TRASH CITY 16/17





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COUIX & AZ

This is TC16/17. All comments to: **34 Perran Road, Tulse Hill, London SW2 3DL.** Subscriptions to future whatever-we-put-out (likely candidates: another double, a best of TC, or the long-threatened Kinski special) are £1 per number in the UK, £1.50/\$3 Europe, £2.50/\$5 further afield. Text: Jim McLennan, unless credited to one of Steve C, Cat, Rob Lyn Davies, Peter J.Evans, Todd Grimson, Phoenix Hitch, Des Lewis, Rik Rawling, Jim Swallow, Andy Waller and Steve Welburn. Per replacement: Rik Rawling (cheers!). Printed by Juma in Sheffield. TC14/15's available from me: £2.50.

Welcome to the Videodrome

First rule of fanzines: "Never believe a fanzine editor". Last issue, I said: "Overall, I wouldn't get rid of the car now". And here's another quote, with respect to that double edition, "This monster is a one-off".

I lied.

Both these statements have proven to be completely untrue. I no longer have a car: it was given away to a friend at work, after I realised I was about to get hit with the triple whammy of car tax, insurance and MoT. I cut my losses, and life has continued regardless, albeit in a slightly more public-transport oriented way. Also, as you will have noticed, this is another double issue, mostly because the last one did look rather spiffing, even if I say so myself. It is also easier to do them: single issues means an almost non-stop grind, while I can take time off to recuperate between double blasts. Which explains why we are here with another slab o' stuff.

TC may also be heading for a change in direction. Readers with especially long memories may remember the days when it was a horror 'zine, back when there were actually decent horror films to cover. We've drifted since, which I feel is a strength - we can adapt, and move to whatever areas open up, rather than being stuck in a single genre like some publications.

10 reasons why 1994 was a cinematic nightmare.

- 1. Quentin Tarantino.
- 2. The Flintstones
- 3. Schindler's List
- 4. Forrest Gump
- 5. Junior
- 6. Mrs. Doubtfire
- 7. The Lion King
- 8. Four Weddings and a Funeral
- 9. When a Man Loves a Woman
- 10. In the Name of the Father

So due to a serious lack of worthwhile movies, Film Blitz has gone on holiday: in the first seven months of 1994, I went to the cinema just six times. This worst period in memory capped with 'The Flintstones', seemingly proof the public do want crap. But '95 started well (Leon, NBK, Shallow Grave), and new anime/HK labels appear with delightful frequency, though quality seems like a secondary consideration for some - or even forty-secondary! Still, others blow the socks off anything Hollywood is producing (can you name the last original American horror/SF film you saw?), thus we have an anime locum for Film Blitz, until the live-action field pulls it's socks up...

But even these fields are losing their freshness. We published our first anime review back in TC6 - Summer 1990 - and our first Hong Kong review in TC7. Both genres have now become more accepted and mainstream: thus, while we will continue to cover them as appropriate (especially when unbiased and informed anime reviews remain rare commodities), it's time to think about moving on. Where to? What will be the next target? Only time will tell: six months ago I'd have said the Internet, but when even "Loaded" has a column on the topic, we've clearly missed the boat! Though at least, now I can change my SIG, which has been plugging TC14/15 since time immemorial... Hopefully by next issue, enough time will have passed to mean we won't be accused of bandwagon-jumping when we start our 'Net coverage!

For it is an awesome creature: no censorship, governmental control, or other external restraint. Whether this freedom will last is uncertain, so get in now! Electronic mail is welcome -editor@trashcity.org for back issues and subscriptions, or jmclennan@trashcity.org with more interesting stuff. Be warned, despite the speed of transmission, snail mail may actually get a faster response. I can write replies to it in my lunch-hour while, as yet, e-mail can only be done during my leisure time, when there are a lot of alternative distractions (hello, Tomoko!).

One such is my steadily growing paranoia, fuelled by letters like this, from one TC contributor:

"Please find enclosed the remnants of your envelope that contained your last wonderful and varied package. The whole thing plopped through my door inside one of those Royal Mail "Apologies for Damage" clear plastic bags".

This might seem just like the usual PO cock-up, except...research revealed that the dubious photocopied manga arrived safely; the questionable Danish magazines arrived safely; my seditious letter arrived safely; the <u>only</u> thing missing from the envelope was ten pages relating to UFOs (Majestic 12, if you follow the field). That was conspicuous by it's absence, like the blood in an dead calf. Brief pause for the hair to rise on the back of my neck.

It is also worth noting after my anti-Customs rants in the past couple of issues, that <u>every</u> package sent to me here from outside the EEC now gets opened, regardless of what it looks like. Not that I give a damn, of course, as I'm not so stupid as to try and import illegal material. At least, not to this address, or under my own name. It's actually perversely enjoyable to see that "opened by Customs" sticker, as it means I've managed to waste some more of their time. Petty, I know, but who cares? They don't seem to bother watching many tapes, though I was amused to see "Madam City Hunter" and "Yes, Madam '92" had both caught their attention. Obviously the word "madam" has certain connotations in the tortuous mind of HMC&E.

But it has been, overall, a <u>cracking</u> nine months (even used some of my 15 mins of fame, with an appearance on "Moviewatch". Got paid, got famous, and got to plug TC - who could ask for more?). Possibly, rather too good, as far as this publication is concerned; something I started because I was bored, must now compete with many other pastimes for attention. Next issue will try and break the second rule of fanzines: "It is not possible for an editor to run a life <u>and</u> a fanzine"! For now, TC's future is assured: its frequency, on the other hand, is uncertain... But if I get the next double out by year end, as planned, '95 would see four issues - equalling the combined tally for 1992-1994 inclusive! But readers are reminded of the first rule of fanzines...

Thanks are due to the people at Anime Projects, Kiseki, Manga, Pioneer and Western Connection, for sending me tapes (even though last issue was a while ago), Trevor and Paul, the Good Mixer crew (previously known as the Psychotronik mob), John, Steve/Mike, the Cinema Store (when's 'Robocop' due out?), Steve, Nicolas, Paul, Rob, Miles, Rudy, Rick and the entire population of alt.cult-movies and alt.asian-movies for wasting most of my evenings over the past year or so! We also bid a farewell to long-time TC artist Per Porter, who would seem to have succumbed to the seditious delights of home and family! Thanks a million, Per; there can be little doubt that we wouldn't have got here without your efforts.

The major problem with travel guides is that they tend to cater for the majority. This is fine, if you want to admire great cathedrals, go round art galleries, or do the usual sort of things that tourists do. I'd rather not. My holidays usually revolve around spending heady amounts of cash on things you can't get at home, usually in the sort of urban jungle a sensible traveller would avoid. This strikes me as totally logical, but information on the best places to buy video tapes isn't something you'll find in most books. Thus, we present the first in a sporadic (depends when I go on holiday!) series:

THE TO GUIDE TO PARIS

by Jim McLennan and Andy Waller

Getting there: Boat/train, London Victoria-Newhaven-Dieppe-Paris. A five-day return is £55 and takes about ten hours. There are two advantages to this route: firstly it's the only one that runs overnight, allowing you to save money on accommodation, and secondly, you get back into Newhaven at 5 a.m, at which time there are unlikely to be enormous swarms of Customs officers roaming around.

Accommodation: Paris is better off than London in this respect; here you'd be hard pushed to find a hotel in Zone 1 for less than 30 quid per night, but in Paris, a double room can set you back about 130 Fr, about fifteen pounds. While this will not get you the Ritz, admittedly, who cares? Last time, I stayed in a hotel near the Sacre Couer, in what could either be described as (poetically) South Montmarte or (accurately) Pigalle. The staff were astonishingly laid-back; we registered and asked about payment, expecting to have to pay cash in advance. "Oh, pay when

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you leave", they said with much shrugging. This worried us so much that the next morning I <u>insisted</u> on paying - but the request for a receipt was waved off, which worried me even more. When we left, I fully expected to be met with sawn-off shotguns and asked for all our money. Sadly, at least for this article, nothing happened at all, but the area is good for finding cheap hotels, at least if you can cope with one that feels like something out of 'Taxi Driver'.

Food 'n' Drink: French cuisine is famous all over the world. However, the TC traveller will probably be more concerned with cost, having spent all his money on videos and comics. Supermarkets are good sources of junk food; rolls, a hunk of brie, some bottles of beer, and you're ready to re-enact "Dejeuner sur l'Herbe" (nekkid babe optional). We're even slowly managing to convince our Continental cousins of the immense gastronomic opportunity provided by the potato crisp - previously only available in "plain" and (of all flavours) "paprika", you now have a chance of tracking down more acceptable kinds. Of the food available on the streets, the best is an interesting delicacy called "merguez frites" - a split baguette containing a

double spiced sausage, with a cart-load of chips shovelled on top. At about £1.50, it's scarcely budget-breaking and it is entirely possible to subsist for an entire weekend on nothing else, though readers should consult their doctors first... [You can also get decent doner kebabs in the Pigalle area though, as here, quality varies!

As you might expect in France, pub hours are lengthy, and are good places to pass an evening. Just don't actually drink anything. The prices, even outside the centre, are extremely high, a fiver for half a litre is not untypical. The solution: visit the supermarket again and buy 'em by the crate. Drink these before going out of an evening, and then you'll be better equipped to imitate the French technique of lingering all evening over the same drink, instead of the British, "get them down and get them in" approach. French beer isn't generally brilliant - they seem to have devoted most of their energy to wine - but there are any number of more than acceptable imports from Belgium and Germany.

Movies: The French are keen on films. There are many tiny cinemas, which wouldn't have a chance of surviving here, living off the fact that the French will watch anything. [The reason is rather a "social" one than a "national" one, relating to the areas in which these cinemas are located. Many of the people who live in these areas are unemployed and will watch anything to pass the time! I visited one such place, three guid got me in for a double bill. The cinema was a very run-down affair, which made the Scala look like a brand-new multiplex: never mind holding your bags tightly, I kept counting my limbs, and hoping I'd get past three. But I eventually relaxed; the crowd was overall more attentive than most you'd get here, though they may have been just drunk or asleep.

While that place was unquestionably very tacky, I enjoyed the experience, so was talked into visiting a porno cinema. Real bad move. Difficult to say exactly why, maybe it was just that everyone seemed to be taking the films so seriously, and intensely. Laughter my first reaction to 95% of such movies - was not a viable option. After 30 minutes of staring fixedly ahead, not even wanting to contemplate what the noises coming from behind me were, I cut and ran, literally. It was a sobering experience, but perhaps proof that my sense of proportion is still intact.

[I still feel a great sense of guilt about insisting that Jim come to a Parisian porno cinema with me. I should have known better, having visited the same dubious establishment with friends a couple of years before, while even more drunk. Being more inebriated on that occasion, and having had the strength of safety-in-numbers had probably blinded me to the cinema's truly sordid nature. However, the cinema did seem to have gotten E IMPITOYABLE. Unforgiven. 1992 2010 tem americain en couleurs de Clint Eastwood. Gene Hackman. Morgan Fr. sleazier, so at the end of the day, I am really only partly culpable! If anybody fancies experiencing a genuinely disturbing porno cinema, it's the Atlas, located on the Place du Pigalle.]



