so many forms. At times he seems to be writing a thriller featuring Clem Snide the Private Asshole (familiar from earlier works); at times Burroughs seems to be exploring the curious netherworld of H P Lovecraft (though the horrors are never quite so overblown); at times he leads the reader into a Utopian historical romance; at times he writes nightmare science fiction.

### THE OLD WEST

Yet Burroughs remains consistent in his inconsistency. In *The Place of the Dead Roads*, for instance, we get a Burroughs-eye-view of the Old West as witnessed by Burroughs' alter-ego William Seward Hall who also operates under the archetypal name Kim (rather than Kit) Carsons (rather than Carson). Yet the West is but a starting point for a heady sequence of phantasmagoric science fiction episodes which are livid with a painter's sense of colour and imagination. And 'interior' and 'exterior' autobiography meld together as Burroughs exploits locations (Tangier, Mexico City) and characters (Gerald Hamilton, for example) he has known.

Because Burroughs writes about a world without women, where all sex is either companionably or dangerously gay, in a very real sense he is an overtly political writer — spurning heterosexual images and society, seeing them as a direct threat to gay men. Yet at the same time Burroughs'

personal posturings (he is an essentially masculine-to-the-point-of-misogynistic novelist) make him unique as a writer of gay experience.

Without doubt, William S Burroughs is a major writer whose vision of the world is entirely original and whose approach to it is innovative. Even when he is writing about a recognisable landscape — Mexico City, for example — he seems to reinvent the terrain, creating a completely personal science fiction domain populated by visionarily beautiful youths (sharply captured objects of desire) and nightmarish grotesques (the natural enemies of his gay characters).

### COMIC HORROR

Burroughs' landscape of fear features a world without natural order (his horror of bugs is manifested in a scene in the junk-induced *Junky* in which cockroaches take over the city), a world burnt out and devastated and encapsulated in the writer's surrealist and droll prose. For it has to be admitted that Burroughs is an extremely comic writer and that his horrors are compounded because — like Bret Easton Ellis in *American Psycho* — he makes some of them so funny. He is a humorist of misfortune (like W C Fields, whose individual cadences are echoed in Burroughs' speaking voice).

Undoubtedly one of the major English-language novelists of the 20th century, William S Burroughs had a vision of the world (partly formed by his longtime addiction to heroin, partly the result of a somewhat misanthropic interpretation of the society around him and partly — almost certainly — as a by-blow of his eccentric sense of humour) which was the very antithesis of Utopian but which, as our recent history has begun to show, is now being slowly validated.

Ted Morgan's biography of William S Burroughs, *The Literary Outlaw*, is reviewed in our book section.



**Chucky is once more amongst us, leaving a trail of terror in his wake. JB MACABRE follows at a cautious distance, in the company of *Child's Play III* screenwriter Don Mancini.**

# PLAYING ROUGH!

Just when you thought it was safe to open the toy cupboard...that evil doll Chucky may have bitten the dust in *Child's Play II*, but that doesn't mean he's content to take his demise lying down. Yes, he's back, once more driven by the demented soul of homicidal maniac Charles Lee Ray and anxious to catch up with old friends. Eight movie years have flown by for young Andy Barclay, who found himself enmeshed in Chucky's sinister doings last time around, and in *Child's Play III* the teenage Andy — now at Kent Military School — must protect young cadet Tyler from Chucky's unwelcome attentions.

*Child's Play III* (Universal Pictures) is directed by Jack Bender (the film marks his movie debut), and screenwriter Don Mancini is once again responsible for guiding us through Chucky's nightmare world. Mancini was keen for Andy to assume an offensive role in this movie, hence the leap in time.

## TURN THE TABLES

I felt that audiences would be getting tired of watching this child running from the doll all the time,' he says. 'It was really important to turn the tables a bit with this story and put Andy in an offensive position. To do that required ageing the character to some extent, and I put him in a situation where he would have to protect a new child from Chucky's wrath. On the surface, I thought the film was about Andy becoming a man, he's finally taking matters into his own hands and doing something about Chucky once and for all. That led to the idea of setting the story inside a military academy. I really wanted to get away from the middle-class American household that was depicted in the first two films. When I came up with the military academy setting, it kind of killed two birds with one stone.'

Chucky has come a long way since he first appeared on our movie screens, but essentially he remains unchanged. Mancini believes that his attraction lies in the simplicity of the character. 'Certainly Chucky is not a complex depiction of evil. I think his simplicity is his appeal. He is sort of a pure evil, but he has a sense of humour. The dichotomy of what he is and what he appears to the world to



be — total innocence — makes him very interesting. Chucky remains the same all the time, he is constant.'

## RACE AGAINST TIME

Mancini feels he's learned much from working in Hollywood, and that his writing has improved during the years spent on the *Child's Play* projects. 'To me writing is a lot like running. You have to stay in shape. I've been writing these films non-stop for the past several years and the more you do the better you get. The reality of writing in Hollywood is that you have deadlines, schedules and a lot of pressure that becomes really daunting at times. You worry, or at least I do, when they say we are starting the shoot on such-and-such a day, we have to have rewrites on this day. Have fun — go to work! It can be quite terrifying, but if you're doing it all the time you have the facility at your fingertips and it's surprising how well you do.'

I think that I've gotten better at characterisation with each film. As I get older and gain experience as a person, I try to delve into myself a little more and use more of myself. Even with a movie that is as obviously pop as *Child's Play* you look at yourself and try to find something useable. I've also learned a lot about scaring people.

## You know what happens to boys who play with dolls? Now, shoe!

During the course of these three movies, I think I've run the gamut in terms of suspense scenes and shocking an audience.'

With considerable experience of the movie industry under his belt, Mancini is naturally keen to take on the challenge of directing. 'I am taking steps towards that now. It's something that I've been eager to do and now I'm starting to feel really ready. Having been on the sets of these films, I've gotten the feeling of how a set is run and of the day-to-day process of making a film, from pre-production all the way through to post-production. I've been involved in all of these stages. I'm not suggesting that I'm Hitchcock, but I'm competent enough to make a good film. I have a couple of movie ideas, and they are original ones, but I really can't say anything more about them at this point. Neither of them is a horror film — they are suspense/thriller type movies.'

## WIDER HORIZONS

Having made his name as a writer of horror screenplays — and even though



he's a horror movie fan — Mancini is now eager to work in other fields. 'As a writer I want to broaden my horizons and work in a number of genres. In fact, what I'm doing now is *The Green Hornet* for Universal, which isn't a horror film. It's a very exciting project for me. On the other hand, I love horror movies. I don't want to give the impression that this was just a means to an end, or that I was lowering myself to write these films. I love the genre and I plan to work within it again. It's just that I want to do other things as well.'

I love comedy too, and have written a comedy script that I've sold. It's on the back burner now, but it's something that I've been developing over the past few years. In terms of a directing gig, though, no-one is going to hire me to direct a comedy because I haven't yet proved myself in that arena. At this point, I've written two horror movies that have been hits, hopefully a third — we'll see. It's logical that people would trust me with that kind of material. I would want to make my directing debut with a film like *Ordinary People* but no-one is going to give me money to do anything like that.'



**Kim Newman's finely written new fantasy, *Jago*, is set in a Somerset village where the Reverend Anthony Jago and his flock are about to bring Heaven... or Hell... to Earth. Out from Simon and Schuster in October.**



## FEAR FORUM

**We're hanging on your every word, truly we are. Don't disappoint us — get scribbling and send your views to FEAR FORUM, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1JW.**

### LIMITED ROCK!

Dear FEAR,  
I do enjoy FEAR — it's interesting, intelligently written and informative. BUT with regards to your April editorial — '...your radio...does more than hammer out hard rock all day.'

Really? As far as I know, us hard rock fans are limited to about six hours a week on Radio 1 of hard rock/metal (on Friday and Saturday). The remaining airtime is given over to pop, indie, token bits of other styles and even more pop and pop (thank goodness for the Saturday sequence — Richard Skinner's selections are quite refreshing.)

As far as hard rock on other stations is concerned — if only! I'll buy your radio, it's obviously better than mine.

Moan over, keep up the good work.  
Andras Millward, Aberystwyth, Dyfed.

### MORE SEX PLEASE?

Dear FEAR,  
I hate to sound alarmist but if you don't heed my warning you will be losing this particular reader, who's been with you from the start.

While your features used to be interesting and informative, they have recently been shoddily presented with the emphasis on stills and pictures instead of in-depth writing. Where do I start? The Black Magic special could have been condensed into half the space it was allocated, *The Silence of the Lambs* feature was the poorest of any I've read and by June your cover story turned out to be no more than a two-page piece in the news section.

You might complain about lack of co-operation from studios, but there is a big world of horror out there as yet untouched by your writers. For a start, FEAR has many readers who would be keen to read about Fulci, Buttercit, Deodata, Damato, Cannibals, Zombies, the weird and the obscure instead of *Terminator 2*, *Robocop 3*, *Alien 3*, features which often disappoint when they finally materialise. My idea of a good FEAR piece would be your 'Sex and the Swastika' ones in November and

December. Now can we have more similar stuff on similar subjects please?

Finally, your film reviews are depleting in size and number, largely because you insist on concentrating on the home market. Why bother? I would be interested in your views on such recent films as *The Church*, *Nekromantik 2*, *Nightmare Concept* and *Meet the Feebles*.

And seriously, John, four and a half skulls for *Neverending Story 2*? Perhaps you're a bit soft for this job?  
Jonathan Swift, Telford, Shropshire.

*John Gilbert replies: The FEAR market is relatively small and we have to try and please all of the people all of the time. That means dragging in the casual reader with the likes of Aliens III, Robocop II etc, and I have it on good authority that most readers love lots of stills. As for the short reports, they are an integral part of the news section and are very often exclusives. Our interview with Arnie on Terminator 2 in this issue is, as we go to press, a world exclusive, as was the Anthony Hopkins piece. We do occasionally carry oddball reviews, but that would be a waste of time if the films were never to see the light of day in Britain. We have plans to continue our coverage of the likes of Fulci in the very, very near future — it's like two months away. So be patient, ask and ye shall receive and all that crapola.*

### HEIR APPARENT

Dear FEAR,  
Peter Etherington's letter in issue 31 caught my attention immediately — I too spent a splendid week or so enslaved by the spell so expertly woven in the novel *It*. Mr Etherington deftly encapsulated the essence of the book. It is so effective because, as with most of King's output, close attention is paid to character, the commonplace and the mundane as well as to the terror content.

And yes, like Mr Etherington, I thought an equal — let alone a superior — to this masterpiece a distinct improbability. Until now, that is.

Having read and thoroughly enjoyed *Carion Comfort* and *Hyperion* by Dan Simmons, I was stunned (to put it mildly) that the subsequent work *Summer of Night* was capable of attaining and even topping

the standards set by those previous tomes. I delighted in the discovery of beautifully crafted landscapes, well effected childhood poignancy, truly terrifying incidents and (most significantly of all) characters created with as much love and care as those crafted by King himself. This is a novel everyone should read and cherish, being also the perfect introduction for the uninitiated to one of the finest 'crossover' authors in the field of fantastic fiction today. Having read most of the author's novels I find myself drawing the inevitable conclusion that, alongside his British counterpart Stephen Gallagher, Dan Simmons must surely rank as one of the most likely candidates to commandeer the throne of 'most exciting all-rounder to have emerged in recent years.'

To Mr Etherington I would say this: *Summer of Night* should have you dashing for the bookshops even as you finish reading this letter. To the rest of humanity I would say it's time to hail the new King and exhibit allegiance by investigating the work of Dan Simmons post haste. You won't be disappointed.  
Matt Williams, Swansea.

### TIME TO ACT

Dear FEAR,  
Although I find FEAR an invigorating read I am always faced with a sense of deja vu when I approach the 'FEAR Forum' section as it often contains a letter or two vilifying the BBFC and its regime of classifications.

The sentiment behind the letters I agree with wholeheartedly — it is the lack of any proposals for altering the situation that disheartens me.

Without a coherent 'plan of attack' the situation will remain static, with Mrs Whitehouse and her cohorts dictating public morality.

The first tentative step towards altering the law to allow individuals freedom of choice would be to create a pressure group capable of combatting the 'moralists' who at present have Parliament's ear.

Perhaps FEAR could print the names and addresses of some groups which are trying to lobby the lawmakers so that all those who wish to be heard may make their beliefs known.

If our rights to free speech are not used, how long until they are curtailed 'for our own good'?

Angus Reeves, Halifax, West Yorkshire.

- *Omen IV: The Awakening* makes its UK debut in October. Starring Faye Grant, Michael Woods and Michael Lerner, it is directed by Jorge Montesi and Dominique Othenin-Gerard and is a Canadian production distributed by 20th Century Fox.

- Rutger Hauer has just finished shooting *Split Second*, a futuristic thriller from Challenge films, on the streets of London. We'll have coverage soon.

- Wide-screen letterbox versions of *Alien*, *Die Hard* and the *Star Wars* movies will be available on sell-through in August from CBS-Fox. Each is priced at £10.20 and should prove popular with owners of large-screen televisions.

- The Talk of the North Fiction Festival is hosting a Friday Fright Night on November 8 at the Oldham Art Gallery. It will be attended by Ramsey Campbell, Stephen Gallagher, Mark Morris and Peter Atkins. Tickets cost £1.00 and are limited to 100. More info from: Michael McCormack, 66 Cowlshaw Lane, Shaw, Oldham.

- The Brighton Records Fair takes place on Monday, August 26 at the Brighton Centre, King's Road (seafront) between 9am and 6pm. Admission prices and further information can be obtained from: Vinylman Enterprises, 46 Sydney Street, Brighton, BN1 4EP.

- *976-Evil II* has just been completed. It stars Brigette Nielsen and will be released by Medusa Pictures later this year.

### HIGHGATE VAMPIRE

- Our sincere apologies are winging their way to the Vampire Research Society...in our recent feature on the undead we mistakenly reported that copies of *The Highgate Vampire* could be obtained for a total of £11 including P&P.

The book actually costs £19.99, and is available from The Vampire Research Society (PO Box 542, Highgate, London, N6 6BG) for a TOTAL of £21.99, including postage.







**BLOOD  
STEREO...**



**With a 3D climax to *A Nightmare on Elm Street 6* heralding another mini-revival of the process, BRIAN J ROBB looks back at the history of the most long-lived of cinema gimmicks...**

**O**f all the gimmicks to come out of the cinema over the years, the most successful has to be 3D photography or stereoscopic films. 3D revivals come around with increasing regularity. The big 3D boom of the

'50s was a fight-back against the new audience grabber, television, and the mini-boom of the mid-'80s was a (failed) attempt to liven up a sequel-ridden film market. Now, as we enter the '90s, sequelitis has again resulted in the old gimmick of 3D cinema being dragged kicking and screaming out of the cupboard to liven up what is probably

the final movie in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series.

Experiments with 3D cinema go back to the roots of film itself, with practitioners in the newest of the arts trying to crack the secrets of three dimensional photography and projection. Magic lanterns were able to project still 3D images, but the holy grail of cinema was a system of moving pictures in three dimensions. Although few of the systems patented across Europe early in the 20th century actually worked or were practical, great directors of the time did investigate their

**The 3D twin camera was just one of the 3D systems developed**

possibilities. Abel Gance is said to have planned to shoot the climax of *Napoleon* (1927) in 3D. If he did shoot it that way, it was never included in any distributed prints. As the film was butchered on its release by a dissatisfied distributor it's difficult to tell if Gance himself decided not to include the 3D sequence.

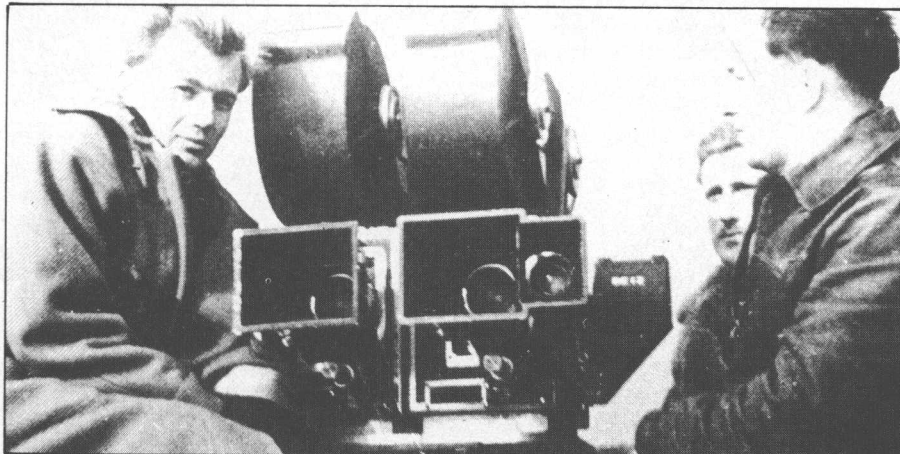
**TRYING TIME**

The ideas tried out in a bid to produce 3D moving pictures have been as varied as the many films themselves. By the end of the '20s, more than 200 different systems had been patented, experimented with and finally discarded before the now familiar red/green glasses were arrived at. Some systems projected two separate images side-by-side which were then drawn together into one by a special, though cumbersome, viewing device. One process printed two images on a single frame, separated in ratio to the human eyes — but unfortunately it didn't work. The most tried and tested system was developed by MGM in 1935. The anaglyph colour process uses two separated red and green images which are recreated as one when the viewer wears the ever-so-trendy cardboard specs. The New York World Fair of 1939 saw some commercial 3D systems being displayed, but the Second World War put an end to any ideas of commercial exploitation.

Although there had been many 3D experiments prior to the '50s, that's when the first real 3D boom took place. Three dimensional films made a real impact and nothing was more suited to the gimmick of 3D photography than science fiction and horror films. The first full-length 3D feature was Arch Oboler's low-budget jungle adventure *Bwana Devil* (1952) which United Artists promoted as being 'newer than television', a film which featured 'a lion in your lap! A lover in your arms!'



**Robert Stack in the first full-length 3D feature *Bwana Devil*, directed by Arch Oboler in 1952**



**WAXING LYRICAL**

With television having a marked effect on cinema audiences, rival studio heads were quick to latch on to the commercial possibilities of this latest cinema gimmick. Warner Brothers, who had been pioneers of sound film in the 1920s, were not slow to get their own 3D productions underway. Jack Warner drew on the reliable talents of Andre de Toth



to direct *House of Wax* (1953).

De Toth had explored the possibilities of 3D cinema in a 1946 Hollywood Reporter article widely read within the industry. The film itself is almost a straight remake of the 1933 feature *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, with Vincent Price in the original Lionel Atwill role of the sculptor who boils his victims in wax and uses them in historical tableaux. The film was shot in Natural Vision 3D, a simple two-camera process, in an attempt to meet the demands of projectionists and cinema managers who had complained about the new projection equipment required for the even more complex three-camera processes.

Ironically enough, Hungarian-American director de Toth couldn't himself perceive the depth of vision he was trying to achieve on screen as he had only one eye. Although the film has been widely criticised as one of the first 3D productions which blatantly waved props at the audience to make use of the process, de Toth was quick to defend 3D. 'It can combine all the possibilities of the motion picture and the theatre,' he said. 'It's not there to throw things at you, but to involve the audience. Instead of showing the story to an audience we can make them a part of it; the feeling, the experience.' Despite sequences such as those involving Can-Can dancers and the infamous ping-pong paddle game, which are obviously aimed at showing off the system, many others are eerily effec-

**'A hail of polystyrene rocks accompanied the on-screen rockfall, which came as a great surprise to the invited celebrity audience.'**

tive, such as that of melting waxwork faces in the fire that destroys Price's studio.

### ROCKY HORROR!

With the release, also in 1953, of *It Came From Outer Space*, science fiction was quick to use the 3D gimmick being exploited so well in the horror genre. The *Ray Bradbury Story* is probably one of the most famous 3D movies of all time, one which works equally



as well when presented 'flat'. The 3D gimmick was cleverly underplayed by director Jack Arnold, with few of the props-in-your-face stunts of *House of Wax*. Instead, 3D enhances the impact of certain key scenes, such as the crash landing of the burning spaceship in the opening minutes and the dramatic rockfall which buries the stranded craft, as well as our first sight of the massive,

**Fending off Jason in Friday the 13th Part 3 (above). Eric van Haren Norman was cameraman on this 3D outing for the masked killer, and returned to shoot the fairly effective Jaws 3D (below)**

Three dimensional cinema had made an impact and was here to stay, for a few years at least. *House of Wax* had made it to number one in the box office grosses, to be displaced by another 3D feature, a Western adventure entitled *Fort Ti* (1953). That in turn was supplanted by *It Came From Outer Space*. Hollywood began to take notice. Some studios announced all their future film production would be in 3D, while others took a more exploitative view of the system. In the first year of the '50s 3D boom there were over 30 feature films and countless shorts released.

dominating ship. Other added gimmicks were used to promote the film over its horror rivals. The first prints were tinted sepia, both as an added attraction and as an attempt to reduce the eye-strain caused by the 3D process. Further gimmicks, of the William Castle kind, were enlisted at the film's Los Angeles premiere in May 1953. A hail of polystyrene rocks accompanied the on-screen rockfall, which came as a great surprise to the invited celebrity audience.

### DARK SECRET

Art director and designer turned director William Cameron Menzies showed a particular interest in 3D. He'd made his directorial debut in 1936 with an adaptation of H G Wells' *Things to Come* and his career contin-





ued through to the mid-'50s when he directed two movies designed to cash in on the 3D boom. *The Maze* (1953) is a mildly interesting film about an aristocratic family with a dark secret — an ancestor locked in the attic who is a curious, not to mention hilarious, blend of man and frog. The film doesn't really live up to the expectations that the combination of Menzies' wayward talents and the use of 3D effects might raise. Menzies directed his last film in the same year, the much better *Invaders From Mars*. Originally designed to be shot in 3D, as is clear from some shots, *Invaders From Mars* was the first victim of Hollywood's loss of confidence in its newest audience attraction.

One of the most famous 3D films from the period was also one which used the techniques more successfully than most — *The Creature From The Black Lagoon* (1954). Jack Arnold was obviously pleased with the 3D effects in *It Came From Outer Space*, so decided to continue using the techniques, improving them wherever he could. The underwater photography that makes up much of the film added to its other worldliness, indeed the poster promised 'underwater 3D thrills'. Arnold knew just how to use 3D effects — not as a replacement for story or action but as an enhancement to a plot that works equally well when shown 'flat'. He does fall prey to the old techniques of waving things at the audience, but in a more spectacular fashion: a speargun is fired at point-blank range. The film also represented a technological step forward. Previously, projection of 3D films required two strips of celluloid — one for the red image, one for the green. *The Creature From The Black Lagoon* was the first film to combine both images onto a single strip of celluloid, thereby cutting out a lot of the practical hassles of 3D at the projectionist end.

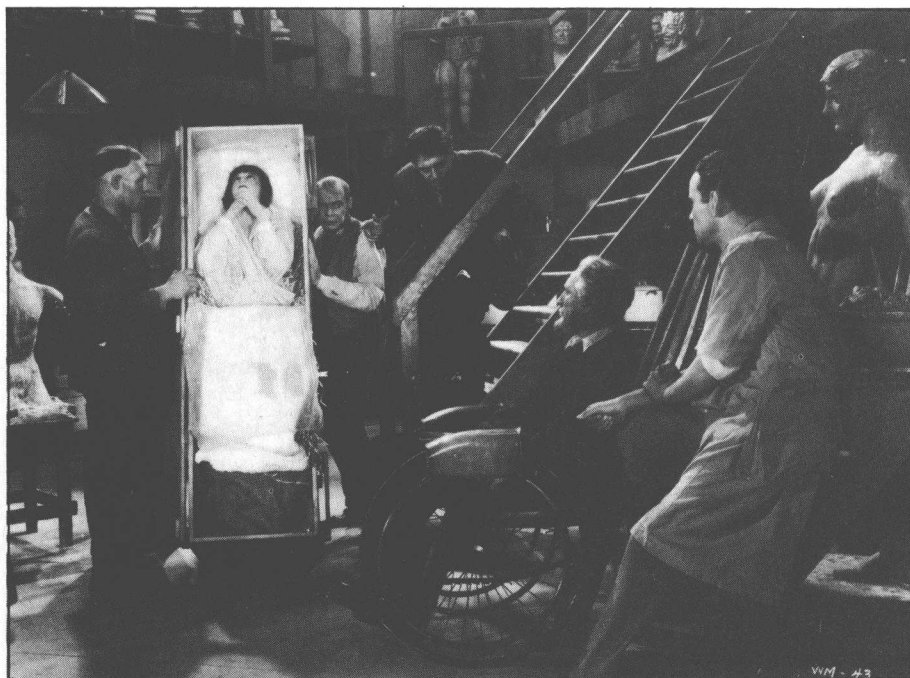
## MONKEY BUSINESS

Throughout 1954, the 3D band wagon rolled on. As so often before and since in Hollywood, the new technological device was rarely used to its full potential, as studios spent their time trying to imitate the big hits their rivals had produced the previous year. Thus Columbia reworked Warner's *House of Wax* as *The Mad Magician* (1954), shot in polarised black and white 3D and starring

**'As Grace Kelly is about to suffer near-strangulation she reaches backwards into the audience, grasping for a pair of scissors, and at the same time reaches out for help.'**

Vincent Price and Eva Gabor, and Warner Brothers themselves tried to repeat their previous success with the killer gorilla flick *Phantom of the Rue Morgue* (1954). This time Roy del Ruth was enlisted to remake Robert Florey's atmospheric *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1933), with an over-the-top Karl Malden in the over-the-top Bela Lugosi role.

Perhaps only one director could really be expected to innovate with the use of 3D technology — Alfred Hitchcock. Unfortunately, '50s audiences of *Dial M for Murder* (1954) were to be deprived of the choice of seeing the film in 3D as it was released in a 'flat' format only, after a couple of test screenings in 3D.



**André de Toth's remake of *Mystery of the Wax Museum* hit the screens in 1953 as *House of Wax***

The boom was coming to an end and studios were wary about over-doing the 3D films hitting cinemas. Thanks to a London revival of the film in 3D in 1983, at least some audiences saw what Hitchcock had made of his new toy. The film shows that he took the time to consider carefully what he could do with 3D photography. In *Dial M for Murder* he uses it as much more than simply a novelty gimmick, instead employing it to comment on the psychology of the players in his drama. Refusing to go for the simple 3D shocks of his contemporaries, Hitchcock uses slightly outsize props to increase a sense of alienation. In one scene in particular, the director combines both the finest 3D shock in the cinema and a subtle comment on his character. As Grace Kelly is about to suffer near-strangulation she reaches backwards into the audience, grasping for a pair of scissors, and at the same time reaches out for

help. If only this combination of subtle and dramatic use of 3D photography had been achieved by more directors, then 3D may have become more than just a gimmick, perhaps even a recognised tool of talented filmmakers. Unfortunately, there were simply not enough directors with the skill of Hitchcock.

