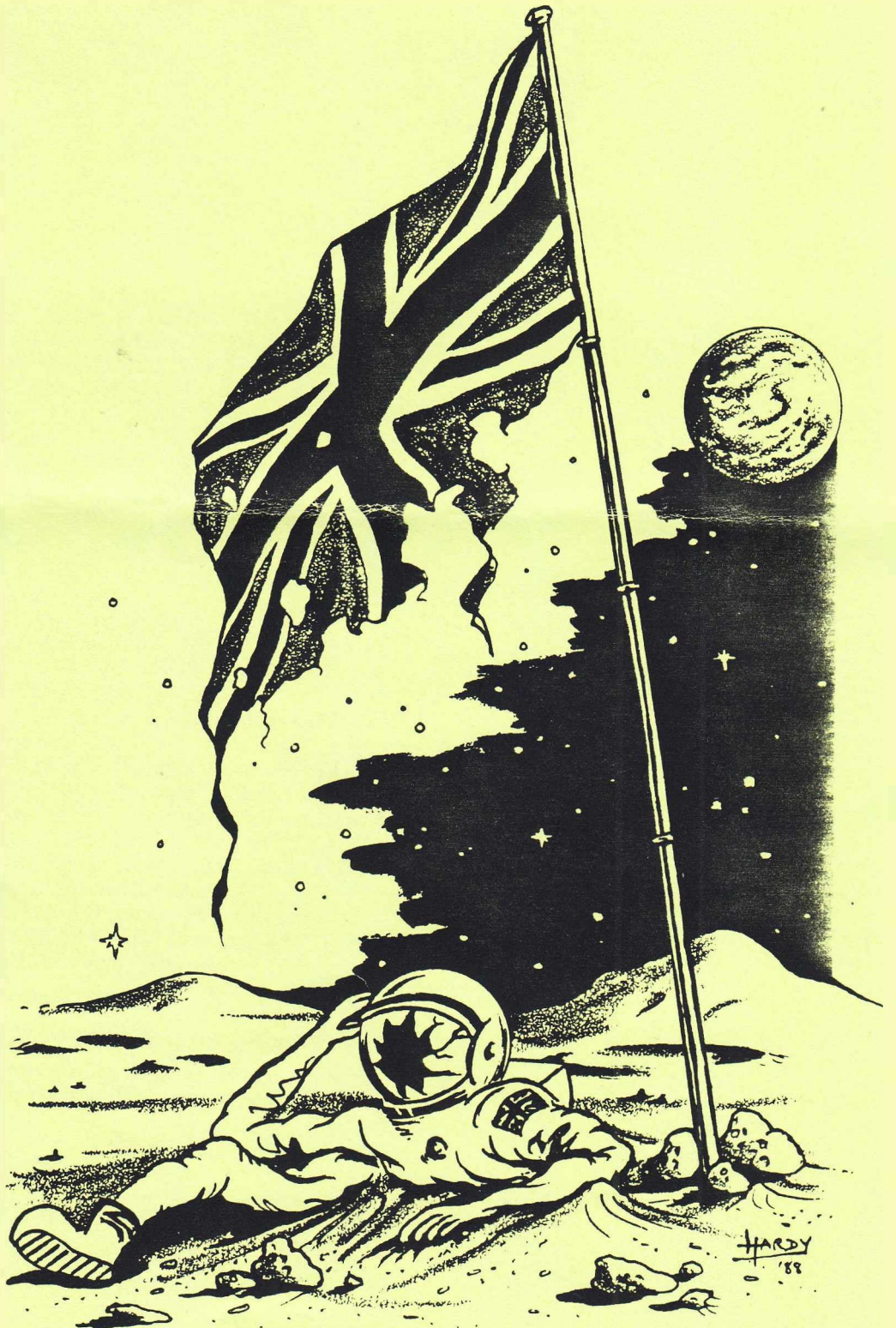


# THE FUTURE OF BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION

CW  
CRITICAL WAVE  
88



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**THE DRAGONHIKER'S GUIDE  
TO BATTLEFIELD COVENANT AT  
DUNE'S EDGE: ODYSSEY TWO**

David Langford

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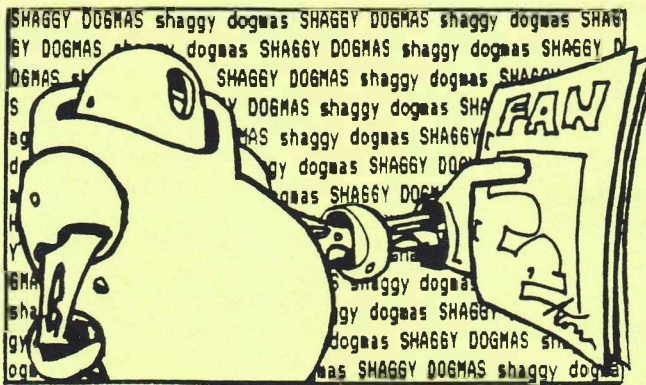
First Edition - Published September 1988

Standard Hardcover Edition (ISBN: 0-947578-01-3) £9.95

De-luxe Edition - limited to 100 copies bound in bonded-leather and with marbled endpapers, numbered and signed by the author (ISBN: 0-947578-51-X) £24.95

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It was the final evening of July, 1987, in the infamous Laap Tavern. Martin and I were nursing our respective pints and discussing the forthcoming UK worldcon, when I mentioned a project I'd been considering, a quarterly news magazine to fill at least part of the void soon to be left by Dave Langford's notorious *ANSTABLE*. There was an ozone crackle in the air above, of a kind last heard when we foolishly considered launching a British bid for the 1989 worldcon, then Martin's alcoholically relaxed focus suddenly sharpened: if I agreed to edit, he'd assist. My bluff was called and by the time Tony Berry and my wife Ann joined us, we were already planning a simultaneous launch at Novacon 17 and Nicon II.

That's little more than a year ago, but it feels like a century. The printing problems which dogged the first three issues (and re-emerged briefly last time), the postal delays we encountered even before September's national walkout, the unavoidable switch to a bimonthly schedule and the similarly unstoppable growth in size (Greg Pickersgill *did* warn us...), the explosion in our workload which forced Martin to abandon any dreams of remaining a 'junior' member of the most exhausting and yet most rewarding partnership I've ever been part of, all of these elements might well have doomed a 'normal' fanzine if not for our joint conviction that the end result might actually have some lasting value.

That isn't to say we've always got it right, of course. The news style adopted in the first issue, particularly our tongue-in-cheek use of 'punny' headlines, was a journalistic own-goal if ever there was one, though hopefully we learned from the mistake. And, despite our attempts to remain factually accurate, an occasional error has still crept through.

Which is as good a moment as any to offer our apologies to Robert Lichtman, whom last issue was quoted as refusing to stand in the current TransAtlantic Fan Fund race if the winner was expected to attend the 1989 Eastercon on Jersey as opposed to Mexican III in Nottingham. Although Robert *had* expressed strong reservations over attending Contrivance, in a letter which appeared in our July edition, he subsequently decided to stand regardless. Unfortunately, neither Martin nor I were aware of that decision and (in retrospect, erroneously) maintained our original interpretation of his letter to us. Meanwhile (as we forecast correctly last issue), his potential opponent Charlotte Proctor was forced to abandon her plans to run due to the dates of the Easter weekend next year. She has been replaced in the running by Luke McGuff.

All of the above was fact by the time *CRITICAL WAVE* # 7 was posted out, but - thanks to the closure of international

postal links both before and after the UK strike - we stayed in the dark till some weeks after the damage was done. Fortunately, Robert contacted our US agent Tom Hanlon less than 48 hours before the American copies went out and managed to arrange a corrective rider; he was also put to the inconvenience of writing to a number of British sf fans to ensure the word spread over here. We've already offered our apologies to both Robert and Tom, who hopefully realise the story was printed in good faith and without malice to either 1988 candidate; the foregoing, however, is included both as a statement made without prejudice to set the record straight and as an apology to those British readers we misinformed.

Still, the fact that *WAVE*'s still alive and kicking for this special anniversary issue must mean something, even if it's simply that nothing is ever achieved alone. Dozens of people from throughout this planet have contributed time and effort on our behalf, gathering news, reviewing books, plays & fanzines, producing art & computer graphics, writing convention reports, obtaining and repairing equipment, scanning electrostencils, placing advertisements, distributing flyers and (most effective of all) word-of-mouth publicity -- our survival depended on all this, so now you know who to blame.

And the future? Well, that's a subject we've chosen to focus upon at some length this edition, although it's the future of British science fiction rather than whether Martin and I will still be handcuffed to our computers in a year or two (traditionally, British newszines have folded with a UK worldcon, so we could be in for quite a long tour of duty). Our specially extended 'Platform' feature was inspired by an *INTERZONE* column by Charles Platt, "Destination: Bloom", in which he analysed the relationship between British society and its sf writers, concluding that only geographic divorce from this "nation of grim despair" would free them intellectually. Although his description of the ending of the movie *BRAZIL* as "tiresomely defeatist" betrayed a less-than-total understanding of the British psyche, enough of that article hit home to raise more than a few eyebrows this side of the Big Pond. If Platt was correct, whatever success British sf enjoyed through the 50s and 60s had vapourised, with only an inevitable stagnation awaiting us in the final decade of the twentieth century. Whether the British themselves give this viewpoint any currency, you'll discover in our rear pages.

One bizarre possibility is offered by Grafton's publication of *FRANK FRAZETTA'S DEATH DEALER, BOOK 1: PRISONER OF THE HORNED HELMET*, a novel by James Silke 'inspired' by the bestselling artwork of Frank Frazetta (whose name appears in larger type than Silke's on the cover - a Frazetta painting naturally - and who shares the byline on the spine). Whilst grasping the commercial considerations behind this 'collaboration', it still strikes me as an affront to the creative process which some writers are still rumoured to be engaged in (those, presumably, not working on novelisations of role-playing games, contracted for the pre-plotted middle chapter of another author's format universe or churning out airport lounge schlock for insomniacs terrified of flying). Is this the launch of a trend? If so, what's next? *EDWARD BURNE-JONES' HOLY GRAIL TRILOGY*? *BORIS VALLEJO'S LARGE-BREADED AMAZON PSYCHOPATHS*? The mind boggles, really it does.

Steve Green



# IN BRIEF

## IN PRINT

Paper Tiger's latest release is *HEROIC DREAMS*, a showcase for more than 20 British fantasy artists, including Jim Burns and Peter Goodfellow. The illustrations are accompanied with an essay by Nigel Suckling on man's psychological need for heroes and the eternal struggle between the forces of good and evil. Due later in the month is a new Tin White portfolio, *CHIAROSCURO*, plus *DREAM MAKERS*, featuring work by six British artists.

Futura has bought Larry Niven's (unwritten) next novel, *DESTINY'S ROAD*, for "a good five-figure sum".

Charles Stross and Eric Brown are among those tipped to join the crew of the upcoming science fiction / fantasy line from Games workshop [see last issue].

The eagerly-awaited political comic *BROUGHT TO LIGHT* - which includes Alan Moore's assault on CIA dirty tricks - is still unfinished and has been rescheduled to the new year.

"People *actually* come up and ask me if *THE WASP FACTORY* is autobiographical," revealed Iain Banks at the Birmingham SF Group's August gathering.

"If it *was*, I'd be helping police with their inquiries, not answering stupid fucking questions like that."

Lucy Sussex's juvenile novel *THE PEACE GARDEN* has been re-scheduled to appear in February rather than December.

Tanith Lee's *THE DRAGON HOARD* will be published by the Arrow juvenile imprint Beaver Books on 5 January, whilst the company's sf imprint Legend publishes Greg Bear's eerie fantasy *THE SERPENT MAGE* on 19 January, a sequel to his novel *THE INFINITY CONCERTO*.

The softback edition of Ramsey Campbell's *THE INFLUENCE* leads Legend's February 16 releases, joined by new editions of *THE HUNGRY MOON* and *THE DOLL WHO ATE HIS MOTHER*. 7,700 copies of *THE INFLUENCE* sold in Century hardback, while the other two have sold more than 44,000 copies in paperback.

The line-up on 8 December includes Guy Smith's satanic thriller *THE MASTER*, Paula Volsky's fantasy *THE SORCERER'S LADY*, Joe Deven's *SLAUGHTER MOUNTAIN RUN* (the 2nd episode in the 'Freeway Warrior' role-playing series) and the first in Robert Asprin's fantasy spoofs, *ANOTHER FINE MYTH* (cover art by Chris Baker). Diana Wynne Jones' children's fantasy *POWER OF THREE* is published on 2 February, followed a fortnight later by Dave Duncan's fantasy *A ROSE RED CITY*.

Congratulations to Ian Williams, who's not only sold an sf novel to Macdonald for its new Frontlines teenage imprint but tied the matrimonial knot with Susan Hardy on 24 August, following a two-month romance. The book's entitled *THE LIES THAT BIND* and is scheduled for a 1989 release, possibly in July. "The book is contemporary sf and should appeal across the spectrum from mainstream readers to comics fans," plugs Ian, who's also just completed the first year of his degree.

It's all change time in the publicity offices, with NEL losing Kathy Gale to Pan, whilst Brian Silich joins Methuen in the wake of Alison Strahn's recent departure. Meanwhile, editor Richard Evans has quit Futura/Orbit, joining Headline in a part-time capacity.

The talent of the late Robert Aickman, who received the very first World Fantasy Award for short fiction in 1975, is showcased in two books just out from Robinson: his novel *THE MODEL*, published here for the first time, and the fiction selection *COLD HAND IN MINE*, which includes the prizewinner "Pages from a Young Girl's Journal". Meanwhile, HTV intends to adapt several stories by Aickman, who died in 1981.

John Brunner's completed a new book, entitled *TOOTH AND CLAW*; meanwhile, Ian Watson's replaced him at Cassandra's writing workshop at Iconoclasm.

Remember the bizarre inclusion of Frank's Miller's *DARK KNIGHT RETURNS* in the 1987 non-fiction Hugo ballot, made at the behest of *LOCUS* publisher Charles N Brown? Thought he might have learned from the resulting brouhaha? Then think again - he's just announced that *WATCHMEN* topped the annual *LOCUS* poll, in the non-fiction category. Guess Chuck just ain't the learning kind, folks.

The other awards went to: David Brin's book *THE UPLIFT WAR* (best sf novel); Orson Scott Card's *SEVENTH SON* (best fantasy novel); Emma Bull's *WAR OF THE OAKS* (as best first novel); Robert Silverberg's novella "The Secret Sharer"; Pat Murphy's novelette "Rachel in Love"; Pat Cadigan's short story "Angel"; Lucius Shepard's story collection *THE JAGUAR HUNTER*; *THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION* (best sf anthology; fourth edition, ed. Gardner Dozois); Tor (best publisher - guess all those *LOCUS* centrespreads paid off); Michael Whelan (best artist); *ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE* (magazine, natch); David Brin again (best 1980s author); Robert Anson Heinlein (best all-time author).

Andy Porter's *SF CHRONICLE* also presented its own poll this autumn, of course, "the only award in the sf / fantasy field which one can wear". This year the medallions went to Gene Wolfe's novel *THE URTH OF THE NEW SUN*; *THE PRINCESS BRIDE* (dramatic presentation); Robert Silverberg's "The Secret Sharer" and Michael Whelan (same as *LOCUS*); *IZZARD* (best fanzine); Octavia Butler's novelette "The Evening and the Morning and the Night"; Carol Emshwiller's "The Circular Library of Stones"; David Hartwell (pro book editor); Gardner Dozois (pro magazine editor); Arthur Thomson (best fan artist - *now howzabout a Hugo, huu?*); Teresa Nielsen Hayden (fan writer). Best semi-prozine was, surprise, *SFC* itself, though our own *INTERZONE* came a respectable second.



Danien Broderick's Australian science fiction anthology *MATILDA AT THE SPEED OF THE LIGHT* has received scant publicity from publishers Angus & Robertson, resulting in copies being "very difficult" to track down, according to the news-zine *THE NOTIONAL*.

Apologies to anyone who tried to track down the excellent *EAT IN OR TAKE AWAY* after our enthusing last ish; the address supplied has proved to be non-existent. Any address where Phil Winslade or Steve Fugh might be contacted in *602s* universe would be welcomed.

Charles Stross has sold a short story to *INTERZONE*, to be published in 1989; he describes it as 'post-cyberpunk'. His story "In the DreamTime" appeared in the November issue, more than four years after it was written, whilst "Big Trouble Upstairs" by Eric Brown once bounced around an orbiter; different strokes for different folks, it seems.

Gollancz has bought a solo sf novel from Arthur Clarke, though the ultra-low advance of £1 was set so the author was under no pressure to fulfil the contract; the book's title is *GHOST FROM THE GRAND BANKS* and it concerns the ill-fated liner Titanic. It's part of a two-book deal with Gollancz & Futura, which also includes *RAMA II* (in collaboration with Gentry Lee, as was *CRADLE*).

Clarke, recently diagnosed as suffering from Post-Polio Syndrome (not Lou Gehrig's Disease, as once feared), is now working on his first tv series, *A FALL OF MOONDUST*.