GROCK, 1931, 1h30, Comédie suisse en o de Grock et Carl Boese avec Grock, Max van Er Adrian Wettach dit Grock, clown, musicien et bule suisse, fut l'un des pionniers de l'art nesque, celebre en Europe puis dans le monde des 1903. Ce document unique, inédit en l entierement reconstitue et restauré, fameux numero. +Le Ranelagh 98 v f

HELAS POUR MOI. 1993 1h35 Comedie tique franco-suisse en couleurs de Jean-Luc I avec Gérard Depardieu, Laurence Mastiah, E Verley, Jean-Louis Loca, François Germond Un dieu souhaite eprouver in corpore la ve desir humain, souffrance et plaisirs confon savoir par ou commence l'amour, là ou il se p comment finalement naît la creation. Je Godard s'est inspiré d'un texte du poète italie pardi ainsi que de la legende d'Alcmene et d' Irvon • Ciné Beaubourg Les Halles 11 •L'E bois 17

TE L'HOMME SUR LES QUAIS. 1992 1145 psychologique haitien en couleurs de Raoi avec Jennifer Zubar, Toto Bissainthe, Jean Martial Patrick Rameau, Mireille Metellus Haiti, pendant la dictature des Duvalier. A tra regard d'une fillette de 8 ans, confice a sa mere par ses parents qui ont du fuir le pays, l' filme avec simplicité et emotion une situati gique \(\text{Lucernaire} \) form 30

Richard Harris, Jaimz Woolvett

nichard Marris, Jaimz Woolvett
Autrefois celebre pour ses sanglants explic
tueur impitoyable s'est conventi en paisible f
père de famille. Jusqu'au jour où, confront
besoin d'argent, il reglonge. Un superbe v
anticonformiste, le dixieme de Clint Eastwood specialiste du genre +Le Grand Pavois 94 v o

French censorship laws are certainly laxer than here, with both 'Hard Target' and 'Betty Blue' rated "12". Contrary to what people like David Alton might think, I did not notice cross-bow wielding Beatrice Dalle lookalikes stalking the streets (more's the pity!). Truly vicious stuff like 'A Clockwork Orange' get a "16" cert, while only hard-core is rated "18". The major problem cinema-going in Paris is thus not censorship, but trying to work out what's on. Film titles in France may be the same as the English title, a literal translation of the English title, something that isn't really a translation, but is close enough to point you in the right direction ('Man Hunt' = 'Hard Target'), or a phrase that bears no resemblance at all to the English language title. Who'd guess that 'Murder in an English Garden' was 'The Draughtsman's Contract'?

You can check all the necessary details in one of the listing magazines. All of these are excellent: a quarter the price of 'Time Out' without the perpetually whining liberal sensibilities or 'Gay' section. If you want a specific recommendation, a court recently convicted one such guide, 'Pariscope', of using massage parlour ads as a front for prostitution. It's 80-year-old director was fined £22,000 for serving as a pimping intermediary, while the head of the "Beauty and Relaxation" section(!) and the guide's publisher were fined £5,500. I need not, I imagine, say any more.



[Generally, the sleazier cinemas in Paris should be approached with a degree of caution. But if you can handle just a mild sleaziness, then there are some real gems on offer in a couple of screens in the city: the Agora, on the Boulevard de Clichy (the main sex street in Pigalle) and Le Brady on the Boulevard de Strasbourg. This pair of cinemas, in two of Paris' most run-down areas, show two different double bills on a permanent basis every week - one from Sunday to Tuesday, the other from Wednesday to Saturday.

The Agora unfortunately doesn't advertise its programs in Pariscope, so basically you have to go there to find out what's on. Generally, this place shows a lot of 1970's/80's action movies, especially Chinese kung-fu films from the 70's, but sometimes some obscure exploitation movies too, among them 'The Virgin of Nuremburg' (a 1963 film starring Christopher Lee, directed by Antonio Margerhiti), 'Caligula - the Untold Story', 'Street Trash' and other classics.

The better of the two from my experience has been Le Brady, which tends to offer more consistent programming of cult/sleaze exploitation movies. Here I had the 'good fortune' (depending on your perspective) of catching such terrible classics as 'Zombie Creeping Flesh', 'Zombie Holocaust' and an obscure Joe D'Amato movie 'The Forbidden Loves of a Nun'. The prints are mostly uncut, though often quite worn because they come cheap to these little cinemas. Other features that have turned up here include some Godzilla (in the shape of "Son of Godzilla"), plus Paul Naschy and other European horror pics from the 70's, although much of the time they screen movies that are just plain shite. [even by our, usually tolerant, standards].



Whether a fan of gruesome movies or not, the fascinating thing is watching this kind of material on the big screen with an unsuspecting audience. It's like stepping off the street into the 70's, with an audience ignorant of the exploitation going on, absorbed in anything they are shown by the cinema proprietor, regardless of its age. It's especially fascinating watching a movie like Deodato's "Last Cannibal World" in

its complete form, from the front row of a cinema auditorium, with a real live crocodile getting chopped up and Me-Me Lay having hot rocks put into her stomach just a couple of metres in front of your nose. And not even a groan of disgust from the spectators (or even a cheer - the probable response if it had been shown at a place like the Scala!).

However, it's also worth keeping your wits about you in cinemas like these, primarily because the audiences consist of some of Paris' greatest sleazoids. I've had no real trouble at either of the above venues (though one friend [not me!] claimed to have received advances from an old bloke in the toilets, which I can believe - keep reading). But experiences at a similar venue (which has since closed down), a couple of years ago, have led me to be prepared for the worst. We hit a double bill of a 70's kung-fu film and a Chuck Norris picture, loaded with bottles of beer. What we discovered were the locals masturbating in the toilets, at the urinals. I guess it wouldn't come as a shock in a porno theatre (hell, that's the most normal behaviour at the Atlas), but it came as somewhat unexpected. Indeed, truly baffling, given the nature of the films, leading me to conclude that there is an aspect to old Chuck's popularity that most people aren't aware of].

Videos: Typically, the French stubbornly opt for their own unique video standard, SECAM contrary sods or what? - which gives a b&w picture on a British VCR. For best results, they need converted - or you can always stick to buying black-and-white movies... Price-wise, sell-through tapes are more expensive, 149 Fr. being a common price, and not much in Virgin on the Champs Elysees sells for less than 120.

However, you can do better, especially with genre stuff. There are discount stores; notably Mega-Video at 18-20 Boulevard St.Denis, which sell a number of good movies for 50 Fr, about six pounds. [Since writing, it has reduced its amount of stock a great deal. Two other shops are located at the top of the Rue Faubourg St. Denis (one has a marvellous upstairs room), but generally quite a few of the electrical shops in here or near Pigalle have a selection of cheap tapes] HK films are well represented, though beware - of three films on the Kara label, one box had the wrong film in it, and another tape was blank. But it is nice that even kung-fu films got the widescreen treatment, which is far more common in France. Laser-discs are also more plentiful than over here; Ondes (31 Rue Greuze) has the biggest selection I came across.

Speaking of coming across films, on the "dodgy" side, the same applies in France as anywhere else; if your tastes are normal, avoid sex shops like the plague. It's possible to pick up 80 minutes of heterosexual fun for 39 Fr. though this may be clips from other films, so the plot might not make much sense. I doubt anyone is bothered. Of course, if you're after, er, more specialised stuff i.e. 'Teeny Pissy' (I wish this was a misprint, believe me), you'll have to head either to Pigalle, or to the infamous Rue St.Denis. Not to be confused o with the aforementioned Rue Faubourg St. Denis, the Rue St Denis illustrates the cool. laid-back attitude the French possess; it's difficult to visualise any other city where you can stop a random stranger, ask "Ou sont les prostituees?" and receive perfect directions without so much as a raised evebrow.

If you can put up with the fact that 99% of releases are dubbed into French, vou can pick up some decent video-tapes in France. While French dubbing is actually very good as dubbing goes, if you don't understand French, hermeneutic problems might present themselves. Fortunately. there censorship of French video releases nowadays, so most films are in their complete versions. However, be prepared for quality to vary - some might be beautiful, sharp, widescreen versions, others might be grainy reduced prints. There also seems to be no legislation regarding titles and packaging. French distributors have a tendency to retitle exploitation pics in order to fool people into buying further copies of the same film. It's not unusual to find a company with the same film released at the same time under two different titles and sets of packaging, or even a release that is incorrectly titled, incorrectly illustrated, and



when you resort to the synopsis to identify the film - fails to deliver one on the dubious grounds that the story is so terrifying that it'd be irresponsible to provide a synopsis on the sleeve, for fear of distressing any shoppers. Really, it can be a hard life for the video collector in France...]

Comics: Another area where the French are well ahead of us is in the field of comics, or "bandes dessines" as they're called. Artists such as Mobius are far better known in France than their British compatriots are here and comics are read by a much wider audience. Almost any bookstore will have a decent BD section, though be warned that "bookshop" in French is, confusingly, "librairie" - attempts to borrow their books will not be viewed kindly...

Having said this, the attitude to browsing seems a great deal more relaxed, and any BD store will reveal it is seemingly okay to stand and read the books for as long as you want. And "books" they are; traditional comics, of roughly A5 size and with a floppy cover, are almost unknown; BD are generally A4, hardback and glossy, with hardback prices of perhaps a fiver per forty-page volume - if you've seen 'Asterix', you'll know the sort of publication I'm talking about. The FNAC store in Les Halles has one of the largest selections, the Virgin Megastore on the Champs Elysees is open late, and the Librairie Glenat on the Boulevard St.Germain is the best of the specialist shops, with a lot of original artwork and so on. I'll admit a knowledge of French is helpful, but it's a far more interesting way to learn the language than school ever managed. The cool points gained by having them on your shelves are considerable, as there is a lot more than Gaullish freedom fighters to the medium.

Customs: Should be no problem, especially if you've taken the advice in the first paragraph. The major advantage of France is that, unlike Holland, Customs Officers will only really be looking for people taking in alcohol for resale (an epidemic problem, especially in the South of England). Anyone travelling on foot is unlikely to be able to carry that sort of volume.

A few general points remain valid. Customs look suspiciously at single travellers, so if you are one, overcome your traditional British reserve and try and link up, even if only for the 100 yard dash off the ship. A school party is excellent - especially if you can get one of the little dears to carry your bag. Or you can go the other way, and offer to help with some aged grandmother's cases. Here is also the chance to practice your method acting. You are not a devotee of trash culture returning from a shopping spree; you are a geology student coming back from a week's climbing in the Jura Mountains. But if you do this, remember to dress the part, whatever the part is. If your rucksack is covered in patches from a selection of Britain's national parks, you've a better chance than if you attempt to stagger through in an 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' T-shirt. Pleasant shopping!

[Finally, while in Paris, also worth popping into is Movies 2000 (49 Rue de La Rouchefoucault, south from the Place de Pigalle), a store managed by Didier Allouch, contributor to the French magazine 'Mad Movies'. They stock various posters, tapes and other memorabilia. Fortunately, he speaks good English so you won't have any problem communicating what you're after. Happy Trails...]

The good, the bad & the printed

The Essential Guide to Hong Kong Movies

(Rick Baker/Toby Russell - Eastern Heroes, £11.99, pp315) - EH

Asian Trash Cinema - The Book

(Thomas Weisser, Asian Trash Cinema Publications, \$19.95, pp187) - ATC

Typical, wait ages for a book on HK films, then two come along at once. No problem: with an empty field, two books are scarcely going to saturate the market. So, getting to the conclusion first, both are unquestionably worth buying, and are indispensable sources of information.