## NEW GIMMICKS

The boom period for 3D in the '50s was almost at an end. As 1954 wore on the quality of 3D releases deteriorated dramatically,

with the technique being used to prop up hoary old plots like Harmon Jones' *Gorilla At Large* (1954), a film which probably helped Hollywood lose confidence in 3D even as a marketing gimmick. Similarly, *Son of Sinbad* (1954) was held back until 1955 for release due to the uncertainty over future prospects for 3D films.

All the attempts at perpetuating 3D cinema failed for the same reasons — not enough cinemas were willing to update and replace their projection equipment for something that might not have been a technological step forward, but merely a passing fad. Three dimensional cinema had gained currency as the most novel of new technological processes developed through the '50s, though it was never practical. While studios and directors failed to use 3D to its best advantage, research had continued into new gimmicks, mainly in an attempt to develop a wide screen process. In 1952 Cinerama had made its debut as the first of many wide screen processes — others included CinemaScope, Todd-AO, Ultra-Panavision and VistaVision. With the release of *The Robe* in 1953, CinemaScope was on its way to becoming the dominant wide screen cinema system. Although CinemaScope required new, mega-sized screens, it found favour with distributors, projectionists and the public alike. CinemaScope was to signal the death knell of 3D.

## URBAN CREATURE

*Revenge of the Creature* (1955) was the last of the '50s 3D movies. Although this sequel was directed by Jack Arnold, who used the 3D gimmick to great advantage in the original and in *It Came From Outer Space*, he seemed to have lost interest in the process. The film is lacklustre, the only novel thing being its attempt to place the Creature in a predominantly urban environment. The fact that the film was shot in 3D seemed no more than an aside. It was followed by another sequel, *The Creature Walks Among Us*, in 1956. The film was even more of a B-movie, shot in black and white and, more significantly, 'flat'. The first big 3D boom was over.

Although few films were to use 3D photography throughout the '60s and '70s, one or two did use the process, with the gimmicks becoming more and more outlandish. *The*





**Douglas Fairbanks Jnr (right) fighting the foe in *Son of Sinbad***

*Mask/Eyes of Hell* (1961) was a black and white fear flick, livened up by three five-minute 3D colour sequences which signified the hallucinations suffered by characters on screen. In 1966 Arch Oboler, he of *Buana Devil* fame, tried to revive the 3D craze he'd started by launching *The Bubble* in a new process dubbed 'SpaceVision'. Unfortunately he didn't actually think of anything new to do with 3D images and the film is a wasted opportunity.

Throughout the late '70s a number of 3D projects were announced, but very few came to fruition. *A.P.E.* (1976) was a very poor Korean *King Kong* rip-off made in 3D and promoted with the slogan 'Ten tons of animal fury leaps from the screen!' In 1979 John Landis was contracted to make *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*, but pulled out when he learned the project was to be produced in 3D, leaving Joel Schumacher to take up the directional reins.

## STRIKING OUT

Two 3D movies emerged in the early '80s to spark a mini-revival which ran through the following couple of years. Largely responsible for this revival was Italian entrepreneur Roger Petitto who, for some reason best known to himself, used the name Tony

Anthony in the US. He produced a spaghetti Western in 3D, entitled *Comin' At Ya!* (1981). The film was very much a promo reel for what Anthony could do with 3D and it did surprisingly good box office business in the US. With American partners Marshall Lupo and Gene Quintano, Anthony developed a lens which could be used to project any 3D film, no matter what system it had been shot in. He then went on to produce and star in *The Treasure of the Four Crowns* (1982) a rip-off of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, shot, naturally, in 3D. Just as in the '50s the large studios latched on to this revival of an old gimmick. In a film market awash with sequels, particularly with many films reaching 'Part Three' for the first time, Hollywood producers were keen on anything which would help draw back the audiences for more of the same. Hence *Friday the 13th Part 3* appeared in 1982 in 3D. No different to the previous two movies in the series, this one lost no opportunity for Jason (in the form of Richard Brooker) to strike out at the audience in 3D, as well as at his intended victims. Eric Van Haren Norman was the cameraman on this latest *Friday* epic, and he found his 3D skills called on again when he was brought in to supervise the photography for *Jaws 3D*. Again 3D photography was used to bring a little novelty to a well-worn formula, and *Jaws 3D* does make fairly effective use of the gimmick. Film projects originally scheduled to be shot 'flat' suddenly found themselves revised for 3D photography as the craze took off anew, 30 years after the first big boom. Lamont Johnson's *Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone* quickly became a 3D project — so quickly that it utilised an old-fashioned two-camera Panavision 3D system.

## OLD TRICKS

Director Richard Fleischer returned to 3D film-making (following *Arena* in 1953) with a remake of *The Amityville Horror* entitled *Amityville 3D*. Fleischer, however, didn't add anything to the film-maker's range of 3D tricks, simply repeating the old favourites. Indeed, the only novelty the mid-'80s 3D boom brought to the genre was the use of 3D in the film titles, convenient as many of the sequels had reached their third instalment. As the mini-revival died out towards the end of 1983, the low-budget gore-meisters, particularly Charles Band, produced a slew of minor 3D flicks. The most notable thing about the end of this boom were the projects announced for 3D production which didn't actually happen. During 1983, Steven Spielberg announced he had contracted Martin Scorsese to direct the first 3D monster-musical — a film version of *Little Shop of Horrors*. Of course, that film didn't appear until much later and under a different director.

As we enter the '90s, the glut of sequels to sequels continues, even though the box office takings are not so hot any more. What better to revive a dying series of films (at least for a short time) like *A Nightmare on Elm Street* than a bit of 3D trickery? Rather than shooting the whole film in 3D and giving the audiences headaches and eye-strain, the producers of the latest in this never-ending series have opted for the cheapest method and have simply shot the climax of the most recent Freddy outing in 3D. The question is: Will the video release come with free 3D glasses? It seems old gimmicks never die, but are simply endlessly revived...

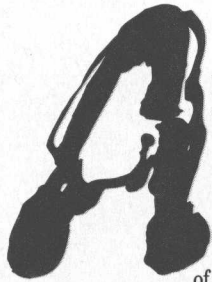


**The Creature from the Black Lagoon extends a 3D claw in Jack Arnold's 1954 movie hit**



# THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES!

Larry Cohen is a multi-talented movie-maker who simply can't stop writing. He talks to STANLEY WIATER about what it takes to triumph in Tinseltown.



Although prolific writer/producer/director Larry Cohen will never deny that he is deeply involved in the horror and science fiction genres, he prefers to think of his basic body of work as black comedy.

This may well be the case, but most of his films are usually first identified by the size and diversity of the monsters they feature. From his first major success with *It's Alive!* (mutant babies) to *God Told Me To* (extra-terrestrial-influenced killers) to *Q* (a giant prehistoric flying reptile), Cohen usually managed to get his satirical message across, but not at the expense of delivering an exciting and entertaining movie first.

Cohen began his career as a writer for television in the 1960s, most notably as the creator of the popular science fiction series *The Invaders*. Although he has worked in other genres — 'blacksploitation' films have included *Black Caesar* (1973) and *Hell Up In Harlem* (1973) — Cohen has mostly chosen projects within the genres which best allow

him the freedom to explore his dark and paranoid visions.

And freedom is the cornerstone of Cohen's work as a film-maker. Although his movies have not yet received the critical recognition heaped upon Cronenberg or Romero, Cohen has the right to say that he always remains the total auteur of his films. He has written, produced and directed an enviable number of fascinating movies, from thrillers like *Special Effects* (1984) to grisly satires on the food industry — *The Stuff* (1985) — to two sequels to his most successful film, *It Lives Again* (1978) and *It's Alive III: Island of the Alive* (1987).

FEAR's own Stanley Wiater caught up with Cohen at his home in California's Coldwater Canyon...

## SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

*It's Alive!* (1974)  
*God Told Me To* (1977)  
*A Return to Salem's Lot* (1977)  
*Q* (1981)  
*Special Effects* (1984)



Right, giving birth to a monster in *It's Alive* — not unlike the mutant baby (above) from *Island of the Alive*.





Wicked Stepmother (1988)  
Maniac Cop 2 (1990)  
The Ambulance (1990)

**Stanley Wiater:** You're one of the few writers in the industry who produces material both for your own projects and to sell to other producers. How do you decide which films to direct?

Larry Cohen: When it's a piece that I'm really in love with, then I'll direct. But I write so much, I write every day. When I have nothing to do, or when I'm waiting for something to happen, I'll write. By the end of a week I've accumulated a stack of pages. And by the end of a year I have more scripts

than I could ever possibly do myself. There are scripts I write that nobody likes, but eventually, sooner or later, most of them find a home.

Complex religious and political issues turn up repeatedly in your films, as in *Q* or *God Told Me To*. Clearly you're using the horror genre to explore a lot of serious issues beyond 'Let's find and kill the deadly monster'.

I'm taking the genre of the monster picture and making it a legitimate thematic format. A lot of people have come up to me and said 'Oh, I saw your film on cable the other night and really enjoyed it. But I never would have paid to see it in a theatre, since I usually

don't like that kind of movie. I just happened to watch it and it was really very good'. What often happens is that the advertising campaigns for a lot of these pictures turn away the very people who would enjoy them the most.

## RATINGS ROW

Do the (MPAA) ratings affect how you make a motion picture? Do you ever pre-censor your 'dark visions' before you start production?

No, because I usually expect to get an R rating. I'm not making motion pictures for a teenage audience or for kids. I'm making them for adults. Actually, *It's Alive!* was

# DON'T CALL THIS AMBULANCE!

Things are never quite what they seem — not in Larry Cohen's movies, anyhow. The creator of *The Ambulance* talks to NIGEL FLOYD about the danger of taking things at face value.

A young woman collapses on a crowded New York sidewalk. A young man comes to her assistance, an ambulance arrives and she is whisked away, the orderly muttering something about diabetes and St Francis' Hospital. But when the young man, comic book artist Josh Baker (Eric Roberts), asks about her there, they have no record of her ever having been admitted. Inquiries at other hospitals also draw a blank. Josh saw a sick young woman taken away in an ambulance, but now she's vanished into thin air...

Once again, Larry Cohen — the man who gave us a demonic baby in *It's Alive*, served up a deadly dessert in *The Stuff* and invented the *Maniac Cop* — has transformed something familiar and benign into something mysterious and frightening. 'Yeah, that's the whole idea,' says Cohen. 'It started with *It's Alive*, in which a baby — the ultimate symbol of something that is good, pure and harmless — turned into a thing of terror. It's the same with *Maniac Cop*, you're running away from bad people, you see a cop and think 'Thank God, I'm gonna be safe now'. So you run up to the cop and the cop kills you. And again in *The Ambulance*, people get sick, they call an ambulance and they feel relieved when they hear it coming. After this movie, they'll wanna crawl under the bed and hide!'

## TOO MUCH GORE

Cohen explains how he wanted to avoid the 'medical horror' of Michael Crichton's *Coma* and the films of David Cronenberg.

'I didn't wanna get into Cronenberg

territory, it's too bloody and gory. It would have taken something away from the basically cheerful quality of *The Ambulance*, which is really about a guy who sees a girl he's crazy about, then risks his life to save her. The ambulance is just a crazy idea to dress it up, to give it a little bit more pizzazz and colour. The girl is taken away in a phantom ambulance and of course no-one will believe the guy, which adds some elements of mystery and danger.

'I really wrote the movie so I could do the scene in which Josh kicks his way out of the ambulance and escapes. I liked the idea for that scene, so I worked backwards from there. I said 'OK, he's in the ambulance and he's gonna kick his way out and go flying down the street.' And then I said 'That's great, now I've gotta figure out a story to go with it.'

Once he gets an idea, Cohen — who wrote *Maniac Cop* in a week — is able to write extremely quickly, mapping out the structure and developing the char-

acters in his own unique way.

'*Ambulance* came to me completely formed, I knew exactly what was gonna happen and what it was about. I get an idea, then sit down and try to imagine I'm looking at the movie in my mind. I get into a sort of self-hypnotic state and as I watch the movie in my mind, I write it. So, theoretically, I would be able to write a two-hour movie in two hours, if my hands could only keep up with my mind.'

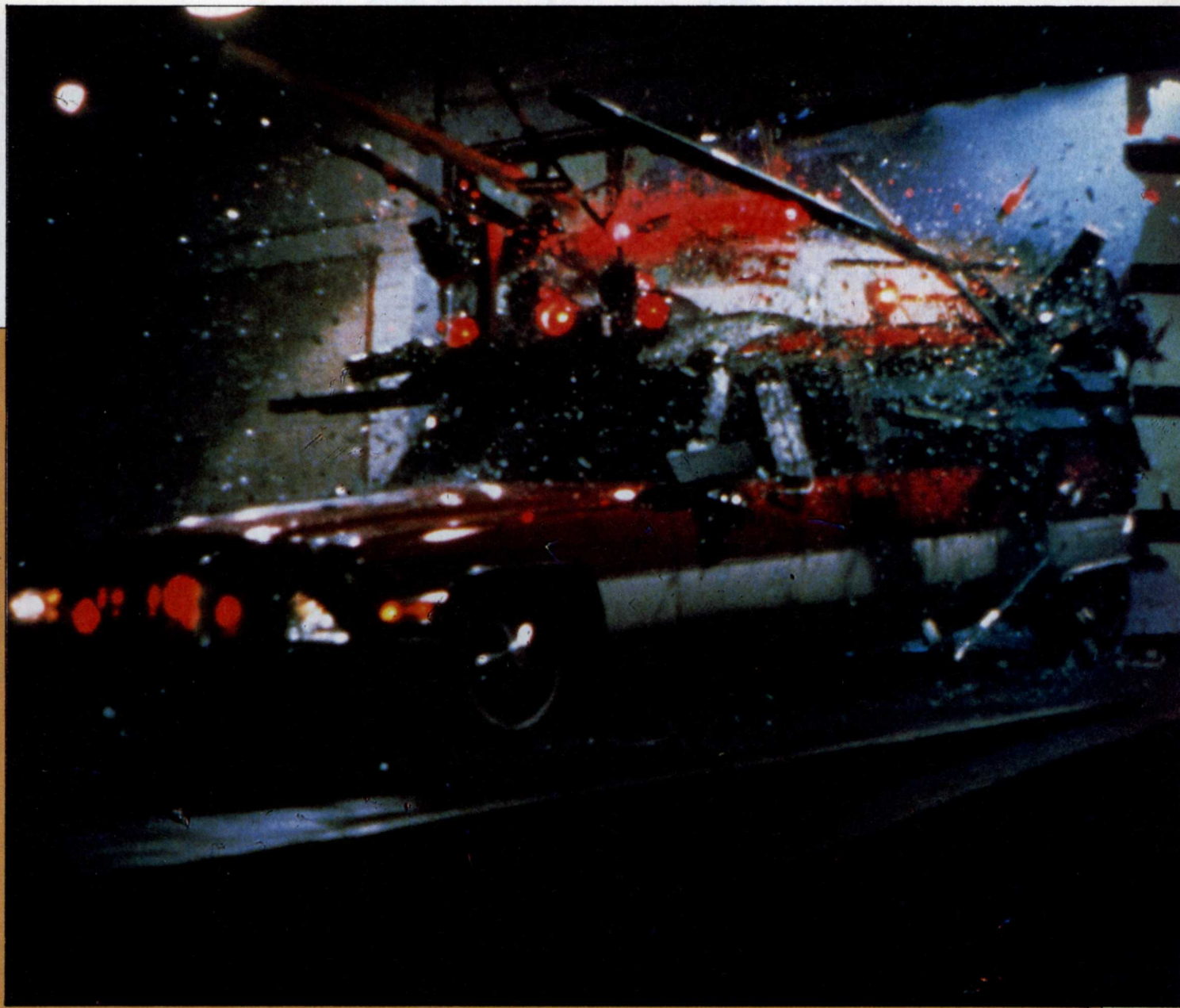
## CHANGING SCENE

Nevertheless, Cohen regards the script as little more than a blue-print for the final film, constantly adding things and re-working it during shooting. The pump house used during a chase scene in Central Park, for example, was just an interesting building that Cohen spot-

James Earl Jones and Eric Roberts discuss the missing girl.







ted while filming the ambulance break-out scene.

'That's an actual pump station under the Central Park reservoir, which they recreated in a studio for the final scene between Laurence Olivier and Dustin Hoffman in *Marathon Man*. We went in and the guy said 'You wanna see what's down below?', and then he opened it up and it was like having a \$1 million set for nothing.

'Of course, the producers said 'But there's no scene', and I said 'Don't worry, we'll make up a scene.' So we made up a scene and the rest of the chase, which gave us the chance to add some more suspense.'

Although he now lives in Los Angeles, Cohen still prefers to shoot his films in New York, which provided the backdrop for movies like *Q — The Winged Serpent*, in which the prehistoric monster nested in the magnificent Chrysler Building. As well as being more photogenic, it's also an easier place in which to film, with less hassles over permits, street closures and the policing of public locations. Ironically, although *The Ambulance* was shot almost entirely in New York, Cohen

was eventually forced to shoot the film's final scene in Los Angeles. In his own inimitable way, he describes the nightmare scenario of almost having a movie but no ending.

### FINAL BLOW

'They wouldn't let us blow up the ambulance in New York because we couldn't find an excavation where there wasn't a risk of starting a fire. So we had to go back to downtown Los Angeles and blow up the ambulance there. The last shot was filmed in LA with Eric Roberts six weeks later — we had to fly him back from Italy for one day. It wasn't the ideal situation but there was nothing else we could do.

'So we've got one more day in Los Angeles in which to blow up this ambulance. Transworld decided they would take charge of the preparations. So they got the technicians to build the ramp and to do the special effects, but of course they fouled it all up. All night long they were setting up this crash, and it got to be five o'clock in the morning and we still hadn't shot anything.

The cameraman came to me and said 'The sky is starting to change, it's going to be daylight'. And I said 'We have to shoot this damn thing, or else we're not gonna get it at all'.

'So 15 minutes before daylight broke, they crashed the ambulance through the fence and into the pit, and the guy did the fall. But it didn't work the way it was supposed to. The flames were supposed to go up and envelop the guy who was dangling there, but it didn't blow up.

'And everyone's saying 'We can't go near it because it's armed' and 'How are we gonna blow this fucking thing up?' So finally one guy got an idea, he got a can of gasoline and a wire, and he ran down there and threw the gasoline can underneath the ambulance. He ran out fast, they pushed a button and blew up the gasoline can, which blew up the ambulance and then the sun came up at the same time. We were this far away (Cohen holds fingers a millimetre apart) from not getting it.'

With a cliff-hanger like that, it's a wonder they weren't taking Cohen himself away in an ambulance.







David Carradine blasts away at Q — *The Winged Serpent*.

rated PG. The MPAA couldn't find any reason not to rate it PG. *It's Alive, Part II* got an R rating. So I appealed. I asked them 'How can you give the second film such a rating when it is identical to the first film as far as horror, violence and monsters are concerned? There are no dirty words in it, no nudity.' They said 'Larry, there's nothing in the picture that warrants an R rating, but we're giving it one because we think parents will want it to have one'.

I said 'I think you should rate a picture on what it is, not on what people think it's going to be'. I went before them with evidence from Warner Bros, the distributors of *It's Alive*, to prove that they had never received complaints from anyone about the first picture being PG rated. But still they maintained the R rating.

**How did you get involved in a Warner Bros sequel to *Salem's Lot*?**

I was talking about making another *It's Alive* picture. And Warner said that they had the rights to Stephen King's novel and were interested in making a sequel to that. So we made a two-picture deal, to do *It's Alive III: Island of the Alive* and *A Return to Salem's Lot*. We made the two pictures back to back, using many of the same actors in both.

**30 September 1991 FEAR**

## SALEM SEQUEL

**What interested you in devising a sequel to an already well-known novel?**

It was a sequel they wanted made. Warner Bros said 'As long as you use the title, you can do anything with it that you want to'. Curiously enough, I had been hired years before to write a screenplay of *Salem's Lot* for Warner Bros, but they didn't like it. They didn't make it as a motion picture, but started from scratch and eventually made it into a four-hour television picture.

**What do you consider to be your most successful film?**

*It's Alive!* is definitely the most successful in terms of box office; it grossed some \$40 million. It's on the list of the 25 top-grossing horror, fantasy or science fiction films ever made.

**Do you have a favourite film?**

I love it when I get to work with the actors that I like. We did *Wicked Stepmother* with Bette Davis, and that was a great experience. It was her last film. She managed to get through most of it, but she couldn't finish the picture. But her being in it brought a lot of joy and inspiration to everyone else working on the film.

## MASS APPEAL

**You once said that the difference between you and studio film-makers was like the difference between an author being published in hardcover or in paperback.**

Yes. In the big world of movies, the theatrical release of a picture is like the hardcover release of a book, and the videocassette release is like the paperback. Often, a publisher loses money on the hardcover edition; they just don't sell that many copies. What I was saying was that if a picture doesn't come out theatrically, there's no shame in it. It's just a different way of doing business. If you can make more money putting a book out in mass-market paperback, what's wrong with that?

What's the difference between seeing a movie on the screen or watching it at home? Sometimes a picture is better when seen at home; at least you have control over the sound, over the focus. In some theatres, movies are just not shown very well. The theatres are small, and the screens aren't very large.

**'In the big world of movies, the theatrical release of a picture is like the hardcover release of a book, and the videocassette release is like the paperback...'**

## THE VALUE OF HYPE

**So you feel that considering a movie's popularity at the downtown theatres is not the only way of gauging success?**

You always hope to have a big hit when you get to the theatre and there's a line around the block. A lot depends on how the film is advertised and promoted. In order to make a movie into a hit, you have to spend a lot on advertising and promotion, so that when the picture opens there is so much hype that people have to see the picture. When I've had a reasonable advertising budget, my films have always made a profit.

**You seemingly have been able to do it all in Hollywood as an independent film-maker: Produce, write and direct. What advice do you have for someone who wants to try and be a success in at least one of those areas?**

They've got to write continually, like I do. All the time. They've got to turn out some scripts. Writing is the easiest of all the challenges. If you write something and someone reads it, they might very well make the picture. A director has a harder job: He has to have film, equipment, a crew, actors, a script, locations. He's got to have a budget. A writer needs only a piece of paper.

I would say if you have writing talent, then you should utilise it. If you don't have writing talent, then you have a problem. You've got to find somebody else who can write, team up and hope to come up with something.

If you're a producer, you find somebody who's written a script, then try and find a home for that script. You might try and tie up with a director...there are many ways to do it. Writing is still the easiest way — if you have the talent.



## MOVIE MAKERS PART TWO



It is almost a cliché to say British film technicians are the best in the world. But like most clichés this one has a basis in reality. Recent blockbusting SF and fantasy movies may have been made with American money, but they invariably relied on British talent for their visual effects.

In this country Derek Meddings is pre-eminent in the field. His credits range from Gerry Anderson's *Century 21* puppet series to fantasies like *Never Ending Story II*. He supervised the effects for five James Bond films and the first three *Superman* movies, and *Batman*, *Krull*, *Supergirl*, *Santa Claus The Movie* and *Hudson Hawk*, among many others, have benefitted from his expertise.

The industry here is suffering due to the current recession. But Meddings believes it also has to contend with the timidity of backers. 'America is the centre of the film industry,' he says. 'Americans take the chances, and are prepared to put \$30 million to \$40 million into a movie. If it fails they don't say 'Bugger this, let's give up' the way we do. They say 'Right, the next one will make it.'

Meddings comes from a film background. 'My mother and father were in the industry. My father was a master carpenter and my mother was a secretary to Alexander Korda, so I always wanted to be in the industry myself.'

### MODEL JOB

'After I finished National Service I joined Denham Laboratories, doing titles for films — which I hated. They were hand-painted and I found it boring. We worked on American films that were translated into Italian, German and French, so all the credits had to be changed. But sometimes there were backgrounds to be done, too. I remember one from a cowboy picture, with a stagecoach coming across the desert. When we changed the titles we couldn't get that piece of film to put the titles over, so we painted the background photographically. It wasn't my job, but fortunately I managed to get to do it.'

He then met legendary special effects man Les Bowie. 'He was a matte artist at that time, and when I saw what matte painting was I wanted to do it. Les had a company called Anglo-Scottish Pictures, which made commercials. I joined him and did a variety of jobs there, including making models. I remember doing thousands upon thousands of chocolates for Cadbury's, and models of buildings for Dulux paint.'

'Les was working on a lot of Hammer films, and I used to act as his assistant, which gave me a good grounding in handling floor effects. He got involved in all sorts of things, and we ended up doing live action effects, usually out in Black Park — where a

# 'YOU'LL MAN CAN

**'Where does he get those wonderful toys?' asks the Joker in *Batman*. Well, Oscar-winning visual effects artist Derek Meddings knows and, in the second part of our *Movie-Makers* series shares some of his secrets and philosophy with *FEAR*'s Stan Nicholls.**



**BELIEVE A  
FLY!  
FLY....**





lot of Hammer films were made — or on the sound stage. Through Les I got a lot of very, very good training.'