DC Comics sent the latest Robin to the grave following a telephone poll of *BATMAN* readers. Holy voxpop, chum.

The 22nd Clarion Writers Workshop in Science Fiction & Fantasy Writing will be held at Michigan State University, 25 June - 5 August. Authors-in-residence will be Tom Disch, Karen Joy Fowler, Octavia Butler, Spider Robinson, Kate Wilhelm and Damon Knight.

Applications should be addressed to Prof. Albert Drake, Director, Clarion 89, Holmes Hall East, Lyman Briggs School, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824; closing date: 3 April, 1989.

Both *ANALOG* and *ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE* have a new office on the 14th floor of 380 Lexington Avenue -- a jump upstairs for the former occupants of the 12th storey.

Bridge Publications has launched a new contest, Mission Earth Choose the Adventure of Your Life, with "three intriguing locations" on offer to the winners.

Meanwhile, an American judge has dismissed charges that of embezzlement, blackmail and extortion against the late L Ron Hubbard and several of his deputies, citing lack of evidence. The class action had been brought by a number of the sf author's former disciples.

Guests at Clive Barker's celebration party marking the softback edition of *WEAVERWORLD* had a nasty surprise waiting for them in his sauna -- a pair of rotting corpses, courtesy of the movie *HELLRAISER*.

Clive Barker, Ray Bradbury, Dean R Koontz and Robert McCannon were the main attractions at a fundraising event in aid of Santa Monica's famous bookstore A Change of Hobbit; the owners need more than \$40,000 in order to move to a new site following the expiry of its lease.

Speaking of whom, *LOCUS* reports that a (possibly innebriated) fan sliced his own arm with a razor at one of Clive Barker's recent New York signing sessions, then requested an autograph in his own blood; the author apparently took it in his stride, but we aren't told if the 'fan' (who suffered minor bleeding) got his signature.

## GLITTERING PRIZES

Ken Grimwood's *REPLAY* won the World Fantasy Convention 'best novel' award, with Ramsey Campbell's novel *THE HUNGER MOON* taking the UK equivalent, the August Derleth Award.

The other World Fantasy Awards were presented to Ursula LeGuin's Hugo-winning novella "Buffalo Girls, Won't You Come Out Tonight?", Jonathan Carroll's short story "Friend's Best Man", both David Hartwell's *THE DARK DESCENT* and Kathryn & Peter Pautz's *THE ARCHITECTURE OF FEAR* (a tie for the best anthology category), Lucius Shepard's collection *JAGUAR HUNTER*, artist J K Potter, editor David G Hartwell (special pro award), both Robert and Nancy Garcia's *AMERICAN FANTASY* and David B Silva's *THE HORROR SHOW* (a tie for the special non-pro award).

Potter was also dubbed best artist in the British Fantasy Awards, joined by Steve Rasnic Tem's short story "Leaf" and Clive Barker's film *HELLRAISER*. Carl Ford received two awards -- for *DAGON* (in the small press category), and the Icacus Award as 'most promising newcomer'.

Robert Heinlein was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Public Service Medal (the highest services honour a US civilian can earn) by the director of the Goddard Space Centre on 6 October; it was accepted by his widow Virginia.

As well as the Hugo Awards listed last edition, several other laurels were handed out. First Fandom's Hall of Fame Awards were presented to Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, David Kyle, Charles P Honnig and (posthumously) Neal R Jones. A special award (identical to the other Hugos, but nevertheless not a Hugo) went to the SF Oral History Association. Andre Norton received the Big Heart Award, whilst the Japanese Sei-Un for best foreign novel translated into Japanese during 1987 (the Asian equivalent of the Hugo) was presented to *NOSTRALIA* by Cordwainer Smith; James Tiptree Jr's "The Only Neat Thing To Do" scored in the short story section.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*CRITICAL WAVE* wishes to thank all those who contributed to this anniversary special, and to acknowledge *SF CHRONICLE* and *LOCUS* as primary sources of American news, *THE NOTIONAL* for Australian news, as well as the assistance of *FILE:770*, Dave Holmes (*Andromeda*) and *MATRIX*.



## FANS & FANDOM

Although Algis Budrys' invitation to attend Mexican III as guest of honour was withdrawn following his controversial speech at the 1987 Hugo Award ceremony, the American author is rumoured to be planning to fly over and visit regardless.

The Conspiracy rescue party on 17 December, exclusively announced last issue, will feature sf author readings and an auction. Among lots at London's Cafe Munchen: 1st editions signed by Rob Holdstock & John Brunner, Jim Burns artwork.

Chicago won the vote for the 1991 Worldcon by a vote of 1,217 against Sydney's 198. Hal Clement will be GoH. Write Box # 218121, Upper Arlington, OH 43221, USA, for details.

Leeds fandom scored a hat-trick at the 1988 Nova Awards ceremony, with Hazel Ashworth's *LIP* named best fnz, Michael Ashley best writer and D West best Artist. Incoming administrator Pam Wells was reportedly delighted with the turnout, a record 55 ballots. Full breakdown next issue.

Martin Tudor, *CRITICAL WAVE*'s co-publisher, is to chair Novacon 19 for the Birmingham Science Fiction Group; venue and GoH will be announced next issue, but membership is £10, payable to Bernie Evans at 7 Grove Ave., Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7UY, England, prior to 13 October next year.

Congratulations to Pete Wright & Anne-Marie Deacon upon their engagement, and to Steve Lawson & Alice O'Donnell upon theirs. Steve will be staying in Sheffield, but handing the former home of Dave Bridges on to lodger Dave Cooper; he's jokingly considered writing a clause into the contract ensuring the house can only be sold to another sf fan.

As mentioned elsewhere, Robert Lichtman and Luke McGuff are both candidates for this year's TransAtlantic Fan Fund; it's said Jon Singer may also run on a write-in platform.

Lichtman edits the fanzine *TRAPDOOR*, a Hugo nominee at Nolacon II; McGuff, who is said to be supporting his rival on his own platform [*shome mishtake shurely ?*], edits *LIVE FROM THE STAGGER CAFE* and fiction for *NEW PATHWAYS*.

The Melbourne SF Club is selling off surplus items from its extensive fanzine collection, ranging from the early 50s to the present day. A list is available from MSFC Zines, PO Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vict 3004.

Scotland's veteran conrunning squad will be concentrating on smaller events in future, opines Malcolm Reid, as the majority of them have been working solidly on large-scale sf cons for nearly a decade and are consequently "pissed off"; see our conventions round-up for details of Prefab Trout, an enswalled Scots gathering next September.

As exclusively rumoured a few issues back, Leslie Fish is to be guest of honour at Britain's first filksinging con, taking place next year. In the meantime, UK filksingers now have a monthly meeting at the ever-popular Wellington Pub on the final Friday of each month.

The Conspiracy '87 committee has been formally censured by the World SF Society over its distribution of site selection ballots for the 1990 worldcon, the bid controversially won by Holland. The censure was backed 38-21 (8 abstentions recorded) at the WSFS's annual business meeting, held at the New Orleans worldcon Nolacon II.

## ON SCREEN

Novacon 18 attendees had a chance to see two C S Lewis stories on stage at the B'ham Hippodrome over the convention weekend; 22 November marks the 25th anniversary of Lewis's death, overshadowed at the time by Kennedy's assassination.

An adaptation of C S Lewis's *CHRONICLES OF NARNIA* will among a £20M package of BBC children's shows this autumn.

Jerry Hall has finished her scenes for Tim Burton's new *BATMAN* movie, whilst Michael (Bruce Wayne) Keaton and Jack (Joker) Nicholson have begun theirs. Meantime, *GHOSTBUSTERS* director Ivan Reitman plans to bring Frank Miller's *THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS* to the big screen. Holy dual-vision, folks.

*DOCTOR WHO* celebrated its 25th birthday by launching a new season in October, taking current incarnation Sylvester McCoy back to the Totters Lane scrapyard where William Hartnell was first spotted a quarter-century ago. Nostalgia got a further boost with references to 'Bernard' and the British Rocket Group, a nod to all the *QUATERMASS* fans out there.

Singer-actress Toyah Wilcox has a one-handed adaptation of Doris Lessing's dystopian novel *MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR* in the pipeline; it's already been filmed with Julie Christie.

November 11 sees the video launch of *ROBOCOP*, expected by the industry to become the smash hit of '88. Other video releases this autumn include *PREDATOR* and, for the dozen or so who missed the pirates six years ago, Spielberg's *E.T.*

Meanwhile, comics writer Frank Miller is working on the screenplay for *ROBOCOP II*.

Autumn UK video releases from Vestron include the Hugo-winning fantasy *THE PRINCESS BRIDE*, with *WAYWORK* (a horror comedy starring David Warner and Patrick MacNee, with sfx by the *HELLRAISER* squad), *DREAM A LITTLE DREAM* (Jason Robards swaps bodies with a teenage boy in *VICE VERSA* fashion) and *CHUD II* to follow.

Next year's releases include *THE LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM* (Ken Russell adapting Bran Stoker's novel), *THE UNHOLY* (Ben Cross & the late Trevor Howard as partners-in-exorcism) and *VAMPIRES IN VENICE* (Klaus Kinski back as Nosferatu).

One American tv network hit by the Writers Guild strike is to re-use old *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE* scripts, shot overseas with Peter Graves back as Jim Phelps, reports *SFC*'s Ed Naha, whilst *GATE II*, *TOXIC AVENGERS II* and the fourth *NIGHTMARE ON ELM ST* among the cases of big screen deju vu en route.

Denholm Elliot and John Rhys-Davis return for the third and final Indiana Jones yarn, *THE LAST CRUSADE*.





# EYE WITNESS

## CONSCRIPTION

24-25 September, Birmingham  
Report by Bernie Evans

A new breed of sf fan has been developing over the last few years, someone who wants "to be involved", but who lacks either the ability or the interest (or both) to produce a fanzine, I am one such ; I am not very creative, I am an administrator. The outlet for this new breed of fan is running conventions and Conscription was a convention for us.

Perhaps the fact that con organisers are administrators rather than creators is leading to a 'sameness' about cons ; at the same time, new conrunners are emerging who have to 're-invent the wheel', discovering how to find a venue, how to organise, who to contact and for what. There *is* a pool of knowledge within sf fandom waiting to be tapped, but they don't know where the stopcocks are.

Conscription was intended to bring together old and new fans, experienced and not-so-experienced, expert and novice. It was intended to cross-fertilise, to discuss, to learn ; and on the whole it worked, beautifully.

The programme was broken into four areas, one held each morning and afternoon of the event's two days. Each session consisted of a short talk by an expert or interested party, after which we divided into discussion groups. We later reconvened and the leader of each group presented its ideas & conclusions. This part of the convention was recorded, and will form the basis for post-con publications.

We discussed:

- a) Committee (getting it together, structure)
- b) Programme (what it should be, how one's run, new ideas)
- c) Site (finding one, agreements (bloody hotel managers!))
- d) On the Day (disasters, how to avoid / fix them, ops)

The discussion groups contained a different mix of fans each time, four sessions, four groups each session, *everyone* taking part, and it ran like clockwork. Laura Wheatley's to be congratulated on her superb organisational abilities.

Now the grumbles (sorry, Laura !). Not enough time was spent on the 'Programme' section. This is the hardest part for most con-runners, as we tend to be administrators in the first place and non-attendees of programmes in the second, usually being in the con bar getting together the next con ! I feel a 'brainstorming' session might have been beneficial here. The other hole was convention finance: the raising of funds, control and accounts. Not covered at all, and it *is* very important -- ask any Conspiracy committee member !

Most interesting was the 'On the day' session, where my group did come up with something new. If there's enough interest, that idea will grow into Electricon -- watch out for flyers at Novacon, etc.

Conscription was a very worthwhile exercise and even in the areas where we learnt nothing new, it was beneficial to be forced to rationalise and verbalise one's thoughts.

[An anthology of articles from Jan Sorensen's infrequent journal for convention organisers, *CONRUNNER*, appeared last year from Beccon Publications ; topics covered included the use of commercial sponsorship, auctions, programming, insurance, venues and relevant law. Contact Roger Robinson at 75 Rosslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex, RM3 0RG, for details.]

## RUBICON III

26-28 August, Newbury  
Report by Dave Langford

Rubicon's established itself as the relaxed and sodden convention where professionals are seen only in claustrophobic glimpses. Chris Priest and Leigh Kennedy zoomed through for dinner, fleeing in disappointment at not being able to listen to well-remembered Rubicon megastar David Brin. Keith Roberts, closely guarded by his Kerosina retinue, haunted the bar for long enough to describe soul-shattering experiences on an Albacon panel, with extensive footnotes about "absolutely dreadful" co-panelists Jack Cohen and C J Cherryh.

Rubicon is the convention of Kafkaesque anonymity. In one of those ideas which sound really good in a pub beforehand, the Oborn/Harvey organisation (I do not say "committee") issued badges with committee titles instead of names: Executive Wallyphone Mumbler, D M Sherwood Clean-Up Operative, Honorary Fred Harris, etc. As a consequence, we never learned the names of some newcomers, especially the two who vanished after Friday night.

Rubicon III, like most conventions these days, saw the great Conspiracy debate, dominated by piercing Armenian cries of "I say we bail them out only if they *publically humiliate* themselves". A sponsorship form for Voluntary Public Humiliation was instantly drafted by someone who should have known better.

Rubicon was the convention at which I was not going to do anything. I'd already refused to be the astral voice of L Ron Hubbard, but when Dave Wood agreed to work the outboard my iron control slipped and I spent an afternoon scripting L Ron's aetheric answers to suitably embarrassing questions. That was the sum total of what I was prepared to do, as I remember saying to Eve Harvey while she wrote me down as the Thick Policeman in a D 6 Compton radio play scheduled for live performance on the Monday. The highlight here was definitely the sound effects workshop, ie. the audience ; Hazel's deeply felt budgie will not be forgotten, unfortunately. At Rubicon IV I'll be doing even less than nothing, provided Eve forgets her notes for a far more bizarre and appalling dramatic presentation, not to mention who suggested it.

Rubicon, finally, was the convention at which not only the committee (whose badges read "Participant") but the punters spent Monday afternoon slumped around the bar saying how restful it had been and -- the final stroke of weirdness which established this as not a real 1980s convention at all -- looking forward to the next one.



## 1988 WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION

28-30 October, London

Report by David Sutton

**THURSDAY:** After an exhausting two hours helping to load the attendees' obligatory plastic bags (the line-up of free books, magazines, posters & flyers threatening to burst out of the 700 carriers kindly provided by Andromeda Books), it was off to Forbidden Planet for a mega-signing session. Lucius Shepard, Robert Holdstock and Alan Lee were all signing their new books upstairs while, in the chaos downstairs, buyers of *BEST HORROR FROM FANTASY TALES* were treated to a baker's dozen of the authors and artists (and editors), including Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Dennis Etchison, Charles L Grant and cover artist Chris Achilleos.

Back at the Ramada Inn (West London), the tone of the convention was set with the first of many publishers' receptions (this courtesy Fontana Books), a video film (*DR JECKYL & MR HYDE* (1932)) & a late-night reading from Doug Winter's anthology *PRIME EVIL*.

**FRIDAY:** The World Fantasy Conventions have always been generous providers of worthy convention books and this year was no exception, with a splendid hardback book, *GASLIGHT & GHOSTS*, edited by convention chairpeople Stephen Jones & Jo Fletcher (Robinson Publishing). Its contents, fiction and fact from a host of the famous, caused a signing frenzy, as the very diligent could obtain signatures from *all 23* contributors! The day's discussions included panels on small presses, agents, adaptations for the screen & novelisations, children's fantasy (with contributions from special guest Diana Wynne Jones), female fantasy writers, and so on. The three-tier programme also included readings by authors Ellen Kushner, Raymond E Feist, Ian Watson, Terry Pratchett -- and Adrian Cole, who provided a variation to the usual theme with a semi-theatrical presentation of an 'unknown author'. This 'original' work in the high fantasy sword and sorcery field was a refreshing send-up of *LORD OF THE RINGS*, *THOMAS COVENANT* & more... good fun! The evening saw a mass autograph session, a reception for Guest of Honour James Herbert and parties hosted by Pan Books and Robinson (launching the new *FANTASY TALES* anthology and paperback edition).

**SATURDAY:** The Dutch bar staff were by this time mastering their inscrutable electronic tills, or if not were adding up bar bills on bits of paper. Either way, the result for two pints of bitter, an orange juice and a scotch was a mere four pound coins out of a tenner; if you don't live in London that seemed, well, expensive. Never mind, though, the publishers' receptions were generous affairs; not only could we meet their writers, we could down large quantities of red or white wine, or Grotsch beer...

GoH James Herbert was interviewed by Douglas E Winter and it proved a great eye-opener for the many fans who have always dismissed the number-one bestseller of horror in this country. His forthright view that his work contains a strong moral sense and that his novels parade a distinctive individuality from one book to the next (and that gruesomeness is often over-emphasised by readers and critics) will no doubt encourage a re-evaluation of the man and his work.

Video screenings included some interesting tv material: *QUATERMASS AND THE PIT* and Kneale's other masterly play *THE*

*STONE TAPES*; one could also catch episodes of *THE AVENGERS* and *ADAM ADAMANT*.