Having said this, which is "better"? This is to some extent an unfair question for what are basically collections of reviews, but technically, they have different strengths and weaknesses. For ease of use, ATC wins out. Want a film, look it up, alphabetical order, no problem. EH is divided into separate sections such as Modern Day Action, Heroic Bloodshed or the ubiquitous Fantasy/Erotic/Horror; to find any given movie, you first have to guess which part it's in, which increases the search time.

This problem is exacerbated by the lack of an overall index, each <u>section</u> has one, but this is useful only for hunting alternate titles. I yearn for a comprehensive list cross-referencing people to films, though appreciate the effort that would involved. ATC makes some effort with a directorial index, but otherwise, they're fine only for finding films by name.

Both are reasonably comprehensive; EH wins out for kung fu movies, while ATC does well in the fantasy genre. However, neither contain 'The Magic Crystal', an excellent movie released here by VPD, or 'License to Steal', a battling-babe film whose omission in EH is doubly surprising as Rick Baker has sold it to me, both on tape and laser-disc! In the picture department, EH is the undoubted winner, with lots of great photos, and a useful section at the back which puts faces to names for a lot of the main stars. It also has more extensive credit listings than ATC, which is terse in the extreme.

The reviews themselves are obviously not comparable; it's all opinion. However, of 500+ movies in EH, only a handful rate under two stars. This over-enthusiasm is especially apparent under 'Heroic Bloodshed'. no films are less than 'ok', and the relentless superlatives - one sequence has nine straight rated 'top-notch' or better - make it seem like a sales catalogue. While I know it is written by fans, more detachment would have helped. The problem with the ATC reviews is more one of familiarity: the book is an expansion of issue 1 of 'Asian Trash Cinema', which was itself a revision of an issue of "Naked! Screaming! Terror!". Those who bought earlier versions may be justifiably peeved at paying again for the same text.

You've already got the conclusion. Neither of these two are perfect by a long way, but they're both solid pieces of work. Readers with a fondness for flowery similes may care to think of them as like two search-lights probing into the pitch-black night sky. Till dawn breaks, we need all the help we can get...

The Crime Studio (Steve Aylett, Serif, £7.99, pp156)

This drifted into TC Towers with no enclosures save a telephone number on the inside cover. Never got round to calling it: didn't see much point before, and afterwards...well, much of the book had a <u>rather too cheery psychotic edge</u> to it. I got the feeling the author had seen one too many John Woo movies, or Tom and Jerry cartoons. Mind you, the same could be said of me.

It's a slim volume - more on which later - of tales about Beerlight, a neo-apocalyptic urban jungle populated by larger-than-life characters with larger-than-life weapons (wasn't sure whether to review it, or pass it to TC's gun correspondent, Jim Swallow). There are many cracking lines, guaranteed to have you snorting into your angel dust i.e. "Aggie Swan had perfected the 'wasted angel' look to such a pitch that people shielded their eyes against the expected atomic blast of her ascension". Nice. The only complaint is that they may be too good: some stories seem written expressly to let Aylett use a really cool turn of phrase he'd just thought up. However, as none of them are of 'War & Peace' duration - or even 'W' duration - this is entirely bearable, in the same way that few TV adverts are actively worth zapping (except the American Express one with bloody Anita Roddick).

This is, above all, cool. However, should a book barely thicker than TC (and with less nice illos) cost eight quid? I know how much we pay for printing, and someone, somewhere is making a healthy profit from 'The Crime Studio'. I hope it's Mr. Aylett. So, shoplift it. Or, in the spirit of the book, drive a tank into the bookshop, massacre the entire staff, and then shoplift it.

Invasion! (Darren Jones et al, £7.00, pp208)

Shunted from the 'zine section to the books comes this quadruple issue of 'Invasion of the Sad Man Eating Mushrooms'. 15 months in the making, and with a price to match, this benefits from a lot of good writing, but is a tad let down by the presentation; some early copies rapidly converted into a loose-leaf format, though I'm informed this has now been rectified.

If you've seen the 'zine, you know what to expect, brash and cheerful, covering a wide range of exploitation material from porn to Euro-horror to the 'joys' of getting raided. This last piece was as fascinating as a road accident, though left important questions unanswered, starting as it did with the police arriving. There're also interviews with people such as David Warbeck & Stephen Laws.

It's hard to fault the writing, a generally nice, relaxed style that I enjoy. However, there were a couple of reviews, such the 'Tower of Evil' review which goes on about breasts a lot, where I'm unsure whether the writer is being post-ironic, or very sad. A downside is the physical appearance. Things like the photo reproduction would be fine for a fanzine, but when you're paying book prices, you expect something a little better. It may or may not be a problem, depending on your demands.

This thick creature represents a growing trend for fanzines to become larger but less frequent (of Shock Xpress, and this humble creature). The effort involved is known: Jones and his colleagues certainly deserve a pat on the back for this solid hunk of pleasurable reading.

It's been a very fraught couple of months for genre fans. I'm sure I need not go into precisely why, nor bother arguing against Alton's amendment to the Criminal Justice Act. [If you need any convincing, then kindly return this magazine. You won't like the rest of it] However, instead of preaching to the converted, I thought it might be nice to cover my encounters with some other "nasties" - namely, the inhabitants of the Palace of Westminster...

THE REAL HOUSE OF HORRORS

Alton's bill wasn't all that unexpected. I'd heard various rumours of 'something' in the wind after the Jamie Bulger and Susan Capper murder trials, but the first confirmed sighting of a torpedo approaching the good ship S.S. Video Tape came via 'Time Out', saying that Liberal MP David Alton had proposed legislation to create a new certificate for cinema releases, "Unsuitable for Home Viewing".

Before long, Alton and the tabloids were feeding off each other like sharks in a frenzy. The best example of gutter-speak appeared in the Daily Star at the end of January. Under the banner headline of "Snuff Out These Sick Cartoons" was a classic of exaggeration, misrepresentation and down-right inaccuracy. No prizes for guessing it was about Manga Video, who must have been delighted to read things like "many show vicious gang warfare among teenagers in a futuristic society", a description that only fits 'Akira' - unless the definitions of 'vicious gang warfare' includes supercharged schoolgirls battling for the attention of an alien princess. This climaxed in a description of them as "snuff cartoons", which I assume means real hand-painted animation characters getting killed...

All this fuss was strange, given that the horror genre is at it's lowest ebb for years - when was the last film you saw that could compare with 'Videodrome', 'Re-Animator', 'The Thing' or 'Hellraiser'? But what this article had in common with virtually all other such pieces, was quotes from David Alton, saying he was outraged/disgusted/sickened/whatever, and was going to do something about it. After reading and seeing this man spew out totally nonsense, time and time again, finally it was too much for even this apolitical animal to take. Something had to be done. And it was: I sent a letter to Mr.Alton, politely pointing out the errors in his logic and suggesting he do something to attack the real causes of crime.

In due course, a reply arrived. The words "form" and "letter" spring to mind. Any connection to my original communication was purely coincidental; I suspect exactly the same letter would have been sent to someone writing to tell Mr. Alton what a wonderful person he was for saving us from filth like "Heathers". He also enclosed an article. written for Catholic magazine 'The Tablet' - which says a lot about where Alton is coming from. Is he the nearest Britain has to someone like Pat Robertson, with this combination of politics and religion?

This mass-market reply was annoying. Had he ignored me, I would have accepted it as typical politico behaviour. Had he sent a defence of his views, I would have been impressed. But to be...**fobbed off** in such a manner was enough to get my ire well and truly riled.

DAVID ALTON MP



Member of Parliament for Liverpool Mossley Hill

HOUSE OF COMMONS

2 February 1994

Jim McLennan 34 Perran Road Tulse Hill London SW2 3DL

Dear Jim McLennan

Thank you very much for writing to me about the proliferation of videos containing violent material. For several years I have been pressing the Government to recognise the connection between the levels of violence in our country and the culture of violence which has been created by the so-called entertainments industry. Last year I tabled a House of Commons Motion calling for a Royal Commission to investigate the causes of violence in society. The Motion was supported by more than 100 MPs from all political parties but I regret that the Government failed to act upon this initiative.

Last November I went to see the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, to raise the issue with him personally and I also took the opportunity during Prime Minister's Question Time, to call for urgent action.

I have now tabled a new Motion calling for a tightening up of the law and this has been supported by a number of MPs from all parties. It would be very helpful if more Members were encouraged to sign the Motion (No 81 on the Order Paper).

I thought you would be interested to see a copy of an article which I published recently and which goes into greater detail about what needs to happen next. I am, again, grateful to you for taking the trouble to write.

Yours sincerely,

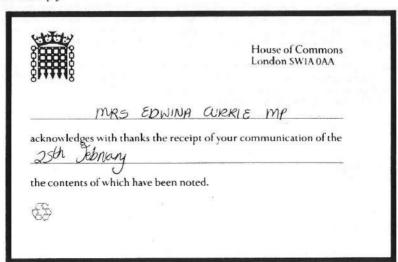
DAVID ALTON MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS TEL: 071-219 3454 - FAX: 071-219 3954 CONSTITUENCY OFFICE TEL: 051-733 2439 - FAX: 051-734 2848 Phase two. Attempt to arrange an interview with Mr. Alton - as you can see, the headed notepaper gave his telephone number (I'm sure he'd welcome more calls). At the first attempt there was no reply: this seemed innocent enough at the time but conspiracy theorists may like to note this was the **very afternoon** before Stephen Milligan was found dead in stockings and suspenders, with a plastic bag over his head and an orange in his mouth. Where was Mr. Alton? Enquiring Paranoiacs Want to Know! [There's a film in there somewhere, about a serial killer MP, except it would undoubtedly be banned as providing "inappropriate role models" - though I'd argue MP's were just as inappropriate as serial killers].

I tried again later, and eventually spoke to his personal assistant, who offered to give me some background before fixing details. I accepted. A mistake. As soon as it became apparent that I was intending neither brown-nose powder-puff nor piece of tabloid hysteria, the atmosphere grew chilly - I could hear nitrogen condensing with a crackle onto the telephone line. In short, no dice. It appeared that while Mr. Alton was readily available to give quotes to the liars who write for our tabloid newspapers, he is less willing to defend his views to anyone more critical.

However, it wasn't an entirely useless conversation. I discovered the terms they were seeking to use to define "unsuitable for home viewing". Afterwards, I skimmed through my top 20 all-time favourite films: fourteen were plausible candidates for termination. The imminent prospect of 70% of my video collection going onto the nasties list concentrated my mind somewhat.

By coincidence, parliament was debating proposals to cut the age of homosexual consent with, of all people, Edwina Currie in the forefront of the gay lobby. During the debate, she said that governments shouldn't interfere in people's private lives. This got a hearty "Hear, hear" from me; surely a woman in favour of "the sodomy of adolescent males" (© Tory Rent-A-Quote P.L.C.) would support my right to watch "Deathstalker II". Off went the letter... In due course, back came the reply:





David Alton

Unsuitable for Re-Election

estate agents, and even rating below financial advisers in my humble opinion. This had always been my opinion, though I hadn't exactly had much contact with them (or pond scum, come to think of it). My views, if anything, had not been improved, but at least now I am able to state them from a position of personal experience.