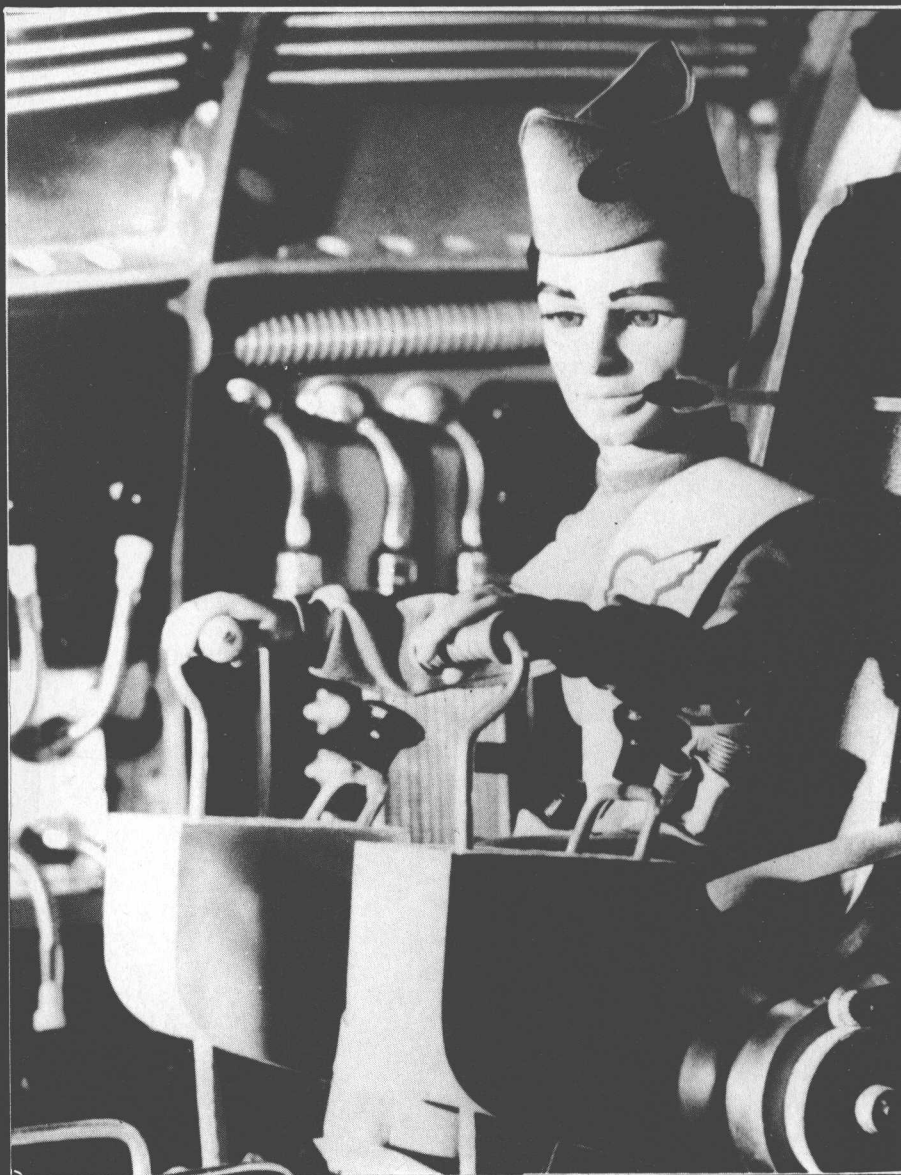
He then joined Gerry and Sylvia Anderson. 'I was with them when they started,' Meddings recalls. 'I worked on *Twizzle*, *Torches*, *Four Feather Falls* and *Supercar*. In conjunction with Reg Hill I designed *Fireball XL-5*, and I devised the spacecraft for *Thunderbirds*. I worked on all the series except *Space 1999*.

### WINNING WAYS

'It was good fun, but you had to be young, enthusiastic and stupid, really, to contend with all the hard work and long hours. I ran around like a madman trying to get something like 200 special effects shots done for each episode of *Thunderbirds*, which was made on a ten-day schedule. I used to spend my lunch hours with the director, storyboarding coming episodes, then go straight back and carry on directing. When everybody had finished I painted the backing for the following day. It was great fun but I wouldn't want to do it again.

'During that time we did three movies; the two *Thunderbirds* features and *Doppelganger*, for which I acted as designer and directed all the effects. On *Doppelganger* we had an American director, Bob Parrish, who did a great job. I almost got an Oscar for it, but we were beaten by *Marooned*, with Gregory Peck. We thought that was a bit of a cheek because their rocket launchings were all done with real footage. Ours required a very futuristic spacecraft so we used miniatures.'

**Meddings was the brains behind the Batmobile (previous page), the Thunderbirds for International Rescue (below), Superman's high-wire act and the Moonraker shuttle (opposite).**





He has since won an Oscar, however, for *Superman*. The film also earned him a BAFTA award, the first to be given to a special effects supervisor. These days he co-owns a specialist effects outfit, the Magic Camera Company. 'It was called the Meddings Camera Company originally,' he explains. 'But the Americans who took it over said they were going to close down companies that couldn't guarantee making a profit. Of course, in this industry you can't make that guarantee. So we did a management buy-out and, because there were two other people involved, we took my name off the title. We recently set up the Magic Model Company too. We can, and do, take on films that require opticals, mechanical effects, explosions and miniatures.'

## SAILING THROUGH

'The reason I've worked on a lot of big pictures like the Bonds is because they are the ones requiring my sort of expertise. The first one I did, *Live And Let Die*, didn't incorporate a great number of models. But by the time I did the next one they had realised how convincingly miniatures could be used, and had become more ambitious. I think the most exciting two I did were *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Moonraker*. *The Spy Who Loved Me* featured this enormous supertanker that swallowed up submarines at sea. We built it as a miniature, and all the destruction was done on the big 007 stage at Pinewood.'

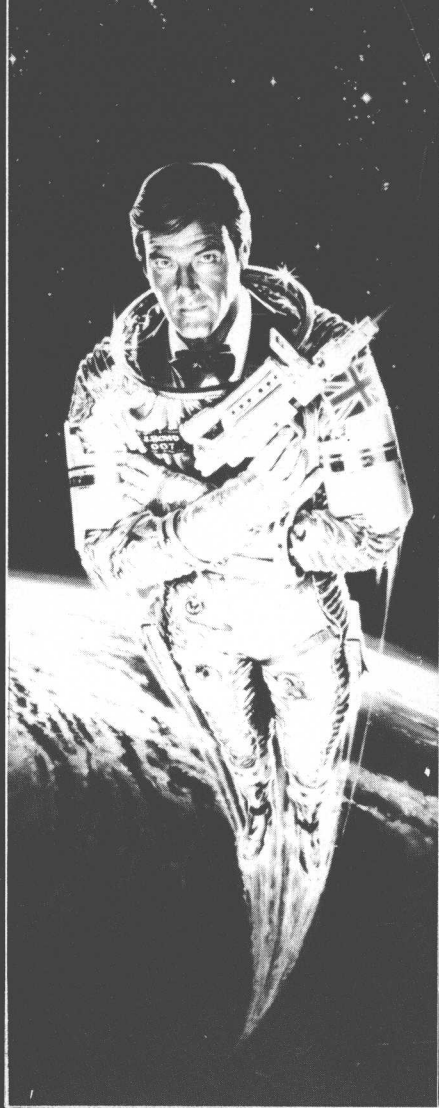
Meddings then encountered the problem of giving the impression of water disturbance and wake from a tanker of that size. 'I built into it a large outboard engine — it was 170 horsepower and created a wash behind the tanker. To make the bow wave and the white foam, we had little water disturbers along the side, churning up the water.'

'Originally, we were planning to use a real tanker belonging to Esso, but it was going to cost a fortune to insure. The other problem was that we would have had to use the tanker while it was en route from Holland, passing close to the shore off the tip of Africa. This would have involved us being flown out by helicopter and dropped onto the deck, then filming for about two hours before the tanker got too far out at sea. In the end Esso lost interest when I told them we wanted to do explosions on board. Even though the tanker would have been cleaned out there was still the chance of fumes remaining and we could have caused havoc. So I talked the company out of using a real ship.'

## SEEING STARS!

*Moonraker* was made before the Americans launched their first shuttle, although NASA helped with technical details. 'People knew we couldn't go into space with a camera crew, so we had to work extra hard to make it believable. We looked at all the footage and photographs taken in space and copied them. You never see stars in those pictures, but we put stars in because that's what the public expects to see. They gave us hell to do.'

'It was a very complicated picture to make. I can't remember exactly how many now, but there were something like 200 special effects shots in it, and we had no time to do them optically. They all had to be done another way — I used the old system of winding-back in the camera. That meant putting in a shuttle, matting it out, putting in another and so on. At one point we did 36 passes on a single piece of negative. It was a real challenge, the schedule was so tight we had to do it as quickly as possible.'



Complex scenes are meticulously planned, says Meddings. 'In the first instance I work with the storyboard artist. I get him to sketch out all the effects sequences, and the scenes in which we're going to have to match live action with miniatures. We then get clips from the live action in order to marry them up.'

'When we did *Superman* the crew went to New York and shot some crowd scenes in the street with Christopher Reeve. But most of the flying sequences were done with transparencies. I had a cameraman go out there and shoot lots of footage, from high up on buildings to down on the ground. Then I had very large transparencies made, which were mounted and cut out. I should say most of the backgrounds were shot using these.'

## COST OF SUCCESS

Given that *Superman's* slogan was 'You'll believe a man can fly,' did Meddings' heart drop when he was asked to make this possible? 'My heart drops every time I get a film. Each one is a new challenge and there's always something a director wants that you think you've done before and then realise you haven't. I don't believe anything is impossible nowadays, although sometimes there isn't the money to do whatever it is the directors want to do.'

'There are times when, because of the budget, I have to talk the director into doing something a different way, like doing an effects sequence in three shots rather than one. Lots of directors want to see an effect in one shot, only to find out later they need to cut it. They may need a close-up of an actor reacting for example. But if you've given them enough footage there's no problem.'

America spends far more on effects than we do, says Meddings. 'When Americans come to England we're expected to do it cheaper, and we want to do it cheaper, naturally.'

'*Batman* had a limited budget, like every film, and we cut down the special effects because there wasn't the money for us to do them the way I wanted. When we were about a third of the way through the producers saw what I had achieved with miniature buildings, cut-outs and transparencies, and they loved it. They showed it to Warner Brothers, who were thrilled to bits. So they gave us more money to do the effects. Unfortunately it still wasn't enough. Having said that, I suppose you could be given an unlimited amount of money and it would never be sufficient.'

## KEEPING IT SIMPLE

'Now they've decided to do *Batman 2* in America, it'll be interesting to see how the effects turn out, and how much they cost. I think it's being made in the States because the director, Tim Burton, can't come to England. His wife's at university over there and he doesn't want to leave her behind. I understand that.'

Because of the parlous state of the industry technicians are constantly battling to update their equipment with very little money. 'But sometimes the equipment doesn't make for a good effect anyway,' says Meddings. 'I've always felt that I would much rather use string or wire if I could. That's preferable to having some computerised unit which, if it goes wrong, needs a boffin to come and fix it. If an effect can be achieved by an aircraft flying on wire, and the wire snaps, the aircraft might get broken but at least you know why it fell out of the sky. If a computer goes wrong you've got to call in somebody. We can't have experts standing by to deal with a computer that might go wrong.'

Work in progress includes Robert De Niro's new picture *Cape Fear*, a thriller directed by Martin Scorsese. 'We're doing a miniature sequence with a houseboat going down the Everglades in a storm and finally breaking up. I got the job because my quote was lower than the Americans'. The film's completed, and we've just got to do this sequence, which is going to take us about a month.'

## HOME COMFORTS

'Beyond that, there's a film coming up next year from Warner Brothers which we're hoping to get. I won't mention the title but it's one of the best scripts I've read in God knows how many years. Usually it takes me about three weeks to read a script. This took me three hours.'

Despite the present difficulties in this country, Derek Meddings has no intention of joining the talent drain to the States. 'I wouldn't want to go to Los Angeles to work because my family is here. Also, I think I would have a struggle competing with the Americans, and would always feel a little bit inferior if only because I happened to be a foreigner — not because I couldn't do the job.'

'I don't think I could have in Los Angeles what I've got here. I like LA — every time I've been there I've enjoyed it — but I'm not quite sure I could cope with living there. Then again, a lot of Americans can't cope with it either.'

Next issue: Stephen Spielberg's Universal Animation Studios.



# FEAR FICTION

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# G J RICCI DEM BONES



I guess I lived in Vegas for three years or so. Not long enough to think of it as home, but enough time to get to know the city that never sleeps. Those hot side-walks and I got to be real friendly as I hit the streets looking for one job after another. I was one of a dying breed, a craps dealer.

The game of craps originated in ancient China, where they used sheep's knuckle-bones for the dice. From these humble beginnings, the game evolved into the extremely complex gambling layout it is today.

It's a game of contradictions with thousands of varieties of bets to be made at every roll of the dice. It takes money to learn the rules, though, and most folk tend to lean towards a game they can pick up easily, like Blackjack.

Don't ask me how I came to be dealing craps on the Strip in Vegas, let it suffice to say that if I hadn't started working on the other side of the table pretty soon, one or two of my gambling buddies would probably have turned into ex-buddies. It's a friendly town, as long as you're winning.

There's a lot of sayings about people who try to make it big in the gambling world. My favourite is 'You can't cheat an honest man'.

Honest folk know better than to try to make it rich in one go. They know that if you are going to make it, it's going to be through hard work and crafty investment. Not through the hazardous roll of a set of dice, or the random flip of a face card or where a little ball is going to

land. I know it too.

It's not what you know, but who you blow, y'know? Fat Maxie Rosen, a kind of a friend of a friend, got me my first introduction for an audition at the Jolly Cable Car on the east-end of the Strip. The Car is what's known as a 'break-in' joint between us dealers. Somewhere that they let brand new dealers work until they're good enough to go to a better casino. It's also a serious dive. Fat Maxie was some friend.

'Let me see what you can do, kid,' Sam, the pitboss, growled through his grotesquely-chewed cigar butt. 'Tap out the stickman.'

Sam gave me my first audition and you'd have sworn by the nerves jingling up and down my arms that I was trying out for a position with the Royal Shakespeare Company instead of this topless strip bar-cum-casino.

The lights are intense, glaring on every part of the table, cameras are trained on every move. All of those mirrors that you see only reflect one way, letting someone watch without being seen.

Break-in joints are favourites for the

professional gambler. The real professional gambler, not those dandy-types who strut around with a girl on either arm, a wad of cash in their pockets and a bet on every table.

The real professional has already lost everything he had but the bare necessities of life. He might live in a crummy one-room apartment, maybe over a bar, or maybe his neighbours are hookers and junkies.

Wherever he lives, you can bet that it's a hole that he doesn't spend much time in. The real professional spends his time, money and passion on the tables, saving each for the next time he gets a chance to roll dem bones, the dice.

I was lucky on my professional debut, I only made six mistakes in twenty minutes. The boxman, sitting opposite me on the table, saw all six and fixed them before the next roll. He and the pitboss talked about me for a couple of minutes while I sort of hung around the bar, waiting for their verdict.

'Luca? That your name, kid?' Sammy asked.

'Yeah?'

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'You start tomorrow. Noontime. Be sharp, and be on time.'

I had my first job as a dealer! I could play my games and get paid for it! There wasn't much more heaven or earth could grant me which would have made me happier. My luck had turned just as my creditors seemed to have turned a little nasty.

I went out that night to celebrate with a friend of mine, Sandy, who's also a dealer. She worked one of the big houses in the centre of the Strip, one of the ones you always hear about on TV. She also pretty much looked and acted like a million dollars.

## **'He'd just lost twenty-five cents without having had a chance to give them away himself, and he was ready to kill for it.'**



After a few months at the Car, I became pretty good at dealing. My jittery hands settled down and I learned to work automatically, while busying my mind on something a little less tedious than watching the dice roll up the table. Then back down.

I was in one of these daydreams, probably the one about me sitting by my own pool-side, surrounded by beautiful women, all of us drinking champagne and having a hell of a good time, when somebody on the table raised his voice above what I'd come to expect as normal for that game.

One of the regulars, I called him Liverlips because of the way he always licked his big, red lips when he rolled the dice, had called the fellow next to him a cheat. Said he'd picked up Lips' twenty-five cent chip, or 'check' as they're known. If true, that was stealing as sure as if the man had held up a convenience store. To us, the amount didn't matter so much as the breach of the rules.

Liverlips, a little low on cash, didn't give a monkey's backside about the rules, which he'd happily have broken given the chance. He'd just lost twenty-five cents without having had the chance to give them away himself, and he was ready to kill for it. He pushed the other man, shouting for him to give the 'check' back.

The other fellow, professing innocence all the while, didn't give old Liverlips another chance to push him. He pulled out a knife and waved it threateningly at anyone near enough to be threatened. When Liverlips pulled out of his coat what looked for all the world like a pistol from where I was standing, I didn't keep standing for long. I ducked under the table to let the casino security musclemen stop this clash of geriatric obsessive gamblers. When it was obvious that Liverlips had been subdued, I got off the floor.

'You're fired,' the boxman told me as I was brushing off my dealer's apron.

In a town where money's the life-blood of everything, a place that wouldn't even

be inhabited if it weren't for gambling, I had committed the second cardinal sin. The first was stealing, the second allowing someone the opportunity to steal.

Of course he was right, by gambler's standards. I had left the table unattended while protecting my backside. A blasphemy in the dealers' code. I'd broken the rules, and was ceremoniously escorted out right behind Liverlips and his fellow combatant.

Losing your job in a few seconds is enough to make a man feel low, but losing it at a joint as pitiful as the Car and ending up in the same back alley as Liverlips is enough to make a man suicidal. The two old farts started to argue over whose quarter it was, and began to push and shove again.

'Shut up, you old bastards!' I had to yell or I was sure I'd murder them on the spot.

'I saw you put that check down deliberately in front of him, trying to create a foul,' I shouted at Liverlips. 'You knew he'd pick it up on the next roll, so fuck off! I just lost my job.'

'Shouldn't 'a ducked, sonny.' Liverlips, now calmed down, cackled in my general direction. The other old coot saw that there wasn't going to be any more action and started down the alley towards the next house he was likely to get thrown out of.

Liverlips looked even more decayed in the full glare of sunlight than he did under the permanent twilight of a casino's interior. He looked younger, but that only made it twice as bad.

You could forgive an old man for not having every tooth in his mouth, or for having a twisted backbone, or maybe for having World War One trenches dug deep into the surface of his face. You could even forgive an old man for having crooked, claw-like hands and dirty fingernails, the fingers' leanness exaggerating the length of each bent talon. But looking at the man, or through him, anybody would have been hard pressed to put his age beyond forty-five. He wasn't an old man, he was a man made old.

'Yeah, well fuck you, you old bastard! I don't have a job because of your penny-ante cheating. Get out of my way.'

'You don't need a job, sonny,' he said to me, whispering-like. I thought that his bent frame swayed a little in my direction, 'Nope. Not a boy like you. Don't need a job in a joint like this, anyways.'

'I guess you know the pitboss at one of the better houses in town?' I asked him sarcastically. I'd stopped walking after I'd gotten maybe three feet in front of him. I was a little curious.

I'd spent weeks watching Liverlips gamble, sometimes insanely, sometimes conservatively. He never won much, but, come to think of it, I couldn't remember him leaving the place losing. If memory served my 21-year-old mind, Liverlips should have quietly stashed some tidy little nest-egg.

'No, I don't know anybody who'll give you a job. I might've been able to get you in the Bilton once, but they threw me out years ago. sonny, I'm talkin' 'bout gamblin' for a livin.' Again, his stick-like body seemed to sway towards me without moving. I imagined I could hear old joints snapping as they were called into use. The little frame shrunk even deeper

into itself, as he spoke.

'I know how to gamble,' I told him. 'What can you teach me? I need to win, and win big.'

'You're thinkin' peanuts. I'm talkin' 'bout real gamblin'. A thousand dollars a roll!'

'Where would I come up with that kind of money?' The old bastard was starting to get on my nerves, but he was playing every gambler's tune; winning big.

'You win it,' he hissed.

'Thanks, but I got a place to go and a beer calling my name. Try not to get swept up with the rest of the garbage when they come to empty the dumpster.'

Old Liverlips reached out and touched my shoulder. 'You can't lose!' He spat out the words like snake poison.

Call it imagination or whatever, but when that dirty, crooked old hand swept over my shoulder I felt something. It was strong, stomach-deep revulsion. The way you'd feel shaking hands with a cold fish. There was something else in what he said. 'Can't lose!' echoed inside my head.

'So how?' I asked him. For whatever reason, even beyond the dream of winning or the fear of those I owed money to, I stayed put to hear him out.

'You'll have to come to my place.' He began shambling up the alleyway, towards the street. 'Now,' he said, still walking.

I was right behind him, beginning to dance to a different piper.

Can't lose! I thought as he drove me to his shabby apartment block in the nasty side of north Vegas.

His one-roomed apartment was everything I might have thought of, and less. It wouldn't have surprised me if there had been a nest of scorpions taking a forward post from the desert in his armchair. The smoke-stained curtains hung limply from their rod, spitefully holding back the brightness of the sun.

He sat down into the folds of the chair, either confident of the lifelessness of its filling, or long since immune to the stings. There was maybe four feet between us. Less than I would have liked.

'My name's Jimmy Huelete, pleased t' meetcha.' He stretched the crooked fingers out to offer me his hand.

I couldn't refuse, although I wanted to, and I took the claw in my own hand, grasping it gently so as not to break anything. 'Paul Luca.'

'Got a proposition for ya.'

'What are you talking about?'

'Yeah, I got somethin' for ya,' he said, slumping a little deeper into that grey chair. I had the feeling that it would swallow him up if he relaxed any more.

'Something good. But you only want to know if I can show you how to win. Don't ya?' He reached over to his left wrist and began tugging on the intricately-carved leather band of his watch.

Finally loosening the clasp, he held out the mechanical timepiece in his palm. It was gold encased, with diamonds on the quarter hour. The hands seemed to be made of delicately-laced silver. Unlike any other part of Liverlips, the watch looked in perfect condition.

'I'll trade it to you,' he said quietly, not looking up from the perfect piece of



metal in his hands. 'You might call it my good-luck charm.'

'I don't need luck like this,' I told him bluntly. It couldn't have passed his notice that he was living like a bum, that everything attached to him had seen better days.

'This is a different kind of luck. This is for others.' Again, he seemed to exhale a little bit of his life, sinking deeper into the chair. His eyes remained alert, now riveted on me.

'You can give other people good luck?' I asked him, getting ready to leave.

He was over the bend, I was sure now. I had only to get out of my chair and walk through that door. Only five paces, at the most.

'Can't lose, sonny,' he cackled again. 'I only got to pull the stem and twist it, then whatever you're trying to do, you'll win. Or lose if I twist it the other way. Only works once on a body, but I can prove it.'

Reaching across the table, he grabbed a beat-up deck of cards. 'Now, take these cards and shuffle 'em up. Try to deal a pair.'

I started to laugh. Did this old fool expect me to believe that his watch was going to make me deal a pair? I leaned forward, took the deck of cards and shuffled. I turned the cards over, one at a time, face up, until a pair of deuces came up. About the twelfth card.

'Now do it again.' The old man's eyes were wild-looking, his hands were shaking and his breath came in short gasps. He gripped the set-stem and twisted it. I couldn't make out in what direction.

I started to shuffle, then twitched, the room went brilliant white, then settled back down. A little nervous, I dealt the cards.

The first card over was the Jack of Spades, the second was the Jack of Hearts. Liverlips was biting and tonguing his lips for all he was worth, his bony fingers were screwed up on the stem of that watch and he stared at my hands as if witnessing a miracle. I thought I saw the left corner of his mouth twist upwards when he saw that Jack.

I tried again, shuffling with the most effective technique I knew. The first card was an Ace of Clubs, the second an Ace of Diamonds.

'You can't lose with this,' he leered as his point drove into my mind. Then he leaned forward from the depths of that musty old chair and showed me the instrument close-up.

I pushed towards him, sensing something going on beyond what I was seeing. He wouldn't let me touch it, but held it out on the palm of his hand. I could barely make it out on that twitching limb, but it glowed.

'How much?' I asked, already calculating how I could bet with other dice players as they rolled. One at a time, table by table, working my way to the big casinos. I could clean up.

'It isn't for sale,' the craggy voice coughed up. 'When you have it, I want you to do something for me.' He hacked and grabbed at his skinny chest, for all the world like he was going to die right on the spot. A few noisy moments later, he got his breath back.

'What is it you want me to do?' I got back down to business.

He smiled his despicable, chipped-

tooth grin. 'I want you to help me kill myself.'

He was loco, alright, I guess I had known that from the beginning. But that watch...

'Why should I do that? You've got to give me the watch or I'll blab all over town. You'll be blackballed in a minute. There's nothing you can do, you've already used it on me.'

Surprisingly, he handed over the watch as if I'd just called his bluff. No grumbles, no bitches, he just handed me the watch. I felt it, still warm from his own hand, as the finely-carved case lay still in the centre of my palm. I wrapped my fingers over it, smiling at the pathetic fool in front of me. Strangely, he smiled back.

'It only works for thirty seconds. Not a long time, but if you're smart, it'll make you a fortune. Use it sparingly, it draws from you. Use it like me, and you end up like me. I'm right next to dyin' an' ain't got much time. There's nothing I can do 'bout that. I want you to help me kill myself before I waste away.' The old guy's face was greying by the minute. He probably would have been better off dead.

I thought about what the old coward was saying. Thirty seconds was plenty. In a matter of weeks I'd be rich as a bitch. I wanted to get started right away.

I strapped on the mechanism and turned to leave. 'Bye, old man,' was all I said, then I walked out of the stuffy confines of his apartment into the oven-like sunshine of noontime Vegas. Last I saw of old Liverlips, he was sunk in that chair, smiling that cat's smile.

The band fitted me perfectly. The mechanism pressed warmly on the back of my wrist, almost like a considerate nurse taking your pulse. It was that kind of soft feeling.

I laid low for a while to see what developed. The watch felt so natural, I didn't even take it off. Ever. It must have been waterproof because I'd been swimming, in the bath and in the shower with it. I didn't want to risk losing it.

I never did hear from the old man again, maybe he kicked off. I decided to get back down to business. A few weeks' later, I called up Sandy and asked her if she wanted to go out, my treat.

'Are you sure you can afford it, Paul?' she asked, as only a friend would.

'We can pick up some money in the casino,' I told her confidently. 'Then we can hit the show at the Plaza, and have dinner at the Skymark.'

'Paul, have you hit a lucky streak?' She was getting excited.

Everyone in the gambling trade was there to make money. The thought of money motivated people. Sandy liked me, but my voice must have sounded like the ring of a cash register to her.

'I'll pick you up in a few minutes. Put on your glad-rags, we're going out for a night to remember.'



Within an hour, Paul and Sandy were sniffing around the high-roller tables of the Plaza. He was looking for a table which had broken out the pink-coloured thousand dollar 'checks'.

They manoeuvred themselves up against the far left belly-level rail of the

centre table. Nervously, Paul pulled out a thousand dollar wadge of money and, waiting for the dice to come to the middle, put the money to the dealer to change into 'checks'.

'Change for one thousand,' the cool dealer announced to his boxman, handing him the money.

The dice were thrust to the person currently rolling a point and the man shook, then rolled the dice across the table.

'Four, four. The hard way four! Pays field bets and long-shots,' the stickman called. Then, sweeping the dice back into the long-shot box, he announced: 'Point of five, place your come, hard-way and don'ts. All bets down? They roll!' He swept them back in front of the same roller.