Two other items added additional variety to the day's panels. Mike Ashley's curious quiz, where one old world and one new world team battled for supremacy in a version of the tv show *UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE*; only a lack of craziness on the part of the contestants made this curiously dull. Brian Aldiss's stagemat *SCIENCE FICTION BLUES* featured readings of the author's poems & stories by Aldiss, Ken Campbell and Petronilla Whitfield. A haunting selection. [See issue two for a review of that excellent stagemat - STEVE GREEN.]

Always popular at UK fantasy cons, the Steve Jones / Jo Fletcher Famous Fantasy Raffle took place, with many worthy collectibles given away; £600 was raised for the Children in Need charity from the sale of raffle tickets.

Publishers Xanadu held a launch party for *HORROR: 100 BEST BOOKS* (ed. Kim Newman & Steve Jones), with 100 writers contributing critiques of other writers. A special limited edition of 300 copies, signed by most of the contributors, sold for £100 apiece; a solid investment.

**SUNDAY:** The art show, put together by Jon Harvey & Sylvia Starshine, displayed the splendid work of artist guest Michael Foreman, plus Chris Achilleos, Jim Burns, Thomas Canty & many others. As well as paintings & illustrations, the show included sculptures and stained glass; a feast for the eye, but it could be heavy on the pocket if you put in a bid! Meanwhile, the aircraft hangar provided for the book dealers allowed plenty of access and there was plenty to empty your pockets for; Andromeda's Dave Holmes did an excellent job organising this extravaganza of fantasy and sf booksellers.

Sunday continued with more panels and ended with a dead dog party hosted by the horror magazine *FEAR*. Before that, though, we had the con 'banquet' (an indistinguished meal as usual, albeit served remarkably well), followed by both the British and World Fantasy Awards; speeches were called for from the honoured guests by MC Clive Barker, who had been running hither and thither all weekend, but still found his usual charm and wit protruding. [Results: page five]

## DECAID: THE 10TH SHOESTRINGCON

21-23 October, Hatfield Polytechnic

Report by Jonathan Cowie

As might be expected, PSIFA's 10th anniversary celebration was the usual curate's egg. Hatfield Polytechnic's sf society, the only British student group to hold its own cons every year since the 1979 UK worldcon, unashamedly proclaims these events as more of a party with a con tacked on than a full convention; nonetheless, this year's members received a programme book (this doesn't always happen), with contributions by GoHs Gwyneth Jones and Lorna Mitchell.

Duncan Lunan & Sydney Jordan turned up, along with past guests Ian Watson & *2000AD*'s Pete Milligan; local author & astronomy lecturer Iain Nicholson talked on the latest cosmology; there was a presentation from the makers of the film *MOONTRAP*, as well as sercon offerings from both guests. In between all of this, Hugh Maschetti launched model rockets and 1st generation PSIFAns wallowed in alcoholic nostalgia.





### **NICON 88**

16-18 September, Belfast

Report by Charles Strass

The third Northern Irish sf convention *must* qualify as the fannish non-event of 1988. Its size was inversely proportional to the friendliness of the gathering, which was so effusive that the event might easily have been mistaken for a ... no, let's not be too hasty and judgemental.

So what went wrong?

Let's start with the event itself. It had the makings of a con: a dealers' room, a main programme, videos, a bar, guests of honour (Katherine Kurtz and James White). It even had a committee. They say a camel is a horse designed by a committee; if that's true, then this was a *committee* designed by a committee. One member had a nervous breakdown; another had escaped from a H G Wells novel about transparent persons; it even transpired that none of them had done anything about mainland publicity before Albarcon. Thus, there were only two fans from across the great undrinkable: yours truly & Iain 'Failed Voyager' Thomas. We gathered together in the bar to commiserate with one another on the altitude of the main programme - up *five* flights of stairs - and the absence of fans.

The 60s put up a valiant performance; there were many interesting panels, as well as a varied video programme; there was even a dealer in the dealers' room, most of the time. The problems were a paucity of attendees & the usual problem with university sf cons: the university. At best it was a conditional success; even at worst it served as a valuable experience for those hardy souls who'll be hosting next year's UNICON, which promises to be a bird of a different feather. Better luck next time.

### **UKCAC 88**

24-25 September, London

Report by Alan Sullivan

As per previous UK Comic Art Cons, there were rooms for those who wanted them, plenty of crash space in the all-night film show and the ever-popular students' union bar; all you really need for a con. Saturday afternoon's fancy dress was even better than last year's; famed band Xxne-mesis were set to play that night at a special benefit for Knockabout Conix but unfortunately had to drop out at the last minute, so we drowned our sorrows in the bar instead.

Both days saw guests, panels, displays, dealers' rooms, conix, loads of fans and Good Conversation (ie, "Whose round is it?", "What's yours?" and "What are all these *comics* doing here?"). Of those panels I attended, some (like the ones on inking & production) dragged, whilst those on politics and violence in comics became fairly heated on matters of personal freedom and censorship. The film show had its moments, *PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE* and *JANE AND THE LOST CITY* not being among them. Otherwise, there was general boozing & the strategic occupation of the extra lounge space, Pizzaland & the art of bill division, not forgetting the Attack of the Killer Breakfast Queues. We all had loadsafun and I, for one, will be back next year. Any other takers?

### **NOLACON II: THE 1988 WORLDCON**

1-5 September, New Orleans

Report by Jammy Weisel

It's been said many times already but - modesty aside - I think I said it first: if Conspiracy '87 was the worldcon which ran without a hotel, Nolacon II was the worldcon which ran without a *committee*.

That about sums it up, really -- use your imagination and you can guess at the confusion. All who attended should thank whatever Higher Life Form that this convention wasn't held in Cleveland, Pittsburgh or some other dull-but-worthy American city, because it was the city of New Orleans itself which made up for the total lack of anything happening at the convention.

Ask anyone who was there what it was like, they'll tell you the food was great, the French Quarter was exciting, the shopping & music was a wonderful treat. But ask them about the *convention*, press them really hard for an answer, and they may mumble a bit about the bookroom, or the artshow, or the parties they attended -- but not much else. That's because not much else happened; only the last-minute efforts of Mike Glycer, Rich Fogs and others of the Los Angeles crowd saved the con programme from the chaos. It was still mildly chaotic -- items taking place without an audience, audiences turning up to find no panelists, two events booked in the same room, etc, etc -- but at least somebody was trying to keep control, and I take my Jammy hat off to L.A. for their efforts during the convention.

So what *did* one do at a six-day non-event, other than be a New Orleans tourist? Well, there was the favourite British activity of sitting in the bar; the lounge of the Marriott was nice & central, becoming a focal point/meeting point in spite of hotel bar prices and a lack of adequate seating. Here, you could watch hot-shots like John Jarrod and Malcolm Edwards do actual live business talk before your eyes; and when you got bored with that, there was always Pete Weston & his trombone (a real bargain from a little Fr. Qtr. shop), or Julian Headlong impressing American fans with his quotes to a local journalist in search of a story ("Most of the men here are fat with a beard and glasses - take away the beard and you have the women"). On the other hand, you could watch Greg Pickersgill sit & stare, or Dave Hodson sit & stare, or Alun Hannies sit & stare... Nigel Richardson would have been sitting & staring if he hadn't been practicing his Fun Boy macho. Iain Banks had his usual mischievous time, ending up in tacky French Quarter souvenir t-shirts, whilst Terry Pratchett seemed to get into the whole swing of the city and was never to be seen without a gallon-size frozen Daquiri in his hand. The TAFF twins seemed to do the appropriate social butterfly bit, though the response to the TAFF auction was shamefully low. But why should *anything* really go right?

In the night, there was always a party in Dana Seigle's suite, someone I can point to as the person responsible for any fun taking place at all. Then there was always the San trek to the Cafe du Monde for coffee and donuts. And that was it. Be glad you saved your money, boys & girls! Jammy rates this event below Cymrucon on almost all levels - which should say it all...



# UPDATES

## SF CONVENTIONS

- 24 - 27 MAR 1989; CONTRIVANCE. *Britain's national sf event, to be held in Jersey. Attending membership £18 (supprrting, £9) to 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey.*
- 28 - 30 APR 1989; CORFLU 6. *Annual fannish relaxcon, moving to Minneapolis this year. Contact Geri Sullivan, Toad Hall, 3444 Blaisdell Avenue South, MN 55408-4315, USA.*
- 26-29 MAY 1989; MEXICON III. *The event for fans of written sf, at Nottingham's Albany Hotel. Membership's £15; write 7A Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London, W5 4XJ, for details.*
- 16 - 18 JUN 1989; ICONOCLASM. *Griffin Hotel, Leeds. Guests Diane Duane & Peter Morwood. £11 attending till 1 April, £6 supporting, to 16 Aviary Place, Leeds. LS12 2NP.*
- 9 - 15 AUG 1989; TYNESIDE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION FESTIVAL. *Details from 30 Wilkinson Court, Jarrow, NE32 3NQ.*
- 11 - 13 AUG 1989; NICON. *Queen's University of Belfast, NI. First Irish Unicorn, pro guests Terry Pratchett & Iain Banks, fan guest Iain Thomas, science guest to be advised. Attending membership £6, supporting £2.50. Rooms approximately £5 per night (+ VAT). Contact 106 Somerton Road, Belfast, BT15 4DE, Northern Ireland, for full details.*
- 26 - 27 AUG 1989; HONEY COMB. *Dr Who convention, being held at Swindon's Wiltshire Hotel. £18 membership (one-day, £9), rising to £20 on 1 March; enclose five stamped envelopes with cheque. Contact via 48 Gurney Drive, London, N2 0DE.*
- 31 AUG - 3 SEPT 1989; NOREASCON III. *47th world sf convention, Sheraton Hotel, Boston. Guests Ian & Betty Ballantine, Andre Norton. Contact via Box 46, MIT Branch PO, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA (or Box 1091, Carlton, VIC 3053, Australia).*
- 22 - 24 SEPT 1989; PREFAB TROUT. *Bellahouston, Glasgow. £5 supp., £10 att, to 55 Cedarwood Avenue, Glasgow, G77 5LP.*
- 23 - 27 AUG 1990; CONFICTION. *49th world sf convention, the Netherlands Congress Centre, the Hague. GoHs incl. Wolfgang Jeschke, Joe Maldenan, Harry Harrison, Andy Porter. Contact Colin Fine, 28 Abbey Road, Cambridge, CB5 8HQ, or Box 95370, 2509 CJ the Hague, Holland.*

*Entries for inclusion in our regular convention lists should include the dates, site, membership costs, guest(s), contact address and some indication of the theme. Special advertising rates available. Please mention WAVE when writing.*

## UK COMIC MARTS

BIRMINGHAM: 10 December, New Imperial Hotel, Temple St.  
LEEDS: 26 November, Griffin Hotel, Boar Lane.  
LONDON: Westminster comic mart, 3 December.  
SHEFFIELD: 12 November, Blind Institute, Mappin Street.

# FILM FOCUS

by Steve Green

Stephen King may have justifiable grudges against those responsible for earlier desecrations of his novels, but with *MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE* he has no one to blame for its mediocrity but himself. Directed from his own screenplay, this dismal extension of King's short story "Trucks" might perhaps have worked in one of the *CREEPSHOW* collections, but stretching so thin a plot over an entire movie is cinematic suicide.

The storyline, such as it is, has the world's machinery possessed by extra-terrestrial forces and sent out on a killing spree amongst a bewildered humanity. King views the war in microcosm, as driverless lorries surround a truckstop and turn it into a latterday Alamo.

But the movie has no internal logic. If the trucks can be manipulated, why not the cars in which the humans try to escape? Why don't the homicidal vehicles simply smash into the truckstop in reel one? Why did Emilio Estevez let himself appear in such unmitigated twaddle? More importantly, will King ever be let within twenty feet of a camera again?

Much the same could be said of Mel Brooks, whose career continues to plummet. The memory of his former brilliance in movies like *THE PRODUCERS*, *BLAZING SADDLES* and *YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN* only serves to make the sheer awfulness of his sf spoof *SPACEBALLS* all the more depressing.

I have to confess I did chuckle. The once. As for the remaining 90 minutes, I could have had more fun in a dental surgery. Maybe some people will warm to a leaden rendition of *STAR WARS* puns in a Jewish accent, but I have this curious habit of preferring comedies to be funny.

Any film starring Jack Nicholson is automatically worth tracking down, and the presence of George Miller as director is an added incentive to check out the cinema adaptation of John Updike's *THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK*. Add Susan Sarandon, Michelle Pfeiffer and Cher as romance-starved enchantresses and you can hear the cash registers ring in anticipation.

My difficulty with *EASTWICK* is, ironically, a virtual replay of my feelings towards *MAD MAX*. Just as that earlier Miller movie seemed an uneasy blend of revenge drama and sf, this latest work seems unsure whether it should be operating as a comedy, a portrait of contemporary sexual politics or a genre fantasy; there are jokes, insights and sfx to support all three, though insufficient of each for any conclusion to be made with confidence. Perhaps the inevitable sequel will plot its course more successfully.

One of the less ethical tactics adopted by film distributors attracted by the growing video market is to repackage



ancient material and foist it onto an unsuspecting audience. It's a technique which has already rehabilitated some of the dreariest mid-70s softcore porn, and is now being applied to equally forgettable horror yarns like *VAMPYRES*, a 1974 skin-flick featuring a pair of bisexual bloodfiends.

The giveaway is the absence of a copyright date for the movie, merely one for the packaging. Caution pays, folks.

Finally, a plug for one of the more pleasant surprises this year: *NIGHTFLYERS*, an unpretentious sf adventure which isn't dependent upon either breathtaking visual effects or a channelhouse-full of gore. Adapted from George R R Martin's novella by director T C Blake and screenwriter Robert Jaffe, the movie opens with a scientific expedition in search of an extraterrestrial primal force but soon heads off on a tangent and develops into a lethal battle between the scientists and the evil psyche controlling the probeship.

Michael Praed adds a dignified air as the captain, John Standing is a suitably bemused teamleader and Catherine Mary Stewart pouts enigmatically. But the real star of the movie is the cinematography and the atmosphere it generates.



Judge not a book by its cover, so we're warned, but the first impression often remains the strongest. So what image persists from the first paperback edition of *FANTASY TALES*, replete with Achilleos cover art and bright new logo? Not that of a worthy successor to *WEIRD TALES*, I'm afraid, but rather that of a mid-teens role-playing novel, an impression underlined by the 99p price tag.

Which is a great pity, since the contents range over an enigmatic Charles L Grant story, a pair of twist-in-the-tail fantasies from Darrell Schweitzer & the late Lin Carter, two neat horror stories from C Bruce Hunter & Chris Morgan, some 30s-style sourcery from David Riley and some pretty idiotic vampire drama from the infamous Guy N Smith. Not at all the kind of fiction you'd expect after that packaging.

*INTERZONE # 26*, on the other hand, sports a Josh Kirby illo borrowed from the Gollancz edition of Terry Pratchett's *WYRD SISTERS*, a surprisingly successful extract from which appears inside. Joining it is a chilling yuletide tale from Bob Shaw, an effective action yarn from Eric Brown, cosmetic fantasy from Susan Beetlestone (a little hard to swallow but a worthy debut in print, nevertheless), cyberdrama courtesy of Charles Stross, typically bizarre satire from John Sladek and a competent if undistinguished portrait of the perils of precognition from Johnny Black. Plus: Chris Priest on British sf, Nick Lowe on sf films, Charles Platt on militaristic sf writers. It's a broad mix, and a strong, solid showcase.

# THE FANZINE FILE

by Paul Kincaid

If I were to say "What I Did on my Holidays" in *LIP # 4* was the best thing I've ever seen by Michael Ashley it might sound patronising. If I say that it's the best thing I have seen in any fanzine for many years, it would be nothing less than the truth. Ashley and I rarely, if ever, see eye to eye, but in this splendid instance he proves not only that he can write, but that he can *craft* an article also. The long discursion in the midst of the article gives colour and sense to what has gone before and what comes after; it manages that most difficult of tasks -- writing about sex and a failed affair -- without being maudlin or daft, and whilst those inevitable hallmarks of Ashley prose, terminal boredom and undirected savagery, are still there, at least here they have a point. I wouldn't have expected such revelation from Ashley, but I'm heartily glad he did it.

In the first fanzine review column I wrote for *CRITICAL WAVE* I asked where the new young fan writers were. Suddenly we seem to have an awful lot of them around the place, and I'll be coming back to a couple of them later in this piece. But Ashley provides an object lesson, not only for them but for the rest of us.

Not that one article, however good, should be allowed to overshadow the rest of an excellent fanzine. Ashley's article is actually bracketed by pieces from Hazel Ashworth and Debbi Kerr that would have stood out dramatically in any other company, whilst D. West's cartoons (here titled "Famous Fannish Breakthroughs") seem to have acquired an even sharper edge than usual in taking apart the essential silliness of fandom.