Say what you like about Mr. Alton, at least he made a vague attempt to create the impression that he gave a damn (even if the execution was utterly screwed up). As for Ms. Currie, seems that she doesn't care a toss about freedom, save the freedom to have anal sex with 16-year olds. Though given the rumours about certain of her fellow Conservative MP's, this should perhaps not be too surprising.

After this, I drifted into cynical mode. Restrictions on the films I could rent were brought into sharp perspective when I realised it's been three years since I last rented a film. So who cares? At least on a totally selfish level, life would go on, with the methods habitual of bupassing censorship merely becoming more frequently used. There were other important fish to frv. such as Guinness deciding to drop Rutger Hauer from their advertising campaign.

So I gave up my short, glorious life of political activism. I'm probably on the computers of MI5 as a result, but then, if I wasn't there already, I'd be slightly disappointed - and also rather worried about the security of this country...

Politicians are pond scum. The lowest

POSTSCRIPT

For some time I've known that this country is not a democracy. However, the Alton affair convinced me this view should be supplemented with "...and a bloody good job too". David Alton came close to punching through a law, which I suspect he only suggested as a starting point from which to bargain down. But after he deftly mugged the moral high ground, there was a stampede of MP's rushing to join him, and before you could say "lynch-mob", it was a 200-strong posse, bearing a rope with the video industry's name on it. It'd have been very interesting to see what would have happened had it come to a vote. How many normally spineless Tory MP's would actually have had sufficient balls to disobey a three-line whip?

The press coverage was generally about as grim as you'd expect. The only bright spot was an editorial in the Evening Standard, the day before the debate was due to take place. Now, the ES is not a paper noted for libertarian tendencies, so reading it was sort of like discovering your school headmistress moonlighted as a hooker. Below are reprinted both it, and 'highlights' from the Daily Mail editorial from April 13th, which represents the far more common viewpoint seen depressingly often in the press:

The new censors

AST night we were able to hear the moving performance by Sir John Gielgud in the BBC radio production of Shakespeare's King Lear, a play in which someone has his eyes brutally put out. A moment of high culture now, perhaps, but at the time of writing an occasion of popular entertainment explicit violence for all ages - virtually of a piece with the bear-baiting also on offer in Southwark. The grim Puritans banned the plays and entertainments, but the English people noticed no particular improvement in public order during the bloody, anarchic civil war that followed. Four hundred years later, there is a new spirit of censorship abroad. Crime and the fear of crime has found a new scapegoat: video films. The MP, Mr David Alton, has set out an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill proposing a new video classification, "Unsuitable for children", banning home rental of any film deemed inappropriate or harmful for children. Mr Alton is a man of exceptional integrity and profound moral seriousness - head and shoulders above much of the Commons lobby fodder.

But he is misguided on this issue, and the Home Secretary, Mr Michael Howard, is right to resist his measure. It would ban important films like Schindler's List along with everything else. 70 per cent of UK households do not actually contain children, and in any case the British Board of Film Classification, under its director, Mr James Ferman, already has one of the strictest banning policies in Western Europe.

There will always be busybody lobbying groups with no great interest in TV and cinema, and a great love of telling us all what we can and can't do. The state should not involve itself any further in censorship. Looking after children's morals is the parents' prerogative and responsibility. We do not want the state setting itself up as some overbearing — and ineffective — moral policeman.

Video victory for Parliament

OH, what a wonderful day for democracy. In the most impressive forcing bid from a backbencher in many a year, David Alton has bounced the Government into what promises to be a real crackdown on violent videos.

For once, common sense has reigned supreme at Westminster. At the last moment, politicians of all parties came together to avert a clash and conjure up a consensus.

It was one of those rare occasions when the Commons more resembles a council chamber than an adversarial cockpit and when politicans curb their partisan instincts to ensure that heartfelt public concern can lead to decisive parliamentary action.

As this newspaper urged, video merchants who rent out brutal adult videos to children will now face heavier fines and even jail.

Also, the categories governing the suitability of videos for under-age viewing are to be more rigorously defined.

Make no mistake, this will constitute perhaps the most significant reversal yet seen to the permissive trend which had its genesis back in the Swinging Sixties.

It signals nothing less than a return to responsible censorship by popular demand. The worst was the 'Daily Mirror', which trumpeted "BANNED!" on the front over a 'Child's Play 3' cover, completely ignoring the fact that there was no way it could be un-certificated. But this didn't stop them - hell, when do tabloids let facts get in the way? Their story started "Horror videos like Child's Play 3 are to be banned - thanks to the Daily Mirror". Wrong again. The Mirror also published a hit list of the films they most wanted to see pulled, thereby guaranteeing they flew off video shelves in following weeks - albeit to customers, rather than Trading Standards officers. See if you can work out what titles they listed, given their synopses for the titles in question; answers are at the bottom of the page:

- a) Homicidal doll Chucky possessed by the spirit of a mass murderer
- b) Four youths turn to violent crime to win respect in the ghetto
- () Mad professor experiments on neighbours. A husband is attacked by his wife's placenta
- d) Killer's butchery is filmed so he can watch it later
- e) Zombie heroine eats her boyfriend
- 1) Woman bitten by monkey develops a taste for raw meat
- 1) Non-stop violence that ends in a 30-minute shootout
- h) Horror genetics in tale of gore and revenge
- 1) Prostitutes lure victims to chainsaw death
- i) Savage cannibal punks

The subject of video nasties has had it's day, as far as the media is concerned, and is now as dead as all their other hyped-up out of nowhere problems: remember pit-bulls and flesh-eating bacteria? I predict that at some point soon, they're going to discover the Internet, and when they do, watch out for more banner headlines - kiddie porn and bomb-making information will undoubtedly be mentioned.

So what's been the actual effect of the new legislation? The refusal of video certificates is well documented, but so far, the titles affected have almost all been urban thrillers like 'Reservoir Dogs' or 'Menace II Society'; movies with more fantastic elements seem to have been scarcely touched. What it has done, of course, is to hand the video pirates a gift: I'm willing to bet there are more copies of 'Reservoir Dogs' in circulation, than you could shake a Harvey Keitel at.

It has also been interesting to note the fragmentation of protest against Alton's amendment and the other proposals put forward in the Criminal Justice Bill. The rave crowd have been opposed to a measure that would stop them dancing all night in fields (personally, I feel they should thank Michael Howard), but were not present when my rights were threatened. This "someone else's problem" reaction is understandable in some ways, but is also worrying. Divide and conquer' seems to be the order of the day, with our freedoms being carved away in such thin slices that there are never sufficient people opposed to any one restriction.

"...and when they came for me, there was no-one left to speak out..."

a) Child's Play 3 b) Juice c) Body Melt d) Henry - Portrait of a Serial Killer e) Return of the Living Dead 3 f) Braindead g) Hard Boiled h) Death Warmed Up i) Hollywood Hookers j) The Hills Have Eyes

American Animation Round 1:

The Danes Call It Quality:

The Rise & Fall of "The Ren and Stimpy Show" by Jim Swallow

Cartoon; to me, the word has always conjured images of Tom and Jerry, Bugs Bunny, the raucous crazy slapstick created by Fred Quimby, Chuck Jones and Tex Avery. In today's TV paradise, you'll find that proud tradition is almost non-existent, replaced with Disney-fed moral pap or cheap, heinous and vacuous dross... There are a few challengers, but sadly one of the greatest has been absorbed by the very forces it meant to gross out: The Ren and Stimpy Show.

This toon of toons sprang from the mind of Spurnco Animation creator John Kricfalusi, as a fragment of another show pitched to the MTV-owned Nickelodeon children's TV network. Originally, Ren Hoek, the Asthma-hound Chihuahua with the Peter Lorre voice and Stimpy, the kitty-litter-eating doofus cat were just wallpaper characters in a series concept called "Your Gang". When they were spotted on the proposal by executive producer Vanessa Coffey, the germ of the idea began (the proposal to Nick also contained the seed for 'Jimmy the Hapless Boy', Spurnco's current project). From these humble beginnings came the shambling beast that became The Ren and Stimpy Show, dogged by machinations behind the scenes and outrageous tales of censorship, overspending and other backstage tomfoolery.

The show's basic tenet was a simple one; a mis-matched 'odd couple', one pseudointellectual and borderline psychotic, the other grotesquely stupid and flatulent, but both best pals. In each story we would find dog and cat engaged in adventures of varying idiocy; out of this simple framework, Kricfalusi and his writers at Spumco spun cartoons the like of which had never been seen on Saturday morning kidvid. John K himself was a fan of the older toons from before the made-for-TV generation, especially the work of the legendary Bob Clampett. He took the classic weirdo slapstick and blended in a 90's edge of such utter surrealism that at times it's scary. While the kids would enjoy the blatant pie-fights and fart gags, adults tuning in would find themselves confronted with violent weirdness and disturbed humour. Whatever the execs at Nick thought, 'Ren and Stimpy' wasn't just for children.

What it was, was crazed, dynamic and utterly hilarious in the most insane fashion. The show shot to instant cult status, even getting it a guest appearance for the leads on Fox's "The Simpsons". Head-twisting oddness abounds throughout the series, whether you're talking about the Shaven Yak and his Enchanted Canoe, the ear-mangling 'Happy Happy Joy Joy' song, or the Bloody Head Fairy.

In terms of story content, at its weakest, Ren and Stimpy veers close to the more outrageous episodes of Tiny Toons, but more often than not it goes off the deep end of utter psychosis - witness Ren's bathtime monologue in 'Space Madness'. If you like your comedy twisted and your cartoons bizarre, you've found it here.

But these story elements helped cause the eventual 'death' of the true Ren and Stimpy. Creator Kricfalusi argued with the Nickelodeon suits about the plot content, reportedly yelling and bugging his eyes to make points, answering requests to drop the most lavatorial moments by demanding even more in their place. The aforementioned executive producer Vanessa Coffey was quoted as saying that she did not want Nick to become known as "the network of boogers and farts", and after skyrocketing budget problems and missed program slots, John K and Spumco parted ways with Nickelodeon, leaving voice actor Billy West (who provided Stimpy's dulcet tones) to step in and speak for Ren, as Kricfalusi had done since the show began. It's still airing on Nick both here and in the US, and surprisingly (or perhaps not), the Spumco-created are the faves. John K may be gone but the Network of Boogers and Farts lives on...

Ouch!

Thai teacher shoots pupil dead at race start

Bangkok - A Thai teacher used a real pistol to start a primary school sports event and accidentally shot dead a six-year-old boy on the running track and seriously wounded a girl, police said on Tuesday. Seven pupils, all aged six, raced from the blocks for their sprint on Monday started by their teacher who fired a pistol into the air instead of a starting gun. But it was a false start and the teacher waved them back to the line. It was then that his pistol went off accidentally and the boy fell dead, shot in the head. The same bullet hit a girl next to him, seriously wounding her. The teacher fled.

Man uses electric saw to... Well, you read it

Tampa, Florida - A Florida man said he cut off his penis with an electric saw this week because he always wanted to be a woman. Doctors at Tampa general hospital were unable to attach the organ, a hospital spokeswoman said. Bill Sconyers, 23, of Arcadia, Florida, performed the crude surgery on himself, later saying to reporters: "I always wanted to be a woman." Because of the flood of phone calls, doctors ordered his hospital phone be turned off, so Sconyers was not available to elaborate. Doctors say he is in fair condition.

Three encounters of the close kind ...