### **'The smoke-stained curtains hung limply from their rod, spitefully holding back the brightness of the sun.'**

Paul twisted the stem of his watch, and put five hundred on the come line. If the man rolled a five, Paul would double his money.

The roller picked up his dice and almost went white with shock, only for a second. It was as if somebody had plugged him into a high-volt battery. Just for a second. Then a smile crept up on his stone features. He was gonna roll dem bones!

'C'mon, where's shoes! A three and a two!' He shouted as the dice flew across the table. They bounced and banged themselves silly, one spinning on its corner until it finally overbalanced and fell flat.

'Four and one! Five a winner!' the stickman called. 'Pay the line, pull the don'ts. Field is down.' He dragged the dice back to the centre of the hard-way block.

'You won!' Sandy, amazed at his luck, jumped up and down and kissed him full on his smooth, dry lips.

He felt good, too. He'd won! But something had hit him like a hammer on his knuckles, just when that guy had picked up the dice. A sharp jab of pain. It was already receding.

He thought wildly to look around to see who had hit him, but even before he could, he knew that it had come from inside. He looked at the watch Liverlips had given him.

Paul aggressively reached down to take the dice, could almost feel his arms being tugged onto the table. He looked around, confusion warping his features. It wasn't even his roll! He pulled his hands from the table and backed away nervously. He wanted to gamble, God, did he want to gamble!

At the sweep of the dice, Paul collected his winnings and cashed in the 'checks' at the cashier. He needed to get a hold on himself. He needed some air. The boxman looked disapprovingly at the gambler who'd hit and run. He'd remember that face.

The evening went pretty much as planned. The ache in Paul's hand dulled,





never disappearing. He didn't eat many of the rare culinary delights presented to him. Also, he wasn't much company.

'Are you sure you're OK?,' Sandy asked several times throughout the meal.

'Yeah,' he would smile back in answer. 'I'm just fine. Got a little ache in my hand, that's all.' He ran his tongue soothingly over his lips. Even they were a little itchy.

The date went well enough, and he kissed Sandy when he dropped her off at her apartment.

### **'Heat pulsed up and down his arms, fever gripped his mind. Paul's eyes narrowed on the faces of those two dice.'**

'Do you want to come in and keep a lonely lady company?' she asked him suggestively.

'No thanks,' he said with some distraction. 'I've got some things to do.' Paul didn't notice that he was nervously chewing on his lower lip, or that his tongue had flicked out for a second, then disappeared.

An urge, like an old friend, pulled and tugged at his sleeve. He wanted to hit the tables, could feel the draw, but this time the friend was stronger. Much, much stronger.

He made his best excuses and drove out to try his luck at the oldest, best-known casino on the Strip, Nero's. They gambled with no limits, if you could afford the stakes. Paul had the best part of thirteen hundred dollars. That should be enough to get him to the table.



He watched as the dice were passed from player to player. Finally, he laid his bet with the guy directly across from him. The point was established at nine. Paul put one thousand dollars on the come line, his hand aching feverishly, his tongue flickering nervously. Sweat beaded his brow.

The man picked up the dice and, like before, a funny look came into his eyes, just as Paul twisted the stem of the watch. The dice rolled a five.

Five? He wondered to himself. Had Liverlips pulled a fast one on him?

The stickman pulled the dice back to the centre of the table, made his calls, then passed them to the thrower. Paul's heart thundered as the man shook the dice in one hand. Sweat slicked on his upper lip, he nibbled at his lower.

The dice flew across the table and Paul's heart seemed to have stopped for that magic moment. Everything seemed to stop but that throbbing pain in his hand. His eyes focussed on the flash of red dice as they rushed past him on a fatal collision course. They cascaded down the felt.

'Nine, nine. Point of nine. Pay the field, come bets, and pick up the don'ts.'

One of the base dealers sized up a thousand dollars next to Paul's pile of 'checks'. He nearly whooped with joy, but his hand! And now the other began

to burn. His breathing hissed in and out. In and out. He only saw the dice.

Must be nerves, he thought distractedly. All that money! I'm not used to things going this good. Probably over excited.

He couldn't leave the table. Heat pulsed up and down his arms, fever gripped his mind. Paul's eyes narrowed on the faces of those two dice. He grinned, licking his lips, sweat dripping down the creases of his face.

Paul passed on betting for a few turns as one thrower crapped out after another. His hands were being strangled off his wrists in a set of dull, merciless jaws. He tried to massage them but that only made the pain worse. Funny, his left thumb seemed OK.

Some brash, blue-haired, busty old lady grabbed the dice aggressively as they were passed to her. She blew on them for luck and Paul waited to see if she would establish a point or throw a natural.

'Ten, ten. Point of ten,' the stick announced after she'd rolled.

But he already knew that. He saw the dice, watched them with the eyes of a predator as they flashed across the table. The action was heating up. The tongue flickered.

Paul put his two thousand dollars on the come line with her. He twisted the watch with nervous, quaking fingers. He only saw the red dice, everything disappeared in a haze of red.

Almost manically, her eyes lit up. Teeth bared aggressively, she threw the dice.

'Nine, nine,' the stick called.

Paul's hands exploded in agony. Hot flashes of white danced up his fingers. With twisted knuckles, he threw a hundred dollar 'check' out to cover ten-the-hard-way, five and five, which paid eight to one. His tongue flicked in and out of his mouth, smearing his lips in spittle.

The blue-haired woman blew on her dice, shook them vigorously and let them fly. The table grew silent for a second which lasted all night. The dice bounced and twizzled against the far rebound wall, smashing through a pile of 'checks' in the field. They settled at five and five.

'Ten a winner! To the lucky lady! Pay the field, come bets and hard-ways!'

Paul's hands submerged themselves in a hot vat of acid. His mind, reeling from the pain, still saw every detail of the flight of the cubical dice. In slow motion, they floated past him, blazing trails of red blood behind, careering off the pile of 'checks', then settling, inevitably, on ten. In delirium, Paul looked at the table. The money, the power of his winning!

Sweat pouring off his brow, his shakey hand reached across the table to collect his winnings. Drool slipped off the corner of his raw, chewed lip, landing on the table.

The dull pain in his right hand sharpened during the feverish excitement. The jaws had teeth. His left hand became nearly paralysed. Even his good thumb now screamed in protest. Hot, blue electric pain kept him aware, alert, watching those red, cold dice. He couldn't control his tongue. It lapped out, flicking the air, waving for another roll of dem bones.

Paul couldn't take it. Two more rolls from the old blue-haired society woman and even that over-powering urge suc-

cumbed to agony. He collected his winnings of nearly 33 hundred dollars and went into the lounge for a drink and hopefully some aspirin. He hurt terribly, was burning in fever, but felt the pull of the tables through it all.

Three whiskies later, the aches were reduced to the now familiar throb. On his fifth, he wiped a hand across his face. It came away bloody. He'd bitten, chewed and lapped so much at his lips that they had begun to bleed. It didn't stop him.



Sandy went to visit Paul around four the next afternoon, to see how he was. He'd refused her bed, which he'd been trying to gain since they'd first met. He must have been feeling rotten, or have been really bitten by the gambling fever.

She knocked on the front door, noticing that all the curtains were pulled shut at his windows. It was quiet inside.

Did he come home at all? she wondered. She knocked again, louder, with more insistence.

'Go away!' a voice snapped through the door.

'Paul? It's Sandy. Are you alright? How's your hand? Did you go out again last night? Let me in, it's OK!' She banged on the door some more.

'I won!' he giggled from the other side of the door. His voice whispered as if too raw from drink and smoke. 'I won thousands. I can't lose!'

'That's great. Let me in, I want to see you.'

The door cracked open, then he pulled it all the way from behind. She came into the dark interior of his small, but neatly-furnished apartment. Both of Paul's hands were heavily bandaged, he walked with a funny sort of shuffling limp. Despite the darkness when he shut the door behind her, he wore sunglasses.

Must have been out late or maybe got involved in an accident. Probably drinking, Sandy surmised, smelling the stale alcohol on his breath and seeing the state of his hands.

'I won thousands,' he repeated in that coarse, raw-throated whisper. She sat down in his chair, opposite him in the room. Her eyes eventually became adjusted to the dimness.

'Have you been in an accident?' she asked. 'What happened to your hands? And you legs?'

'I'm rich,' the young man said, stumbling over the words.

She didn't know if he was hearing her. She noticed the skin on his face, rougher than it should have been, flaking, scaly, as if he'd been badly burned. There was a sheen around his mouth, his tongue flicked constantly over the cracked lips.

'Are you alright?' She stood and walked towards him. He shuffled away from her, in a curious swaying motion, going into the kitchen. More a shifting of weight from one leg to the other than walking. His feet hardly separated.

'I won on the dice table. You saw me win!' he shouted, over-loud, nearly hysterical, slurring his words. 'I didn't get it! I didn't get it until I won all that money. I won on five! Five!' he shouted, raising a bandaged hand.

'I was with you, Paul, I saw it,' said Sandy, watching him.



'Five was my hand,' he croaked. 'I won on nine next. A thousand dollars!' he hissed through the flickering tongue. Both hands waved in front of his seemingly unbalanced body. He sat heavily on one of the kitchen chairs.

'Then ten. The fat old bitch rolled a ten.' He buried his head in his bandaged hands. 'Over three grand! I made over three grand! But my hands! I didn't get it!'

Sandy, seeing that he needed more help than she could give, backed a step away from the sobbing man. His breath came in wet gasps, as if something was in the way of him getting air.

**'Have you been in an accident?' she asked. 'What happened to your hands? And your legs?'**

'I didn't like her, the blue-haired, old society bitch. She was fat, didn't know what she was doing. I bet against her and turned the watch the other way.'

'What watch?' she asked him, trying to remain calm, to soothe him until she could get out of there and call a doctor.

'The watch I got from Liverlips. He told me it worked from the person who wore it.' His speech grew worse with every word, as if he was sobbing, unable to control an alien tongue.

'Who?' she asked, not understanding. 'He gave me the lucky watch.' Paul raised his head to look at her. Slowly, one hand moved towards the sunglasses.

Sandy looked on, as his feet shuffled back and forth in unison. They moved liquidly from side to side, undulating hypnotically.

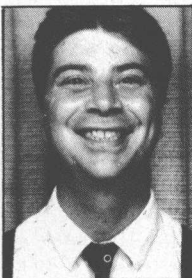
In the brighter kitchen, his skin seemed to take on a strange, oily sheen. Cracked, blistered scales sweating rivers. The lips were swollen and torn, a trickle of blood got lapped up by that quicksilver tongue.

'I bet against her. I didn't like her, and I won!' he cackled. 'Craps! She crapped out!' He laughed uncontrollably.

The tongue twisted freely, wildly, in the air in front of him. The feet swung nervously, back and forth under the chair, never separating. Almost writhing. Back and forth.

'I'm going to go now, Paul.' Sandy backed out towards the living room.

'She crapped out and I won!' he repeated, as if she hadn't heard his screech. His hand reached up to the glasses and pulled them off. 'Snake eyes! The bitch rolled snake eyes!' he hissed as she turned to run out the front door.



**G J Ricci** — who himself was once a Vegas dealer — is 33 years old and married. He grew up in northern New Jersey, USA, and now lives in Rugby. He has always been interested in horror and fantasy, and has written for pleasure since he was six, always in the horror genre. His first story was *The Black Castle*, which he wrote in 1966.

# FICTION FILE 51

## CAMPBELL BLACK

**What's in a name? Campbell Black talks to John Gilbert about pseudonyms, success and Stateside heroes.**

The novelist's nightmare: To write a series of staggeringly successful thrillers under a pseudonym. It has happened to Campbell Black, a Scottish author who is well-known (as Campbell Armstrong) for writing books such as *Jig*, *Mazurka* and the recently released *Agents of Darkness*, while his lesser-known horror/mystery novels have appeared under his own name. 'I had to use Campbell Armstrong when I started because I had a problem with a former publisher and was under option as Campbell Black,' he says. 'I wanted to move and the only way I could do it was by adopting a pseudonym.'

Such shenanigans could lead to confusion now that his 1986 horror novel *The Wanting* has just been published by Mandarin under his real name. Writing as Campbell Black, the author has, until now, seen print in Britain only through imports of his American releases — not all of which have been horror novels. It seems a shame, because he has written so many good genre books under the Campbell Black banner.

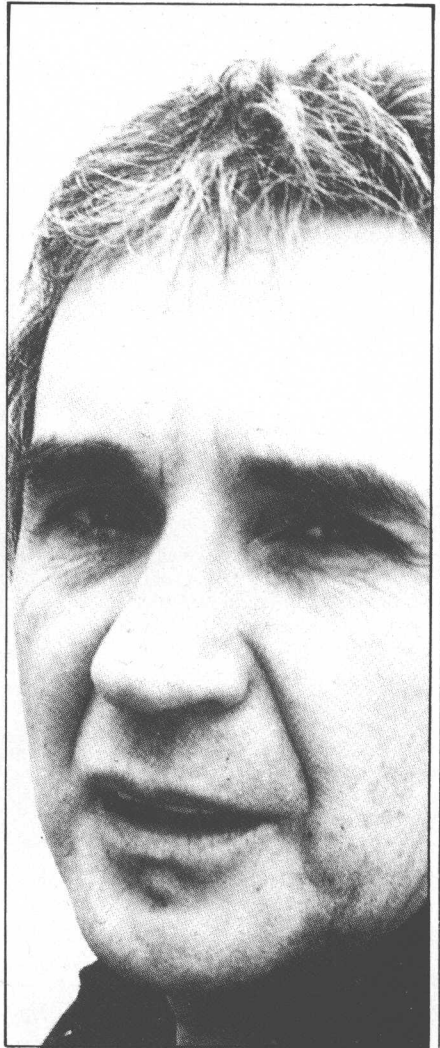
'My first Campbell Black book was published in 1968, a black comedy called *Assassins and Victims*. Then there were a couple of other books that were not in any genre and after that I went to America. I wrote a cold/psychic war novel called *Brainfire* under the name of Armstrong, and I dropped the name Black.'

Campbell now splits his time between America and his Scottish home in Dundee, from where his bestsellers continue to stream.

Despite his Scottish background, Campbell found it easy to adapt to the US style of thriller-writing, and to American dialogue. 'It took a few years, because they have so much slang, but it came. When I'm in America I don't hear the accent, but when I'm writing in Scotland it sometimes gets difficult to remember and I'm tempted to write with a Scottish dialect.'

His sudden immersion in American culture has enabled him to discover why the British prefer American thrillers and horror novels to homegrown versions. 'Everybody here wants to visit America. We were all brought up on American cinema and American heroes whereas our heroes, like Sherlock Holmes and James Bond, have never exported well. We've also never exported anything like a Rambo.'

Most readers also prefer their thrillers to be served with a high degree of gadgetry and technical know-how, as in books such as Tom Clancy's *The Hunt For Red October*. Campbell can provide such offerings, but he prefers to write about 'what is in a char-



acter's heart rather than what is in his hand.'

'I think Clancy is a bit over the top. I'm not interested in gadgets, they're a terrible drag for me. I don't care how a submarine works. In some ways it does give the reader a privileged insight into the workings of such things, but it also stops the action. I'd rather know about the character and his limitations.'

Campbell's most famous character, and the star of *Jig*, *Mazurka* and *Mambo*, is counter-terrorist expert Frank Pagan, but he is leaving him behind in his next three novels. The first book is 'built around the events surrounding Robert Kennedy's assassination: It's about obsessive love and LSD. At the time of the assassination, the CIA used a lot of young people by flooding the streets with drugs. Some of those young people did not come back. Now we're 20 years on, someone is trying to piece it all together and they find a connection with the Kennedy assassination.'

Sounds like another bestseller but, with Campbell's track record, that's not a difficult prediction to make.



# Flamingo Villa

Lynne H Sharp

**H**ey lady, how ya doin'? Yo wanna start my day off good? A set of gleaming white teeth beamed at me over the hedge which divided Flamingo Villa from the beach. I owned the villa — a youth of sixteen with smooth, ebony skin that glistened beneath the heat of the Bahamian sun, owned the teeth.

Over his left arm and around his broad shoulders hung a selection of T-shirts. The words 'HEY MON!' — almost the national slogan — caught my eye first. Everyone on the island possessed at least one 'HEY MON' T-shirt; I myself owned several. Then I saw the other T-shirts. 'COME AND GET LADE' they screamed, and I grinned at the cheeky spelling. Chance would be a fine thing.

'They're different,' I said to the youngster. 'Haven't seen those before.'

'Yo wanna buy one, Mam?' he asked eagerly.

'No, sorry. Not today.'

His face fell.

'What abo' these?'

He shoved his right arm towards me. It was completely covered by swirls of brightly-coloured beads, strung together to form cheap necklaces and anklets. They jingled and jangled against each other at the boy's sudden movement.

I sighed and started to turn away. I'd lived there a long time and should have known better.

'No, thanks. I'm not buying today.'

'Sheesh, Mam,' he suddenly breathed. 'Thass some fine house yo got there.'

I was hooked.

I felt my face broaden. Twice so far this lad had made me grin. It suddenly occurred to me that I hadn't done that in an awfully long while.

Following his gaze, I turned to admire my home as I had done so many times before.

Flamingo Villa — my first impressions of the house came flooding back to me with a rush of recognition, as vivid as though I was seeing her again for the first time. I recalled how my artist's eye had appreciated Flamingo Villa's precise symmetrical lines. I was struck yet again by the frivolous pink stucco walls; this almost outrageous contrast beside portly, but oh-so-elegant, white colonial columns and shuttered windows. I had fallen in love with the villa from the moment Gerald's Great Aunt Jessie had bequeathed the house to us in her will.

Gerald had gleefully sold his dental practice and I had given up a none-too-promising career in journalism. Together, we had fled England without so much as a backward glance.

'Time to indulge myself,' I'd said to Gerald. 'To be with you, to be able to paint to my heart's content.'

He'd agreed as he kissed me and held me close. 'Time to find our own place in the sun.'

But everything in life costs. Aunt Jess had said that once on one of her flying visits to England. I hadn't understood then. Too young, I suspect. But I certainly did now. If I'd known, I might never have set foot on that plane.

However, that was in the past. Now all I had left was Flamingo Villa, the home I loved more fiercely, more possessively than ever. There was more here than met the eye, some deeper meaning which went beyond the pretty location, the glorious colour. Flamingo Villa had an air of silent mystery, an aura full of hidden secrets which I knew I had yet to discover. Yet she seemed to guard them all so well — as my failed attempts at unlocking her secrets testified. Hundreds of canvasses lay spreadeagled across the cellar floor. There was Flamingo Villa painted at break of dawn, Flamingo Villa under slick silvery moonlight. I'd also tried painting my home in the searing brilliance of noon-day sun. Always, always trying to catch a glimpse of that mystical quality I sensed so strongly yet couldn't quite capture.

'Hey, Mam, yo listenin' to me?'

The boy's voice made me jump.

'Lookee here, I gotta l'il brother to feed, gimme a break, will ya, Mam?'

'Sorry. Miles away.'

'Yo gonna buy somethin' or not, Mam?'

It was an honest question, asked without rancour or hostility.

That's the Bahamian way, I thought. Everyone so relaxed, polite, so...so...lade back! Maybe that's why I'd missed all the signs. Or had the heat addled my brain? So many maybes. Maybe I was just too damned stupid to notice, I thought bitterly. A burnt copper-coloured dragonfly whizzed neatly past my ear. I flicked it away.

'Beautiful, ain't they?' said the boy, following its flight path with his eyes.

'What's your name?'

'I'm Linberth an' this here's Ellsworth.' He stepped to one side and nudged the small child forward. 'C'mon,

Ellsworth. Don' yo be shy now. Say mornin' to the nice lady.'

A thin child of about ten years slowly appeared. He'd been completely hidden by his elder brother and I hadn't noticed him at all. But when I did I felt my mouth go dry.

A piece of light grey gauze covered the lower half of Ellsworth's face. A slit had been crudely sliced where his mouth was supposed to be. And two further strips of material were tied in a knot behind his head holding the makeshift mask together.

His eyes, however, were clearly visible above the mask. And what eyes they were. Two enormous, brown velvet 'O's stared eerily back at me, crying soundlessly: 'I'm trapped, help me, free me.' They were so full of pain, so full of suffering that I was forcefully reminded of Munch's painting *The Scream*. Suddenly, I saw something else reflected in those circles. Another kind of pain. And I knew it for my own. Somehow, this young boy had touched something deep in my soul. I stared, my eyes locked into his. And felt vulnerable, raw inside.

Time slipped silently by as Ellsworth slowly untied the gauze and showed me his scars. It was I who averted my eyes first. I gazed out to sea, towards that vast, calm, turquoise sheet which drew so many people down to explore its depths.

'What happened?' I whispered.

With eyes narrowed against the sun, I tried to make out the figures in the distance. Today, unusually, there were only two divers. I wondered who they could be. And then, a sudden movement and the bodies separated, disentangled themselves from each other. At that moment, I recognised them. It was Gerald. Gerald and his new love, Lona.

Wherever I looked it seemed I found pain. I turned sharply back to the brothers and said again 'What happened to your brother's face?'

'Fire,' said Linberth. 'Ellsworth shy. He don' like people starin' at the scars so he wear the mask. He muss like yo if he show yo his face.'

I reached out, stroked the welts and ridges which criss-crossed like tramlines over the child's cheeks.

'Fire? What fire?'

'Couple o' years back,' sighed Linberth. He turned, pointing towards Nassau. 'Yo know St Andrew's? Chapel near the fish market?'

'Yes.' Then I remembered reading about it in the papers. 'An English priest died in that fire, didn't he?'

'Yeah. Father George,' said Linberth. He hesitated. 'An' our parents.'

Gerald and I had been frequent visitors to the chapel in those early days and it was just before that fire, at one of Father George's social events, that Gerald had met Lona.

Lona was a statuesque beauty who bewitched all around her. I loathed that strutting bitch because she had stolen my man and destroyed my dreams. Lona, on the other hand, had possessed her own dreams and ambitions. She was a talented fashion designer whose creations were as chic and sophisticated as she herself was. Talent, beauty, ambition — Lona had it all.

Except a wealthy backer to make it all happen, I thought acidly. Why else



choose such an ordinary man as Gerald? He wasn't particularly handsome. He was even a bit paunchy. Decidedly ordinary was Gerald. But rich.

Two years on, and the pain still squeezed, still clawed at my heart. I would never forgive either of them. Heavens above, was I never to be free of this misery? This hatred? You were right, Aunt Jess, I thought suddenly. Everything does cost.

I still had Flamingo Villa, though. Unlike the boys in front of me who had nothing.

'Your parents?'

'Uhuh. Pa was Father George's gardener an' Ma tended the house.'

'How did it happen?'

'Hey, listen up, Mam,' Linberth said good-naturedly. 'Yo gonna start my day off good or not?'

He dangled the beads and T-shirts at me again.

'Normal, I charge \$20, but fo' yo special price. Only \$18.'

'No-one really know how the fire started,' Ellsworth hisped suddenly through the slit in the mask. 'Think it were Ma's fault. She cookin' conch shell in the kitchen.' He shrugged his skinny shoulders.

'Range caught fi', guess. Pa came runnin' in fr Ma an' they was both kil't. Father George got me an' Linberth out, then went back for Ma and Pa but got hit hisself by a fallin' rafter.'

I nodded sympathetically. It suddenly became very important that I help these boys in any way I could. But I knew I had to be careful. Past experience had taught me how proud the Bahamians were.

'What's in there?' I asked, pointing to the leather, tubular contraption tied lightly across Ellsworth's back.

'They's paintin's, Ellsworth's ART,' said Linberth proudly.

'You paint?' I asked the youngster.

He nodded.

'May I look?'

Reluctantly, the child spread out his work.

'Yo'll like this 'un,' said Linberth excitedly, pointing to a portrait of Ellsworth wearing the mask. 'See the background', Mam? Thass yo house. Ellsworth paint it yesterday, cos he like the house too.'

Yesterday? I hadn't seen the boys yesterday. And why hadn't they mentioned the painting first? But then I thought, what did it matter? The painting was good. The masked boy formed its central, focal point, while Flamingo Villa stood small, somewhat shadowy, in the background. I liked it even though it was slightly out of perspective. It had something I couldn't quite put my finger on.

Ellsworth touched my hand and said solemnly: 'Yo buy it, Mam, wish on it an' all yo dreams'll come true, I swear.'

How intriguing. I smiled, noting that was the third time in one day. I decided to play along. 'Good or bad, Ellsworth?'

'Both, Mam. An' I ain' kiddin'. Yo be careful with this paintin'. Po'ful magic in there.'

Ellsworth's 'po'ful magic' was reasonably priced at \$25.

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The transaction over, I walked into the kitchen. There was Gerald's

spare scuba equipment, alongside of which I placed the painting. Hanging on the wall was my husband's black wet-suit and my fingers, as though with a mind of their own, lingered longingly over it. Fresh images of the good times we'd had together raced chaotically through my mind; tears not far behind them. I looked at the knife Gerald usually attached to the side of his rubber shoes when he went down. I found myself caressing the blue webbed fins, fingering the lung's air pressure gauge. It's over, I thought. I'll never get him back. I must accept that and get on with my life.

It occurred to me that I might lose Flamingo Villa too. And with that fear-some thought, my fingers tightened around the air gauge. Appalled by what came into my mind, I quickly pulled my hand away.

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That night in my bedroom, I dreamed. Dreamed as usual of Gerald and Lona. Diving, snorkelling, making love. Everything we had done together before the bitch had appeared on the scene. Later still, I awoke from a nightmare of such intensity that I let out an anguished scream that curdled and churned up the empty, silent night. It was by far the worst nightmare I'd had since Gerald had left.

'May you both burn in hell!' I screamed wildly. 'Burn in hell...burn in hell.' I sobbed bitterly, the perspiration coursing down my cheeks.

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Next morning, though, the sun still shone and all was as before. I almost forgot the horror of the previous night, especially when Gerald put in one of his unexpected and brief appearances. My hopes rose momentarily but were dashed almost before they were fully formed in my mind.

'I've come to collect the last of my things,' he said, barely giving me a glance.

'Feel free,' I replied, feigning a flippancy. I certainly didn't feel. I got out the tool box and turned my attention to hanging up Ellsworth's painting. Over there, I thought, just above the piano in the drawing room.

I raised the painting to the wall and then stopped. Was it my imagination, or did the masked figure seem misty, surreal? I looked more closely. Were form and flesh beginning to merge together? And where had that come from? That luminous shadow on Flamingo Villa's roof?