Poor Harry Bond seems to have become British fandom's current whipping boy; he's royally lambasted in *LIP # 4* by Michael Ashley, while Owen Whiteoak (in *KAMERA OBSCURA # 3*) recounts with glee how Bond religiously collected staples from old *HYPHENS* and made them into a badge. I think it's Bond's enthusiasm which wears us out, his devout belief that there's a right way of doing fandom and it can only be found in slavish devotion to the 'great names' of the past. Just about everyone else reinvents fandom for himself, but Bond seems to want somebody else's, even down to the revival of tired old fannish language like 'thish'. Good, there'll be extraneous "h"s cropping up in words before we know it!

What we therefore get in *NOWHERE FAST # 4* is not Harry Bond, but his impression of what a famous faned (argh, it's catching) of the past would be. Plus countless jokey references to famous fannish names which seem to be dropped only to demonstrate how 'in' he is. The result is a fanzine that is irritating because it's clear from articles elsewhere (in



the latest *PULP*, for example) that it could be an awful lot better than this if he dropped the pretence.

Okay, let's not be too cruel on the poor lad; *NOWHERE FAST # 4* shows a great improvement over what's gone before, with an infinitely better layout for a start, and believe me that counts. And it has been edited in a manner which provides balance and readability -- although I do question the wisdom of putting "Boil-Lance" by Pete Cox immediately after Bob Shaw's "The Benefits of Fluoridisation of Public Water Supplies". Even a rather weak & weary example of the Serious Scientific Talk shows up the complete lack of wit or genuine humour in Cox's dreadful cod epic. But there's nothing here which really stands out; we have a fanzine that is pleasant enough, but unexciting and instantly forgettable.

Bond should try reading Michael Ashley to learn how to open himself up; better yet, he should read his own fanzine reviews in *PULP* and try applying some of the insights there to his own productions.

Maybe Bond should try collaborating with another of the newer fanwriters, Kev McVeigh: Bond's production, McVeigh's contents. *EFILNIKUFESIN # 2* has the impulses of a 'sercon' zine and the production values of a new: double-spaced and then reduced to A5, with a typewriter which is inclined to leave blobs rather than letters. It's a pain to read, and that's a pity.

Those sercon inclinations come out in a long, and often perceptive, review of Lucius Shepard's *LIFE DURING WARTIME*, and a well-handled & revealing interview with Clive Barker. But the main piece is an article called "Aching and Playing" which provides a strange parallel to Michael Ashley's "What I Did on my Holidays", suffering badly from the comparison. The format's roughly the same, a week's holiday with sex and fandom, but the sex is on-going, there's no loss and there's no revelation. I suspect McVeigh considers the sly, nudge-nudge passages about his sexual frolics to be very revealing, but he hasn't really had the nerve to be anything other than coy, and it provides no insights to reveal either himself or the story he has to tell. All we learn is that he's lost his virginity, which is something you may want to shout about but is not really something that anyone else wants to read about. If it could have coloured what else was going on - a meeting in Leeds, a talk on sf & feminism, a visit to the Wellington - this could have been an excellent article; but a simple recital of "we did this, then we fucked, we did that, then we fucked" is not enough. Still, the rest of the zine does make up for that weakness.

Being bold enough to reveal yourself in print, and then going all the way with it despite the temptation to stop at the final veil, is the way most writers get the best out of themselves. And the revelations need not be sexual. Martin Tudor threw away the veils to notable effect in *EMPTIES # 8* when he described being beaten up.

The fall-out from that article, in the form of letters, is at the heart of *EMPTIES # 10*, and what a disturbing response it is. The subject really seems to have got through the defences of some people and unleashed an unanticipated amount of prejudice and bile. Tudor confesses himself to be shocked by the letters he got, and is at pains to distance

himself from the views expressed, but publishing them is the right thing to do. It provides an interesting and important insight into the real heart of our fannish community.

Away from the letters, though, it's a rather thin issue (in terms of content, if not page length), and two issues in one month does seem to have drained away some of the creative energy. The most substantial item, Ken Lake's "Fanzine Anabasis", deliberately sets out to be no more than a précis of some 27 fanzines, though it's interesting to see critical comment sneaking in as the article progresses. However, it is puzzling to see both this and a long fanzine listing (and I'd be interested to learn why the BFS newsletter is listed, but none of the BSFA publications?)

Two brief mentions to finish with. Like *EMPTIES*, *PULP* is one of the solid, reliable genzines which are making the British fanzine scene look so healthy at the moment. Once again, my tenure of the critic's chair coincides with John Harvey's tenure of the editor's chair, and I am coming round to the opinion that he's marginally the best of a good bunch at *PULP* HQ. The contents are as usual, and it is here that criticism must lie. Everything in this issue is by a member of the editorial team, or a regular columnist, and readable as Messrs Langford, Harris & Bond may be (Bond is far better here than anywhere else), there is little sense of freshness in the zine. It could go on this way for ever, but is that really what we would want?

Mind you, Owen Whiteoak does go on in the same way, and there's no sign yet of him running out of steam. Perhaps it is his markedly idiosyncratic approach that keeps all Owen's fanzines so fresh. *KAMERA OBSKURA # 3* is mostly made up of letters, but there is still that indefinable style lurking there, especially in the discussion of that surreal subject, holy relics, reported at the end of the zine.

Addresses: HAZEL ASHWORTH, 16 Rockville Drive, Emsay, Skipton, North Yorks, BD23 6NY; HARRY BOND (CoA), 20 Maple St, London, W1P 5GB; KEV McVEIGH (CoA), 37 Firs Rd, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7QF; MARTIN TUDOR, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Mids, B66 4SH; JOHN HARVEY (CoA), 8 the Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG11 1EP; OWEN WHITEOAK, Top Flat, 11 Horseall Road, Highbury, London, N5 1XL.

♦ ♦ ♦

Other recent changes of address: MICHAEL ASHLEY, 4 Melbourne Place, Bradford, BD5; HAZU HIROAKI, Avenue Oswaldo Cruz 81/201, Flamengo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; LAURENCE DEAN, 47 Forrester Close, Canterbury, CT1 1DZ (where he's eager to look into setting up a local sf group -- tel. 0227 458509); DICK & NICKI LYNCH, somewhere north of Chattanooga; DAVE & LINDA BRIDGES, 226 S. Patton Avenue, Dallas, TX 75203-2746; SHAREE CARTON, somewhere in Bremerton, WA; KATHLEEN GALLAGHER, 490 Poe Avenue, Worthington, OH 43085 (correction to last ish); RICH BROWN, 508 N. Highland #85, Arlington, VA 22201; STEVE STILES, unknown; MOG DECARNIN, 2020 Portland Avenue Sth #3, Minneapolis MN 55404-2553; THEO & SONIA CLARKE, 98 Choumert Road, London, SE15 4AX; ERIC MAYER, 279 Collingwood Drive, Rochester, NY 14621. Updates always welcomed.

# UNDER COVER

*THE TOLKIEN CALENDAR 1989*  
Unwin Hyman ; £5.95

No artist will ever capture on canvas a single portrait of Middle-earth which will satisfy every Tolkien enthusiast, so vivid and personal are their own visions. The task which confronts the author of this annual publication is therefore twofold: the paintings must be as credible as the fan's own mental snapshots, and there must be enough similarities for these alternatives to have a general air of familiarity.

Roger Garland's portfolio eschews close-ups of the main characters and evidences a preference for landscape rather than action, which proves an asset in his portraits of Hobbiton and the Falls of Rauros, but the reverse when capturing events such as the fall of Gondolin or a flock of swans flying over Pelangir (the birds seen especially inanimate, as though suspended upon steel wires).

That said, Garland has an admirable eye for both colour and detail, making this an ideal Christmas present for your favourite Tolkien fan. [Steve Green]

*MERCEDES NIGHTS* by Michael Weaver  
New English Library ; £2.50

If hitech and drugs in a near-future world are the distinguishing marks of 'cyberpunk', then this is what we have here. To me, this novel displays another important facet of the genre: a reckless and soulless disregard for human life, with characters splattered all over the place with no real reason save than to sicken the reader.

Mercedes Night's a vidstar. She's been multiply cloned without her knowledge, and the clones are being sold as sex slaves. But the government is also involved, using a clone to set up a promising rebel politician for a sex-and-drugs plot which will justify his murder -- not to mention that of the clones and anyone else who happens to get involved, a group which includes several over-stimulated teenagers in this unpleasant US futureworld.

War is endemic between the US and the USSR; Paris has just been nuked and nobody but the Parisians and that honest politician seem to care much. The New Police are corrupt from top to bottom and there are constant bursts of obscene language which do nothing to improve the plot or our picture of the protagonists.

The only amusing line in the book is to the effect that they never found an AIDS cure because they can't teach rats to be sodonists. It's that kind of book. Yet I have to say that of its type it is well done - taut, complex, intriguing and, indeed, frightening. Enjoy it if you can. [Ken Lake]

*HOW TO DRAW & SELL COMIC STRIPS* by Alan McKenzie  
Macdonald Orbis ; £12.95

At last, an insider's guide to the industry that offers technical tips specific to comics rather than broad generalisations. Topics range from layout to scripts, with dozens of illustrations from Miller, Kirby et al. [James Penfield]

*SLOW FALL TO DAWN* by Stephen Leigh  
Headline ; £2.50

This is one for the kill-kill-kill freaks. The novel's cover tells us that 'the Guild of Death fights for its life' and from here on in it's skullduggery in the context of a society with institutionalised assassination & complex rituals which say a great deal about Leigh himself and American society today in general.

Actually written in 1981, the publishers use that handy phrase 'first published in Great Britain in 1980 by Headline.' to disguise quite effectively whether anyone else has previously published it here in paperback or hardcover. Watch out for this misleading gimmick, already denounced in *The Sunday Times* by oldtime fan Terry Jeeves. [Ken Lake]

*MADONNA* by Ed Kelleher & Harriette Vidal  
Star ; £2.99

The mark of a good trashy novel is the ability to flick it open at random and find either gratuitous violence or sex awaiting your gaze. This steamy saga of ancient evil on the warpath certainly scores on that count, even if the authors' repetitious pseudo-sourcery is about as convincing as an old Hammer yarn. Come back, Jimmy Sangster! [James Penfield]

*CRADLE* by Arthur C Clarke & Gentry Lee  
Gollancz ; £11.95

Reporter Carol Dawson is in Key West apparently investigating the beaching of a large number of whales; in fact she's there to search for 'a state-of-the-art cruise missile the US Navy has rather carelessly lost. Carol hires a boat crewed by Nick Williams & Troy Jefferies and, whilst scouring the seabed with Nick, makes two curious discoveries: one is a weird golden trident, the other a set of tyre tracks which disappear into a fissure in the underwater rocks.

Vast in scope with a fast-paced plot, believable advances in our own technology and some weird & wonderful alien robots (we never do get to see the ETs), this book is good but - as a well-known lager ad says - not *that* good. I had real problems with some very stilted dialogue, especially in the italicised 'thoughts'. In certain places the narrative reads almost like Enid Blyton in its references to 'our adventure' and in such sequences as "Now I'll call a taxi... and go over to Nick's apartment. I hope that the two of them heard my warning and are safe." Thankfully, this glitch in style does not detract too much from what is basically a very interesting piece of science fiction. [Ann Green]



*SPIDER WORLD: THE DELTA* by Colin Wilson  
Grafton ; £3.50

Yet another interminable series ; this is the second part, the first being *SPIDER WORLD: THE TOWER*. This novel, however, is written for the literate teenager if one is to judge from the author's words and the trend of the plot, so don't expect anything but the tanest of sex and the least horrific of battles with the telepathic giant spiders which rule this future world. I must say the characters Bildo and Bill Doggins remind me of someone ; I wonder whom ?

Certainly not in the same class as the original, this ; can Colin Wilson be running out of non-ideas for his speculative books ? [Ken Lake]

*TROUBADOUR* by Richard Burns  
Unwin ; £3.95

In his first fantasy novel, *KHALINDAINE*, Burns created a rich and colourful world, peopled, unfortunately, by some serious-minded, artificial and frankly rather boring characters. *TROUBADOUR* picks up where its predecessor left off, injecting some much-needed humour into that world and those characters.

The new Emperor of Khalindaine has gone mad ; the wandering minstrel Streetpoet believes he knows why and sets out to find the woman the Emperor loves. A rather basic fantasy quest, but well written and enjoyable. [Martin Tudor]

*HAUNTED* by James Herbert  
Hodder & Stoughton ; £10.95

Standard ghost story here, folks ! Psychic investigator David Ash is hired to research a mystery at Edbrook, a large, run down, very un-des-res in the English countryside. The house is owned & inhabited by the quirky Mariell family, along with Nanny Tess (remember Dawn French as Consuella in *THE COMIC STRIP* ?).

There are some predictable convolutions in the plot, but luckily the novel has several genuinely creepy moments which made me glad of the company of a large Alsatian whilst reading it.

The problem with *HAUNTED* is that although the writing and characterisation are good, the pacing fast and the whole affair fairly gripping, the book *Jacks something*. Maybe a touch of camp humour a la Vincent Price could have injected some vitality into this tired old theme. [Ann Green]

*UNICORN AND DRAGON* by Lynn Abbey  
Headline ; £2.99

This modest fantasy story is set in a mystical version of pre-conquest 11th century England. The main protagonists are two magically talented adoptive sisters ; one, the last remnant of native English magic ; the other, a pupil of new sorceries which will supersede it following the imminent Norman invasion of Britain.

All the action takes place within a single manor house. The magic has power, but it is subtle and not openly displayed. In this homely setting, the last gasp of Saxon culture is enacted in miniature.

The book has little substance and the illustrations are irrelevant, but it's well told and pleasingly far removed from the usual sword & sorcery cliches. [Nick Mills]

*BERSERKER MAN* by Fred Saberhagen  
VGSF ; £2.99

Although a reasonable yarn, I can't say that this is a particularly worthy addition to the VGSF series. At only 11 years old, Michel Geulincz is forced to become man's champion against the ultimate evil of the Berserker machine race.

Guess what ? He does okay. Yawn... [Martin Tudor]

*THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT GETS DRAFTED*  
by Harry Harrison  
Bantam ; £2.95

"Py le pynak my a wra mones prest y tevhelaf y'lh herwyth clos, Rag nyns us par dhe'th tyr plegadow yn le may fynnyf nos."

If that verse is familiar, you will greet this latest Stainless Steel Rat book with joy. Taking up the story from *A STAINLESS STEEL RAT IS BORN* (1985), he carries us through another stirring and amusing episode in the early life of James di Griz, in a world where the worst dangers dissolve, the nastiest threats are evaded, and from his purgatory in a brutal army to salvation on a planet which irresistibly recalls the joys of that oldtime classic "A Bicycle Built for Brew".

I'm a Rat addict, but that doesn't make me understanding. Harry gives us full measure - and more - with the tenets of Individual Mutualism on one hand, and the twin languages of Esperanto and (wait for it) Old Cornish on the other !

Frankly, I found the book's funniest line in this brief exchange:

"Does he speak Esperanto ?"

"Like a native," I said.

Think about it. And if you think that the horrors of the Old Cornish speaking, backward, half warlike and half decadent world are played for laughs, be grateful. As the couplet above says,

"Wherever I go, I return close to thee,

"For there is no equal to thy so pleasant land where I may go."

I recommend this novel for fun. Only the jacket lies - as usual. [Ken Lake]

*THE REDISCOVERY OF MAN* by Cordwainer Smith  
VGSF ; £3.50

Smith was one of the best short story writers to grace the sf field. This is a collection of 12 of the best stories I've ever read. What more can I say ? [Martin Tudor]



*ENDGAME ENIGMA* by James P Hogan  
Century ; £6.95

God help us ! We are trapped, like it or not, on a world controlled by two superpowers, and whatever one thinks of the Soviet Union, America is the one which is supposed to be on our side.

But America seems to be afflicted with grandiose dreams and an incredible paranoia. It is this combination which produced Ronald Reagan and his Star Wars schemes. And this thick (in both senses of the word) novel is just the sort of thing designed to feed on, and amplify, that paranoia.

We are right to load space with American weapons, Hogan is saying, because if we don't, the Soviets will, and every Soviet is evil, scheming, untrustworthy, totally devoted to the destruction of the world, an emissary of Satan. This is the sort of ludicrous fiction which should have disappeared with the late, unlamented Senator McCarthy. That it's still alive today is an indication of some sort of sickness in the United States.

You want plot ? The USSR has launched a space station, but the good guys of the CIA know -- "it doesn't matter how" -- that it is loaded to the gunnels with weaponry. So brave computer scientist Paula Bryce (a woman, just to prove how modern the author is, though he continually describes her as 'pert', 'attractive' and so on) is dispatched to the space station in an elaborate plan to get the necessary proof.

Thereafter, it's cops 'n' robbers in space, with the only good Soviet a dead Soviet, and enough gung ho 'America is right, might is right' lunacy to nauseate. The writing's dire, the characterisation nonexistent, and the only mystery is why a reputable publisher like Century decided to regurgitate this rubbish in Britain. [Paul Kincaid]

*THE MOON GODDESS AND THE SON* by Donald Kingsbury  
Grafton ; £3.95

This was one of the best sf novels I've read this year. Overflowing with sharp new ideas, massive in scope & vision, it was very nearly excellent, but suffers from the fact that although many of the minor characters are almost believable, the two central protagonists Diana Osborne & Byron McDougall never become more than cardboard cut-outs.