Barcelona, Spain - A driver and passenger escaped alive after their truck collided with a car, fell onto a railway track and was crushed by a train. The truck driver sustained minor injuries, his passenger and the car driver suffered broken bones. Rescue workers took four hours to free the truck, which was pinned between the train and the railway embankment. The accident happened near Arenys de Mar, north of Barcelona.



Fried Chicken by Todd Grimson. I don't know if, in the back of my mind (yeah, I figure my mind is a place), I was planning on doing it this way all along. People have a way of doing things, little things maybe, that show how they really feel about you, underneath all the smiles. "And Jim here, Jim would like a drumstick, isn't that right?" said Carl, and I didn't like it one bit. I didn't want no drumstick. That's for kids. I wanted a breast, or a thigh.

Carl was smiling, yeah I saw that smile, his wet lips pulled back so I could see his big sharp yellow teeth, teeth that, if thought he could get away with it, would gnaw me down to naked bone. He and old Bob were pretty brave now, in the kitchen, drinking bourbon while Carl's wife fried up something to eat. It was a different story, I'm telling you, back at the bank. Now I could see them looking at each other, secret, like maybe they'd already come up with a way to cheat on the count.

Numbers, you see, man, have a kind of life of their own. And when you get into Division, it's like, well... Divided by three, divided by four...that's a whole lot different than divided by one. There's a lot of sense in divided by one. That's what I was thinking, and maybe I'd been thinking it all along. If I didn't trust them, they could probably see it, and then they didn't trust me, and that's no good, you can't leave things like that, drive everybody nuts.

Carl's wife, Suzanne, stayed over by the stove, she didn't want to look at me, I could tell. It was hot, and there were a couple of flies in, past the hole in the screendoor, and I was sweating, smelling the strong, dirty smell of all that chicken grease, and I was afraid if I got greasy fingers I'd never get anything done. I took a bite of potato salad, and said, "This is some fine potato salad, Suzanne."

Carl and Bob both laughed, and it was that laughing — I don't know what was so funny — made it real easy to pull out my second gun, a .32, out from my armpit under the leather jacket they'd said something about me wearing in the heat.

"Hey, kid..." began Carl, he was always talking, always had an expert opinion on everything — then right after I shot him in the face Suzanne swung the skillet of hot grease so I shot her and then Bob, who'd caught himself most of the chicken fat and was making some kind of noise, I shot him dead. Twice in the heart. Shit, I could always shoot.

I was all jacked up then, and Suzanne didn't seem too bad, she had an old butcher knife and just about nailed me, she tried to stick it in me and just nicked me through the leather jacket as I put the last few bullets into her and jumped away, I was trying to keep from stepping in a lot of blood. I never had anything against Suzanne, she made a sandwich for me once when I came over and on one else was home, but what was I supposed to do? She knew there was nothing left to talk over, no way I could leave her be.

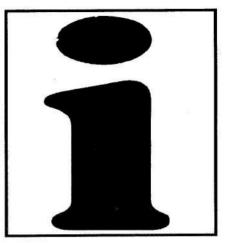
I got what I needed then, some weaponry, the money, and some other stuff, like hitting the medicine cabinet just in case, and I walked out of that house chewing on a piece of chicken — a breast, in case you're interested — that so far as I was concerned needed some salt. I wasn't about to go back inside after a salt-shaker, though, you can bet. It still tasted pretty good.

Divided by one. The one and only. That's me.

'For your information'

Tokyo panties thief gives himself up

Tokyo - A Japanese motorcyclist who terrorised the streets of Tokyo by stealing women's panties at knifepoint has given himself up. Ken Tanaka, 23, told police he had robbed five or six young women of their panties this year. He gave himself up because he thought he would be caught after newspapers publicised the assaults. in each known case the attacker was riding a motorbike, and left after the victim gave up her panties. No one was hurt. "I've been interested in women's underwear since my early teens," said Tanaka, a truck driver. "I did it because I want to see inside their skirts."



Police pinch pair in pastry pelting

Bickleford, Maine - Police arrested two men for assault and are seeking a third after the pair admitted to pelting a pedestrian with pastry from a passing car. Laurie Remillard told police she was strafed and hit in the face while walking by a salvo of doughnut holes sprayed from a passing car. She got the car's plate number when it returned for a second pass. Police said the two suspects, 19 and 20, admitted they normally throw doughnuts at street signs and did not know why they turned on a human target. Police were not sure if the pastry was fresh or stale.

'I now pronounce you man and...'

Beijing - A Chinese man spent 20,000 yuan (£1,500) for a lavish wedding, including music, a ring and a pink dress for his bride — but the ceremony was held in a morgue and she was in a coffin. The Economic Evening News reported how relatives forced 25-year-old Ge to marry the corpse of his former girlfriend. Ge had won the chance to emigrate and broke off their relationship, causing 22-year-old Yu to commit suicide. Her enraged family demanded a proper marriage with photographs, music and cars bringing family members. The pair came from Harbin, capital of Northern Heilongjiang province.

Kidnapped girl's nanny finds love

Cotabato, Philippines - Kidnappers freed a seven-year old Filipino-Chinese girl in a remote town in the southern Philippines, but the girl's nanny has chosen to remain with the kidnap gang as she has fallen in love with one of its members, police said. Emproso and the nanny, Dolly Tumbaga, were seized at gunpoint on February 24 by six men. Tumbaga's choice to remain with the kidnap gang was because she fell in love and will marry one of the kidnappers, police said. Michelle Emproso, daughter of a businessman who owns a shoe department store, was unharmed except for mosquito bites.

Js it live, or is it role-playing?

Let's talk about live role-playing. Oi! Come back here! Live role-players aren't all bad - ok, maybe just a little bit - and it's not all about running through muddy fields, latex sword in hand.

Perhaps I'd better start off by making a few (yawn!) explanations. Role-playing games are about taking the part of a fictional character and following it's story through a variety of situations. Live role-playing (LRP) games up the ante somewhat. In a live role-playing game you physically represent your character: everything you say and do becomes his/her actions. Instead of having someone describe what you can see, everything is there for interaction.

You may be thinking that LRP is little different from table-top games, except that much more effort has to go into making these things for the players to interact with. So why bother? After all, it's much easier to sit down, talk, and eat crisps, than to travel to an isolated site (it will be isolated - let's face it, any neighbours are unlikely to be very impressed), don appropriate clothing, and quite possibly get all sweaty and icky. Well, for one thing, there's the atmosphere. When a live game works well, you start to suspend disbelief and can get scared, happy, sad, whatever. You find yourself shouting and screaming over nothing at all, and only later notice just how high an adrenalin rush you were on. That feels good. Add to the fun and excitement, a post session party and you have an event which is really well worth looking forward to.

"But", you cry, "I don't want to dress up as Elbert the Doomer, slayer of thousands with his sardonic sword Fido". And just how do you get into a fight without hurting someone? No-one wants to go home from a game via the local infirmary, but surely action is an important part of any situation life-threatening enough to give that adrenalin rush? First off, don't be suckered into thinking all LRP games are high fantasy. Murder mystery parties are a form of live role-playing, and almost any genre can be plundered to form the foundations of an entertaining game. I've never seen anyone badly injured in LRP combat, because organisers and players take adequate safety precautions. It's also important to note that many modern games are not combat orientated - Gothic horror games, for example, can scare the socks off you without a single violent act. Here are two examples which will hopefully give you a much better idea of the kind of story that can be easily played out in an LRP session.

The story so far: it's a winter evening, the players are a group of apparently unconnected individuals from all walks of life, lured to a remote country pub by a series of mysterious letters, and from there to an old house. The host has disappeared. Strange figures have been seen wandering about. There's no power, and only a few small torches and candles provide illumination. The visitations increase, player characters start to suffer from a serious of injuries and breakdowns, and it becomes apparent that some of the worst things that have happened in their lives have been carefully planned by someone. Old notes are found which suggest that all the characters are descended from a single individual who hundreds of years ago was a witch hunter. That's when the vampires turn up, and it becomes obvious that no-one's coming out alive unless a way is found to deal with a vengeful witch who's now a vampire...

This was the basis for a fairly successful gothic horror scenario. No rubbery swords and the monsters were a couple of people in stage make up. It worked because it represented ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. Of course it's not easy for such an adventure to be a success. It relies upon the 'acting' abilities of the players rather than any physical proficiencies.

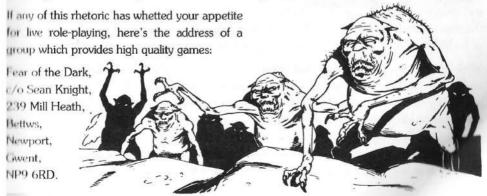
But if you want a bit more action than a cerebral horror adventure can, try this. The setting is modern day Iraq, a little while after the Gulf War. Weapons inspectors have heard of a laboratory in the far north of the country that is performing hideous experiments on live subjects drawn from the local Kurdish populace. It is decided that a highly illegal team of experts (the player characters), will parachute in to deal with the place, since it's proving impossible to get an official inspection team there. Just before the player characters are due to leave, a radio monitoring station in Turkey picks up reports of some kind of battle going on at the lab. Then the transmissions go dead and the PC's are sent in anyway. The plot from here on in, has little to do with mad scientists. Meet a live role-playing version of Predator, an alien has come to the hills, pursued by it's nemesis, and has gotten involved with the experiments. The player characters are slowly picked off, either by the monster, it's swarm of underlings, or each other, as subplots take effect, involving various covert organizations attempting to get hold of the lab's original research and the alien's secret. Gun play, quotes from Aliens and a fair bit of player intrigue were the secret to this scenario's success.

These represent different ends of the LRPG spectrum. The first relies on weirdness, slow realization and an escalating sense of hopelessness to enthrall and terrify the players. In the second, the referees followed the law of film-making according to James Cameron. It was full of chases, very sharp shocks and a count-down to destruction.

Other options are available. As many, in fact, as you can think of genres to base a story upon. It helps if all the players understand the ground-rules of the genre. Don't do a game based on an obscure series of novels if none of your players have ever read any of them. Instead you're better off being more mainstream and cinematic. Base games on classic TV shows or hit movies. In fact a fair description of participating in an LRP game is that it's the nearest thing you can get to being in a movie. Go on, play James Dean!

Rob Lyn Davies

Il apologise for the "fantasy" illustration below. Desperation set in with regard to pics! - Ed]



The Early Life of Rutger Hauer



Rutger Hauer's reputation stands mostly on his work done since "Blade Runner", when his portrayal of replicant Roy Batty brought him to international attention. After that, he appeared in some of the most entertaining films of the 1980's, such as "The Hitcher" and "Wanted: Dead or Alive", as well as the unparalleled Guinness adverts which he helped to create. But before "Blade Runner", he'd already been starring in European films for ten years, mostly in his native Netherlands. Some of this early work is quite famous: "Soldier of Orange" gained significant rep, to the extent of winning the Oscar for Best Foreign Film that year. However, others are not so well known, so let's go back in time....

"Keetje Tippel" (Kathy's Passion, aka 'Hot Sweat') (Paul Verhoeven) - 1975

First stumbled across as 'Hot Sweat', it was difficult to believe that this truly was it's original title, as the rest of the packaging bears little resemblance to the movie, with neither Hauer nor Monique Van De Ven bearing much resemblance to their cover pictures, and a blurb which makes it seem slightly more sleazy than 'I Spit On Your Grave'. And it was indeed a gratuitous retitling, but it's still of interest, if only for the number of people involved who are also known for other things: apart from Hauer, and director Verhoeven, the cinematographer was Jan de Bont, who went on to shoot 'Die Hard' and, of course, direct 'Speed'.