Rubbish, I thought abruptly. It was just the morning light playing tricks on me. But I recalled Ellsworth's eyes, his mysterious words. And shivered.

By the time I had finished, Gerald was gone. So too had his diving equipment.

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A week passed before Linberth's head and teeth peered over my hedge again.

'Hey, lady,' he called. 'How yo doin'? Seen the noos? Paper's full o' them missin' scuba divers, some English dentis' and tha' Lona wassaname. Yo English, ain't ya Mam? Wass they

friends o' yo's?'

'Yes. Friends,' I said. The newspaper lay in my lap. The bold, black headline stared up at me. 'BODIES OF TWO SCUBA DIVERS DISCOVERED'.

It was the strangest thing, continued the report below the headline, but the equipment worn by both divers had been in good working order. Their air lungs had been almost full, their wet-suits were untouched. Their fins, knives and face masks remained intact. Yet inexplicably, below their masks, the flesh had been burned from their faces.

I shivered beneath the hot sun. What a dreadful way to die.

'Shame abou' them divers, Mam,' said Ellsworth, stepping silently in front of his brother.

'Indeed it is.'

He nodded gravely, then asked: 'Yo still like my paintin', Mam?'

'You were right, Ellsworth, it's truly magical. Every time I look at it I see something new. You're a very talented young man, did you know that?'

'Thank you, Mam.'

'Perhaps you'd care to see it?'

The boys padded barefoot after me towards the drawing room.

'Sheesh,' breathed Linberth, staring at the painting. 'Thass some fine picture yo got there, Mam. Yo' villa sure has grown!'

'I know.'

Flamingo Villa filled the entire canvas now, pulsating with life, with that sense of mysterious timelessness I had always striven to achieve. Only where I had failed, Ellsworth had succeeded. Somehow, though, my failure no longer seemed important.

'See that, Mam?' said Linberth, pointing to a small, luminous figure on the roof. 'Looks jest like Ellsworth in his mask, don' it?'

'What do you think, Ellsworth?'

'No, Mam. I reckon thass the Bird of Freedom.'

'I agree, Ellsworth,' I said and looked down into his unscarred face, marvelling at the way his skin glowed clear and smooth, the colour of ripe chestnut.

'Hey, Mon!' said Linberth, slapping his brother across the shoulders. 'Time we moved on — less, Mam...' He grinned at me mischievously. 'Yo wanna start my day off good?'

But Ellsworth shook his head and pulled his brother towards the door.

'Yo have a nice day now, Mam,' he said softly. Then they were gone. As silently as they had appeared. And we — that is Flamingo Villa and I — never saw them again.



Lynne H Sharp has a husband, two daughters, a cat and an MA in History. She has been published in Options, Woman's Journal, Bella and Woman's Weekly, and has taught creative writing for several years. Her future aims include winning the Ian St James award, re-writing the unpublished novel gathering dust beneath her kitchen table and completing a recently-begun TV sitcom.



# THE SHIP OF

# DEATH

By

Ralph W Hill

**H**e was listening to *The Ride of the Valkyries*. The word 'listening' is too weak. He was caught up, immersed, possessed.

It was the day after he had discharged himself from the AIDS unit at St Olaf's. He lay on his untidy bed under the window of his squalid basement squat in the derelict Islington back-street. The drug quickly extended its hold upon his brain, bringing him into that state of super-consciousness where every sense would blaze into needle-sharp intensity.

The empty syringe lay on the floor amid the heap of crumpled clothes, as the pale orb of the wintry sun traced its mid-morning arc across the heavens. Seeking to obliterate the reality of his hopelessness with the mind-numbing beat and blare of pop music, he had reached out to switch on the radio, but inadvertently selected Radio Three.

Immediately, Wagner's swirling crescendo had filled the room, the echoes

rebounding from the bare walls. The brass announced the brief but insistent theme. The howl of the wind outside became part of the music, matching precisely its wildness, its rise and fall, even its pitch and tone. It shook the bare branches of the tall plane tree growing in its ridiculous square of earth among paving-stones above the level of his grimy window. The city litter of polystyrene and paper trapped in the basement area swirled in garish dance.

On waking, he had lain there fitfully, half-dreaming of his childhood home in Oslo, of his first school and of his introduction to the Norse legends. The stories of Odin, Thor, Freyr, Baldur and the treacherous Loki had sprung vividly to life in his disordered brain.

As he recalled the old tales, one by one, he was led inevitably to the last and most harrowing of all. He could hear the deep voice of headmaster Bjerregaard booming around the glazed-brick walls of the classroom.

'The scholars are divided as to which word is meant — Raganorök, the doom

of the Gods, or Ragnarök, the twilight of the Gods — and of course there is an important difference between these two interpretations.'

Difference? Whether it was to be a judgement or a fading, there was no significant difference. In plain fact, the Gods were not destined to continue into eternity their playful and wily dealings, but would in that last fateful sunset be overthrown and perish.

**A**s a child, lying in his little bed near the tiled wood-burning stove in the early winter darkness, he would picture Mithgarthsormr, the great serpent which encompassed the flat earth and sea and held them bound together, releasing its scaly tail from its mouth and coming to attack Asgarth, the home of the Gods. More fearsome still was Jormungandr the dragon, opening its vast jaws to swallow the whole creation.

**'Lying there then, his life in ruins and all hope gone, the whole world vivid scene had possessed his mind;'**

Speeding across the heaving waves came Odin at the helm of Naglfar, the ghastly death-ship made entirely of human nails stolen from the corpses of the dead. Odin thrust his gigantic boot into Jormungandr's cavernous jaws, holding them open to render him powerless whilst he and the other Gods, aided by the chosen warriors streaming forth from Valhalla, fought to subdue the unspeakable shapes attacking Asgarth and Mithgarth, the abodes of Gods and of men.

In his early youth he had laughed at the legends; but bitter experience had taught him that the powers which they represented were very real. Lying and cheating, faithlessness and greed, the incomprehensible workings of fate, the injustice of life, he had drunk deep of them all.

The great boot of Odin was destined to be made from all the parings of leather from the soles of men's shoes. Archaeologists excavating Viking settlements in Dublin had found a huge solid bank of leather, a yard high, a yard wide and several yards long, made entirely from such parings. The English newspapers had made no comment, but he knew the significance of their find. The leather had never been used, nor burnt, but had been dedicated to Odin for the Ragnarök. From this and from many similar pieces of evidence he had realised how powerful the beliefs of the ancient Norsemen had been, and gradually he had succumbed to the deep influences of his ancestry and the fatalistic spirit of the fierce people from whom he had sprung.

Lying there then, his life in ruins and all hope gone, the whole vivid scene had possessed his mind; but now, in the frenzied howling of the wind and the wild fury of Wagner's music, and inspired by the working of the drug, he knew that Ragnarök was at hand.

The flailing knobbed branches of the tree became the creaking spars and rig-



ging of Naglfar. The indistinct shapes of the shadows upon the opposite wall became Odin and Jormungandr locked in deadly combat.

A new terror began to take shape in his fevered mind. He knew that the doctors could do nothing more for him, and that he must soon die, but he believed that if he could preserve himself from being caught in Mithgarth at the Ragnarök, he might yet be safe. The task of the Valkyries was to choose and carry off to Valhalla brave warriors who had died in battle. He had not fought in battle with spear and axe and sword, but had he not been found faithful as a true believer, using his skill as an artist to bring the Gods to life in the world of men? The poets of old had been revered in the mead-halls, their skill acknowledged as a gift of the Gods. Each one had been distinguished by the honourable and godlike title 'Maker'. Was he not himself also a Maker? Was he not also fit for the battle?

If he died and remained in Mithgarth, Odin would come for his nails, to augment the fabric of the death-ship Naglfar. His nails were part of his very life, a mysterious part, growing yet apparently always dead and said to continue growing after death. If they were yielded to Odin, there would be for him no new growth in the after-life. The guarding of the corpse to forestall this supernatural theft was the origin of the 'wake', a custom which he had found to be practised still even in parts of Britain, and in Ireland, where the Norsemen had settled long ago.

He was seized with a frantic desire to save himself from eternal oblivion. He must at all costs cut his nails! He struggled to sit up, and crawled about on the floor, scrabbling amongst his few possessions to find the little black leather case containing his nail-scissors.

As his hand closed upon the familiar worn case, memories came flooding back. It was his sixteenth birthday, and he was opening his mother's present, a hairbrush, comb and mirror, and a manicure set including these scissors. His mother was smiling, kissing him and saying: 'You are a young gentleman now, Knut, and you must start taking a pride in your appearance.'

Poor mother; in three months, she was dead and her body was laid to rest beside his father in the cemetery. Aunt Hedda had taken him in, and seen him through school and the Art College. His early drawings of trolls, giants and Gods had attracted some attention, and he had come to London to make his fortune. For a while he had prospered. He had managed to buy a flat, to save a little, and to look forward to the day when he could marry Helga and settle down to raise a family.

Sadly, fashions had changed, commissions had dwindled and finally melted away. In one instance he had gone too far. After he had submitted to a 'comic' paper a sequence involving the horrifying torture and killing of a victim by the cutting of the dreaded 'Blood Eagle' on his back, a polite note had informed him that this lucrative connection had been severed.

The sale of the flat had eased matters for a time, but when the money was gone the old problems returned and new

ones multiplied. The death of Helga on a fog-bound motorway had left him devoid of all purpose for living. His drug-taking, previously just an intermittent part of the party-going scene, grew imperceptibly into a habit, an indispensable means of escape.

To fund his habit, he was reduced to hawking small drawings around the local public houses, or executing lurid murals of the Norse Gods in the homes of his former friends.

The latter task he approached with a mixture of emotions. When he was absorbed in the work, he was able for a time to forget his troubles and for that he was thankful. However, along with this temporary relief, and the pride he felt in his mastery of the surrealism essential for such subjects, was a lurking sense of unease. If the ability to merely speak the secret name of a powerful being gave one the power to conjure that spirit to appear, what sinister effects might overtake that foolish mortal who should undertake to portray such spirits in a painting?

As he painted, he increasingly believed that his hand was being guided — that by some occult means he was being manipulated by demons to bring them to physical life. They were using him as a doorway through which to enter the world of men. He instinctively felt that he should, when working, employ some sort of propitiatory incantation or ritual to avoid incurring their displeasure or to placate their anger, but he could never think what to do. There was an infuriating lack of information on this point in the sagas. There were countless references to 'dark rituals', 'secret spells' and 'unspeakable sacrifices', but details were never given.

Once at a party he had been introduced to a couple who were known to style themselves as witches. They both affected all-black garments and wore several heavy rings. The woman wore a black band around her forehead, and a large brass pentangle hung from a cord at her waist. They were impressed by his interest, intrigued by his knowledge of his country's ancient beliefs and riveted by his description of the 'Blood Eagle' ritual, so they invited him to join them in their devotions. At first he felt flattered, and studied their practices closely, hoping to glean some hints for his own purposes and perhaps even to make contact with any forces which might emanate from the spirits of his ancestors. However, he began to see that for them it was little more than a game and an affectation. In any case, the real beliefs which lay behind their charades were essentially foreign to those about which he had hoped to learn. He continued with them for a while longer, being persuaded that occult powers could indeed manifest themselves even amongst those who were not fully conscious of the possible consequences of their dabblings, but eventually his interest waned and he broke off the connection.

Increasingly he had drawn some comfort from wearing around his neck a small chain bearing a bronze 'Hammer of Thor' which he had bought long ago from a tourist gift-shop in Bergen. Often, when absorbed in his work, he found that the fingers of his left hand were

occupied in playing with the cross-shaped hammer, turning it about and touching its four points. It began as a nervous habit, much as many people will absent-mindedly in conversation continually reverse a pen held in the fingers, alternately tapping the point and the top upon the table.

Imperceptibly this fingering of the charm assumed a similar regular form. First his thumb would touch the bottom of the shaft, whilst his index finger would touch the top. Next his thumb and finger turned to touch the two ends of the hammer-head. The third movement was to repeat the touch of his thumb on the top of the shaft.

Thus, unaware, as if instructed by the God or by some latent folk-memory deep in his unconscious mind, he evolved a compulsive sequence which gradually assumed the character of a satisfying ritual, which, to remain effective, had to be repeated precisely and without deviation.

## 'They were using him as a doorway through which to enter the world of the men.'

Yesterday he had awoken to find the Hammer missing. He had searched the entire room without success. Obviously the chain had broken whilst he was out somewhere, and now the Hammer was lying in the gutter, or was already bringing weal or woe to its new owner.

His last and most powerful work had been executed here in this basement room, on the wall adjacent to the foot of the bed. This wall was now still in deep shadow, and little detail could be made out. The scene depicted was of Odin, cloaked and seated with folded arms and his single bright blue glaring eye. His two ravens, Thought and Memory, sat obediently upon his great shoulders, and his grizzled beard covered his chest. At his feet his two yellow-eyed wolves bared their glistening fangs. His wife, the earth-goddess Frigg, was seated beside him plying her distaff. On the other side stood his brother, the war-god Tyr, his two hands resting upon the haft of his heavy double-bladed axe and his red eyes glowing malevolently under the iron rim of his winged helmet.

When the picture was lit, the eyes of Frigg were seen to be soft and kindly, and turned slightly away, but those of the ravens, the wolves, Odin and Tyr stared directly down at the viewer with a menacing and hypnotic effect; and it was under the stare of these baleful eyes that for many weeks Knut had eaten and slept and counted his weary wakeful hours.

He took out the curved scissors, took a large plate from the upturned crate and cut all his nails as near as possible to the quick, taking care that the parings all fell onto the plate. Now they must be destroyed, and by fire. He set the plate carefully on the bare floor in front of the large torn and faded armchair which had been abandoned there by the last tenant. He found the plastic container of white spirit beside his brushes, and unscrewed the cap. He thought that the





container was almost empty, and so he tipped it well up to pour, but was surprised to find it nearly half-full. The viscous liquid glub-glubbed into the plate, and a good deal spilled onto the floorboards.

He had neither matches nor lighter. From beside the bed he fetched his camping lamp, opened the tap until he could hear the loud hiss of the gas, and spun the knurled flint-wheel. The gas lit with a loud 'plop', the dark wall behind him was immediately flooded with brilliant white light and there looming above him sat great Odin with his companions and familiars.

**'At his feet his two yellow-eyed wolves bared their glistening fangs.'**

**K**nut tore himself a strip of newspaper and inserted the end into the small air-space between the lamp-glass and the metal top of the lamp. He applied the flaming paper to the spirit. At first it would not light, but after a few seconds the flame crept across the surface and made a circle of fire. As he dropped the remaining strip of paper into the plate, and waited to see the slow-burning spirit consume the nails, he seemed to feel the power of the seven baleful eyes in the picture above him, and was irresistibly drawn to look up.

It seemed to Knut, kneeling there before the picture, that Odin's cruel pale blue eye was flashing ominously. In the final grumbling surge of the cellos and basses and the crashing of the cymbals and timpani, he was preparing to visit his mounting anger upon this mortal who was daring to withhold his due tribute.

Transfixed with terror, Knut saw the whole picture begin to pulsate with movement, an effect produced by the flaring up of the armchair. The menacing jaws of the two wolves seemed to open yet wider, and the muscles of their powerful shoulders quivered. They were about to spring at him and tear him to pieces.

It was time for the Valkyries to come for him!

The swirling fumes from the sizzling polyurethane upholstery quickly filled the room. The picture disappeared in a pall of black smoke. Clutching his throat, Knut Thorbrandson fell back senseless upon the floor.

Ragnorök had come to Islington.

**Ralph Hill** was born in London in 1924. Whilst in the Royal Navy, he won two medals, four campaign stars and the 'Russian Convoy' Gold Medal. In 1975, whilst teaching full-time in state schools, Ralph gained an honours degree in English from London University. He has three married children. 'The Ship of Death' won first prize in the Mid-Sussex Festival Open Competition

## FICTION FILE 52

# PAUL J MCAULEY

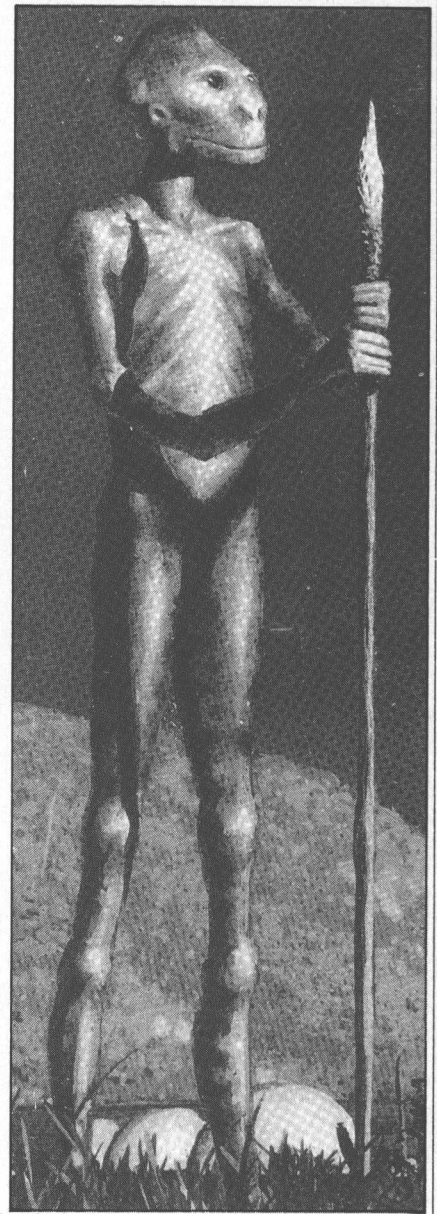
**Paul J McAuley unlocks the secret history of the universe in his latest novel, and his revelations come complete with equations. He takes time out to talk to LIZ HOLLIDAY about the appliance of science.**

**I**t is surprising, but comparatively few science fiction novels offer much in the way of actual science. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that very few SF writers are actually trained in science, let alone in a position to practice it. One writer who does incorporate considerable scientific know-how into his work is Paul J McAuley. His latest book *Eternal Light* comes complete with equations in the text. 'I make no apologies for it,' says McAuley. 'I assume readers might pick up something. It's not supposed to be a manual on astrophysics or anything, but if readers don't understand something they can look it up if they want to. I assume they are fairly scientifically literate people.'

McAuley's professional discipline is biology, rather than physics or astronomy. 'Just because you're a biologist doesn't mean you are doomed to write biological stories — I hope not anyway. It's just that cosmology happened to catch my attention a couple of years ago; all of a sudden there were all these weird ideas knocking around. It had been a very boring field, and then there were all these people like Steven Hawking and Penrose coming along and cracking the thing back open again. I stole a lot from everywhere. There's this great book called *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* by Barrow and Tippler that I stole from outrageously, and anything I get wrong is my fault not theirs. It condenses down tons of stuff into a fairly readable form. But there's a whole bunch of other books I used as well — about two feet of them, I should think.

'Things that I mention in the book, for instance things at the centre of the galaxy, are actually there. They are specific objects, and not made up.'

*Eternal Light* is a sequel to McAuley's earlier *Four Hundred Billion Stars*, a book which relied less on astrophysics and more on biology and ecology. In the meantime, there was another novel, *Secret Harmonies*, and *The King of the Hill*, a collection of short stories. 'I didn't originally plan to do a sequel, otherwise I would have written one straight away instead of going off and writing a different book. Eventually, I did it because I got interested in cosmology, and I decided the logical road to take was to investigate the secret history of the universe that was alluded to in *Four Hundred*



*Billion Stars.'*

McAuley is unusual because he sold a number of stories to American magazines before he became established in this country. 'I did it the classical way, really, which was by selling short stories to get myself noticed in order to sell a novel I had written. You have to remember that in the old days — I'm talking about 1983 — there weren't that many British magazines. *Interzone* was still only quarterly then. I didn't actually know much about it — I'd been living in the States for a couple of years. That got me writing science fiction again, because I'd given up at one point. I was getting somewhere; I hadn't actually sold anything, but I was getting positive responses, and that encouraged me to keep submitting even though I had returned to this country. At the same time I learned about *Interzone* and the rest is history.'



# FEAR REVIEWS

## FILM AND VIDEO



### HORROR

Dawn  
It  
House IV  
Django



### FANTASY

Robin Hood: Prince of  
Thieves  
Jason and the Argonauts  
Wishful Thinking



### SCIENCE FICTION

Rocketeer



### THRILLER

Henry: Portrait of a Serial  
Killer  
The Comfort of Strangers  
Scissors  
Vigilante Cop  
Kick Boxer 2: The Road Back  
After Dark My Sweet

## CINEMA

### THE ROCKETEER

Starring Bill Campbell, Alan  
Arkin, Jennifer  
Connelly, Paul Sorvino,  
Timothy Dalton  
Director Joe Johnston  
Distributor Warner Bros  
Cert 12



Comic-strip artist Dave  
Stevens first created *The  
Rocketeer* back in 1981, by  
way of homage to the design and style  
of thirties' Americana. In transferring  
Stevens' vision to celluloid, director Joe  
Johnston and production designer Jim  
Bissell faced a Herculean task; to

reproduce on screen not only an  
authentic milieu, but also to evoke the  
graphic style of Stevens' distinctive  
artwork.

The result of their labours is a parodic  
period-piece laden with in-jokes and  
knowing references: Howard Hughes,  
Nazi spies, Errol Flynn, W C Fields,  
even Rondo Hatton — they're all in  
there somewhere! Keeping only one eye  
on the lucrative kids' market, Johnston's  
film celebrates the 'golden age' of  
modernist design, whilst simultaneously  
satirising the values of the great  
Stateside way of life. 'I may not make an  
honest buck, but I'm one hundred per  
cent American!' intones a cartoonish  
villain in one particularly splendid  
moment. The casting is spot on:  
Strapping Bill Campbell is all square-  
jawed heroics as Mr Rocket-pack  
himself; Alan Arkin behaves as quirkily  
as ever as the aged mechanic-cum-  
inventor; and Timothy Dalton swanks  
around in fiendishly fine form as a  
swashbuckling, philandering infiltrator.  
Jennifer Connelly, meanwhile, heaves  
her bosom but remains appropriately  
two-dimensional (not to say wooden)  
throughout.

There are, of course, problems — not  
least of which is the fact that the many-  
handed story-writing team seems often  
to be pulling in different directions, and  
one wonders what younger audiences  
(whose financially renumerate  
attentions the film needs to be a  
success) would make of the plot's  
confusing contrivances. More  
surprisingly, some of the  
superimposition work is decidedly tacky,  
tragically marring a few of the flying  
sequences. Johnston, however, seems  
happy simply to pile on the in-jokes and  
clean up the mess later, and his efforts  
will doubtless dazzle the train-spotters,  
baffle the mainstreamers and electrify  
the comics fans. But will it fly?

Mark Kermode

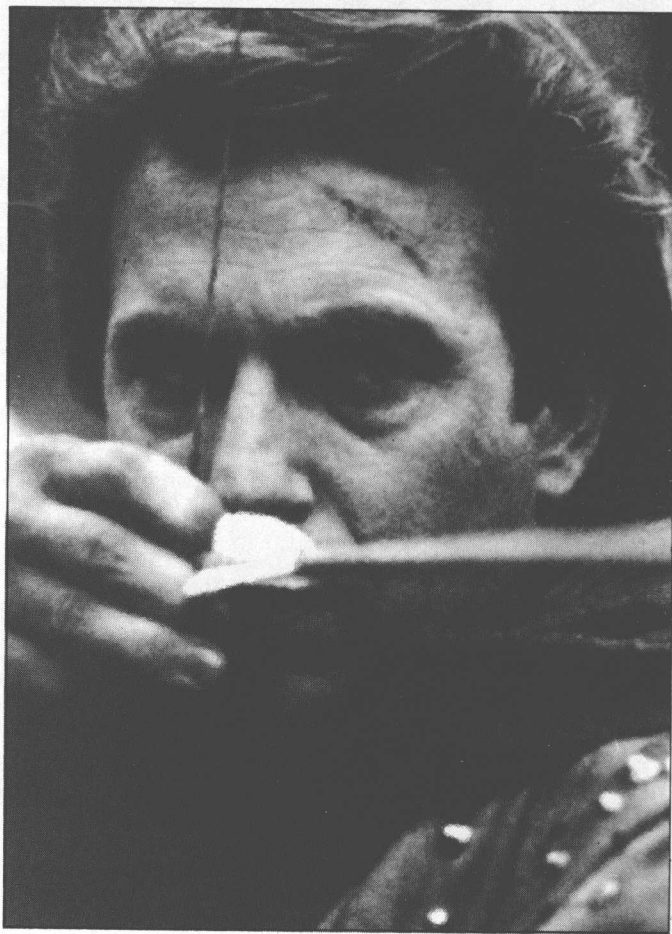


### ROBIN HOOD: PRINCE OF THIEVES

Starring Kevin Costner, Morgan  
Freeman, Christian Alater, Alan  
Rickman, Mary Elizabeth  
Mastrantonio  
Director Kevin Reynolds  
Distributor Warner Brothers



Crime doesn't pay — unless  
you're an actor. Ask Anthony  
Hopkins. Or Alan Rickman for



■ Costner as Robin Hood.

that matter. The latter, the sadistically  
diabolical smoothie in *Die Hard*, here  
gives a performance to treasure. While  
Costner may be the audience draw,  
given such noble antecedents as  
Connery, Flynn and Fairbanks Sr to  
aspire to he's almost impossibly bland,  
too heroically clean-cut to be anything  
more than adequate in the title role.

Instead the film revolves around  
Rickman's loony, leering, lecherous  
Sheriff of Nottingham, ruling the roost  
from his dark, musty castle. It's he who  
gets all the best lines, the grotesquely  
distorted close-ups and Geraldine  
McEwan's cackling witch as his  
personal seer. The script updates the

myth by way of Indiana Jones, spicing  
the familiar tale with black magic, a '90s-  
style psychological perspective, hip  
dialogue and a rollercoaster ride  
mentality. Costner's Robin returns from  
the Crusades with Moor buddy Azeem  
(Morgan Freeman) in tow, to discover  
his father slain, his home torched and  
the poor crippled by taxes...you fill in the  
rest.

Reynolds' film has a woozy,  
dislocated quality; a consequence of  
shooting predominantly with a hand-held  
camera and Steadicam. Along the way,  
however, there are a number of  
breathtaking set pieces and clever-  
clever camera wizardry — notably when  
Robin illustrates his archery skills by  
splitting an arrow in two with another,  
the camera whizzing through the air just  
behind the arrow's tip as it seeks its  
target.