In another novel this would have been an insurmountable problem, but here it becomes only a minor irritant. This is a book which really does bring back the old sense of wonder. Buy it. Read it. [Martin Tudor]

*THE SHADOW OF HIS WINGS* by Bruce Ferguson  
Grafton ; £3.50

'The Outstanding Fantasy Saga'. Yup, another one. However, the claim is excuseable as no lofty ideals of Good or Evil are allowed to intrude ; this novel is set on a world where pragmatic self-interest rules.

The novel's chief protagonists are Lukan, a human sadly burdened by a functional conscience, and the Erseiyr, a draconian creature beset with grief and ennui.

The one, whose singular handicap brings many woes, must enlist the aid of the other in order to save his city-state from annihilation by a bunch who make the SS look like nice guys. It makes for a good enough adventure tale, competent but not brilliant. [A W Johnston]

*VICTIMS* by Shaun Hutson  
Star ; £2.99

What I love about Shaun Hutson is his complete lack of literary pretensions, taste and writing ability. This novel contains some of the most gruesome and lovingly described scenes of violence that I've come across in fifteen years of reading horror fiction.

His 'hero' Frank Miller (little homage there...) is the best sfx man in the business, basing his techniques on those found in sundry 'Wax Museum' movies. I can't really give you much detail about the plot ; it's so thin it merely serves as a backdrop to the numerous scenes of gore and bloodshed.

You'll need a strong stomach and an equally robust sense of humour to get through this one. [Ann Green?]

*HAMMER'S SLAMMERS: AT ANY PRICE* by David Drake  
Venture ; £2.99

No matter what you think of Prince Charles' opinions on violence, here is a book that gives the genre a bad name. I did try to find something other than violence - mostly cruel and unnecessary - in this novel, but without luck. A pity, as some of Drake's books make fine reading ; this, however, is aimed at the lowest possible denominator of literacy, and so far as I am concerned that sort of person is better off without anything to read at all.

It's all summed up in the cover blurb: "He didn't like killing all that much ; it was just that there was nothing he liked more." Yecch ! [Ken Lake?]

*UNQUENCHABLE FIRE* by Rachel Pollack  
Century ; £5.95

Imagine present-day America, with tv game shows, shopping malls, small town & big city politics, etc. Now add to this a Californian-style cult/religion along vaguely druidic lines - except that the beliefs of *this* faith have been proven *true* and are now an accepted part of everyday existence. As the back cover blurb tells us, "this is an America totally transformed. Ritual and magic pervade everyday life. The miraculous is not only commonplace, but expected."

Jennifer Mazdan is a 'server' for the Mid-Hudson Energy Board, trying to pick up the pieces of her life following a divorce. She is having a fairly tough time even before she becomes pregnant - by a dream. Jennifer gradually becomes convinced that an agency has manipulated her whole life to produce the right host for the child she will bear.

This is a complex novel set in a very strange world, a fascinating, occasionally disturbing & frequently irritating work. Recommended. [Martin Tudor?]



*THE LOTTERY* by Shirley Jackson  
Robinson ; £3, 50

Although only the title story is overtly fantastical in the established definition, all 25 exhibit a bizarre aura of unease, as though some phantom evil lurked on the peripheral vision of our mind's eye.

Those horrors Jackson does focus on are regretfully all too real: bigotry, loss of identity, bitterness, the myriad mortal daemons which terrorise our minds. [Steve Green]

*IMPERIAL EARTH* by Arthur C. Clarke  
VSSF ; £2, 99

Although I wouldn't go so far as to describe this novel as "a polished gem", as *The Daily Mirror* apparently did, it has to be admitted that it is nowhere near as bad as some of Clarke's other, more recent, works.

The storyline concerns the 'return' to Earth of Duncan Makenzie, heir to Titan's Makenzie dynasty (and the second clone of that dynasty's founder). It contains very little in the way of characterization, but lots of plausible and semi-plausible technology ; these, coupled with tight plotting, make for an enjoyable read. [Martin Tudor]

*ALPHA BUG* by M E Morris  
Grafton ; £2, 95

Copyrighted 1986, this is one of those bang-up-to-date novels about US-Soviet espionage. As Morris tells us, this "is not science fiction. Only the characters and plot are make-believe. The technology, regretfully, exists today." The snappy sentences in that foreword echo the tone of the whole book, whose author was a navy aviator for 30 years and is now a navy consultant lecturing on experimental aviation.

The story is well-plotted and believable given that you accept the terrible stereotypes of the protagonists on both sides (I don't) ; the technology is explicit enough for even me to grasp, and the denouement obvious from the start, but there's a big market out there for this kind of thing and I'd be foolish to knock it for not being what it has no pretense to being. [Ken Lake]

*THE ATLAS OF THE DRAGONLANCE WORLD* by Karen  
Wynn Fonstad  
*THE ART OF THE DRAGONLANCE SAGA* ed. Mary Kirchoff  
Penguin ; £9, 99 each

Although I still have serious reservations about TSR's merchandising of the Weis / Hickman novels and their various spin-off anthologies, one has to admit that the production quality of these two volumes, particularly the slimmer showcase of artwork from the series, is top-notch, even if their content is disturbingly derivative. Fonstad, of course, has plenty of experience with such voyages into other people's imaginations - her earlier cartography includes atlases of Pern, Land and Middle-earth. [Steve Green]

*THE WARRIOR'S APPRENTICE* by Lois McMaster Bujold  
Headline ; £2, 99

Let's look at the blurb again ; it's wonderful what you can learn. "Warrior... victim of a chemical attack... tough physical trials... whirl of political intrigue and guerilla warfare... survive a war and prove himself worthy of his proud family heritage... adventure, action, political intrigue, war romance, tragedy and triumph..."

Presumably Lois is a woman ; I wonder what she is trying to prove ? With sentences like "Miles unclenched his aching jaw" & "he composed his face to a mask of sternness", she is unlikely to appeal to the sort of reader at whom she might be thought to be aiming this book. [Ken Lake]

*THE SIGN OF CHAOS* by Roger Zelazny  
Sphere ; £2, 99

This is a novel that you either must read, or must not. Let me elucidate: it's the eighth book in the 'Amber' series or, if you prefer, the third volume in the second chronicles of Amber.

Now, *some* sequels stand up to being read on their own, but only when they are just books set in the same background and using the same characters as their predecessors ; when a sequel picks up the action more or less unbroken from the preceding book, this no longer holds true. And when, as in *THE SIGN OF CHAOS*, we start in the middle of the acid trip in which our hero was left trapped in the previous episode - sorry, previous book - *BLOOD OF AMBER*, any claim that this volume can be read in isolation loses all credibility.

So how does *THE SIGN OF AMBER* stand up considered only as *AMBER VIII* ? Personally, I still think that the first book in the series, *NINE PRINCES IN AMBER*, remains one of the half-dozen best sf novels ever written ; it combines the racy excitement of a good detective novel and the lyrical prose of a good fantasy with the theme of conceptual breakthrough - uncovering the hidden world lying, like a Platonic form, behind the everyday world we know - which is the very essence of science fiction. Any attempt to follow this up is bound to disappoint, and a clutch of sequels even more so.

All these sequels contain good passages, but it's still impossible to escape the feeling that the story's been spun out to pay the bills. So many of the characters & settings, particularly in the second sequence, seems to have been introduced purely to make the books longer, and are irrelevant to the main plot.

Unfortunately, that's especially apparent in this case. I would have liked to have read more of Ghostwheel, Merlin's telepathic, shadow-shifting computer, and of Merlin's father Corwin, hero and narrator of the first five books. Instead, we are drawn into a complex and largely irrelevant adventure revolving around a place called the Keep of the Four Worlds, which, as far as I can make out, poses no threat to either Amber or Chaos, and is run by someone called Mask, who poses no serious threat to Merlin.

Somewhere along the line, the gradual revelation of Machiavellian intrigue within the House of Amber, which was the driving force behind the earlier novels, seems to have





lost its way. That is not to say that *THE SIGN OF CHAOS* is a bad book ; it is excitingly written and in some of the more lyrical passages we can see Zelazny the poet of "A Song for Ecclesiastes" shining through.

But in the end, I was left frustrated. Zelazny's marking time, and our knowledge of the secrets of the Master of Amber is advanced no further ; those of us addicted to the world of these books will just have to wait for the next one to come out...  
*[Ric Cooper]*

*THE DRAGONHIKER'S GUIDE TO BATTLEFIELD COVENANT AT DUNE'S EDGE: ODYSSEY TWO*  
*The Collected Science Fiction and Fantasy Parodies of David Langford, Volume One.*  
*Drunken Dragon Press ; £9.95 (£24.95 limited edition)*

Well, the book's title says it all (and more...). This is a collection of vintage Langford ; sharp, witty, intelligent... and short. Among the sf authors parodied are Is\*ck Asimov, Frank H\*rbert, the Br\*thers Gr\*mm, P\*ters Anthony and J\*ns White.

All of these spoofs are wickedly funny and well worth reading. However, as you get only 142 pages for your £9.95 (standard hardback edition), many people might feel they are not getting value for money -- a view I would disagree with. Not only this book's contents, but also its production quality, are of the highest standard. Drunken Dragon intends to prove "attractive de-luxe volumes can be produced at relatively reasonable prices" ; with the de-luxe 100-copy limited edition of this book priced at £24.95 (compared with the £75 or more which other publishers charge for theirs), I would say they have succeeded.  
*[Martin Tudor]*

*FAERIE TALE by Raymond Feist*  
*Grafton ; £11.95*

*FAERIE TALE* is a wonderful novel in every sense of the word. People and races of myth and legend come vividly to life under the pen of its author ; so vividly, in fact, that I found myself muttering "gosh", "wow", etc, throughout. Mr Feist proves equally adept handling the human characters and the contemporary American setting, providing protagonists who are well fleshed-out and exhibit believable motivations.

However, the strength of this book lies not only in the power of its author's imagination and his amazing ability to create people, places and moods ; Feist has also paced and developed the plot perfectly. Commendations, too, to artist Don Maitz, whose wraparound painting is simply beautiful.

One problem: this book is so damned good that it proves impossible to put down once opened, with the result that you are liable to end up late for work or with no clean socks...  
*[Ann Green]*

*Reviews next issue will include MORT by Terry Pratchett (Gorgi), LAVONDYSS by Rob Holdstock (Gollancz), INTERZONE: THE 3RD ANTHOLOGY (Simon & Schuster), ELFQUEST, BOOK 1; FIRE FLIGHT by Wendy & Richard Pini (Titan), PRIME EVIL (Bantam),*

## COVER NOTES

*THE RUNNING MAN by Stephen King*  
*New English Library ; £2.99*  
Film tie-in edition of 1982 'Richard Bachman' novel.

*GALACTIC EMPIRES ed. Brian Aldiss*  
*Legend ; £4.99*  
Amalgamates both volumes of 1976 anthology featuring Clarke, Simak, Asinov, Blish & Harrison ; excellent value for money.

*IN A PLACE DARK AND SECRET by Phillip Finch*  
*Star ; £3.50*  
Mountainan kidnaps young girl in place of dead daughter.

*TOOLMAKER KOAN by Joan McLaughlin*  
*Orbit ; £3.99*  
Superpowers investigate spacial anomaly, stumble upon hidden force scheming to wrest global control from them.

*THE DIGGING LEVIATHAN by James P Blaylock*  
*Grafton ; £3.50*  
Bizarre inventor stars in new novel from PKO Award winner.

*BRIGHT AND SHINING TIGER by Claudia J Edwards*  
*Headline ; £2.99*  
Sorceress seeks sanctuary, villagers seek her protection.

*THE SHADOW OF HIS WINGS by Bruce Ferguson*  
*Grafton ; 3.50*  
Young soldier has magic opportunity to claim throne.

*MELOME and ANGADO by E C Tubb*  
*Legend ; £2.99*  
Episodes 28 and 29 in 'Dunarest' saga.

*WINDMASTER'S BANE by Tom Deitz*  
*Orbit ; £3.50*  
Fables hold core of truth for psychic youngster.

*STAR OF GYPSIES by Robert Silverberg*  
*Orbit ; £3.99*  
Spacefaring Romanies seek legendary star.

*IMPERIAL EARTH by Arthur C Clarke*  
*Gollancz ; £2.99*  
Reprint of mid-70s 'classic' mixing political intrigue and genetic manipulation.

*ISLANDS IN THE NET by Bruce Sterling*  
*Legend ; £11.95 (h/b) or £5.95 (p/b)*  
Paradise proves a flimsy facade in near-future sf thriller.

*INVOLUTION OCEAN by Bruce Sterling*  
*Legend ; £2.50*  
Reissue of cyberpunk disciple's highly praised first novel.



*JINIAN STAR-EYE* by Sheri S Tepper  
Corgi ; £2.99  
Wordy finale to the 'Jinian' fantasy trilogy.

*EVIL EYE* by Ian Watson  
Grafton ; £2.99  
Fourth story collection, incl. "When the Timegate Failed".

*SEVENTH SON* by Orson Scott Card  
Legend ; £10.95  
Acclaimed opening volume in 'Alvin Maker' sequence.

*WOUNDHEALER'S STORY* by Fred Saberhagen  
Orbit ; £3.50  
First instalment of 'Lost Swords' trilogy.

*SHIP OF STRANGERS* by Bob Shaw  
Gollancz ; £2.99  
Novel 'fixed-up' from four adventures aboard space probe.

*EMPERY* by Michael P Kube-McDowell  
Legend ; £3.50  
Conclusion to far future sequence 'Trigon Disunity'.

*DAUGHTER OF THE EMPIRE* by Raymond E Feist  
& Janny Wurts  
Grafton ; £3.99  
Collaborative continuation on 'Riftvar Saga' theme.

*BLACK WIZARDS* by Douglas Niles  
Penguin ; £3.99  
Second volume of TSR-generated 'Moonshae' trilogy.

*THE SLEEPING DRAGON* by Joel Rosenberg  
Grafton ; £2.99  
Role-playing game becomes real-life trial in new trilogy.

*VALE OF THE VOLE* by Piers Anthony  
New English Library ; £6.95  
Latest instalment in the successful 'Xanth' cycle.

*SEA OF GLASS* by Barry B Longyear  
Legend ; £3.50  
Childbirth is capital crime in overpopulated future.

*THE BOOK OF DREAMS* by Jack Vance  
Grafton ; £2.99  
Concluding volume in the 'Demon Princes' sequence.

*MORT* by Terry Pratchett  
Corgi ; £2.99  
Death hires an apprentice in hilarious 'Discworld' farce.

*PIRATES OF THE THUNDER* by Jack Chalker  
New English Library ; £2.99  
Second volume in 'Rings of the Master' trilogy.

*WHITE MARE, RED STALLION* by Diana L Paxson  
New English Library ; £3.99  
Celtic clans war in magical ancient Scotland.

*TALES OF THE CTHULHU MYTHOS* Ed. August Derleth  
Grafton ; £3.99

*NEW TALES OF THE CTHULHU MYTHOS* Ed. Ramsey Campbell  
Grafton ; £3.50

The horror continues; older tales by Lovecraft, Bloch, Kuttner, Derleth and Howard, more recent chillers from Campbell, Copper, Lunley, Klein and King.

*THE FOG* by James Herbert  
New English Library ; £12.95

New hardback edition of Herbert's second novel, published to coincide with his 60th appearance at the World Fantasycon and the book's millionth UK sale ; introduction by the author.

*TRILLION YEAR SPREE* by Brian Aldiss & David Wingrove  
Paladin ; £6.95

Welcome softback edition of the Hugo-winner ; part history, part critique, a landmark text.

*VIRCONIUM* by M John Harrison  
Unwin Hyman ; £3.95

One-volume edition of the acclaimed two-novel sequence.

*THE DARK DRUID* by Kenneth C Flint  
Bantam ; £3.50

Concluding volume in 'Sidhe Legends' fantasy sequence.

*LAST SWORD OF POWER* by David Gemmell  
Legend ; £11.95 (h/b) or £6.95 (p/b)

Messianic fantasy set in dark age Britain.

*THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF SHORT HORROR NOVELS* Ed. Mike Ashley  
Robinson ; £4.95

The label may be dubious (these 10 'novels' range between 30 and 87 pages), but it's a top-rank line-up: King, Blackwood, Shepard, Klein and Doyle to name just five of those present.

*ROOFWORLD* by Christopher Fowler  
Legend ; £11.95 (h/b) or £5.95 (p/b)

Secret sect wages internal war above modern London.

*SLEEPING IN FLAME* by Jonathan Carroll  
Legend ; £10.95 (h/b) or £5.95 (p/b)

Actor-writer's dreams spark paranormal abilities.

*A BLACKBIRD IN TWILIGHT* by Freda Warrington  
New English Library ; £3.99

Fourth volume in the 'Blackbird' fantasy sequence.

*FORGING THE DARKSWORD* by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman  
Bantam ; £3.50

First volume of new fantasy trilogy from *DRAGONLANCE* team.