Despite these credentials, what we have here is less action film than earnest little social drama, set in Holland about the turn of the century. A family move to the town from the countryside, hoping to find a better living there. Needless to say, they don't - it'd be a dull movie if they did - and daughter Kathy (Van de Ven) slides into a downward spiral, ending in prostitution. Luckily, this doesn't last long: her second client is Rembrandt, who decides to use her as a model. One of his friends (Hauer - at last!) takes a fancy to her, and it all eventually ends happily.

While allegedly biographical - the author was nominated for a Nobel prize, according to a final caption - it doesn't really ring true. Seems a tad too sanitized: take the nudity away and this could be a Sunday evening BBC serial. However, the performances are solid, Van de Ven doing a nice job in the sparky-heroine-who-won't-give-up role, and the period atmosphere is also successfully evoked. Hauer's role is small; his major activity is punching the stomach of a man who recognises his girlfriend from her early, ahem, career. Maybe it's just me, but Verhoeven seems to have enjoyed this single moment of literally visceral violence... C-

Dandelions (Adrian Hoven) - 1974

For the first hour, this is an intriguing beast. Hauer is a screwed-up ex-sailor, obsessed by a poster of a girl blowing on a dandelion, whom he feels represents the ideal woman. His attitude to the female race has been severely warped, since his wife became a junkie whore while he was away at sea. As a result, he now spends his time being generally unpleasant to any female who crosses his path - and many do, attracted by his handsome looks. He finally gets to meet the model for the poster, after a spurned woman hires her to "teach him a lesson" by spurning him in return, only for the duo really to fall in love. Which, sadly, is where the film falls apart.

This combination of hunk and misogynist is an ideal role for Rutger Hauer and he cheerfully gets his teeth into it. It's easy to see why women fall for him and, after his history is explained, why he's being so nasty. So when he meets the model, we are all set up for a solid and vicious conclusion. But we don't get it. The pair's relationship is portrayed with perfect regard for every 70's cliché you can imagine - slow-motion, crap music, flared trousers, the works. While perhaps understandable given the date, this doesn't make it any less naff. And the ending is one of the worst I've ever seen: it contrives to tie up the loose ends in perhaps 120 seconds, without managing to be satisfactory in any way. Maybe they ran out of time, energy, money or ideas; the end result is certainly nowhere near as good as it ought to have been, especially after the barn-storming opening. D-

Das Amulett des Todes (aka Cold Blood) (Ralf Gregan and Gunter Vaessan) - 1974

You know you're watching a low-budget film when one opening credit is 'Music and Special Effects By'. This is 100% accurate here, though for 90% of the movie, the result isn't too bad. Pilot Hauer, occasionally works for a mysterious (intelligence?) organization, but wants out. They don't want him to go: however, after he steals a case of money he should be delivering and does a runner, the chase is on. He's aided by a woman whose life he stumbles into and hunted by his employers who want the cash back.



This feels quite a bit like 'Wedlock', a more recent film of Hauer's which is also about a guy on the run with a woman, looking for loot that he's hidden. The chief ploy in 'Cold Blood', however, is to keep information hidden - it starts with the heroine knowing nothing, and we only find out about Hauer and his past, as she slowly does. The film escalates nicely, until heroes and villains are in and around a ruined castle where the money is stashed. Then someone starts killing characters off with a telescopic rifle? Who is it? Sadly, once more, the answer is a lot less interesting than the questions, though what happens to the money is a nicely cynical touch. Chalk up another 'coulda been a contender' film. [Oddly, once again there is an eventually-famous cinematographer: Michael Ballhaus, who's since done "Goodfellas" and Hram Stoker's Dracula".] D

Turkish Delight (Paul Verhoeven) - 1973

Deja vu. Going by the cast and crew list on this one, you could be forgiven for thinking you've seen - or at least read about - this before. Hauer, Van de Ven, Verhoeven and De Bont all make a reappearance, together with frequent Verhoeven scriptwriter, Gerard Soeteman. Hauer's character, the appropriately named Eric Bonk, also seems straight out of 'Dandelions', a serial woman-hater for whom a one-night stand is a long-term relationship. In this case, however, rather than a quest for perfection, it's down to events in his past, flashbacks to which occupy the majority of the movie.



As previously mentioned, this kind of role suits Hauer down to the ground, and Verhoeven seems better able to handle the emotional ensuing intensity than Adrian Hoven manages. It's irregularly amusing, with Hauer's wild character causing chaos in a variety of forms (for example, one of which involves a statue, a dress that won't stay up, and the queen of the Netherlands!), and all supporting roles are solidly presented. At first, the new love he's found seems ideal for him, but the flashback structure means we know it's doomed to failure - the only questions are how and when. It manages to avoid too much of the classic 70's style, so unerringly hit by 'Dandelions', and is worth a look; it's now out on sell through, unashamedly trading on both star and director's subsequent careers! C+

These four films do not represent the sum total of Hauer's pre-Hollywood career. "Spetters", another Verhoeven movie, has been previously reviewed in TC, and he played Blane Van Neukirk in "The Wilby Conspiracy", made in 1975. There's also "Max Havelaar' - or to give it's full Dutch title, "Max Havelaar of de Koffieveilingen der Nederlandse Handelsmaatschappij". I've never seen my spell-checker so totally perplexed: wonder if they made the posters especially broad so they could fit the name on. If there's a conclusion to be drawn, it's that you can see Hauer experimenting with his various personas. You can detect flashes of Roy Batty, John Ryder, Nick Randall and Stone in these early roles. Of course, as films like "Legend of the Holy Drinker" show, Hauer is not restricted to genre parts, but it is probably these that guarantee his status as one of the leading cult actors of our time.





City pours cold water on nude shower

Los Angeles - A night-club must close its main attraction, a shower enclosure where nude dancers cavort for male customers, because the enclosure lacks wheelchair access. Los Angeles officials said the club discriminates against wheelchair-bound people because of lack of access to the shower, denying them an equal opportunity to work as nude dancers. Ron Shigeta, head of the disabled access division of the city's department of building and safety, said the law is the law, no matter how ridiculous it might seem to some people. "They built something that the physically disabled cannot use. The law doesn't allow you to discriminate..." he said.

Pensioner given 18,000 years to pay tax bill

Massa Carrara, Italy - Italian pensioner Aldo Trusendi got the bad news and the good news about his tax bill all in one envelope. The bad news? He owes the state some 46 trillion lire (£25 million) in back taxes and fines. The good news? He will have nearly 18,000 years to pay it. Trusendi, 63, was told the money would be deducted from his pension at 281,000 lire (£110) a month, the Italian news agency AGI reported. Trusendi was quoted as telling the agency it was all some kind of mistake that would be cleared up sooner or later.

Candid cameras challenge coin crooks

London - British telephone booths are being fitted with hidden cameras the size of a fingertip to catch thieves breaking into their cash boxes, a newspaper said. The cameras begin filming when their high-tech sensors detect any tampering with the coin box and relay pictures to a control room, The Times said. British Telecom aims to fit up to 500 of the gadgets in booths across Hampshire by the end of the year, it added. "There is no question of taking pictures or listening to people just using the phone normally," a BT spokesman said.

World Cup fever outrages purists in Iran

Tehran - Iran is gripped by World Cup fever. Up to half the population reportedly watch the games which are broadcast live -- or almost live -- for the first time since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Purists concerned about revolutionary Islamic values are outraged about the coverage and about the partial lifting of a ban on women going to soccer stadiums announced this week. State television has been showing every game of the World Cup live -- except for a delay of a few seconds to allow editors to cut out crowd scenes showing women fans in clothes deemed inappropriate. The gap is filled by doctored crowd shots from previous games.

Conspiracy Corner: Satan in Your Stereo

We recently moved offices, a process fraught with difficulty and enormous logistical problems such as finding a decent sandwich shop, convenient Post Office and cheap stationer. While engaged in these, I came across a CLC bookshop. Now, I had no idea what CLC stood for, so innocently entered, freely and of my own will. Within seconds, I'd realised my error - I still had no idea what the last letter meant, but I realised the first two stood for 'Christian Literature'.

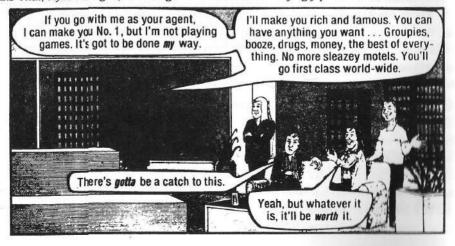
Resisting the urge to projectile vomit, I explored. Beyond wall-to-wall Bibles in every format possible, I found a crock of wonders collected under 'New Christianity'. That's "new" as in "new man" and "new Coca Cola", i.e. 'irreparably screwed up'. I heartily recommend any reader needing a good laugh to locate their nearest CLC bookshop and lay out a little money - a very little money, in fact, as their subsidised nature means you get a lot of paranoia for your pennies.

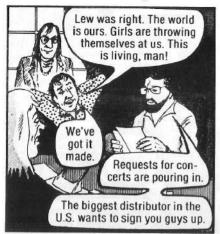
We've covered some New Christian beliefs previously, but just as you won't find wild porn in W.H.Smith's, it seems that the best, juiciest, hard-core religious rants only appear in "specialist" shops. I have quite enough material for an entire series of articles. You have been warned...

"Dancing With Demons - The Music's Real Master"
Jeff Godwin, Chick Publications, 7.95, pp.352.

"Unrepentant agnostic, convicted drug smuggler, pro-homo dopehead and powerful prophet of a generation's immorality". Which pop star does Mr. Godwin describe in these glowing terms? Madonna? Prince? Ozzy Osbourne? No. Difficult though it may be to believe, it's actually that well-known Satanist...Paul McCartney.

Yes, the man who wrote perhaps the anthem to Beelzebub, 'Mull of Kintyre'. For according to Jeff, it's not that some rock music is satanic, or can unduly influence young people. "The vast majority of today's popular music is pure praise and worship directed towards the Greek god Pan, and his ultimate master - Satan". Consider the implications: Betty Boo, Take That, Kylie Minogue, all in league with the devil. Worryingly plausible.





Indeed, he even quotes Bananarama - "I'm your Venus, I'm your fire, your desire" - and follows up with the solemn assertion, which I quote directly and unaltered, that "in the occult, Venus, the "bright morning star", is another name for Lucifer. This nightmarish picture of burning souls trapped in a world aflame is blaring from millions of stereos all across America. Each one is an altar to Satan, dripping with the doctrines of devils".

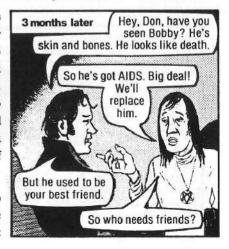
Apparently, rock music is "rooted in the Druid demon worship of Celtic England and baptised in voodoo ceremonies of Africa and

the Caribbean". Most of the rest of the book is taken up with supporting the point by extracts from songs and quotations from interviews which "prove" that Satan is behind these people. This is not difficult with people like Dee Snyder of Twisted Sister, but where the book gets more amusing is when he sinks his teeth into people like McCartney, or Tina Turner. She gets pilloried for, among many other sins, her choice of jewellery in "Mad Max 3". "To those in the occult, wearing an ankh shows that you have given up your virginity and take part in sexual orgies". Ah.