If only as much precision had gone  
into photography, plot and pacing.  
Running at two hours plus, *Prince of  
Thieves* is around 20 minutes too long.  
The first hour seems to have been  
edited with an economic edge, but the  
second is sloppy by comparison,  
labouring where it should hurtle,  
smouldering where it should sizzle.

There's enough boisterous  
buffoonery and swashbuckling action to  
channel the attention away from the  
sometimes clumsy staging and the  
disconcerting sight of a legion of British  
character actors fighting side by side  
with a bunch of Yanks in Sherwood  
Forest. Credit where it's due, though, as  
entertainment this succeeds both  
shamelessly and admirably.

Mark Salsbury



# A festival of PURE HORROR

THE BIGGEST HORROR FESTIVAL TO BE  
STAGED IN THE UK BOOK NOW AND  
BECOME PART OF IT






# MURDEROUS DUO

## HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER

*Starring Michael Rooker, Tracy Arnold, Tom Towles*  
*Director John McNaughton*  
*Cert 18*

 In its infinite wisdom, the British Board of Film Classification has chosen to cut between 12 and 15 seconds from John McNaughton's awe-inspiring directorial debut. Although the damaging effect upon the overall film is minimal, one wonders again why such people should be allowed to tamper in this manner with great works of art.

Inspired by the notorious prison confessions of Henry Lee Lucas, *Henry* is nevertheless a work of fiction, a studied and bleak drama which documents the murderous activities of two social misfits — Henry and Otis. With its savagely realistic visual style, the film breaks down any comfortable sense of distance between the viewer and the protagonists (who are presented not as monsters but as disturbingly ordinary failures) and thereby forces us to question our own roles within a society which breeds murderers. Richard Fire's script is bitingly economical, and Michael Rooker lends an electrifying credibility to the central role.


While the film is far from bloody, the overwhelming sense of hopelessness which saturates every frame may well prove unbearable for some. McNaughton is an uncompromising talent and — as befits its grim subject matter — *Henry* is appalling to endure. Brilliant.

**Mark Kermode**



## DJANGO (1966)

*Starring Franco Nero, Loredana Nusciak, Jose Bodalo, Angel Alvarez*  
*Director Sergio Corbucci*  
*Distributor BFI*  
*Cert 18, 91 mins*

 There's a western riding its way across the country, as unlike a traditional John Wayne movie as it is to *Dances With Wolves*.

In the opening scene, the hero (or anti-hero, as this is a spaghetti western) tramps his way into a muddy hell of a town. All alone with his colts, his stubble and his trusty ole... coffin.

Yup, you heard me, pardners. That Django sure travels light — with just a wooden overcoat on a rope.

It's these eccentric touches that make *Django* such a diverting hour-and-a-half. Kim Newman, in his book *Wild West Movies* calls it 'bizarre and gruesome...the first of the Gothic Westerns', and there speaks an hombre who knows what he's talking about. Set in the kind of town where brothel keeper and undertaker pursue the only secure trades, *Django* divorces itself from reality straight away. There's violence aplenty, sure, but it's as near the baroque camp of Hammer horror as it is to any Sam Peckinpah epic.

By a grim irony, the film gained a belated UK release (25 years later!) after its creator's death last December. It was originally considered too violent for British screens. Sergio Corbucci was a pioneer of the spaghetti western, the

first Italian director to have a western accredited him — *Minnesota Clay* (1964). In *Django*, Corbucci pushed the recognisable spaghetti elements — sweaty close-ups, tense pauses before bursts of unflinching violence, the lethal



loner as hero — as far as they could go. He ended up with a film too campily stylised to be taken totally seriously, too violent to be comic-bookish.

The *Django* theme song sounds as if Elvis Presley had wandered drunk into the studio and been talked into giving an out-of-tune rendition of a cowboy ballad. It's a shamelessly over-the-top, overwrought and enjoyable slice of overdone ham. Much like the film itself.

*Django* will play at the Bristol Watershed from August 9 to 13, and at Glasgow Film Theatre from August 25 to 29, before continuing to run at repertory cinemas throughout the country.

**Paul Woods**



## AFTER DARK, MY SWEET

*Starring Jason Patric, Rachel Ward, Bruce Dern, George Dickerson*  
*Director James Foley*  
*Cert 18, 111 mins*



The seedy desolation of Jim Thompson rock-hard boiled crime fiction has touched a nerve in the disenchanting '90s: A nifty line in dark plotting makes his stories perfect movie material.

To underplay Thompson's nihilism would be a gross misinterpretation, but director James (*At Close Range*) Foley injects a ray of hope — even in the eyes of a dying man love gives life meaning. The complex thriller that is *After Dark, My Sweet* reaches for epic tragedy.

Intercut with shots of *Raging Bull*-style looking brutality, we find ex-prizefighter Kevin 'Collie' Collins aimlessly roaming the California desert. Hard-drinking widow Fay Anderson plots a kidnapping with her dissolute Uncle Bud (Bruce Dern), and Collie is the perfect fall guy. Childlike but wise beyond his years, he plays out his role, acknowledging his inevitable fate. What Fay doesn't figure on is falling in love — criminal intent is subverted by passion into an intriguing power triangle from which Collie emerges a broken hero.

Minus flowing *Lost Boys* locks, plus designer stubble, Jason Patric's Collie is fashionably angst-ridden but astutely observed. *After Dark* and his upcoming role in *Rush* could make him as famous

■ *Django*: Did Clint Eastwood pass through here?





■ Rupert Everett with the obsessive Christopher Walken.

# COLD COMFORT!

## THE COMFORT OF STRANGERS

*Starring Christopher Walken, Natasha Richardson, Rupert Everett, Helen Mirren*  
*Director Paul Schrader*  
*Distributor 20:20 Vision, Sovereign Pictures*  
**Cert 18**



'My father was a very big man...everyone was afraid of him...but he loved me, I was his favourite.'

Christopher Walken's character is obsessed with the memory of his long-dead father who was, quite simply, God. He had known what it was to be a man — to be strong and to dominate. Walken relates to this role model by beating his wife in increasingly bizarre roleplaying sessions, and by wandering the streets of Venice photographing potential victims to ensnare in his love life. When he's not abusing his wife (Mirren) they sleep apart, as do the young lovers played by Rupert Everett and Natasha Richardson — a depressingly English couple holidaying in Venice.

As the couple wander around, Walken trails after them, relentlessly photographing his new obsession — the young man (Everett). He covers his bedroom wall with photographs of Everett so he can admire him as he has sex with his wife, who has also become infatuated with him. And although Richardson is bored with Everett, she is still attracted to his good looks and has nightmares that he might one day become ugly. Indeed, all of Venice seems obsessed with Everett's angelic good looks, including Everett himself.

As Walken's obsession with Everett rekindles

his sex life with his wife, so the very strangeness of Walken and Mirren reunites Everett and Richardson. Whereas early in the film they are distant, they now become increasingly aware of each other's beauty, preening each other, enjoying sex and playing 'dare' games.

*Comfort* is primarily a film about aesthetics. Schrader's camera floats through Venice, observing the beauty of the city's architecture and the people who occupy it without overshadowing the characters. The beautiful images reflect the film's central concern while creating a false sense of serene security for the viewer which mirrors that of the young tourists.

The underlying theme is the inability of bourgeoisie civilisation to conceal or heal the inherent animosity and aggression between men and women. Mirren is very much a clichéd female, a victim ashamed of her own sexuality, who feels she deserves to be punished and enjoys Walken's violence as a kind of absolution. But the movie is even more concerned with the long-lasting effects of childhood traumas. Walken cannot forgive his sisters (and, in turn, women) for their blatant sexual exhibitionism which he witnessed as a boy. Richardson cannot forget the rejection and alienation she suffered from her peers at school. Everett himself becomes real only when we see Walken's photographs of him, as an object of obsession he gains character. The film's emotive subject matter, together with seemingly effortless acting and superb production values, keeps the viewer engrossed right up to the typically explosive Schrader climax.

**Mark Wynne**



as an actor as he's become through holidays with Julia. Although her Anglo-Australian accent is initially disturbing Rachel Ward is also a revelation. She delivers dialogue as dry as the desert with style, and despite Fay's bitterness is never entirely despicable.

On the surface it's a tranquil film, the complex plot taking second place to profound psychodrama; a compulsive companion piece to *The Grifters* and Kubrick's earlier *The Killing*.

**Philip Blinks**



## RENTAL VIDEO

### WISHFUL THINKING

*Starring Murray Langston, Michelle Johnston*  
*Director Murray Langston*  
*Distributor Medusa Home Video*  
**87 mins**



Lord, this film ain't good. Upon discovering one morning a python in his toilet, idiot extraordinaire Michael (Langston) realises it is time to leave his apartment for a while.

Fortunately, he has just completed a new script. Unfortunately, it is stolen on the bus. Michael gives chase and the villain falls over a passing dwarf, but Michael's demand for the return of his work falls on deaf ears when the robber decides to pick on the dwarf. Michael intervenes, but gets thumped. However, the dwarf is so grateful he gives Michael a magic notebook in which to write down his desires. Said desires will then come true.

Then the fun begins — apparently. The film was written and directed by Murray Langston, and I can only presume he was left oodles of cash by a late aunt with which he financed this 'comedy'. I really don't want to entertain the idea that he was paid to make this movie.

*Wishful Thinking* is, quite simply, the least interesting and least humorous film this side of *The Dawn of Mankind*.

**John Merrick**



### DAWN

*Starring Elizabeth Rees, Geoff Sloan, Craig Johnson, Kate Jones Davies, Meg Whelan, Graziella Jones*  
*Director Niall Johnson*  
**Cert TBC, UK, 78 mins**



Reputedly the cheapest horror film ever made in Britain, this Bristol-based production has been shot entirely on video. Usually, this leads to unreleasable drek like *Suffer Little Children* and *Redneck Zombies*, pictures even the pickiest horror completist will be hard put to have seen, but here the effects are surprisingly absorbing.

Influenced by the vampire novels of Anne Rice, the plot focuses on a disaffected young woman (Rees) picked up in a pub by Louis (Sloan), a suavely ordinary young man who turns out to be 200 years old and fleeing from a vengeful vigilante (Johnson). Rewriting the rules for screen vampirism, *Dawn* has Sloan take his blood in a painful-looking transfusion involving plastic





surprisingly well. The story boasts thrills, humour, drama and respectable special effects — and is spoiled only by a hokey ending. Sean Cunningham certainly knows how to throw a party, this is a particularly welcome return for the house movies.

John Gilbert



## VIGILANTE COP

Starring Alex McArthur, Dale Midkiff, Terry O'Quinn  
Director Mel Damski  
Distributor ITC  
Cert 15, 91 mins



Vigilante Cop is the true story of two rookie cops (Stephen Smith and Farrell Tucker) who are assigned to the tough San Antonio

isn't exactly in the box office smash league. As it's a true story one can't find fault with the script writing, but the old saying that truth is stranger than fiction fits pretty well. My only real moan is that the director (or whoever) decided to show the ending right at the start of the film. But to be fair it's pretty obvious who the murderer is within about fifteen minutes, so I suppose that isn't too bad. In short, *Vigilante Cop* is worth watching as an alternative to the Saturday afternoon sports coverage, but don't expect a cliff hanging ending.

Mark Caswell



■ Alex McArthur, Vigilante Cop



tubes and much writhing, and goes back to basic mythology by emphasising that the killing stake is just to secure the vampire to the earth while the sun does its work, thus cueing some cheap but welcome splatter effects for the finale.

The emotional core of the film is the heroine, who has to be lectured by both vigilante and vampire on their respective histories and lifestyles and who must, finally, leave the man she loves and whose child she carries to die a horrible death at dawn. The limitations of video — static shots, unconvincing lighting, scenes that drag endlessly on in cramped quarters — are largely avoided by Johnson's inventive corner-cutting, with clever use of an always-moving camera to overcome the video tendency to stop dead for dialogue.

Although one step up from an amateur production, the cast performs remarkably well given the occasional solemn ludicrousness of the necessarily talky script. It's a picture you have to make allowances for — as you do for any number of zero-budget classics, from *Detour* through *Carnival of Souls* to *Pink Flamingoes* — but it still makes you a lot keener to see the team's next picture (*The Falling*) than, say, another sequel to *Child's Play* or *Fright Night*. Certainly a collector's item for vampire watchers, this is also a promising debut from a group of young film-makers who are obviously either committed to their art or ought to be committed because of it.

Kim Newman



## HOUSE IV

Starring Terri Treas, Scott Burkholder, Denny Dillon Melissa Clayton, William Katt  
Director Sean Cunningham  
Distributor Medusa  
Cert 15, 90 mins



Linda (Treas) and David (Katt) Adams like to play happy families with their daughter Laurel (Clayton) so when the ancestral

■ Maybe a bag over the camera would have helped: Wishful Thinking

homestead becomes vacant they decide to move in — much to the chagrin of David's younger brother Uncle Mort.

Everything is hunky dorey. David has a wonderful job, a big car and the prospect of making a lot of loot. The only annoyance is Uncle Mort's insistence that they sell the house to him and move out. Then the family is involved in a car crash, David is fatally injured and Linda has to sign the order to terminate his life support. Uncle Mort and his dwarfish land developer friend with loathsome habits take advantage of the situation and turn up the heat.

A series of strange incidents leads Linda to her dead husband's Red Indian friend, who tells her that David's spirit is trapped in a spiritual vortex within the house and that she must find some way to release it. As Uncle Mort's evil plans become more apparent, David's ghost steps to the fore and, like Patrick Swayze in *Ghost*, tries to save his family from a fate similar to his.

Although the uninspiring film title might lead potential renters to pass this movie by, it wears its genre tag

streets where, despite the best efforts of both the cops and the courts, villains invariably walk free. However, the pimps, drug pushers, rapists etc are themselves becoming the victims of violent and often fatal attacks. Sergeant Ray Nicholas starts investigations into the murders and finds that the killer is an excellent shot. Indeed, one of the victims was felled by a pistol shot from quite a distance away — through a chain link fence.

Sergeant Nicholas is convinced that a cop is behind the murders. Farrell Tucker is the prime suspect but what are his motives? The film is fast-paced enough to keep you from reaching for the eject button, but on the other hand it

## SCISSORS

Starring Sharon Stone, Steve Railsback, Michelle Phillips, Ronny Cox  
Director Frank de Felitta  
Distributor First Independent  
Cert 18, 90 mins



Angie Anderson (Stone) is a woman haunted by a childhood nightmare. The victim of a vicious attack in a lift, she has been prompted to remember a terrifying incident she had learned to forget as a girl. It seems that a plot has been hatched to drive her insane.

She finds a friend in Alex Morgan








■ Tim Curry, clown but not out.

# MONSTER SHOWDOWN

## IT

*Starring Richard Thomas, Annette O'Toole, John Ritter, Tim Curry, Dennis Christopher, Richard Masur*  
*Director Tommy Lee Wallace*  
*Distributor Warner Bros*  
*Cert 18, 90 mins*

 Given that the Stephen King novel on which this two-part mini-series — here stuck together as a three-hour video release — is based is one of the writer's flabbiest, fattest achievements (a 1,000-page rewrite of his *The Body* with yet another shapechanging villain) it is not a bad job. It works a lot better than the novel by trimming some of King's sillier ideas — including a prepubescent gang bang that must be the worst scene Stevie has ever written — and streamlining the still repetitive plot into the semblance of order.

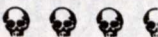
Every 30 years a monster that usually looks like a clown (Curry), but is actually a giant spider from hell and can resemble anything scary you happen to think of, menaces the town of Derry, Maine, and slaughters selected children. In 1960, seven geeky kids faced and bested the beast and now, in 1990, it is back for another depredation, and the grown-up thirty-somethings get together for another crack at the monster.

Screenwriter Lawrence D Cohen — who won plaudits for his adaptation job on *Carrie* but later let the side down with *Ghost Story* — and director Tommy Lee Wallace (in his first major non-sequel

assignment) do a fine job of pruning away the deadweight of the novel, but not a few of the minor illogicalities remain, as well as the overwhelming feeling that all the window-dressing can't conceal the very tiny nugget of an idea at the heart of the excessively protracted story. Settling into the conventional pattern of a TV mini-series even allows for some creative repetition as we see basically the same thing happening to each of the characters in successive between-commercials snippets that gradually build into something approaching a storyline. King favours Everyman-type characters (and American television is perhaps the ideal medium for that side of his work) with a pony-tailed Richard Thomas leading the Loser's Club as the perfect, thoughtful King stand-in hero, and committed work from the whole cast, especially the too-seldom-seen Annette O'Toole as the token girl in the gang.

The sub-Harryhausen monster at the end is slightly hokey, and the way it is defeated by a bit of group bonding and a slingshot hardly feels more final than the fake climax at the end of Part One, but along the way Curry metamorphoses amusingly into a mummy with pom-poms, the teenage creature from *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* and various *Flatliners*-style phantoms from the past. Like King's most successful books, this is palatable, mass-market horror, skillfully done but hardly likely to extend the boundaries of the genre overmuch.

**Kim Newman**



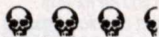
(Railsback, who also plays Morgan's wheelchair-bound twin Cole), but can he save her? It soon becomes apparent that Angie's psychiatrist (Ronny Cox) knows all about her long-ago ordeal — she saw her mother stab her stepfather — and is deliberately trying to push her over the edge into madness. He has murdered his wife's lover with a pair of scissors, and is looking for someone to pin the blame on...who better than a woman who is seriously mentally disturbed?



■ Sharon Stone, under psycho-logical pressure.


The cleverly-structured plot will have you sitting on the edge of your seat, and throughout Stone is excellent as the innocent Angie. *Scissors* is a highly entertaining, thought-provoking thriller, well worth the rental charge.

Gary Campbell



## KICK BOXER 2: THE ROAD BACK

*Starring Sasha Mitchell, Peter Boyle, Dennis Chan, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, John Diehl, Michel Quissi*  
*Director Albert Pyun*  
*Distributor Entertainment in Video*  
*Cert 18, 90 mins*

 *Dallas* star Sasha Mitchell hits the big screen as David, the younger kick boxing brother of the famous fighting Sloanes.

The gym he runs in a slum district of New York is a success with all the youngsters in the area but their support is not enough to pay the bills, so David agrees to fight again. He makes a successful fight comeback and at the end of the bout criticises the newly-formed United Kickboxing Association of America which, he claims, is crooked.

The UKAA's boss wants revenge and when his Taiwanese business partner



suggests a way of destroying David's world, he agrees. The gym goes up in flames, David is shot and one of his young protégés is killed, but the UKAA is exonerated. David refuses to consider re-entering the ring, even when his brothers' old teacher offers to help him. But fate plays a hand and forces him to face a Taiwanese rival who killed one of his brothers several years before.


Sasha Mitchell is certainly not star material — he doesn't know how to hold the audience — but in this movie he certainly proves that he can act as well as fight. The action sequences are impressive, the thriller elements are shown off to good effect and the twist at the end is very well timed, so this film is probably as good as it gets. As one of the young trainee kickboxers says, it 'kicks ass', and from this type of movie that's really all you can ask.

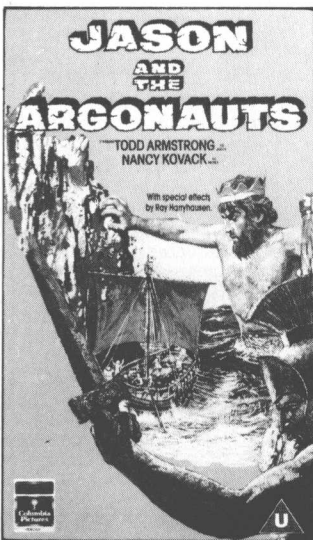
John Gilbert



## JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

*Starring Todd Armstrong, Gary Raymond, Nancy Kovak, Laurence Naismith*  
*Director Don Chaffey*  
*Distributor RCA Columbia*  
*Cert U, 97 mins*

 *Jason and the Argonauts* may well have an unappreciative new generation audience but 28 years on it's still a strong enough title to consistently appear in the Christmas movie line-up. Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, battles with fantasy creatures and defiance of the Gods has long served as lightweight 'reference material' for Classical Studies students alongside the Clash of the Titans. It beats the hell out of *The Sound of Music*, anyway.



Despite the rather tame plot (amounting to 'Go fetch the Golden Fleece, Jason, and fight some special effects along the way') the film still manages to charm. The image of the age of heroes is pampered throughout, with a clean-cut Jason (Todd Armstrong) leading the predictably unruly but obedient Argos crew from encounter to encounter with opportune


but ultimately unnecessary Godly intervention. Jason seems to do alright on his own although Honor Blackman makes the best of limp performances on Mount Olympus. It's all fairly unexciting stuff performance-wise and you know it's the special effects that attract, but it's great entertainment nonetheless. Ray Harryhausen's creations are simply stunning even now — the Talos Titan in particular is an awesome effect and there's still a sense of disbelief that those skeletons could work as well as they did in 1963. Harryhausen's fantastic creatures may possibly have possessed more personality than the actors but this doesn't stop Jason being a sheer entertainment film and classic(al) stuff.

Robin Hogg



## KING OF MORNING, QUEEN OF DAY

*Ian McDonald*  
*Publisher Spectra*  
*Format PB, £4.99*

 The classification of faery rather than fantasy for Ian McDonald's third full-length book is a considered one, and reflects the author's careful attempt — and, glory be, a stunningly successful one! — to turn myth and superstition into more enlightened yardsticks of science and history.

*King of Morning, Queen of Day* is a serious and dazzlingly ambitious work which considers the dimension of the so-called 'little people' (elves, goblins, changelings, wizards, warriors, monsters and even gods), both re-assessing their place in our civilisation and going some way towards explaining humankind's creation of them.

In the course of three novellas, McDonald eloquently tackles the sentient ego of our collective subconscious, focussing on both our need for the inexplicable and our ultimate desire to eradicate it.

The book follows the experiences of three women living in Ireland at different times over the past 80 years.

Emily Desmond is a headstrong and romantic schoolgirl from an eccentric family which embraces both the arts and the sciences. And while her father, the prominent astronomer Dr Edward Garret Desmond, becomes increasingly preoccupied with contacting the pilots of what he believes to be an interstellar

vehicle, Emily unearths, through the power of dream, in-roads from her turn-of-the-century world into the realm of Faery.

Jessica Caldwell, an embittered between-the-wars young artist, discovers that she possesses the god-like power of creation. With the help of a young soldier, the psychologist Hannibal Brooke and two mystical tramps, she learns the full extent of her true inheritance.

Enye MacColl, a modern-day advertising copywriter trained in the Japanese fighting arts of Kendo and Katana, has a flair for identifying the barely-disguised denizens of the Faery world's dark side. With the aid of the records of the late Hannibal Brooke and the advice of a bizarre band of were-creatures, she tracks down and confronts the Nimrod, Faery's king-like carnivorous shape-shifter.


McDonald casts his inspirational net wide, and is equally versatile in the writing styles he employs. Using a series of letters, diary entries, newspaper articles and latterly speech transcripts, as well as the more conventional first (and third) person points of view, present-to-past narrative shifting and flashbacks, McDonald proves himself worthy of the generally over-used appellations poet and wordsmith. With this book he has done for the fairy story what he did for science fiction with the near-classical *Desolation Road*.

Pete Crowther



## SEVEN LITTLE GIRLS

*Chris Hockley*  
*Publisher Grafton*  
*Format PB, £4.50*

 The brilliant PR surrounding Chris Hockley's debut novel *Steel Ghost* last year ensured that he quickly came to the attention of horror fans, and it is likely that his second novel *Seven Little Girls* will garner him similarly good press.

The seven little girls of the title make the unfortunate mistake of watching a pervert at work in the woods. They grow up, scatter across the world and bury the incident deep in their subconscious minds until, one by one, they are traced and tracked by the pervert, an ex-diplomat, who wants to take revenge on them for his fall from grace. As the book progresses, the women begin to remember what they saw when they were children and the threat of their pursuer becomes more claustrophobic as he moves closer to vengeance.

Stories in which the characters are placed in numerous different locations

## BOOKS



### HORROR

*The Nightmares on Elm Street*  
*Satan's Harvest*  
*The Wanting Slice*  
*Agents of Darkness*  
*Seven Little Girls*



### FANTASY

*The Revenge of the Rose*  
*Dream Weaver*  
*The Angel of Pain*  
*Medusa: A Tiger by the Tail*  
*My Pretty Pony*  
*Little Myth Marker*  
*Tarra Khash: Hrossak!*



### SCIENCE FICTION

*The People Collection*  
*Heir to the Empire*  
*Tek Lords*  
*The Heirs of Hammerfell*  
*Aleph*  
*After Such Knowledge*  
*Raft*  
*Clay's Ark*



### THRILLER

*Lie to Me*

can fall apart at the seams if the structure is not right. Fortunately, Hockley has paid a great deal of attention to the atmospheres of his locations and carefully marries them with his characters.

Hockley is not Stephen King or James Herbert, but he knows his stuff. He is an epicure of horror entertainment, and knows how to massage a thrill and inject the odd chill. So make sure that you pick up this itchy little number. Your spine will never be the same again.

John Gilbert



## LITERARY OUTLAW

*Ted Morgan*  
*Publisher Bodley Head*  
*Format HB, £20*

While many people have vilified the work of American culture guru William S

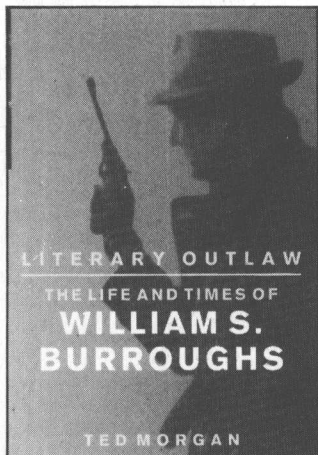


THE BIGGEST HORROR FESTIVAL TO BE STAGED IN THE UK BOOK NOW AND BECOME PART OF IT



Burroughs, there can be no argument over the powerful images behind the writer's words. They are at once chilling, caustic and ironic, often running through a wide gamut of emotions, ideas and startling perversions.

Morgan is an old hand at the biography game, with critically favoured books on Churchill and Somerset Maugham, amongst others, already on bookshop shelves. *Literary Outlaw* begins with the first hint of Burroughs' acceptance by his so-called literary peers during his induction at the American Academy of Arts and Letters.



The book incorporates many reminiscences from Burroughs' friends — Ginsberg, Kerouac, Hopper and Leary — and Morgan pays credit to Bill's incredible memory which appears to have logged just about every conversation and meeting he has had over his 70-odd years of life.