*A MULTITUDE OF MONSTERS* by Craig Shaw Gardner  
Headline ; £2.50

Second volume of comic fantasy series in Pratchett vein.

*NIGHT'S SORCERIES* by Tanith Lee  
Legend ; £2.99

Fifth volume in 'Flat Earth' fantasy sequence.



*THE PENGUIN BOOK OF VAMPIRE STORIES* ed. Alan Ryan  
Penguin ; £4.95

Consummate collection of the sub-genre, from its origins in the stories of Polidori & Rymer, through Le Fanu & Stoker to the more modern horror of Moore, Bloch, Matheson & Campbell.

*THE SHAPING OF MIDDLE-EARTH* by J. R. R. Tolkien  
Unwin Hyman ; £4.95

Fourth volume in Middle-earth history edited by Christopher Tolkien, includes 1926 draft of *THE SILMARILLION*.

*THE NAUTILUS SANCTION* by Simon Hawke  
Headline ; £2.99

Fifth in the 'Time Wars' series sees Jules Verne in combat.

*THE WHITE RAVEN* by Diana L. Paxson  
New English Library ; £12.95 (h/b) or £6.95 (p/b)  
Post-Arthurian fantasy re-enacting the legend of Tristan and Iseult, historical research much evident.

*DRAGONLANCE CHRONICLES* by Margaret Weis  
& Tracy Hickman  
Penguin ; £7.99

Hefty 'collector's edition' containing the 'Dragon' trilogy.

*A CLOUD OVER WATER* by [Alison] Spedding  
Unwin Hyman ; £3.95

More global conquests and sexual power games in follow-up to *THE ROAD AND HILLS*; second in 'Walk in the Dark' trilogy.

*KNIGHTMARE* by Tim Child & Dave Morris  
Corgi ; £1.95

Novelisation from popular role-playing tv series, includes a role-playing 'challenge' in the back.

*FRANK FRAZETTA'S DEATH DEALER: PRISONER OF THE HORNED HELMET* by James Silke  
Grafton ; £2.99

Opening volume in series 'inspired' by Frazetta paintings.

*KOKO* by Peter Straub  
Viking ; £12.95

Vietnam horrors provide bizarre legacy in new thriller.

*COUNTERSOLAR!* by Richard A. Lupoff  
Grafton ; £3.50

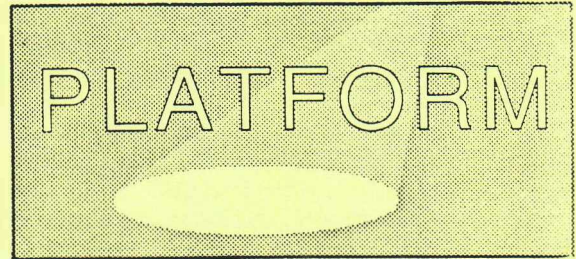
Parallel Earth satire, sequel to *CIRCUMPOLAR!*

*TALES FROM THE SPACEPORT BAR* ed. George Scithers  
& Darrell Schwitzer  
New English Library ; £2.99

Anthology containing some of the best bar room skiffy; the authors include Asimov, Clarke, Niven, Robinson, Silverberg.

♦ ♦ ♦

Inclusion in this listing does not, of course, preclude a full review in a future edition of *CRITICAL WAVE*.  
Subscribers interesting in joining our roster of reviewers should send a reply-paid envelope to our editorial address.



[As explained in page three's editorial, our regular soapbox feature is this issue devoted to the future of British sf in the 1990s. Is there a uniquely British voice in sf and, if so, can it survive into the next century? We invited representatives of the British publishing, writing and critical communities to offer their own visions of tomorrow. We also welcome your own comments on the following commentaries, for a forthcoming special letter column.]

♦ ♦ ♦

[Self-styled 'Texas dirt-child' Sherry Goldsmith and British fan Mike Christie co-edit the fanzine *A FREE LUNCH* and plan to launch a new 'more personal' zine towards the end of this year...]

What was the most eagerly-awaited sf novel of the past 12 months? Easy: *MONA LISA OVERDRIVE* by William Gibson. What about the most eagerly-awaited sf novel by a British writer? Hmm. Maybe *KAÏROS* by Gwyneth Jones. Maybe Bob Shaw's *THE WOODEN SPACESHIPS*.

When speculations and recriminations about British sf are in the making, comparisons with American sf are inevitable. Britain's quality short fiction and genre-bending novels show how good our products are when compared to the American brand. But are we saying very much when we compare British authors with the poor cousins who keep turning out squalid little trilogies and torrid nuke-'em-high skiffy? If you stop to think about it, the difference is more one of kind than of degree.

The British have excelled in a category of Literary SF, one which they brought into being almost single-handedly. This category is a natural one for Brits to work in. It uses the strengths of their reverence for literature, inculcated in them by all those exams which divide the advanced from the ordinary, all that glorious Brit education in art, lit & lit crit! All that discipline and discrimination, the sort of thing which took the energy of low-life jazz and gave it a capital letter: Jazz. But along with all that education, British sf has absorbed an upper-class aesthetic, lending a slightly snobbish, *Times Literary Supplement* touch to the work our writers produce.

This is not to say that British writers are snobs, just that they tend to reflect establishment literary values. This hasn't been a problem - we've seen some dazzling work from this country over the past twenty years. But these are works in a different genre, one we'd like to call *Mythic Realism*; realism, because the propositions of the fiction are usually described in a realistic way; mythic, because they are imbued with the dignity and quality of myth crea-



tion. A list of writers producing work on this edge of the sf genre would be impressive: M John Harrison, Chris Priest, J G Ballard and Michael Moorcock, just for starters.

If we move away from the edges and towards the core of the genre market, then Britain has little to show. Bob Shaw is a stalwart, Brian Aldiss occasionally contributes (most recently with the *HELLICONIA* series) and that's it, more or less. It would appear that sf is not a natural language for many of Britain's better writers. And that is a shame twice over. Firstly, because some of sf's more wearisome troops could do with rehabilitation, and people like Priest & Moorcock are capable doing it. Secondly, because the cash-laden American buyers don't seem too interested in mythic realism -- perhaps because its transhistorical character fails to capture the texture of today's more popular entertainments.

Gibson is the only writer to successfully fashion an sf suit of clothes from a thoroughly modern fabric. Unrestricted by notions of taste, Gibson's written some very contemporary fictions, grafting the feel of visual entertainment onto written sf ; he has shown how writers can capture the energy of a chase scene, the speed of an expensive car, and the schlock of a computer game in writing. His ideas aren't new -- the Left has been citing the extra-legal nature of multi-national corporations for 30 years, and mirror-shades for 20 -- but integrating so many modern icons into a literate whole *is* new, and Gibson does it with the grace of a Ferrari hugging a tight curve. Now that's entertainment.

And William Gibson's work is unclassifiable as anything but trad sf. When *NEUROMANCER* was first published in 1984, the phrase 'cyberpunk' was scarcely out of Gardner Dozois' mouth before people were finding similarities in 50s science fiction novels like *THE DEMOLISHED MAN* and *THE SPACE MERCHANTS*. Compare that with Gwyneth Jones' first adult sf book, *DIVINE ENDURANCE* -- it's hard to think of anything in genre sf remotely like it.

But of course, we don't want British authors to simply re-write *NEUROMANCER*. On the contrary, we should thank our lucky stars for those, like Jones, who create fun and refreshing sf, with rather more political bite. She and other sf authors, such as Geoff Ryman, are able to discuss politics -- governmental, economic & sexual -- in their fictions, in direct contrast to the Americans, who time and again reduce politics to the heroic efforts of one individual: Conan or Count Zero.

The future of British science fiction, as opposed to mythic realism, no doubt lies in a fusion of the two genres. Perhaps the mythopoetic qualities of Ryman's *UNCONQUERED COUNTRY* could be used to take on the traditional tropes of sf. A healthy, British mutation of genre sf would have to sacrifice mythic realism's venerability to the pursuit of fun. It would have to acknowledge what made kids raised on *STAR WARS* tick. The mythic realists' unmatched ability (in the genre as a whole) to turn out a phrase or to capture an image could be used for a more explicit seizure of the symbols and symptoms of the modern world.

What might we see in the next year or so which promises an expanded vision of how genre sf can be used? We can look forward to a new novel from Geoff Ryman, based upon the award-winning story "Love Sickness", which first appeared in *INTERZONE* ; Gollancz has just published *CRADLE* by Arthur

C Clarke & Gentry Lee [reviewed this issue] ; Unwin Hyman are excited about new author Gill Alderman ; Storm Constantine's first straight sf novel, *THE MARSH WOMAN*, is coming out from Futura. Most of these will be very recognizably American-style sf, but perhaps one will expand the boundaries of science fiction a little further, without actually crossing into mythic realism.

*INTERZONE* is the ideal place for writers to experiment with a British / American fusion. Its new distribution deal with the leading British chain W H Smith may tempt *INTERZONE* to abandon some of its post-grad worthiness in favour of more visceral stories. Its new bi-monthly schedule could well mean renewed attempts to do for sf what punk did for rock 'n' roll. And the forthcoming UK sf anthologies (including *ZENITH*, *OTHER EDENS II & III*, *ARROWS OF ERDS*) are indications that whatever the future of sf is on this side of the Atlantic, there's plenty of opportunity for British writers to be a part of it.

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[As well as being an academic institute's publications manager and encouraging the independant science press, Jonathan Cowie is co-editor of the annual journal *CONCATENATION* and a member of the *Beacon* team...]

Futurology (science fact) has as its first principle an acknowledgement of the science's inherent inaccuracy. Apply futurology to science fiction and perhaps the best thing that you can possibly get is a delphi poll, of those with an interest in the genre, pointing a blunderbus at the future ; no doubt there will be some hits.

Today, sf makes up 10% of both UK and US fiction sales. Will that increase in the 1990s? The chances are favourable, especially with the increase in popularity of sf films, and even those which are expensive to make (due to the sf's) still make bucks. This can only help to stimulate growth in sf's market share. Though this 10% may grow, the breadth of style of writing may well suffer if countered by a decline in the over-all book market should the visual media continue to capture would-be readers. My guess is that although the genre will increase in importance to fiction publishers, the sales figures will remain about the same.

Of course, British sf is affected by that double-edged sword North America. We share the same language, which does add the economy of scale to British writers' worth to publishers. Though not familiar with developments in the fiction publishing industry, I suspect that these will follow trends in the world of science fact publishing. Recently, due to mergers, groups of science publishers have come together and although on the face of it they have retained their former identities, they have pooled their access to each others' market. Should this happen with sf in the 1990s, pop titles like *HITCH-HIKERS* will hit shops from Dover to California fairly quickly. Your average-selling British sf release, no matter what its merits, could well suffer under the invasion from the United States (in a single year (1986) *LOCUS* listed 1,502 sf & fantasy books published in the US!) Further, the American market is well over double the size of the UK's and inevitably dominates customer demand.

Currently, much American sf has a hard science content. Personally, that is my sort of science fiction, though I do recognise that British writers are often far more colourful in their writing, both in terms of style & plot. It may be that there is a tendency for not-particularly-above-average scientists in the States to turn to writing and become not-particularly-above-average writers, yet they succeed because they fulfil a market demand. Here, this phenomenon could well play a major role in the development of British science fiction in the 1990s.

I won't actually try to predict the genre's future, but I would like to see more science in British sf. I wouldn't follow the US route, but encourage our existing able pool of writers to solicit help from British scientists. Although scientists like Jack Cohen and Iain Nicolson have assisted British authors, no scientist has helped produce sf on a 50% effort (not writing) basis! This path would be most challenging and rewarding. Publishers & authors would have much work to do in creating and managing such collaborations, but much the best in British sf would be retained whilst increase its penetration into the US market. For ill or good, and no matter how its done, success in this last will determine the health of science fiction publishing in Britain.

♦ ♦ ♦

[Dave Hodson formerly edited the British SF Association news magazine *MATRIX* and currently works for *Forbidden Planet*. . .]

Where lies the the future of British science fiction? It's a difficult question to answer. British sf seems to be following its usual inconsistent path, with no single author or trend emerging from the pack to give a lead. In general, British sf still doesn't quite live up to the sales of its US cousin, be it in import or UK published editions, and UK publishers don't seem quite as willing to put any marketing muscle behind British authors when there are glossier American equivalents around.

Which is really a shame, because there are some good sf writers around the UK scene at the moment. Let's take Neil Ferguson as an example, an *INTERZONE* contributor with two books to his credit. Ferguson has the attitudes and, possibly, the scope of a US-style sf writer, but both books - the short story collection *BARS OF AMERICA* and a novel, *PUTTING OUT* - have suffered from their publishers' complete indifference, especially the hardcover house Hamish Hamilton, plus awful covers & marketing. How different the situation would have been if Ferguson had been picked up in the USA by Arbor House / William Morrow.

A substantial part of the problem seems to be that very few publishers, even today, have specialist sf editors, and even those who have don't seem to take them all that seriously. With the exception of Malcolm Edwards (Gollancz) and John Jarrold (Futura), how many British sf editors can you name? Okay, a few of you probably know Richard Evans (now at Headline, so we can be sure that their sf line will probably pick up quite drastically), but who knows the editors at Pan, Methuen, Penguin, Sphere, MacMillan, Unwin, Corgi / Transworld, Star, Arrow, New English Library, the Women's Press -- even Grafton, which is responsible for churning out

huge amounts of sf and fantasy every year! I work in the trade, and I haven't a clue as to many of them!

How different the situation is in the US, where editors like David Hartwell are almost legendary, and because they have been so visibly connected with the books they've published, one can tell whether the sf books they are currently involved with are liable to appeal to the individual tastes of us all. Look at the quality of the list Lou Aronica has built at Bantam Spectra. Brian Thomsen of Questar / Popular Library puts his name to a page in every issue of *LOCUS* and *SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE*. New American Library continues to release good books under the direction of John Silbersack and, good god, if I need a question answered by an editor at a US publisher I don't get the runaround I have from some UK publishers' editors. They know the answer - immediately!

Another bone of contention I have with UK publishers at the moment is the number of limited editions which are being forced down our throats. Who in their right mind would pay £75 for a shoddily-produced book in a dingy slipcase with no dustwrapper and one extra page with a number and a signature on it? It's beyond me! If Collins suddenly realises that it's impossible for them to recoup the silly money they've paid some horror writer endorsed by Stephen King as an advance on two books, they shouldn't attempt to make the punter make up any of the difference. Of course, small presses are the worst offenders when it comes to this form of publishing crime, but perhaps it would help if they tried to publish books which every other publisher and his dog hadn't already rejected. It also doesn't take a genius to realise that if publishers can stay in line with the average book price at the format they are publishing in, they may sell a few more copies to libraries, enabling larger print runs, lower unit costs, and a little less strain on all our pockets. It's a simple lesson, I know, but there are a few of us out there who haven't quite grasped it.

Oh well, let's get back to the subject of the state of British sf (rather than sf publishers). If all of the above doesn't kill off the aspirations of the up-&-coming writers, the scene looks quite healthy. I've already mentioned Ferguson, but there's also Christopher Fowler, whose first novel *ROOFWORLD* seems to be catching a few peoples' attention and who is another writer with a British form of American sensibility. By contrast, Scott Bradfield is an American who has been in Europe for a while and has caught the bug this end. I regard Scott more as a British / European science fiction writer, and he'll be big one day; pick up a copy of his short story collection *THE SECRET LIFE OF HOUSES*, published by Unwin Hyman, and see what I mean. Ian McDonald has had a heap of short fiction published in the US digests, and the resulting short story collection *EMPIRE DREAMS* (issued over in the US by Bantam Spectra) is a stunner, especially as it came out simultaneously with his first sf novel, *DESOLATION ROAD*. McDonald will probably end up being the market leader of British science fiction by the turn of the century.

Of course, there is one name conspicuous by its absence in the above: Iain Banks. I can't say I regarded Iain's move into sf as particularly wise at first, but he's probably the most talented British author to come along in any genre over the last few years, so far be it from me to criticise such a source of good reading material.



Who have I missed? Well, if Geoff Ryan could become a little more prolific, he's got the talent to make all our heads reel. Robert Holdstock seems to have found his niche, and Barry Bayley has a new publisher, so maybe he's due for that long overdue break (he's also been picked up in the US by Arbor House).

My god, I haven't even started on the more established British science fiction writers yet, who seem to be producing some of their best work in the field.

So, all in all, British sf seems quite healthy, with the potential to keep us entertained for years to come.

Now, if only the science fiction *publishers* could get their acts together...

♦ ♦ ♦

*[A writer and editor, George Hay was instrumental in setting up Britain's Science Fiction Foundation, currently housed at the North East London Polytechnic.]*

I have a vision; oh yes, I do. I see a very large building in a fashionable area of London. There aren't very many people around in the vast open-plan offices, but the doorman is impressive, and the lifts softly-carpeted. The absence of staff is mainly due to the fact that all but the humblest of them are usually 'in a meeting', which explains why it is so difficult to reach them on a phone. Wandering about, one sees the name of that sf publisher or this one on plaques, and after a while one realises that *all* British sf publishers are now housed in this one building. One well-placed bomb, and the boys in marketing will be without a product. But not to worry; the American owners will soon fly in replacements.