Vitriol is also heaped on Daryl Hall (homosexuality and satanism), Stevie Nicks (witchcraft) and Madonna (three guesses. Her section sounds like it was written by Anthony Perkins on the set of 'Crimes of Passion': "smeared, brazen picture of a street-wise harlot", etc, etc). Then he turns his attention to rap, and we get the following very interesting paragraph, with regard to the cover of LL Cool J's "Radio" LP, and Cool J's hands in particular:

"They are in very odd positions. He is "signing", or calling up demons. Superstar Prince also uses signing on his 1986 "Parade" album cover. Most of today's rock videos are full of these manual incantations. I once sat through six hours of non-stop MTV. At least half the videos I watched contained witchcraft signing! This is not rock dancing, it's the literal calling up of demons".

After a chapter on the film "Trick or Treat" - 99.9% more than it deserves, or is going to get here - he talks about two **"especially rotten"** groups. Bet you can't wait to find out who...

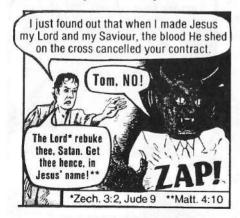


He means Whitesnake and Heart. Bit of a disappointment, despite claims that "there is more about David Coverdale & Whitesnake...but it can not be printed". But happily, Tawny Kitaen is mentioned, as Coverdale's wife: "What a 'coincidence' that Kitaen has also appeared in an occult film called 'Witchboard' about demonic manifestations called up through a ouija board. Her sex-soaked 'acting' has lust-witch written all over it". Well, I wouldn't have said she was that good. I can only presume Jeff hasn't seen "Gwendoline", or Tawny would be burning at the stake...



Next in the firing line is the New Age movement. Now, I'll admit they have their faults - I have some sympathy with another Christian book that claimed vegetarianism was the work of the Devil - but comparing them to Nero, Karl Marx and Hitler is, well, giving them more credit than they deserve. John Lennon gets a lot of flak in this chapter (what <u>has</u> this guy got against The Beatles?), as does Live Aid, though the impact is deflected somewhat by a reference **to "David St. Hubbins of the Heavy Metal group Spinal Tap"**, with no detectable irony whatsoever.

Then there's a surprising section in which he attacks even the Christian Rock acts, such as Stryper, for hypocrisy, pride, timidity(?), and barely stops short of accusing them of sacrificing virgins. Only barely; he makes the relatively valid point that the title of Stryper's LP, "To Hell With the Devil" can mean opposite things, depending on whether you stress "Hell" or "With". I do agree that people should be dissuaded from listening to these groups, albeit for the simple reason that they are uniformly naff.



The final commentaries are the most worrying, as it's there that he describes what he considers to be "truly" Christian music. Know what it sounds like? Melody FM.

"You can reject it if you choose, but when you stand before the Lord on Judgement Day, don't say you weren't warned".

Thanks for the tip, Jeff, but on the whole, I think I'll take my chances that God is a Ministry fan. Now, where did I put that 'Jesus Built My Hotrod' CD...

"Trash City" religious icon pin-up #1



RELIGIOUS MYSTIC PRAYS TO STOP COSMIC COLLISION BETWEEN COMET AND JUPITER 16-23rd JULY 1994

SOFIA Richmond ,whose religious name is SISTER Marie. Gabriel says she is paying to God to stop the cosmic collision because it could be dangerous for mankind. MEDIA PHONE LINE 981-450 2748 FAX 981-268 2774.

She HOPES THE COMET MAY APPEAR VISIBLE BY 21st JULY. IF her forecasts do NOT come true she will admit her mistake. The cosmic collision will NOT BE THE END of the world. Rather the opposite, it could be the beginning of a new era in human history. There could be some cosmic surprises as well. Mankind could be standing on the threshold of a most dramatic change in human history awaiting Divine Intervention. What will happen when the IF the comet hits Jupiter next week ? There are 2 possibilities facing mankind. Firstly there is the one advocated by scientists who say that it could be a non event, as far as the public are concerned. because people will not see anything. Then there is the other scenario predicted by a Religious Mystic; Sofia Richmond known also as Sister Marie, claims she received prophetic messages saying the collision will be a COSMIC DAY OF JUDGEMENT ordained by GOD to warn all nations that they must reduce the crime epidemic; return to the 10 commandments or face cosmic global penalties. The frightening collision between comet and jupiter is a warning from God showing nations what could happen to them; unless they quickly reduce the crime rate; destroy all pornography; bann all indecency;crime. & violence from Television; Films; Videos etc; destroy all video nastles; bann all indecent shows; songs dances fashiuons to reduce offences against women & children. ;keep the Sabbath day holy & sacred. Stop all wars, Stop all fighting; Ban cruel blood sports; Stop huinting wheling traffic in live snimals etc. stop bull flighting; Close down cruel zoos; circuses animal laboratories etc. Share food mountains with hungry nations. Teach moral ethical religious education daily in all schools. People must give up crime dishonesty drugs. Become pure honest angelic SAINTS. THE GREAT COSMIC FLASH from the Comet & Jupiter explosion may be visible on earth, it may cause panic. Shock waves could stop all traffic; motors; engines; planes, etc it would be better NOT to book flights from I S to 23 July 1994, better not to travel. Stay at home. PRAY Beg GOD FOR MERCY to stop the collision. SUPERNATURAL EVENTS could occur during or after the Cosmic Day of Judgement when all people will see their consciences judged by God

Sofia (Polish Surname Paprocki) appeals today to the GERMAN GOVERNMENT to quickly pay the Compensation money it owes her for NAZI WAR CRIME DAMAGES 1944 so that she can immediately use the money tomorrow morning to print an urgent list of PUBLIC SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN NEWSPAPERS ALL OVER BRITAIN EUROPE USA AMERICA & WORLDWIDE AT TOP SPEED. So that people can be prepared for any severe effects from the coamic explosion next week, if GERMANY falls to pay the Millions it owes for destroying the family estates in Poland 1944 it will be impossible to print the urgent messages. & SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WORLDWIDE IN THE NEXT 3 DAYS, If lives are endangered as a result, then the German Government could be responsible because it refused to pay the compensation money to Sofia. That money could now enable her to print the urgent wentings which COULD HELP TO SAVE MANY PEOPLE. Sr Marie wrote a prophetic book in August 92 about the comet & Jupiter explosion, She asked WH SMITHS to pay her capy copyright roystities due to her from the nationwide a sales of her own book. But whishirts wiserstones search as refuse to pay her capy copyright roystities from the sale of her work the money could have helped to pay for printing the Public Safety precautions all over UK EUROPEUS ETC. In SAVE MANY ECOPLE. Obviously in the forecasts are will, admit the militaks She has sent Registres that their specification to design the Country warmings werdenders. A Chambrook Bears to the fine Tanda to be help pay for philing dots to Dake of Westminister & Paul Getty Junior to halp pay for printing the safety surrocustoms search many tops pages.

The weaker sex?

Australia woman goes berserk with stiletto shoes

Sydney - An Australian woman has been charged after attacking five people and smashing a car windscreen with a pair of stiletto-heeled shoes during a rampage in southern New South Wales at the weekend, police said on Monday. Police said the woman, 19, went berserk with the stilettos, holding one in each hand and hammering people on a street in the city of Albury for no apparent reason. Three of her alleged victims were sent to hospital with head wounds, while the other two received abrasions. She was charged with three counts of malicious wounding, two counts of assault and one count of malicious damage.

Who said women can't fight?

Tokyo - Eight bikers needed hospital treatment for injuries at the weekend when two Japanese gangs clashed in a fist-fight, police said. The two gangs of 17- to 20-year-old women, one called "The Beautiful Devils" and the other simply "Beautiful", fought with bare hands at a park near Tokyo, a police spokesman said. The Devils won and their rivals were sprawling, and injured, by the time police arrived. The spokesman said that while the two motorbike gangs had been on bad terms for some time it was unusual for women to fight battles like this.

Unstoppable schoolgirl stops thief

Tokyo - A 13-year-old Japanese schoolgirl foiled a purse-snatcher who tried to escape by bicycle in Tokyo by using her umbrella, the Asahi Shimbun newspaper reported. It said Yumi Kurakawa grabbed the cycle as the thief tried to escape with another woman's bag and wrestled him to the ground. The thief punched her three times in the face and cycled off but the courageous teenager gave chase. Finally she stuck her umbrella through the spokes of his wheel, sending him crashing into the arms of nearby police. Yumi said she acted simply because she thought it was wrong to steal.



Robbed man's tale of tears before bed time

Tokyo - Three Japanese teenage girls lured a man to a Tokyo hotel with the promise of four-ina-bed sex, sprayed tear gas into his eyes and stole 120,000 yen (£750) from his trousers, police said. But the 15-year-old girls gave themselves up and returned the money after seeing newspaper reports of their attack, police said. The girls met the man, 43, though a telephone dating agency and told him "50,000 yen (£310) is enough for the three of us".

High Weirdness by Mail

Designed to annoy...

I agree with reader
Jenny Hugget (TVQuick,
Issue 11) — soft plastic
bottles with dimple
bottoms certainly aren't
a step forward in design.
But the 'improvement' I
find most annoying is
the Gold Blend coffee jar
— I hate that awkward,
square lid! Whatever was
wrong with the screw
top? Luckily, I kept an
old jar, so I just transfer
the coffee into it.

Why do manufacturers have to change things?

Margaret Kane.

Margaret Kane, Ipswich, Suffolk

Should be barred

Do we really need to see over-enlarged breasts and bursting boxer shorts to sell chocolate? How on earth did this snippet of pornography make its way onto early-evening TV? I'm referring to the new Yorkie advert, of

We arent I'm no prude, but
We arent I'm concerned
apologise a young,
for the computer als.
error which led to us so inadvertently printing
a selection of letters from
"TV Quick". Normal service
will be resumed as soon as...

as soon as we can be bothered.

Dress sense

I have just switched off my TV in utter disgust. Was it sex? Violence? No, it was Pebble Mill.

I was appalled at the appearance of actress Helena Bonham-Carter. Her hair looked as though it hadn't been touched for many a long day. It showed real contempt for the viewers.

Why can't young stars realise that chat shows are part of their job, and groom and dress accordingly?

I once saw The Three Degrees on the same show. For their first number, they came on in lovely dresses and, later, reappeared in different gowns. True professionalism. They knew it was only a low-key lunchtime slot, but that their audience was still entitled to the best. Elizabeth Wahlstrand, Norwich, Norfolk

WHY does British Gas need Dallas star Larry Hagman, a rude, ill-mannered American, to sell its product?

Have we no suitable British actors who could fill such a bill?

Surely Sean Connery or Russ Abbott would do a better

MARGARET HARRIGAN, Dingwall, Scotland.

Super troopers

In your recent preview of Trooping The Colour (TVQuick, Issue 24), you said that the Beeb would be proudly beaming it out as it happens, but 'would anyone actually notice if they repeated last year's Trooping by mistake?' Of course we would! Unlike the endless repetition of mouldy sitcoms, at least the Trooping only comes once a year, and every frame is different, as is the commentary.

And isn't it lovely, for once, for women to be able to admire strong, healthy, good-looking men, after a surfeit of uglies on the TV? Leave off the Royal Family. Without them, this country would be like the rest, who are, in reality, jealous of our traditions.