Morgan attempts no whitewash of this literary anarchist and Burroughs has obviously supplied details of his life which lesser men might have left buried. There's the incident when he shot his wife during a 'game' of William Tell, a comprehensive charting of his homosexual adventures, tales of his brushes with the film world and details of his sometimes stormy encounters with other writers. Indeed, Morgan's book works best as an exploration of the motivations behind Burroughs' fiction and the evolution of his extraordinary literary methods.

Burroughs fans will relish this 660-page book. Novices may want to read it before they attempt any of the man's fiction, simply because it sets novels such as *Junkie* and *The Naked Lunch* in perspective. Part of Burroughs' marvel, however, is the whiplash of understanding you get when you've read a particular passage several times. His work is intuitive and the reader must often switch off the brain in order to understand the essence. Go to it as a main course and then treat *Literary Outlaw* as a massive block of ice cream. It's so easy to overdose.

John Gilbert



## DREAM WEAVER

Jonathan Wylie  
Publisher Corgi  
Format PB, £4.99



When was the last time I raved about a high fantasy novel? It seems like aeons — for me such novels have to meet Everest-scale criteria to get me handing out the laurels.

All accolades should, however, go to

# DON'T MYTH OUT!

## LITTLE MYTH MARKER

Robert Asprin  
Publisher Legend  
Format PB, £3.50



Okay, so the title's obscure, the jacket features a pseudo-Kirby illustration and the central character is an extra-dimensional magician. Looks suspiciously like a duff fantasy comedy set to cash in on Pratchett popularity, doesn't it? Well, ignore all that because *Little Myth Marker* is one of the funniest, best-written, fast-paced novels I've read for a long time.

The extra-dimensional magician is Skeeve. In truth he's little more than a lounge lizard who likes swanning about the town of Deva, mainly in the sprawling bazaar — a place where the most ruthless merchants in all dimensions sell anything at any price.

He's also partial to gambling, and for once he has won at the universe's most complicated game — dragon poker. Besides the cash he's raked in, he's won another player's marker: A little girl called Markie (who turns out to be an absolute whizz at elemental magic, hurricanes and the like).

Skeeve is attached to the inter-dimensional mafia, the mob (but he's double-crossing them). Things get pretty chaotic when he returns to his home (an inter-dimensional tent) with Markie only to find his assistants and his grumpy partner Aahz in a flap — the mob has issued Skeeve with a bimbo moll, Bunny, who just happens to be the boss's niece. Not only that, but a character assassin called Ax is after Skeeve's blood and the great-



est dragon poker player ever, the Sen Sen Ante Kid (geddit!?) wants to challenge Skeeve to a showdown.

Thanks to utter chaos, confusion and coincidences, the story then transforms into an hilarious farce with an imaginative fantasy backdrop. It's a racey story, and you'll be hard-pressed to put it down as there are cliff-hangers at the end of most chapters. Asprin's writing is thoroughly entertaining, with an endless stream of well-planned scenes and great dialogue. The only feeling you're likely to be left with after reading *Little Myth Marker* is hunger for more of the same (which is fine, because there are five more *Myth* novels in the series!).

Richard Eddy



*Dream Weaver* which starts with a world-making bang and continues without unnecessary diversion along a path of high originality. The story settles around a desert made of salt underneath which lies the mysterious city of Derith. Nearby, Rebecca (daughter of Baron Baldemar) is urgently seeking a way out of an arranged marriage to a local king's son. She does this by invoking an ancient custom in which the suitor has to play a game of chess in order to win his bride. Rebecca arranges the game so that her unwanted lover will lose but she does not realise that magical powers, focussed around an old portrait in the

castle, are about to set her in the midst of a civil war and cast her as a pawn in a much more important magical battle.

Although *Dream Weaver* often slips into a style reminiscent of *Dragonlance* and other novels spawned from role-playing games, the duo which writes under the name of Jonathan Wylie has not hatched clichéd plots with an eye to commercialism. This book, however, will be a success. It is engrossing, marvellously written and most surely one of the best of its type. Applause all round.

John Gilbert



## THE WANTING

Campbell Black  
Publisher Mandarin  
Format PB, £3.99



Readers of Campbell Armstrong's thrillers *Jig*, *Mazurka* and *Mambo* will be pleased to know that the author's real name is Campbell Black and that he brings the same sort of dark realism to his horror stories as he does to his espionage novels.

The book's scenario is fairly standard. A doctor who is recovering from some form of mental breakdown brings his family to a house in a small

**A festival of PURE HORROR**

**THE BIGGEST HORROR FESTIVAL TO BE STAGED IN THE UK BOOK NOW AND BECOME PART OF IT**



American town called Canarvon. As the family settles into a quiet life, the doctor — Max — gets to know the local population, including jittery police officer Metger and a strange old couple called Charlotte and Dick, who appear to have lived in their woodland cottage forever.

The old folks seem particularly enamoured with Max and Louise's son Dennis. He visits their house frequently and begins to see them as secondary parents. There is a gradual change in his mental make-up as he becomes withdrawn from his family, under the influence of a dark and unidentifiable force. Officer Metger might have the answer. Many years ago similar events occurred in the house that Max and Louise now own. Another couple's son died in mysterious circumstances, but Metger is so intent on keeping the incident secret that another tragedy could happen.

Robustly American in story structure, style and characterisation, *The Wanting* is an astonishing book simply because Campbell Black is a native Scot who has taken US culture to heart. This is the first of his horror novels to be published in Britain, but more than likely his public will want more.

John Gilbert



### SLICE

Rex Miller  
Publisher Pan  
Format PB, £3.99



The cynics amongst FEAR readers might think that Rex Miller and his psychopathic serial character Chaingang are running out of steam. Knowing Rex's plans for this massive monster it is easy to deny

this, but if you want further proof just take a look at *Slice*.

After bouts of high profile violence in *Slob* and *Frenzy*, Chaingang appeared to be dead. But now he's back, badly disfigured and determined to terminate the man who has the only knowledge of his modus operandi. This quest, however, does not stop Chaingang from tracking other victims in order to destroy what he considers to be the dregs of humanity — women, children, you know the type.

Brutal, though not always uncaring, Miller's narrative catalogues one appalling crime after another. Although the cliché trap is always there, the author never falls into it. Chaingang remains fresh because there are so many facets to his character. Miller never repeats himself, which is a change after endless *Nightmares* and *Friday The 13ths*. If you want serial killer fiction in the classic '70s style you can read no-one better.

John Gilbert



### MEDUSA: A TIGER BY THE TAIL

Jack L Chalker  
Publisher Penguin  
Format PB £4.50

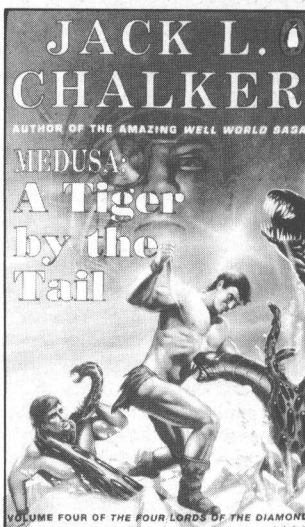


The fourth episode in the 'Four Lords Of The Diamond' saga sees success for three of the four assassin clones sent to kill the Lords of the Warden Diamond. Only Talant Ypsir, Lord of Medusa, remains, so our friendly Confederacy assassin's last alter ego (in the body of a teenager) goes in search of the final target.

Tarin Bul's job isn't an easy one

because Medusa is an Orwellian nightmare where the citizens' every move is watched by the dreaded TMS. Tarin's best chance to hit Ypsir comes when he is contacted by a resistance group calling itself 'The Opposition'. He joins and learns of 'The Free Tribes', a group of outcasts who chose to flee the repressive society and live outside the city. The TMS gatecrashes one of the Opposition's meetings and in the panic Tarin and three women escape from the city through a waste pipe.

Tarin and co meet up with one of the Free Tribes and find out from their Elders that shape changing is possible. To try and understand this Tarin sets off to a nearby mountain. Here, he finds the secret of shape shifting, but gets captured and has his mind wiped. Is this the end of the mission?



I must say that I prefer this book to Mr Chalker's previous effort *Charon: A Dragon At The Gate*, there is a lot more action and a definite sting in the tail at the end. The continual slanging match between the Confederacy and the aliens does get a bit tedious, but as usual the seemingly megalomaniac aliens are the good guys who really do want peace with the humans. It's a fitting end to a generally good series.

Mark Caswell



### THE HEIRS OF HAMMERFELL

Marion Zimmer Bradley  
Publisher Legend  
Format PB, £3.99

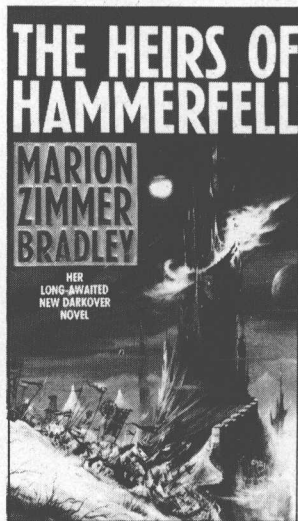


Marion Zimmer Bradley is famous for her Arthurian novels — which she discusses during an interview in this issue — and the continuing saga of the planet Darkover.

Spanning a history of two decades, the Darkover novels began with a ship crash landing on the planet, and the story of how the survivors began to build a new life for themselves. Although the fauna in this world can be dangerous the ship's crew manages to survive. But within a short space of time some crew members begin to display ESP talents. The colonists become factionalised, form alliances and develop their psychic skills. All of this happens within the scope of more than a dozen novels, of which *The Heirs Of Hammerfell* is the latest.

Written in the darkly romantic style that has made the rest of the series so popular, the book is essentially about

twin brothers Alaister and Conn who must forget their different upbringings if they wish their bloodline to survive. At the beginning of the novel the two men believe their parents to be dead and it is only through constant quizzing of their new companions that they learn the truth.



The mix of high drama and high fantasy is cleverly brewed in a cauldron of strong, though sometimes quirky, characterisation. Bradley is one of the most imaginative SF writers around and, by the look of *The Heirs of Hammerfell*, other Darkover books could follow to continue the tradition for new devotees.

Andy Braille



### TARRA KHASH: HROSSAK!

Brian Lumley  
Publisher Headline  
Format PB £3.99



Here is another one of those fantasy books which feature a number of jaw-cracking names. Set in a primal land at the beginning of time *Tarra Khash: Hrossak!* is the sort of story that legends are made of. The hero is Tarra Khash, a Conan the Cimmerian-style Hrossakian and a typical barbarian who likes wine, women, lots of food and stealing the odd treasure chest.

For many years men have tried to find the vaults of Ahorra Izz, the god of scarlet scorpions. The path is a very dangerous one and indeed Tarra is the only man to have survived the trip, even though he found the way by accident.

He returned with his pockets full of rubies, though he was more dead than alive. But once nursed back to life by nuns, he is tricked into revealing the whereabouts of the vault by a nasty jewel merchant called Nud Annoxin. He is thrown into a deep pit by Annoxin, but is promised his freedom if the jewel merchant's employees return with news of successfully locating the vault.

Tarra doesn't trust such a slimy toad to keep his word, but of course he survives — only to be thrown into many further adventures that Mr Lumley describes with the skill of the master novelist that he is. Conan The Barbarian is one of my favourite fictional characters and, as I have said before, Tarra Khash bears more than a passing resemblance to Robert E Howard's immortal hero. Further tales of the Primal Land are bound to be worth searching out, as indeed is *Tarra Khash*:



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# SATANIC VISION

## THE ANGEL OF PAIN

Brian Stableford  
Publisher Simon and Schuster  
Format HB, £14.99

 The message that humanity is in the thrall of the mysterious powers of fallen angels is an old one, but in *The Werewolves of London*, an epic of alternative history, black magic and the warring factions of heaven, Brian Stableford took the cliché, broke its neck and re-animated it as his own.

As a result, any follow-up to that book has to be superbly styled and needs to tread new ground and produce more of the surprising revelations that comprised the trademark of *Werewolves*...

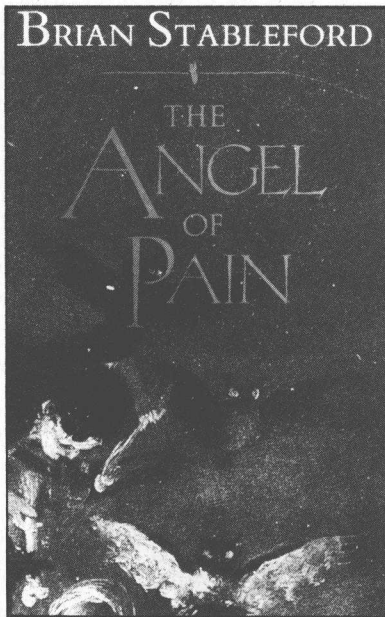
Unusually for a sequel, *The Angel of Pain* pulls off all these tricks without showing the conjurer's hand behind them. Two decades have passed since David Lydyard was bitten by a snake in Egypt and returned to England with a crippling disease and a clutch of visions which have begun to drive him mad. He soon understands that these visions are by-products of interventions by fallen angels who need temporal eyes through which to see and influence human affairs.

As the angels begin to wake from their eternal sleep, David gradually learns about the logic behind their fall through a series of visions. He sees that the dark angel we call Satan is unleashed from his shackles far above the Earth and enabled to walk the fiery fields that we would associate with Hell. This lord of despair has his own vision of God, as an uncaring deity who will not brook disobedience from his underlings. It is easy to associ-

ate with Satan, to see him as almost human with his understandable desires and frustrations. And Brian has done a superlative job with this thoroughly-rounded, dark-souled character and others of similar ilk within the novel. Even the black magician who is searching for eternal life and the enigmatic *Werewolves of London* are portrayed in a three-dimensional way.

Brian is obviously a writer in love with his characters and subject matter. *The Angel of Pain* is a work of passion, a romance which spans the reeking dead and the Most Holy. Fantasy fans will see it as a bright light in a widening abyss while admirers of Stableford's literary career will find it to be a garden of sweet-smelling dark roses.

John Gilbert



victims, help to keep you reading.

My one criticism is that the whole thing takes place over about three days. It is, according to the inside cover, the third in the *Patternmaster* series. I would have thought that it was the first in a series, as there are loads of expansion possibilities, and I would certainly buy a sequel. A good book, if a little short.

Will Evans

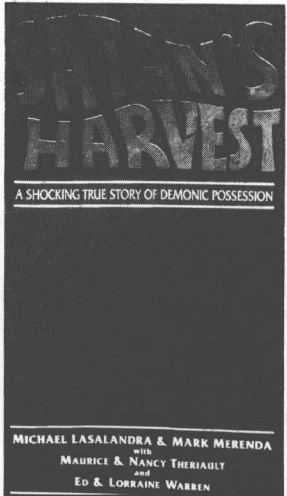


## SATAN'S HARVEST

Michael Lasalandra and Mark Merenda with Maurice and Nancy Theriault and Ed and Lorraine Warren  
Publisher Futura  
Format PB, £4.50



Non-fiction by committee, and about Amityville-style possession to boot! Yes, I could easily poke fun at this type of enterprise, if only for its naivety, but I have to admit that *Satan's Harvest* is as good as much of the horror fiction which is indiscriminately showering British shelves.



The entrée is fairly innocuous. Police Chief Sean Le Boeuf of Warren, Massachusetts, is called to investigate a disturbance at a local farm. The owner, Maurice Theriault, is already suspected of setting fire to his own place and has a history as the victim of child abuse.

As the book progresses, he also seems to be the victim of a particularly virulent spirit who physically abuses him, makes him appear in two places at the same time and lays waste to his immediate environment. The possessing entity is at first believed to be the malicious soul of a recently departed family member but, as an exorcist and the couple who investigated the

Hrossak!

Mark Caswell



## CLAY'S ARK

Octavia Butler  
Publisher Gollancz  
Format PB £3.99



An alien has invaded Earth. Thousands of aliens have invaded. They were brought here in the body of an astronaut, thought dead when his revolutionary spaceship crashed into the desert.

The alien could easily be mistaken for a bizarre virus, with some equally bizarre symptoms. Victims become stronger, faster, better co-ordinated and, although they constantly eat, they lose weight almost to the point of fading away. Senses and 'urges' are also heightened to new levels and can overwhelm the carriers at moments of weakness.

The most sinister effect of the 'disease', however, is the compulsion to spread it. When carriers see an uninfected person they cannot help but bite and scratch until their victim too is infested with the tiny creatures.

It was this compulsion to infect others that drove the astronaut across the American outback to a (thankfully) secluded settlement, where he secretly infected all the inhabitants. Only a few

survived, but those that did learned to cope with the disease and with the astronaut's help they managed to confine it, giving in only to abduct and infect the odd traveller on the nearby Mad-Max highway.

*Clay's Ark* tells the story of the abduction of Dr Blake Maslin and his twin daughters Rane and Keira into the self-sufficient carrier's colony. There is an increasingly tense relationship between captors and captured, not eased by Keira's acceptance of the new life they must lead and Rane's rejection of it.

The tables are turned when a passing family takes Blake and his daughters hostage and life in isolation starts to look different when compared to their imminent fate at the hands of the savage kidnappers.

That's the basic story, although there are two plots (past and present) going on at once, in alternate chapters. This is done well and is seldom confusing — the more you read, the more everything fits together.

The characters are interesting and reasonably complex, and they, together with the empathy you feel for the







# HI-TECH 'TEC

## TEK LORDS

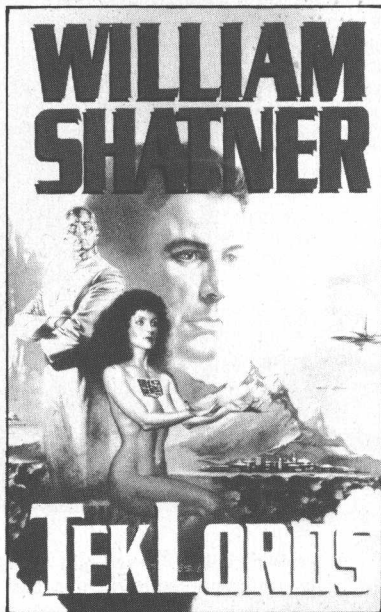
William Shatner  
Publisher Bantam  
Format HB, £13.99



Surprise of last year: William Shatner's future-shattering debut novel, *Tek Wars*. I certainly was surprised because Shatner unashamedly used a style that was prevalent in the '50s and a storyline which smacked of Golden Age science fiction. And yet I enjoyed the adventures of Jake Cardigan, back on Earth after serving a sentence for a crime he did not commit and determined to stop the drug lords who had helped put him away.

By the end of the first novel Cardigan and the set-up were perfect for a thrilling repeat performance, and that's exactly the term I'd use to describe *Tek Lords*. The hi-tech 'tec' might have rescued Professor Kittredge from the evil Tek drug lords, but they are determined to regain the anti-drug device which the professor has developed. While Cardigan again attempts to keep it out of their hands, he has to cope with pressure from his son who has apparently been expelled from school for using the Tek drug. On a professional level he is also called in to investigate the murder of an old rival and head of the drug enforcement agency, Kurt Winterguild. This case sees him tackle a deadly new assassin, Wildfire.

Shatner may be a newcomer to the world of long fiction but he is certainly proving to be a master of



pace and style. *Tek Lords* proves that he is anything but a one hit wonder and that the hype engendered by the first novel was well justified.

John Gilbert



place during the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. Dis, the fortress of hell, has emerged in the Valley of Death — a formidable opponent for the surviving US military. Blish takes the reader on a breathtaking tour of theology, physics and logic in a discussion between the generals and magicians about dropping a nuclear bomb on Dis, and a fantastic battle eventually ensues.

These two novels display Blish's formidable knowledge in a continually fascinating manner. Black magic and science are handled with consummate assurance, mathematical formulae rubbing shoulders with medieval treatise.

*A Case For Conscience* is even more of a theological thriller. Set in the far future, it revolves around the alien civilisation of Lithia. This society seems so peaceful as to be perfect, here are a people who appear not to have Fallen. To the layman there is no apparent sin, yet this inevitably troubles one of the team sent to examine Lithia's suitability for trade with humanity. The Jesuit Father Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez is disturbed that such an idyll could occur without the slightest trace of any kind of religion. This secularist paradise must obviously therefore be a trap set by Satan! It's a stunning premise and although the remainder of the book doesn't quite live up to its early promise, it's still a compulsive read.

Overall, a bargain package and well worth buying.

Stuart Wynne



## THE NIGHTMARES ON ELM STREET

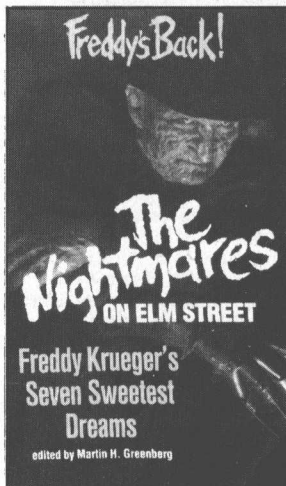
Edited by Martin H Greenberg  
Publisher Futura  
Format PB, £3.99



Sub-titled *Freddy's Seven Sweetest Dreams*, this anthology presents a number of half-baked short stories which emanate from the over-used *Nightmare* on *Elm Street* film mythos.

Freddy may now be dead but Greenberg and his publishers obviously see this collection as a golden opportunity to carry on in the Krueger fashion. If the book is successful there may be a whole slew of them, in which case yet more money will be made from the burned flesh of Freddy's overburdened back.

Most of Greenberg's other anthologies — which include collections of Batman and Joker stories and several volumes of collated horror/SF fiction — incorporate tales from big name authors,



Amityville Horror are brought in on the case, it soon becomes apparent that the entity is pure evil.

Although the book reads like a tacky horror thriller with a plot that has more holes than a crocheted blanket, the 'demon' appears to be stronger than anything thrown up by the Amityville books. It just won't leave the poor Theriaults alone and at the end, when you're suddenly introduced to some startling information about the apparently downtrodden and mild-mannered Maurice, it's interesting to see that this is one story of possession which cannot be left to rest with the words 'begone foul spirit'.

John Gilbert



## MY PRETTY PONY

Stephen King  
Publisher Knopf Whitney  
Format HB \$50

This is not a horror story, a fantasy tale or a science fiction yarn. It's a book about a boy, his grandfather and Time.

Think back to what you were doing last week — does it seem a long time ago, or can you remember it vividly? This book sees King focus on time and its effect on people. If you have only a month to live time is very precious, if you are just in your teens it feels like there is a long way to go. Don't be fooled.

This is classic King and proves yet again — as with *Different Seasons* and *Misery* — that he can tell a story without the horror element and still write it well.

This is a must for King fans, and it is a shame that it is available as a limited edition only (just 15,000).

You can obtain a copy from Time Tunnel, Craig Goden, 313 Beechwood

Avenue, Middlesex, NJ, 08846, USA, or by phoning Craig to order via Visa on 0101 202 560 0738. Ask Craig to send you a copy of his catalogue. FEAR fans will find the contents interesting.

Kevin McHugh



## AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE

James Blish  
Publisher Legend  
Format PB, £5.99



Although inevitably best-known for his *Star Trek* novels, Blish ranks as one of the truly great SF writers. Sixteen years after his death, it's only right that his works be subject to continual reprints. *After Such Knowledge* is a somewhat ungainly, and certainly bulky 'thematic trilogy' which actually includes four novels: *Doctor Mirabilis*, *A Case of Conscience*, *Black Easter* and its sequel *The Day After Judgement*. Blish himself regarded the books as a trilogy and Legend are to be praised for finally bringing them out in this fashion.

The first book in the trilogy is set in the 13th century, and is the most unfriendly of the novels. It's an ambitious attempt at writing the story of Roger Bacon, 'a forerunner of modern science' surrounded by so much myth and legend that his reality is unclear. Blish's own speculations are clearly the result of extensive research, and much of the dialogue approximates Middle English! This, and a wealth of detail, makes the novel's 300 pages a bit of a slog.

This contrasts sharply with *Black Easter/The Day After Judgement* which



are set roughly in the present day — the late sixties/early seventies. The juxtaposition of demonology and science is inevitably much sharper and more shocking. In *Black Easter*, an American arms dealer asks a black magician to ensure the death of a scientist, and in an elaborate black magic ceremony demons are called up and despatched to see that the man dies — they drive him to suicide. The success of this operation leads to a far more fearsome experiment. Attracted to his business by an interest in chaos, the arms dealer wants to unleash some demons on Earth in a series of small-scale assaults. Unfortunately, this time the demons are not so obedient — Armageddon seems to have been set in motion.

*The Day After Judgement* takes





# THE EMPIRE'S BACK!

## HEIR TO THE EMPIRE

Timothy Zahn  
Publisher Bantam Press  
Format HB, £9.99

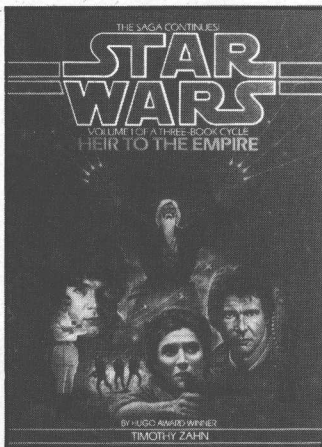
It's funny how we look back at our childhood through rose-tinted glasses, even to the point of reminiscing about school when we never stopped complaining about the place while we were there. We're always looking for things that bring back those days, if only in a diluted, temporary form, hoping to recreate those innocent pleasures we once experienced.

Thus I greeted *Heir To The Empire*, a novel based on George Lucas' *Star Wars* characters, with open arms and enthusiasm. *Star Wars* and its sequels were my childhood obsession and the endlessly merchandised toys and memorabilia were my favourite possessions. So this new slice of space opera, the first in a trilogy set in that far, far away galaxy, won my affections almost immediately.

The book is set five years on from the Battle of Endor (ie *Return Of The Jedi*). The Empire is a shadow of its former self, its forces demoralised and misguided since the destruction of the second Death Star and the death of the Emperor. The Rebellion, renamed the New Republic, has taken over much territory and assumed the lead from the former Imperial palace on Coruscant.

But there's life in the Empire yet, in the form of Grand Admiral Thrawn, a ruthless leader and master tactician somewhere between Darth Vader and Grand Moff Tarkin. The New Republic's ultimate defeat is his ambition but to do so he needs a Jedi to help guide his attacks — before his death, the Emperor had been this co-ordinator. Now Thrawn enlists a previously unknown Jedi Master but he will only work for the Empire if he's given the last of the Jedi: Luke, Leia and the twins she'll give birth to six months in the future...