Of course, it is not that bad - *yet*. Some of the best publishers still insist in leading their own lives in ridiculous places such as Covent Garden, and there are new ones opening up in even more remote places. But by and large, the chief influence in publishing over the next decade seems likely to be the increasing centralisation of control, with fewer and fewer people exercising ever more power. This, to put it bluntly, is not publishing, but marketing, where success goes not so much to the richest, as is so often assumed, but to the best organised. And the best organised are those with the ability to spot a trend ahead of others, and to gear their choice of books, publicity and sales campaigns accordingly.

This quite simply means that the lowest common denominators will have the largest sales -- with one exception, the reprint area. One would be crassly stupid to call a reprint of one of the better sf works by, say, Heinlein or Asimov, a 'lowest common denominator'; quality will therefore be kept up in this area at least. But even with the best will in the world, how often can one re-read *STARSHIP TROOPERS*?

By and large, the percentage of really good new science fiction writers, either British or American (or even real foreigners, such as Stanislaw Lem or last year's A C Clarke Award winner, Australia's George Turner) is much the same as ever it was. The difference is, it is increasingly unlikely that they will be able to compete in terms of sales with certain well-known current authors I could mention.

Really, I don't want to be a spoil-sport, and I don't begrudge Douglas Adams a single penny of his earnings. I am prepared to admit all these three-volume sagas of alternative history, sorcerers and spaceships, plus the rest of it, give their readers a good run for their money. But whereas in the past I always, I think justly, resented the expression 'mere science fiction', I have come to the point where I have to admit the justification of the implied slur.

Really, this isn't the fault of sf authors. People like Bob Shaw & Ian Watson write as well as they ever did, if not better, and there *are* outstanding new writers, but can they stand against the flood? To market books, one has to have them simple and accessible, so what price real science, real writing or real plotting?

Recently, because I had got embroiled in a discussion about L Ron Hubbard, I took down a copy of the blockbuster *BATTLEFIELD EARTH* from my bookshelves. Looking through it, as I had not for quite some time, I realised how barren in comparison most contemporary sf is of this kind of plot development; and the same thing goes for the writing. Whilst I was about this, I also had another look at M P Shiel's *THE YOUNG MEN ARE COMING*, written around the end of the 1930s. Now, M P Shiel was a fascist, not to say an anti-semitic, but could he write! I can go back further. What about Joseph Conrad? You didn't know he wrote sf? Well, he did, and so did quite a lot of 'respectable' writers around the turn of the century, though the fact has been forgotten. Why is this not the case today? There *is* Doris Lessing. I suppose, but...

It may be my age speaking, but I don't see much improvement coming. I recommended a friend lately to get hold of John Crowley's *LITTLE, BIG*, a masterpiece if ever there was one (though not strictly sf); she had a hard time finding a copy. All one can really do is to urge people to exercise discrimination; not to read anything except the very best, and to keep scanning the magazines for promising newcomers. Iain Banks, for example, has a great feel for the workings of large organisations, something really essential if one is to write space opera with any hope of convincing readers of their internal reality.

And it must be added that the latest writers to the sf field, though weak at plotting, are much better at characterisation than their predecessors ever were. I get a real feeling of hope, for example, when I read Gwyneth Jones (who is *not* weak on plotting), because one finds two things with her essential to what one might call 'real novels' -- a continual dual vision, and, more important still, a certain sense of inevitability, the sense that this book was written not because the particular subject was fashionable (fashionable writing is a curse) but because here was a subject that had to be tackled. *That* is what makes a book superior.

♦ ♦ ♦

*[Ken Lake is a long-time sf reader, whose book reviews regularly appear in these pages and those of BSFA magazines such as VECTOR and PAPERBACK INFERNO. Ken specifically addresses himself to the points raised in our form letter to all those taking part in this survey; which UK authors would dominate sf in the 1990s (if any), what trends were apparent, had the*

*British writers an individual voice and could this endure in the face of American imports, would fantasy continue to take up the bulk of the publishing lists, would there still be a market for British sf writers and was there a specific brand of science fiction which they should be writing to fill this market demand...? He opens by turning his attention to the ever-present influence of American sf...]*

The following is going to be (I warn you) opinionated, probably deeply offensive to many readers, and as brief as I can fairly make it.

We all come to sf mainly through American writing -- US authors even turned up in British magazines when we used to have several of them to choose from, and for all I know may do so today. European and other foreign sf is hardly known, so it's really a case of little brother walking his own path alongside big, big Yankee brother with his massive inbuilt prejudices and conditioning. We never had a HUAC, a Vietnam (though we have Northern Ireland, for example), Marilyn Monroe (how did *she* get in here?) or much of the background that makes American sf occasionally so oblique, if not downright opaque, to British readers.

Two other aspects of Yankee sf pose us problems: their literary style(s), rooted in 30s pulps of all kinds (westerns, true confessions et al), and their inbuilt belief that everyone reading their works will know where every US town and state is situated, what the route numbers mean, all the street furniture that makes the United States so -- well, not to put too fine a point upon it -- un-English, in fact un-everything-but-American.

Faced with such an overwhelming influence, it is not only intriguing but downright meritorious that British science fiction writers have, on the whole, hevn an exclusively British path. I mean, most British sf is recognisable not only by its lack of US references and its staunchly more grammatical style, but because it is based upon a morality and an ethos that is specifically British. I do not believe that this is because -- like the Americans -- we cannot escape our own cultural matrix; I am patriotic enough to believe our longer democratic experience, our carefully checked-and-balanced political and cultural establishments, and our general way of life are such as to provide a better matrix for civilised living anyway, and that our writers instinctively realise this and write from conviction.

They're also, on the whole, a lot more amusing (thanks, Bob Shaw), less turgid when launching themselves into scientific explanations (thanks, Arthur Clarke), less politically motivated (almost everyone) and lacking in gung-ho kill-kill nastiness (sickening stuff that does, I am afraid, point up the most important way in which we still, thank heavens, lag behind American progress).

But we remain -- and it would be foolish to pretend it isn't so -- a small island full of geniuses, lying just off the shores of Europe and just off the cultural colossus of America. We may hope to speak for ourselves, but we are not going to change the rest of the world to our idyllic way of life. So? I don't think it matters one whit -- what does matter is that British sf should continue to be British, and for the life of me I can't see why even a diet of MacDonalds crap should bring any change.

How on earth could I know which sf British authors will "dominate the field" in the '90s? Chris Priest has told us all clearly that he will *not* be writing SF in future; Bob Shaw is irrepressible and our greatest weapon in the war against (or possibly for) sanity; there are a lot of writers around there who are getting better, some who have been better for a long time, and (when you come down to it) a lot of downright cruddy sf authors on both sides of the Big Pond that people will buy in quantity because... well, who knows why (I don't!). "Dominate" is a hard word; in the end, it comes down to public support, and that's unforeseeable.

New trends are, I'm afraid, outside my field of competence, anyway; I am a 'traditional sf' fan, eschewing the avant-garde as I eschew orange juice (it gives me indigestion). Bob Shaw (yes, him again) has shown how to 'bend' the sf rules in his *RAGGED ASTRONAUTS* universe, where pi is 3; and who could have foreseen the rise to esteem of Terry Pratchett even a decade ago (well earned in every way, too, but can he keep it up?). For me, the most welcome trends are more humour, and less seriousness -- not the same thing as my two exemplars show.

Yes, I've tried cyberpunk. Mostly, it seems a sterile and limited area for development; I could be wrong. I note that some of the Pournelle nastiness crops up in cyberpunk; for me, it's unwelcome. But the influence that cyberpunk, like fantasy, will have on sf is the thing to watch -- and that influence can only, in the long run, be for the good in its addition of new shades to the spectrum of the genre.

Fantasy; ah, that's the thing. Personally, I read only humorous fantasy; the rest appears hackneyed, conny, predictable and a copout in that the authors can always create more illogical tricks to extract themselves from bad plotting. Yes, it sells far better than science fiction and will continue to do so just as long as people don't tire of it or o-d on the form. So? Sitcoms attract more viewers than *RED DWARF*, but that doesn't mean the latter *loses* an audience, does it?

Will there still be a market for British sf? *This* is the hub of the matter. To be honest, there has *never* been a market for British sf so far as the casual buyer is concerned; or for US sf, or any other kind. There has been a market for sf, and it comes and goes without any reference at all to the nationality of the writers.

So far as sf fans are concerned, we all have our favourite writers, but I'd very much doubt if any of these are predicated solely upon nationality. I can think of 20 American writers I rate tops alongside perhaps four British, but as I've said, that is because there are not so many of us, and whilst I have already indicated that I find British sf more readable and congenial in many ways, I would not and cannot discard US science fiction simply because it speaks a language somewhat strange to me.

The market for British sf depends, I'm afraid, on something I haven't even hinted at yet -- the willingness of the British publishers (who are in the business to make a profit of course, nothing wrong with that) to be persuaded there is profit and sense in publishing British writers' works rather than simply reprinting (without even changing the spelling!) US books which have already more than covered their costs from home sales.

Publishing is a very complex field, and recent developments have left many non-sf writers in Britain frightened, confused and angry ; if this trend goes on, we may see the virtual disappearance of *all* British science fiction unless it is first accepted by *American* publishers. And there, I really must hand you over to better-informed sources than I. Who will speak for the sf writers ?

♦ ♦ ♦

[Enter stage left Simon Ings, chairman of the Cassandra writers' workshop, spotlighted in our fifth issue. Its members contributed four out of the seven sf stories featured in the November INTERZONE. But is this the light at the end of the tunnel, he asks, or the headlamp of an approaching train...?]

Maybe it's just my own ignorance playing me false, but I don't believe a word about this British sf boom.

That might seem a perverse thing to say, now that INTERZONE has released its third anthology, and the horror magazine FEAR has undertaken to publish sf (and by new writers at that), now that the new science fiction magazine THE GATE is readying itself for a 1989 launch, and two major original anthologies of British sf - OTHER EDENS and ZENITH - have got the go-ahead for new issues.

But consider: of what does this boom, if boom it is, consist ? The sustained efforts of a handful of people ; nothing more.

A relatively small group of people thought that Britain should have an sf magazine. They worked hard, they got recognition, sales, and a competing title from a rival company. Voila ! A magazine market !

And for years writers had been (rightly) bemoaning the demise of the sf anthology. Lo and behold, two enterprising writers and a far-sighted publisher took a gamble on a one-off anthology. It sold, four similar titles are established, and we have an anthology market.

The renaissance of British science fiction is the work of a very few. Likewise, its continuation rests on their shoulders. That's not a state of affairs you can entirely rely on, and it's certainly not something whose future you can predict.

Good ideas are not rare and, at least in the magazine field, persistence on behalf of good ideas can win out against market inertia. Remember INTERZONE's dervish wails on behalf of 'radical science fiction' ? There was no such animal, of course, but by declaring an uncompromising corporate dedication to 'original work', they fostered, and today still foster, new writers and a varied readership.

I am suggesting here that, while magazines like INTERZONE and sf anthologies like OTHER EDENS are not easy to establish, all it takes is a small group of people with the right expertise to get such projects off the ground and a modicum of luck to keep them running. You don't need a booming economy, a public outcry or the passage of Halley's Comet. Why then have we had to wait so long for this pleasing, modest, home-grown crop ?

I fear the answer may be that those who hold the money look at all sf as a homogenous genre, which of course some of it patently is not ; and having applied this false cri-

terion, they fail to recognise a good idea when they see it, this being outside their province. Sadly, there isn't a very good argument you can mount against the powers that be over that. Economically, it works very well ; economically, it makes perfect sense to publish tie-ins, role-playing books, and sequels over new and experimental work.

It's not that they're stupid ; it's that they're complacent. They've told the public "the future is here" for so long that they've come to believe it themselves. It so happens that at the moment a number of publishers are looking for new sf talent, the next set to counterpoint the Anthony's and Heinlein's in the 1990s - but this is a familiar phenomenon ; the giants turning in their sleep once every 15 years. Most evidence still points to the old saw: there's never been a worse time to sell a novel, but there's never been a better time to sell a trilogy.

Whither, then, the Science Fiction Novel ?

Mainstream fiction has traditionally misunderstood what it conceives to be typical sf. One sad example will suffice: Wells is chiefly stored in the public consciousness not as a political commentator or theorist, but as the inventor of certain frequently recurring fantastical props -- quaint, fileable and forgettable.

File under 'Science Fiction'.

You know and I know in the back of our minds that H G Wells' strength as a science fiction author lay in the way he informed his fictions with his moral & political thought. But, at least until recently, the rest of the world was cataloguing things differently.

Three phenomena may have shaken us out of this impasse and opened a new way forward for the science fiction novel: feminist sf, the new respectability of horror fiction, and the popular demand for metaphysical thrillers.

Whilst post-modernist fictions seek environments in which their ambiguities & contradictions may be codified and understood, modern sf, with its frequent use of the many-worlds premise and its increasing emphasis on psychological themes, looks for ways to render its invented environments suitably ambiguous. There is, I think, room for a kind of symbiosis here, and this relationship, or a variant, is demonstrated in a number of wildly different places: Priest's THE GLAMOUR, Harrison's VIRICONIUM, Ian Watson's WHORES OF BABYLON and so on. The existential badlands of the contemporary horror novel offer other relationships and alternatives, and their intellectual capacity is no less great than that of sf, albeit of a different kind ; take as a case in point Ackroyd's HAWKSMOOR.

This isn't genre fiction being 'swallowed' by the mainstream (whatever that might mean). It's a meeting of equals. The self-reference of much modern work can find more elegant means of expression within the toils of a many-worlds and/or psychological sf novel - and what I find startling is that we are not just talking about the practitioners of 'soft' sf here -- the Evanses, or Kilworths, or Harrisons -- but about the most technophile of the very new sf writers to emerge on the British scene via the pages of INTERZONE ; think, for example, of McAuley's superfats, or Brown's pineal zen equation. Britain's new writers are assured and unselfconscious in their use of sf hardware as metaphor, and with an ease which is deceptive, they are illustrating metaphysical





philosophical and moral outlooks in terms of scientific and technological systems. Less technocratic writers are learning the trick too - I am reminded here of Tuttle's 'Memories of the Body'.

The speed and efficiency with which work by Gibson in particular has caught the imaginations of some mainstream pundits must point to some trend, and I suspect it may be an unusual one. The prospect of Britain's new gun-metal sf, the grittiest work of the cheroot-chewing Brown, the gung-ho McAuley and the positively impenetrable Stross, merging with the effete, consumptive, angst-ridden mainstream as the years go by is, I admit, a bizarre notion, but stranger things have happened. Ian Watson, after all, has been wandering these literary buffer zones quite successfully for some time now, and it might be that he is but the advance party. For myself, I'm happy for the moment to throw my lot in with these accidental decadents, writers who have demonstrated that technophilic science fiction is still part of the larger playground.

*[Anyone interested in joining Cassandra should contact Simon at 10 Marlove Court, Lymer Avenue, Dulwich, London, SE19 1LP; the group is organising a workshop at Iconoclasm next June, to be chaired by Ian Watson, and is currently running a short story contest to tie in with that event.]*

♦ ♦ ♦

*[Ken Slater's vital contribution to post-war British science fiction fandom with his fanzine OPERATION FANTAST was recognised in 1987, when he and his wife Joyce were fan guests of honour at the British world convention Conspiracy...]*

I detect a tendency towards stories with a total lack of rules. The action takes place in an uncertain, nebulous, continent/country/world which may be (or on) Earth, possibly in some past or future time, and with characters who may be human. Or they may not be. It's often unclear. The action is warlike or at least political. These stories are often enjoyable and exciting but not 'fantasy' in the sense that they include any supernatural / paranormal elements or characters. Originally they did -- take the excellent fantasy novel *LEGEND* as one example. But I've encountered examples where this is no longer true. Not yet by a *British* writer, that I can recall, true, but we are getting close. And I do not see any of this as science fiction.

I have always interpreted sf as being the relationship between humankind and its environment, or at least the environment we make for ourselves. I think I once wrote that a story involving cattle breeding to increase milk yield could be called sf if you stretched the limits, but stories involving the supernatural in any sense couldn't; I also stated that human relationships could be better interpreted in stories which could be understood by all humans, and not just the small fraction who appreciate science fiction. A rather large amount of material written today attempts to interpret human relationships in non-human terms, or to link science and fantasy / myth into the same novel. This is often well executed, very readable and well thought-out; even significant. But not sf, as I look at it.

It is my belief that this trend will continue, and that 'meaningful' books will be written against backgrounds which are so nebulous in both time and place that the point of the novel becomes lost in a blur of bright lights and fascinating scenery. Similarly, equally 'meaningless' novels will be written in an identical manner, and possibly with greater imagination.

And, to be frank, who cares, just so long as there's a body of readers out there who enjoy a fair proportion of the output?

♦ ♦ ♦

*[Paul Kincaid is co-ordinator of the British SF Association as well as a prolific reviewer, whose book and fanzine critiques are a regular feature in these pages...]*

It is strange to take a look at the future of British science fiction and feel optimistic. I don't think I could have felt this way for a decade or more. But now, well, we are not there yet but we're going into the 1990s with everything in our favour.