All the other good guys make an appearance — Han, Chewie, Threepio, Artoo, Lando et al — and Timothy Zahn relies on the reader's familiarity of them and their cinematic exploits to carry the novel. Because of my boundless love of the *Star*



*Wars* series, I was initially fooled. But as I read on, *Heir To The Empire* cheapened, subjecting several of my favourite movie characters to tacky and ludicrous situations.

Luke discovers an electronic device near Yoda's house (odd that he never detected it on his previous visits), Lando operates a mining company from a walking city, Threepio is reprogrammed to talk in Leia's voice, special creatures neutralise the Force, Leia visits Chewbacca's homeworld... there's a whole list of situations that destroy the 'realism' and atmosphere of the *Star Wars* universe — it's hard, if not impossible, to imagine Lucas allowing *Heir To The Empire* to reach the silver (or even small) screen.

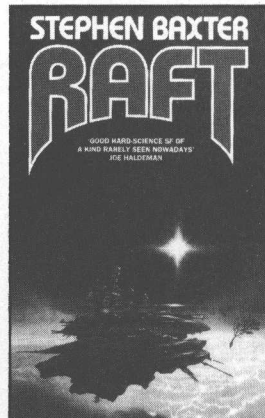
Zahn introduces few new major characters. Thrawn is central to the book and has ridiculous deductive skills — he has all the reasoning and logic of Sherlock Holmes, Columbo and Inspector Morse rolled into one. Yet at *Heir Of The Empire's* climax (I use the word lightly) he overlooks a simple fact that anyone in his position would know.

Zahn tries to spice things up by withholding facts — why a gang boss's assistant hates Luke so much, why some 'insignificant' devices are so important to Thrawn's plans — but fails to inject any urgency into the proceedings. I shall view the two remaining parts of the series as I do this: Just more *Star Wars* memorabilia I'd happily ignore if I wasn't such a great fan of the films.

Warren Lapworth



solitary, obsessed with asking questions, eternally optimistic (about human knowledge, if not nature) and questing. His adventure begins when he stows aboard a flying tree which takes him away from the brutal world of the Belt and up to the Raft. The Raft has been constructed from the original starship, and its inhabitants like to believe Miners are sub-human — so to justify their oppression. Rees should be returned to the Belt, but of course he proves to be such an intelligent, hard-working, uncomplaining chap that he gets to stay. He is taken into the Scientists' class and inevitably graduates with flying colours. There are of course thoughtless bullies to defeat, wise old (male) Scientists to recognise his genius and a suggestion — but no more — of romance. It sounds tired old clichéd stuff, but Baxter handles it all very deftly, and if there are no astonishing plot twists there are the occasional few surprises.



I read the entire book in an evening, appreciating Baxter's skillful remix of a familiar plot and continually intrigued by the environment.

The inventive concept is genuinely stunning, whatever your scientific competence — men walking on stars, a nebula sustaining life, flying trees and all the rest just keep you reading on for more. The only slightly negative element is the inevitable suggestion of numerous sequels. Unless Baxter can develop a more original human aspect, I fear revisiting his weird and wonderful universe could fail to equal this debut. Nevertheless this particular jaunt is definitely recommended as fast, thoughtful entertainment.

Stuart Wynne



## LIE TO ME

David Martin  
Publisher Headline Feature  
Format PB £4.99



The cover boasts that this is the most compelling suspense novel since *The Silence Of The Lambs*, which basically means there is a serial killer in the story. Unfortunately, this invites comparison with *Lambs* and it rapidly becomes apparent early on in the book that *Lie To Me* does not possess the characterisation or storyline to rival Thomas Harris' excellent novel.

The story revolves around the violent death of the multi-millionaire Jonathan Gaetan. Was it murder or suicide? After a late-night visit from a psychotic (Philip) Gaetan winds up dead in a most unsavoury manner. Detective Sergeant Theodore Camel is brought in to interview wife Mary Gaetan. Camel detects that Mary isn't telling him the

and if this tradition had been carried on with the Freddy anthology it might have been a quality book. Unfortunately, the only really big name is Nancy Collins, who wrote *Sunglasses After Dark* and the disappointing *Tempter*, and she has been relegated to the back end of the book in an effort to leave the reader with good feelings about the rest of it. Her story, *Not Just a Job*, is not up to the task, using the tired old cliché of 'like attracts like' as Freddy turns a young boy into a serial killer.

William Relling Jr is the other name that you might know, if you buy books on import. His spritely novels include *Brujo*, *New Moon* and *Silent Moon*, but his story, which concerns the Springwood clinic as well as almost sycophantic references to Amanda Krueger, Kristen Parker and Nancy Thompson, is over-long and unimpressive.

Other contributors include native Briton living in America Philip Nutman,

who works for Fangoria and used to write for *FEAR*. His story, *Dead Highway*, *Lost Roads*, is as close as we get to the visions of '80s horror superstars Skipp and Spector, with overtones of Clive Barker — at least in the title. His style is clipped, urban and to the point, but still he is unable to bring anything startlingly new to the milieu. The same is true of Tom Elliot with the puzzlingly titled *Briefcase Full of Blues*, Bentley Little's *Miles To Go Before I Sleep* (yawn), and Wayne Allen Sallee's *Close My Eyes and I'll Kiss You*, which at times promises to be interesting.

The problem with all these Freddy stories is that they all stick to the images and story restraints of the film. They lack innovation which is a shame because, as far as this book is concerned, sleep and dreams remain largely unexplored areas.

John Gilbert



## RAFT

Stephen Baxter  
Publisher Grafton  
Format HB, £14.99



This intriguing hard sci-fi novel is a surprisingly assured debut by Stephen Baxter, very much in the mould of Larry Niven. The original concept is that an Earth starship has accidentally been transported to a universe radically different from our own where gravity is more than a billion times more powerful.

Not surprisingly, the plot Baxter has developed to dramatise his startling ideas is quite conventional. The story opens some centuries after the starship arrived and promptly crashed. The ship's crew has splintered into a class-ridden society of oppressed Miners, aloof Scientists and ineffectual Officers. A revolution is brewing.

The central character is Rees, young,





whole truth (she doesn't mention Philip), but he doesn't inform his superiors because he's lost his appetite for solving cases. However, as new bits of evidence start to appear Camel gets hungrier for answers. Meanwhile, Philip is holed up in a hotel awaiting a cash payment from Mary. As the book progresses so does Philip's madness, along with the body count.

While *Lie To Me* does evoke some suspense, particularly with the kidnap scenes, ultimately it disappoints. Rather than being a whodunnit the story centres on why it was done. Sadly, it's too easy to work this out after reading about half of the book. The rest of the story merely confirms what you already thought. The plot device used at the end to explain everything is particularly pathetic while the epilogue is just too corny to be true.

Robin Candy



## THE PEOPLE COLLECTION

Zenna Henderson  
Publisher Corgi  
Format PB, £5.99



If anyone tells you that Zenna Henderson's *People* stories are twee, they're wrong. The stories are warm, and in places joyful, but they're also solidly written. And at long last they're all together in one book.

The *People* fled their planet when it was about to break up, and came to Earth in the 19th century. They have all the strengths and weaknesses of other people, and are indistinguishable from Earth dwellers except for their Psi abilities: Telepathy, flying, healing and seeing the future.

This volume includes the two previous *People* collections — *Pilgrimage* and *The People: No Different Flesh* — plus four other stories, three from the difficult-to-get-hold-of *Holding Wonder* and one previously uncollected. Some of the tales are set in the present day, others in the 19th century, and one takes place on the people's home planet, telling why and how they left.

Having Psi abilities brings trouble; the dark side of humanity is never stronger than when ordinary humans feel threatened by something different. So Christian fundamentalists who take the usual (but incorrect) translation of Exodus 22 literally — 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live' — tie up and burn a family of *People* because they see them flying. And so in one small town the *People* force themselves to shuffle, so they are never tempted to lift their feet from the ground. The pain — and also the hope — in these stories makes

most SF look flat.

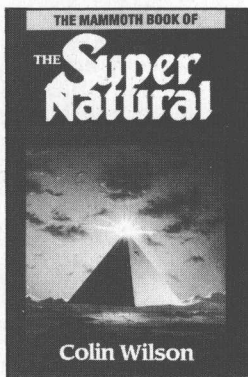
David V Barrett



## THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF THE SUPER NATURAL

Colin Wilson  
Publisher Robinson  
Format PB, £5.99

Most young people have some sort of interest in the occult, the secrets of nature that make psychics and practitioners of magic powerful individuals who stand apart from the herd of humanity. It was certainly the promise of unusual wonders that drew me to the subject almost two decades ago and, although I have since learned that the magic is a very different beast to that described in popular exposés, it was a series of books by that angry young man of the '60s, Colin Wilson, that put some structure to the subject for me.



*The Occult*, his first panoramic overview of metaphysical matters in which he posited the existence of a paranormal quality called Factor X, was followed by *Mysteries* and, more recently, *Beyond The Occult*. His new book, co-edited with son Damon, is a careful re-working of the strangest cases from his career as an investigator of the paranormal.

Split into 16 chunky sections, the book rushes headily through the birth of recent interest in magic, which occurred 21 years ago with a French book called *Dawn of The Magicians*, back to the lives of magical luminaries such as John Dee, Madame Helena Blavatsky, Rasputin and Aleister Crowley and forward to contemporary wonder-workers such as Eileen Garrett and Peter Hurkos. He also takes in many of the societies that quested for the knowledge of the Illuminati and delves into the nature of witches' covens and

the rather questionable antics of some of the occult's renegade organisations.

Switching from the magical to the truly paranormal, the emphasis is again on the mysterious Factor — or Faculty — X which Wilson posits as, perhaps, that which is responsible for human intuition and the more physically demonstrative powers such as psychokinesis (the movement of objects through force of mind and will). It's all here and, although Wilson does suggest the existence of an intelligence behind poltergeist phenomena, he is very even-handed in his coverage of *The Super Natural*.

Wonder lovers will find this book one enormous revelation. More approachable than his other learned tomes, *The Super Natural* is well-suited to anyone who wants a quick dip into the loch-like depths of the occult, but is also a reasonably portable reference work for serious researchers and an ideas machine for twitchy writers itching to find new material for their latest novels or stories. That's quite an audience for one non-fiction book, but then this is quite a book.

John Gilbert



## ALEPH

Storm Constantine  
Publisher Orbit  
Format PB, £7.99



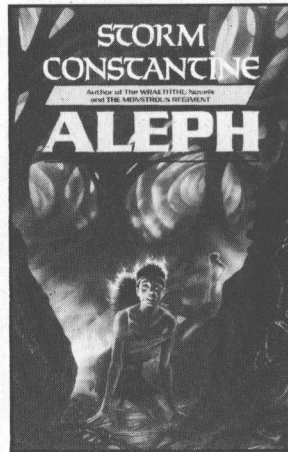
The first book in this series about the woman-dominated world of Artemis, called somewhat unoriginally *The Monstrous Regiment*, was not a critical or commercial success.

Although the novel incorporated an interesting contention — that a world dominated by women might be just as harsh as one in which men rule — the storyline trudged through a sludge of unconvincing emotion and peaks of tension were too few and too late. But it is always possible for a writer to bring an ongoing story into line with a new book, and Storm has done just that with *Aleph*.

Fleeing the confines of Silven Crescent, the main city on Artemis, and its female autocrats, Corinna Trogtarden, her mother and sister Dannel go to live in an uninhabited area called Freespace. The Freespacers represent freedom from the fetters of the increasingly maternalistic society, and Freespace is a place in which the Goddess of Artemis can be worshipped without confusion.

Peace is, however, a slender thread and easily broken, for the rulers of Artemis have been in contact with outworld interests and Zy Larrigan, the representative of a galactic touring

company, is about to pay a visit to Silven Crescent. He's a man, and in this book that can only cause problems. In this case Zy's flyer is disastrously drawn off course by a series of contradictory commands which seemingly come from nowhere. The alarming intercession from an unknown source brings back whispers of the mythical Greyhids, and raises speculation of a new power which could endanger the sanctity of Freespace.



After the disappointing beginning with *The Monstrous Regiment*, *Aleph* puts Storm's story back on course with an entertaining main plot and numerous seductive side-shows, while the final paragraph leaves some tantalising story threads which will no doubt be developed in a future book. Those of you who didn't like the original novel can read this one in the knowledge that it's vintage Storm and, who knows, it could tempt you back to *The Monstrous Regiment* with new insight.

John Gilbert



## THE REVENGE OF THE ROSE

Michael Moorcock  
Publisher Grafton  
Format HB, £13.99



Prince Elic, Moorcock's heroic fantasy figure from the '60s and '70s, returns with his demon-sword Stormbringer in a new battle against the forces of Chaos. For Elic fans this will be a great event; I have mixed feelings.

Elic, in the company of the wonderfully pathetic little poet Ernest Wheldrake, is on a quest to find a small rosewood box containing the soul of his dead father. The two meet up with the Rose, a warrior-woman, who has a quest of her own, and they all join a band of gypsies, becoming close to one family of clairvoyant travellers. During their subsequent adventures they become separated and reunited several times.

All leads to a climactic battle, with our heroes caught between Duke Arioch, Lord of Hell, and his deadly rival for supremacy, Count Mashabak of Chaos. Stormbringer at times sees good use, although Elic is often worried that the sword might be using him rather than the other way around. Still with me?

The characters are well-drawn and interesting, and the quality of writing is excellent, as you'd expect from Moorcock. But the plotting, the story itself, I found formulaic and confusing.

David V Barrett



**A festival of PURE HORROR**

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# GRAPHIC DE

Once more Warren Lapworth delves into the world of speech bubble, cape and *Meanwhile...*, to meet super and wonderful men.

Even before reading a word, I was pleased to see RAW 3 (Penguin, £8.99) arrive at the office, as the previous edition was one of the most... interesting anthologies I've read. This features 24 stories plus an art section (by Gary Panter) of dubious aesthetic value.

Highlights this time round include *Two In The Balcony*, an inane conversation between two scholars on the evolution of Mickey Mouse, illustrated in a strange inked realist and caricature style. *Thrilling Adventure Stories'* text is a first person account of a boy's childhood yet the pictures tell their own story, of a cloaked superhero versus an evil scientist: a curious mix. *The Boulevard of Broken Dreams* plots the downfall of a Felix-style cartoon cat and his creator at the hands of an animation studio's

bosses. *The Most Obvious Question* continues the harrying real-life adventures of an American girl, and *Repulsion* is a grim, horrific and enthralling tale of murder.

OK, I wasn't especially impressed by this RAW, but its wide range of styles, topics and approaches — in terms of both scripts and art — mean it's good value for money. One thing's constant and unavoidable in RAW: original, disturbing and stimulating ideas.

## THEY'RE BACK

With T2 the current movie rave, Dark Horse are sure to be raking in the profits with their two latest movie tie-ins. In *The Terminator: One Shot* (£3.95, import), a T800 is sent back in time to kill Sarah Connor.

Sound familiar? Well, this Sarah Connor is a newly-wed, so the phone book the Arnie Terminator used did not list her. However, this 800 model uses the telephone company's computer, and tracks this Sarah to San Francisco, where she's aided by her unwanted husband and a cop from the future.

This one-shot (hence the title, I

presume) seems purely for the benefit of Dark Horse, as I can see few people enjoying it. The plot is scanty: the Terminator kills a few dozen people, the cop talks with Sarah, then the 'climactic' (I use the word very loosely) end battle sequence is already upon you. Matt Wagner's art is vague and clumsy, his palette drab, and fails to spice things up; ditto for the gimmicky Terminator pop-up. Not worth the cash.

*One Shot's* writer, James Robinson, gets a chance to redeem himself in the four-part limited series, *The Terminator: Secondary Objectives* (£1.75, import) — sequel to Dark Horse's first Terminator series, *Tempest*. Again, Sarah Connors is the target — the one from the movies this time — and has a friendly Terminator, a soldier from the future and a scientist on her side. Just as well, with C890.L on her tail and Z000.M about to appear in her timeline...

*Secondary Objectives* relies on the reader having picked up *Tempest*: without familiarity with surviving characters from that mini-series, it would appear quite flat and gratuitous. Presuming ignorance, this second series is sure to pick up next issue, as it's

extremely unlikely Z000.M is just another Terminator after Sarah's blood.

Paul Gulacy's artwork is sometimes over-simplistic, not helped by Karl Kesel's basic inking, but panels and pages are well composed and colours vivid.

If you enjoyed *Tempest* (I know I did), go for it, otherwise consider your comics-buying budget first.

## FAME

The Avengers' most powerful bare-knuckle fighter, Simon Williams, has struck out in his own comic, *Wonder Man* (Marvel, 65p). As you might expect from this no-nonsense ultra-strong hero, he launches straight into action, his debut comic opening with him in mid-battle with the 50-foot giant Eric Josten.

Better known as Goliath, Josten doesn't just want Wonder Man dead, he wants his fame, money and adulation — Williams is a successful Hollywood actor as well as a respected Avenger (West Coast division). All Williams' glamorous, excitable girlfriend Ginger wants is for him to appear as macho and gain as much media coverage as possible. All our hero wants is the quiet life.

*Wonder Man* provided my biggest surprise this month — a pleasant one, too. I'd never heard of Gerard Jones (words) and Jeff Johnson (pictures) before but they certainly make a good team. Johnson's art is in the style of Whilce Portacio (*X-Factor*, at the moment), who, in turn, is reminiscent of Jim Lee (*X-Men*, of course): stylish, dynamic but uncomplicated.

Jones is a bigger talent. *Wonder Man* never grabbed me until now and the prospect of a comic based on a hero who was simply super-strong didn't excite me, but the Williams portrayed here seems human, despite his ridiculous strength. In this story, though, Goliath's the star: it's rare that a villain gets as much attention as he does here and the characterisation is exceptional for a single-issue story.

I don't know where *Wonder Man* will go from here but, against the odds, it's a title to watch.

## ULTRAVIOLINS

Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's artful collaboration of 1987, *Violent Cases*, has escaped from prohibition era Chicago and 60s England once more, this time in colourised form (Titan, £4.99).

It's a straightforward tale of a man recounting his youth. His father injured his arm and the osteopath he visited supposedly treated Al Capone. A scary bald

TERMINATOR





# TALENT

magician and a birthday party reveal further memories and thoughts of the boy and osteopath.

*Violent Cases* is well worth a fiver just for McKean's art. There's none of the distorted images that delighted us all in his famous *Arkham Asylum*, but a lot of gritty, realistic characters and scenes, deftly rendered in pencil, pastels, charcoal and pale washes. As one might expect (particularly when bearing *Cages* in mind), the colourisation is subtle, greys and blues tastefully adding (yet more) atmosphere to the illustrations.

The story is simple and brief yet captivating and evocative of youth, characteristic of Gaiman, particularly his *Miracleman* work. But, as ever, there's a hard edge to his writing and you can't miss it in *Violent Cases*. So don't.

## CENTENARY SQUADS

Oddly for an anniversary issue, *Alpha Flight 100* (Marvel, 80p) opens in mid-battle, with little explanation for the new reader attracted by the double-size special. Luckily, I'm not one of the uninitiated...

Golden space-faring alien, Her, arrived on Earth, pursued by the Consortium, a highly aggressive intergalactic corporation. The Consortium are not strangers to violence and when Canada's premier superteam, *Alpha Flight*, came to her aid, the resulting

battle destroyed Toronto. Teaming up with the Avengers, half the heroes have been transported to the homeworld of an alien race.

Now, on Earth, *Alpha's* Sasquatch, Diamond Lil, Puck and Northstar and the Avengers' Captain America, She-Hulk and

the Black Widow attempt to infiltrate and disable the Consortium's mothership. On the planet Quwrl, the rest of *Alpha* plus Sersi, Hercules, Quasar and Her are given little choice but to defend it from Galactus, the infamous world devourer.

Ho-hum, another 'special' anniversary comic, another disappointment. This time, though, I'm not surprised, as *Alpha Flight's* been pretty insipid since James Hudnall stopped writing it over a year ago. Fabian Nicieza has tried very hard to make it exciting and dramatic, but never having the right feel, has made it derivative and near infantile instead. The four-part *Her/Consortium/Quwrl* concluded in this issue was long-winded, unexciting and too galactic and world-shattering to suit the Canadian team.

Art? *Alpha Flight* hasn't been too hot in that area of late, either. Crudely formed and inked characters haven't done the stories any favours. This issue has seen an improvement, but only in places, as it's been illustrated by a variety of artists, from the naff to the impressive, but who did what and where is a mystery as there's no credit panel.

But every cloud has a silver lining. A new creative team is taking over the title so it's likely there'll be major improvements. And not a moment too soon: I want the *Alpha Flight* I know and love to come back.

## ANYTHING FOR THE WEEK, KENT?

Everyone's favourite journalist, Clark Kent, is busier than ever these days, with four titles to his name. The latest of these is *Superman: The Man Of Steel* (DC, 50p), scheduled with the others so a new Superman comic is released every week.

Keeping him occupied in *Man Of Steel* is a terrorist bomber called Cerberus. He thought the cyborg he tackled and brought to justice in Issue 1 put an end to his deadly reign but the real Cerberus is coordinating the attacks from a safe distance. In *Man Of Steel 2*, Lexcorp is Cerberus's target, napalm missiles the ammunition, and Rorc and Sergeant Belcher Superman's 'human' protagonists.

Louise Simonson's scripts for Marvel met with my approval and she's doing well with Superman, keeping the usual flavour but with natural domestic scenes and a more human Kent — even if he is an alien. Bogdanove's macho and characterful pencils are greatly enhanced by Janke's strong, often moody inks.

So now you can get a dose of Superman every seven days. But is it worth it? In general, the answer's debatable (although personal preference leans toward the negative), but specifically, *Man Of Steel* warrants attention if caped do-gooders are your thing.



# SUPERMAN

# RAW





# NIGHTSTYLE

NEXT ISSUE

## FEAR



### **ALICE COOPER — WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE/THE NIGHTMARE RETURNS.**

What can I say? To see this man live (although that seems a contradiction in terms) would be an experience. The stage effects in these two live videos are pretty damned impressive. Heads rolling, horse whips, chains — you know, everything you'd expect from a rock legend, really.

All the way through the songs Mr Cooper struts his horrific stuff wielding a multitude of left hand accessories. Ranging from swords to syringes. At one point in *The Nightmare Returns*, he picks up a mike stand. 'What's this?' I hear you say. 'Is Alice going mainstream on us?' Have no fear, he promptly impales a cameraman with it.

Overall, this is good entertainment as long as you enjoy great rock and lashings of gore. My only criticism is that the videos are very much the same in content — same songs, new stage. Only a major fan should buy the two, but one at least would be money well spent on your video collection.

**TIM MORRIS**



### **FLYING THROUGH LIFE (12 inch single)**

HELLFIRE CLUB  
HEAD RECORDS

The reason behind Hellfire Club's formation (it has an 18th century namesake) was the need for a hang-out for rock's 'bad boys'. It has a very impressive line-up for that reason, including Trash and Marty Williamson (late of Zodiac Mindwarp and Psychedelic Furs respectively). Other band members include Les Warner and Mark Neatron, plus David Lush who had never sung or performed with a band before.

The idea behind the band's conception was to regain the rock limelight from American commercial rock bands such as Guns 'n' Roses, Aerosmith and others (a list too long to mention). If this single is anything to go by the band will do just that. It is rock in its truest form, an evolution from Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple but involving a modern feel. These are talented musicians who deserve serious air play. Good luck.

**Robb the Rev**



### **ALICE COOPER — PRIME CUTS**

It's easy to think that Alice Cooper is a sick, deranged psycho, and let's face it when he sings numbers like *Dead Babies*, *Sick Things* and *Only Women Breed* whilst lopping the bass player's head off, I wouldn't blame anyone for saying so.

This video looks at the strange and bizarre career of Cooper, and also highlights the shock treatment delivered to the world by him since the early seventies right up to the present day.

Like it or not, this is the man responsible for the face of rock music. As we have known it for the past three decades.

The video also features interviews with Pink Floyd producer Bob Ezri (who helped forge the Cooper sound), Slash of Guns 'n' Roses fame and Alice Cooper manager Shep Gordon, plus a brief word from Ozzy Osbourne. What more could you ask for? This has to be an absolute must for any Alice Cooper fan, serious or casual. The die hards amongst you will love it for the rare footage and for glimpses of Alice Cooper (the band, not just the man) in the early years.

The slightly less fanatical rock lover will appreciate it for the music if nothing else — every track, classic or not, is an absolute belter.

Sick, deranged psycho? I think his head's screwed on tighter than we think.

**TIM MORRIS**



## FEAR competition

### **WELCOME TO HIS NIGHTMARE!**

Let the legendary — and very bizarre — rock singer and special effects artist Alice Cooper enter your life.

His distinctive voice and provocative stage act combine to create unique performances wherever he goes, and now Castle Music Pictures have created three very special musical documentaries which chart his unbelievable life.

*Welcome to My Nightmare* includes 14 of his best-known tracks, all sung live.

*The Nightmare Returns* provides more music, beheadings, impalement, whips, leather, chains etc.

*Alice Cooper Prime Cuts: The Alice Cooper Story* charts his life through 23 more live tracks.

The three videos provide an education for any fan of horror or heavy metal, and we've got five sets to give away, courtesy of the Castle. To win, name three of Alice's most famous songs. Send your entry on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope to: Cooper's Choice Cuts Compo, FEAR, Newsfield, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1JW. Entries should be in by September 5, 1991, and remember that no employees of FEAR, Newsfield or Castle Music Pictures (or their relatives) can take part, or they may have an accident with a guillotine.

● **STAR TREK** celebrates its 25th anniversary in style, and we'll be there to ensure that you get all the information you could ever want on the original series, the Next Generation and the movies — the last of which has just completed production. If you're an ST fan, you're not to miss our magic treatment of this continuing cult. If you're not, we hope to prove that the fuss is all worth it. It's an issue even Home Alone star Macaulay Culkin would enjoy — the secret behind that little quip will be revealed in September.

● **RUTGER HAUER** takes to the streets of London in his new SF super thriller *Split Second*. We're on set to bring you the latest on one of the few genre films being shot in the capital this year.

● **JOHN SAUL**, acclaimed author of *Nathanial*, *Punish The Sinners* and *Brainchild*, launches his new thriller, *Second Child*, with an exclusive interview for FEAR. Find out why this actor turned horror writer and how he uses the concept of evil infants with such success.

● **BLACK SUNDAY SIX...** we'll be taking a look at what's in store for film fans at this horror movie extravaganza.

● **RACHEL TALAHY**, director of the last *Nightmare On Elm Street* and top dog with New Line Cinema, discusses her involvement with one of America's most successful independent film companies and her love affair with that Krueger character. We have the shock horror superhot details, fresh from Freddy's grill.

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