Let's face it, we've had *INTERZONE* for years, but one swallow does not make a summer, particularly a swallow which seems intent on flying south for the summer. Despite its frequent protestations, *INTERZONE* does have a house style. There are stories which you automatically know are *IZ* stories, but that style, with its twin planks of new wave sensibilities and cyberpunk enthusiasm, is flying in the face of British sf. You need only to take a look at the novels that British sf writers are producing, and the short stories that are appearing elsewhere, to recognise that a somewhat different tone and sensibility is more common.

Not, I hasten to add, that *IZ* is getting it wrong. No publication which has given us Geoff Ryman's "Unconquered Country", or introduced Paul McAuley and Eric Brown, could be accused of that. All I'm saying is that there's far more to British science fiction than sits comfortably within that one magazine's pages.

But now, all of a sudden, there is a wealth of other outlets for British writers. A new sf magazine, *THE GATE*, is promised for early 1989. Unwin Hyman's *OTHER EDENS* has become an annual series. And a host of original anthologies are due to appear, or being planned. Good or bad, all these outlets will allow a wider range of voices to be heard. It will prompt fresh efforts from established British writers and encourage newcomers; indeed it's already doing so. The competition might even stir *IZ* to new heights, since it has never been quite as exciting as it should be.

And if British science fiction is now offering scope for writers, what substance will it offer?

If we look at trends in sf first, it's always easier to recognise what they are and what they achieve in retrospect. The new wave, for instance, brought literary techniques and experiments to science fiction, but style tended to win out over content. Come the 70s, and American sf turned its back on these experiments in favour of action, adventure and the genre's traditional hardware. Look at it this way, and John Varley is the natural precursor of Bruce Sterling, cyberpunk merely using a somewhat different technology. But British

sf has very different origins from its American counterpart, always evidencing a much more 'mainstream' literary basis ; as American sf became harder, British sf became softer, so much so that many of our finest writers drifted out of the genre -- Ballard, Kilworth, Priest, Moorcock, among others.

At the same time, as boundaries were broken down (under the influence also of South American *magic realism*, as well as individual books such as Peter Carey's *ILLYWHACKER* and Umberto Eco's *THE NAME OF THE ROSE*), some of the most innovative and exciting writing around came from *outside* the sf genre, although using genre tropes. Alasdair Gray's *LANARK* and Peter Ackroyd's *HAWKSMOOR* are perhaps the best examples of this vogue.

The result: British science fiction enjoyed some of the finest writing the genre has produced, yet the genre itself seemed to be stultifying.

It is little wonder that cyberpunk has not, with a few exceptions, caught on in this country ; the two traditions are coming from completely different backgrounds. But if British writers have not taken up the cause, there is little doubt that they have been inspired by the excitement and vigour which have ridden in with cyberpunk. There are signs of a new trend emerging in Britain, a post-literary, post-cyberpunk trend, in which the literary and stylistic lessons have been learned and are now being applied to more traditional, more obviously science fictional themes and subjects.

It is, as yet, no more than a pale and tremulous glow. There were early glimmerings, perhaps, when Aldiss produced the full-blooded sf of *HELLICONIA*, and in both adult novels so far from Gwyneth Jones. It flickers on in Iain M Banks' *CONSIDER PHLEBAS* and *PLAYER OF GAMES*, in Garry Kilworth's *CLOUDROCK*, in Paul J McAuley's *FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS*. It has yet to grow into a great, roaring fire, but it could, it could.

And if it should happen, which writers are going to be in the vanguard? Brian W Aldiss has always straddled the mainstream & sf, but he's now grown into such an impressive literary figure that he can go his own way without regard to what else is happening ; he is hardly representative of the trends which afflict British sf. The next generation along, Keith Roberts, J G Ballard, Michael Moorcock, Harry Harrison & Christopher Priest -- really our only great survivors from the heady days of the Sixties -- will, like Aldiss, continue producing work of note, but it is hardly going to break new ground if I suggest you look out for them. Of the current big names in British sf, Christopher Evans, Geoff Ryman and Gwyneth Jones are, for various reasons, hardly prolific enough for a critic to yet draw any great conclusions from their work. Each is likely to produce a body of work that's highly acclaimed but, on current evidence, small. The edginess and unease that is so much a part of Lisa Tuttle's work tends to mean that she is more at home on the fringes of the horror genre, whilst Robert Holdstock, that most British of writers, with a deep awareness of the past and of tradition, consequently seems more at home drifting into fantasy. Meanwhile, Garry Kilworth's performing, with apparent consummate ease, that most difficult of balancing acts between sf & the mainstream, though his recent sf reveals him as someone with fresh and vivid things to say in the language of this genre. Of that whole generation of British writers, only Ian Watson

can be called prolific, though that's often meant led to him spreading himself too thinly, to poor effect.

As for tomorrow, Iain Banks & Paul McAuley are obvious contenders for 'the big time'. But for once, there are more than just a couple of British sf writers to keep an eye on. Perhaps because of the new proliferation of markets, we are now getting a similar proliferation of new writers. For instance, I'm going to take a keen interest in the future work of Eric Brown, Elizabeth Sourbut, William King and Ann Gay ; plus Ian McDonald, a Belfast-based writer who has had hardly anything published in this country, though he already has a very impressive novel and story collection out in America.

I hold to the theory that the spread of fantasy in the United States and latterly over here, followed by the recent spate of horror, is due in part at least to the lack of excitement, invention and imagination elsewhere, notably in sf. It does not follow, however, that if science fiction becomes fresh again, as I suspect it might, then these other genres will lose their domination of the market. I suspect that there is a lot more fantasy, and a lot more horror, to come before the market is sated. Which isn't necessarily a bad thing -- some British fantasy writers, such as Diana Wynne Jones and Storm Constantine, have proven themselves as inventive as any sf writer. Furthermore, in this country at least, science fiction shares with the more literary forms of fantasy a common background, and they remain much closer. We couldn't have had Corlay or Viriconium, Malacia or *DIVINE ENDURANCE*, had the two forms not been able to feed off each other to very fruitful effect.

It's this cross-breeding of so many literary forms that gives British sf such a distinctive voice -- and which gives me great hope for the future.

♦ ♦ ♦

*[Which seems an appropriate point to conclude this straw poll of literary fortune-tellers, Martin and I wish to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed, as well as those who were prevented by pressure of work or by the recent postal dispute. As indicated on page 19, a number of articles are in the pipeline already and we may well include these in our new year edition. Have a merry xmas, y'all.]*

Artists this issue: David A Hardy (cover), Kevin Clarke (computer graphics), ATow (headings). © 1988

♦ ♦ ♦

#### **IMPORTANT NOTE FOR AMERICAN READERS:**

As of our fifth issue, our US agent Tom Hanlon has published a separate American edition on our behalf ; this was the cornerstone of our initial \$5 sub rate, Tom ensuring the US copies (printed free of charge in New Orleans) were posted within days of the proofs arriving. From discussions at Novacon 18, however, it appears that US readers feel they're receiving a second rate service. With dramatic improvements in the pipeline for our UK run, we have decided to raise the US rate to \$15 and airmail direct, Tom remains our US agent and can be contacted at 13833 N. Amis Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70810-5044, USA ; our debt to him cannot be overstated.

# THE THIRD WAVE

Edited by Martin Tudor

*[To start the ball rolling this issue, we have a letter picking up on a point Steve made in his editorial in CW#6..]*

ROBERT DAY,  
'Ashgrove', Didgley,  
Coventry, CV7 8DQ.

I really must take you to task over *[your comments concerning]* the amendment to the new Copyright Act ; I'm sorry but you really haven't thought it through.

The new legislation is being brought in to bring up to date laws which were last drafted when only a few hobbyists had tape recorders of an audio nature, and which are totally unrealistic. I for one have a large library of off-air radio recordings which pre-date the video era ; they were illegal in 1973, and they'll be no less illegal in the future.

Do you really think that anyone will actually police the new legislation in any form ? To have a police state -- which is what even minimal enforcement of this Act will require, just to identify us cinephiles -- requires a large number of policeman. And do you see *this* Government, with its obsession with 'rolling back the frontiers of the State' -- on financial grounds -- actually spending the money to recruit the manpower to have that many policemen ? Or civil servants ? Or council workers ? Come off it ! Do you really think that something as trivial as the Copyright Laws are going to be enforced with a rod of iron ? No way, squire...

HMG recognises this. A source close to the Minister of Trade and Industry, whose legislation this is, told me that this legislation is *not* aimed at home tapers who legitimately build up libraries for their own pleasure. Instead, it provides a handy legal framework for prosecuting people who copy for profit. Up until now, the copyright owner has had to bring private actions against those making multiple copies for gain. The new Act enables public prosecutions to be brought and disables the defence, in such cases, of "It's only for my own use". ("A likely story, pal ; only a criminal or a madman would want 25 copies of *THE SOUND OF MUSIC*.")

What alternative was there ? Issuing recording licences ? The Mechanical Copyright Protection Society used to issue £1.50 licences to allow home audio taping. They were withdrawn a couple of years ago because no one bothered with them. A levy on blank tapes ? All those who were making original recordings - live music, bird songs, steam engines, video camera users, etc - were up in arms over that. Doing nothing ? Almost as bad as the current legislation seems to you.

The new Act looks stupid to you and me because it won't affect us. It isn't aimed at us and people like us. It *is* a threat, not to ordinary people but to the pirates and bootleggers.

*[If you honestly believe that merely because a law isn't specifically aimed at your particular segment of society, it won't affect you, then you're the one who hasn't thought the debate through properly. Legal history's crammed with incidents where ill-drafted legislation has been manipulated to restrict our civil liberties, and the current government is one of the worst offenders. If the current Act was re-drawn to specifically exclude home taping, I'd be prepared to take a less suspicious view. Still, at least they saw sense and scrapped the ludicrous 28-day deadline. - STEVE GREEN, J]*

NIC FAREY,  
30 Woodcote House, Queen Street,  
Hitchin, Herts., SG4 9TL.

What's this I see [*Hearsay, WAVE #7*] ? Dave Holmes in bed by midnight with a cup of hot chocolate at Confetti ? I should cocoa, matey ! Either that, or it was his twin brother getting progressively more plastered at 3am on the Sunday ; a session which, in fact, culminated in the removal of a certain intimate item of apparel from one of the more lascivious attendees. This, of course, is more like the Holmesy we all know and avoid, not at all the softy early-to-bed person one might like to cuddle up to !

PS: Storm [*Constantine*] was fab !

*[What can we say ? The words came right from the horse's, sorry, Holmes' mouth, but the man he lies...]*

BOB SHAW,  
66 Knutsford Road, Grappenhall,  
Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 2PB.

There was an item in the last *CRITICAL WAVE* I saw with which I am forced to take issue. It concerns the reporting of my having withdrawn my short story "Dark Night in Toyland from Harlan Ellison's *LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS*.

It is perfectly true that I took the story back after a delay of many years in *LDV*'s appearance, but it is totally *untrue* that Harlan spent a long time on the phone pleading with me not to quit the project. On the contrary, as soon as I told him that I needed the story to front a new collection he immediately went along with me. He did express disappointment that he would not be the first to publish the story, but he behaved in exactly the same way as he always behaved during our meetings - in a courteous, friendly, gentlemanly manner.

The remainder of our long and expensive transAtlantic conversation (and it was Harlan's dime, not mine) dealt with health problems which we have both faced recently.

*[As requested by Bob, the above letter appears verbatim. It's worth pointing out, however, that we made no mention of a telephone call, lengthy or otherwise, in issue six, merely that Harlan Ellison requested Bob to reconsider his decision to pull the story, which Bob admits. In the meantime, we'll take this opportunity to express our hope that the health of both authors improves in the near future. - STEVE GREEN, J]*



IAN WATSON,  
Bay House, Moreton Pinkney,  
Nr Daventry, Northants, NN11 6SQ.

I was delighted to see Ann [Green]'s review of *THE FIRE WORM*, since the magazine *Q* just described the same book as "the best horror novel since Iain Banks' *THE WASP FACTORY*", and the paperback edition of that contains all those wonderfully abusive notices by appalled reviewers. This gives me a great idea for the paperback of *THE FIRE WORM*, for which Ann's review would be ideal.

Vint Clarke,  
16 Wendover Way, Welling,  
Kent, DA16 2RN.

Maureen Porter's statement [*WAVE* #7] that "Vint's conviction in *PULP* that one needs to direct people on how to expend (money for fanzines)...," makes for odd reading, as in the fourth paragraph I said "...these days most fanzines are for free; a faned will be only too pleased to send a copy... If you send a friendly LoC, you'll probably get the duplicator by return of post." If Maureen's idea of criticism is to read the first three paras of an article only and ignore the rest, I give up.

*[Vint also picks up on last issue's TAFF report, and the problems caused by the administrators specifically stating the 1988 winner must attend Eastercon, rather than allowing the candidates to choose for themselves...]*

When TAFF started, it was cut and dried; most US fans attended their worldcon, so it was a logical choice for the British winner to attend, and meet there any fans that he or she might miss on a subsequent Grand Tour. And in Britain, the Eastercon was the thing. Nowadays, and especially with the Eastercon being awkwardly situated next year, I don't think it's particularly significant which con is attended; who's complaining? In any case, I reckon sheer hospitality in both countries means that at whatever date fans arrive, the chances are they'll see their friends. An interesting point, however.

HARRY BOND,  
Ransay Hall, 20 Maple Street,  
London, W1P 5BB.

I'm not best pleased with Maureen's review [*last issue*] of *BOGUS* #1. It's probably inadvisable to go on about it, since in similar circumstances I've usually seen people in my place making right prats of themselves, but... but... sod it. I shan't waste too much time over her strange attention to one joke-line in the colophon, or to her weird inability to recognise sarcasm when everyone else who's responded has spotted it without apparent difficulty. But "so many names he doesn't appear to have encountered" -- bloody hell, how many names can you drop in six pages without turning it into a mere transcription of your mailing list? Just because I don't mention, say, Tony Berry, doesn't mean I've never heard of him. And if I hear many more people using the phrase 'half-digested' in conjunction with my name, I shall stamp my little feet all over their faces. One last thing:

sorry, Maureen, but had you read *BOGUS* carefully instead of doing whatever you did with it immediately after flicking through it, you would have seen that I do actually mention Lillian [Edwards] and Christina [Lake]. Why, in her survey of the dire state of *BOGUS*, does she neglect to mention... Perhaps it spoils the theory to see me actually get something right, or whatever the term is in Folkestone these days.

(Although I'll admit that I don't mention the twins all that much, due to their reluctance to trade for *THE CAPRICIAN*; I've not seen an issue since #1, and even that was casually picked up at Lucon rather than being presented to me specifically. Perhaps, from what I've heard about Zy [Nicholson]'s bit, they want to stop me murdering him. Don't worry, Big Sisters of Harry -- I've already vented my spleen on some bark in Folkestone...)

*[Of course, if Harry had read CRITICAL WAVE properly, he would not have sent the above letter to Steve, instead of to me; because, as you should all know by now, comments on CW must be sent to me, Martin Tudor, 121, Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH. Still, not reading fanzines tends to be a congenial disease with most fans.]*

*[WAVE also heard from: Joe McNally, Jenny Glover, Alan Sullivan, D M Sherwood ("Still too many book reviews"), R I Barycz, Pam Baddeley, Ken Lake (a lengthy reply to Steve's editorial last issue, which we intend to use next time), Rob Meades, and Ahnvid Engholm, who reiterates his SEFF accusations and urges us to print a breakdown of the feud provided by Wilf James. Steve & I have, however, decided that WAVE's devoted enough space to the SEFF dispute already, and though we were willing to use Wilf's article when originally submitted in April, he subsequently withdrew the piece.]*

*[Two further letters arrived literally as this issue was going to press, both concerning the 'TAFF Crisis' story (see editorial). One was from UK TAFF co-administrator Christina Lake, who confirms that Robert Lichtman and Luke McGuff will be standing and adds: "As to the wider issues of whether the TAFF delegate should automatically be invited to the National Convention or not, I would only like to say that any TAFF administrator would hesitate to set the precedence (sic) of inviting the delegate to a different convention without first considering its possible effect on TAFF finance and people's general perception of the fund." Readers' comments on this topic would be welcomed for next issue's lettercol.]*

*[The other correspondent was Robert Lichtman himself, in reply to a letter we sent the moment we discovered our story was false. He incorporates part of an unfinished missive to us dated 2 August, in which he announces both his intention to stand and Luke McGuff's candidature; as Bob says, it's unfortunate that was never sent, as it would (just) have got to us before the loss of international post. He adds: "Well anyway, there's no hard feelings on my part, your apology is gratefully accepted and I appreciate your agreeing to run a retraction in the next issue." In turn, we appreciate Bob's calm and generous response to our blunder. - STEVE GREEN.]*

*CRITICAL WAVE* is edited & published by Steve Green & Martin Tudor; subscription rates on page 26. Interiors printed by Martin Tudor, covers by Rank Xerox at Waterloo St, B'ham.