A Peterson, W London

Stop your fiddling, Chuck!

A plea to Prince Charles: please, please, stop fiddling with your cuffs every time you venture out in public. Have other readers noticed how he is always twiddling away?

If I had my way, I'd stick small (but powerful) mousetraps up there. It is extreme, but it may be the only way to dampen his enthusiasm for this habit.

Harriet Bourne, Norwood, London

High weirdness by mail (or phone \rightarrow) Take 2.

Douglas Baptie, Hawick -"With regard to Conspiracy Corner, security cameras are a particular pet hate. I'm not convinced they work for a start the 'Abbie' case being an example...Despite dramatic claims, senior police officials quietly admit crime just gets moved to the areas not being covered. Logically, of course, cameras should cover every street in the country, so that every citizen is protected, and not just the business community wanting to protect their property. Cameras in every household



might help stamp out child abuse and spouse battery. I guess the cost might be prohibitive. [However, surely the only people who could object would be those with something to hide? Decent, law-abiding citizens surely have nothing to fear!] I am always surprised at how susceptible many of the cameras are to a spot of teen-terrorism. Most are rarely positioned higher than above first-floor level and could easily be pulled from their stands by a well-aimed rope and a couple of brawny scallywags. The only other equipment required would be a balaclava and a decent pair of running shoes..."

We at TC do not condone any behaviour in breach of the law. We do not suggest you try the tactics discussed above. Or, at least, we suggest you don't get <u>caught</u>. Particularly not carrying a copy of TC, carefully folded to this page.

Rik Rawling, Morley - "All my neighbours have got these fucking searchlights in their gardens - every time a cat goes for a shit, it lights up the backyards bright enough to be seen from Alpha Centauri. This climate of fear revved up by the media carefully smokescreens all the Big Brother shit that's really going down. Bar codes on wrists - not long now. I brought up the subject with some friends, and they thought it was bollocks. It's going on around them and they just don't feel the fire...Let loose the Overfiend! Bring on the Apocalypse! Eternal death in the fiery lake of Oblivion, under the hateful gaze of the one true dragon of the Eternal Night, is infinitely preferable to endless hours trapped in a grey room (pink blinds), with John Major clones, forced to watch re-runs of 'May to December'. Forever."

Paul Mallinson, Eynsham - "I would expect that the links between the IRA and our own government are closer than they like to admit. All governments, when they reach such a high level of control and influence, are nothing more than legalised criminal organizations. If the Mafia ran Italy legally, I'm sure it wouldn't be much different to how it is run today! [Oh, I dunno, would probably be a good bit more stable. And the government/IRA thing: interesting how the peace truce was negotiated with the Conservatives at their lowest poll rating since the first caveman was asked whether he preferred mammoth or bison. Let's face, it's the only thing that's got a chance of saving the Tories' necks, unless they can convince Argentina to invade the Falklands again] The 'wondrous visions' page after the letters? Why is it that I've never managed to get one of these bloody things to work yet. I tell you one thing - when I eventually 'click', and I do actually see what I'm supposed to, I'm worried that my head might explode. Should make a good scene in the middle of Athena, if nothing else."

Ah, yes. The 3D picture. Some interesting responses: a Scottie dog; the Statue of Liberty; and we'll draw a veil over the identity of the person who stared intently at the picture for several minutes, and then said "Is it a penis?". And now we hand you over to one of the aggravating bastards who can actually see them:

Tim Greaves, Eastleigh - "I assume you're joking when you say you can't see anything in that 3-D design. [That's right, make me feel really inadequate, why don't you?] It shows the words "Trash City", with "Trash" being small in the upper foreground, "City" very large just behind and below it, and what looks like the skyline of a city along the bottom. Do I win a prize? [Bah. Hope you go blind] You want a tip? They say you have to pick a point behind the design and stare fixedly at it, but I can't do it. I mean, what exactly are you supposed to fix on? The only way I can see 'em is by placing a clear acetate sheet in front, then fix on my own silhouetted reflection. Gradually the images blur and the three dimensional picture just pops into focus. Give it a try, it works for me!"

Hark. That sound in the distance. Must be Paul Mallinson's head exploding.

Andy Collins, St Leonard's-on-Sea - "The DJ decided it was that time of the evening to air a Ministry tune. Out of the corner of my eye, a demonic looking guy, large for his height, joined us, looking very similar to Henry Rollins. I became a little wary...then he went up to my friend, roared loudly in his face like a sexually repressed water buffalo and went ape shit, huge arms flailing, mental illness apparent. We backed off to the edge of the dance-floor, expecting imminent death as he ripped off his shirt and went even wilder. No tattoos - this wasn't a 'Cape Fear' situation - but fists were clenched and chest was straining. To my relief, the song cranked down. We were all still standing, faces intact. He then roared again, proclaiming very emotionally that "I fucking love that song". Great. We're so pleased for you. Piss off home and go knock through a wall or something. We came to a conclusion that he was a thoughtform created by Ministry in some heinous black magic session to infest various clubs, reassuring people that their fan-base was still as strong, and active, and manic, as ever.

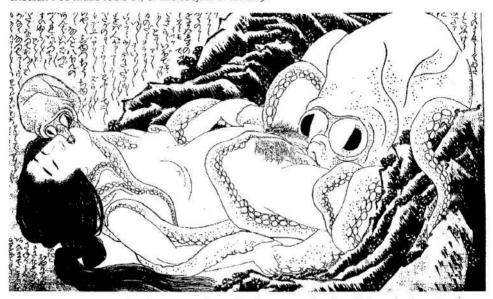
Andy Waller, Magdeburg - "We sampled Berlin a couple of weeks ago and it turned out to be a classic - if disastrous - weekend. The Friday in the city was fine, but when it came to Friday night, we had no accommodation. Our solution was just to ignore this factor. Thus, we played cards, went out for a pizza, consumed a few litres of red wine (I followed my usual principles - "If in doubt about anything while in a big city, just get horribly pissed"), rode down Tiergarten in shopping trolleys for a couple of kilometres, and then collapsed on the grass next to the Brandenburg Gate. This kind of improvised "summer campout" was problematic for a number of reasons, and rather ill-considered. It wasn't yet Summer, and was therefore very cold, we had no tent, no sleeping-bags, we didn't even have a mat. The next day, everybody was ratty as fuck, I was still drunk from the night before (I kind of overshot the required amount of wine needed for intoxication purposes) and nobody had succeeded in getting any sleep. It was a total disaster, but was one of the most memorable weekends I've probably ever had, in a funny sort of way..."

Given the above, I feel lucky to have got out of Paris alive. Maybe there is a market for nightmare holidays? "Kids go free on our tour of Romanian orphanages" - and if you're lucky, they don't come back, but are kidnapped by some rich but infertile parents from suburbia.

John Weller, Bournemouth - "I'm thinking of putting together something 'zineish myself, but I'm not sure yet what form it'il take...Another aim would be to load for bear, and stalk a few of the counterculture's sacred cows [er, shouldn't that be "load for cow" then? - helpful editor] - vegans, 'animal rights' and hunt sabbing, the gut reactions that pass for thought among people whose only contact with the countryside is a day spent chasing red-coated fools. Liz and I hunt rabbits to feed ourselves and our animals (17 ferrets and a red-tailed hawk) and we take responsibility for what we kill. What we don't need are the fools who told us (at the Food and Farming Show in Hyde Park) that "all hunting is blood lust" and that "all ferrets should be released into the wild". Pure, thoughtless compassion: 90% of any animals released into the wild would die in the first two weeks, and the survivors would gravitate to poultry sheds, or wherever there's fast food. But who wants to hear the truth when righteous anger is so much more satisfying?"

I would deeply love to produce a contentious, hard-hitting 'zine that succeeds in annoying people and getting up their noses. Difficult, though it may be to believe, inside this mild-mannered editorial body, there beats a heart of purest sulphur. Unfortunately, I think after 17 issues of TC, people probably know me too well to actually take it seriously. This has been one of the appeals of the Internet; the chance to talk to a lot of Americans, to whom concepts such as "sarcasm" and "irony" are mostly alien and anathema. Anyone feeling in need of an argument should go onto the "alt.cult-movies" newsgroup, and say something derogatory about "Schindler's List". Oh, and be sure to put on asbestos underwear first. But in the hallowed pages of this publication, I guess I'll just have to keep on with the political incorrectness.

Pam Creais, Sidcup - "I have doubts about most things that are supposedly 'good for us'. I think too many people are influenced by what they read in papers and magazines, and talked into doing things that they wouldn't normally do. I mean, do you go around supermarkets examining tins of food for 'E' numbers? I thought perhaps not! [Actually, I do - and refuse to buy anything unless it has at least three additives] As for vegetarianism, it's not a philosophy, I could adopt myself, and I'm an animal lover. I especially love them when they're on my plate at meal-times. Too many people exhibit ludicrously idealistic sentiments when it comes to animals. Obviously, I'm not saying that it's right to ill-treat them, but it's always sensible to get matters into perspective. An animal is, after all, just that - an animal. They shouldn't be made fools of, or the subject of idolatry."



 ${\it Japanese\ animal-rights\ activist\ being\ kind\ to\ a\ couple\ of\ cephalopodic\ friends}.$

I agree. It's like the recent controversy over calf exports; in terms of valid, commercial alternatives, the only other option is really killing all male calves at birth - this would scarcely please "Friends of the Furries", but to use them in the nice, kind, humane British veal trade, we'd have to increase 100-fold the amount of veal that we eat. Not that I personally mind, being a great fan of a nice escalope. But certainly, animals shouldn't be made into fools. Casseroles, possibly, or certainly sandwiches, but it's gooseberries or some similar summer fruit you want if you want to make a fool...

Speaking of which, more letters for this column are always welcome. They needn't be anything to do with the 'zine, as the above show, and I am quite willing to keep them hanging round until an 'appropriate' moment arrives; at least one of the above letters dates back to '93. You have been warned...

American Animation Round 2: BEER BRING PAIN!

The Simpsons

It must be five years ago that I first heard tell of a strange, yellow-faced family taking America by storm. Wondrous tales of biting satire, film and music references galore and merciless parodies of American life and culture started to filter across the great soggy divide, setting my taste-buds alight with curiosity. At first I was sceptical of the enthusiasm given to the telling of these tales: I remember reading of land-lubbers being wooed by old sea-dogs, with tales of mermaids; was this just another story peppered with imagination? I was determined to find out, so set sail on a journey of discovery to the United States of America...well, went there on holiday anyway. The trek was long and arduous, many ship-mates were taken by scurvy (probably the in-flight meals). But I was so close, there was no turning back. Then off the starboard bow, blurry in the distance (too much duty-free Vodka), I spied the S.S. "Simpson". The stories were true, under-estimated if anything, my search was ended; all that remained now was to see every episode.



Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie were the main crew, ably assisted by religious neighbour from hell Ned Flanders, bar-owner Moe, Grandpa Simpson, Barney the drunk, Krusty the Clown, Mr. Burns (owner of the nuclear plant), Selma and Patty (Marge's sisters), to name just a few. Yellow faced perfection, where had they been all these years?

It was obviously aimed at a junior audience, but the good ship "Simpson"...okay, okay, enough "Ancient Mariner" crap... has much to offer the culturally aware. Film references include "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (several times), "Clockwork Orange", "Thelma and Louise", "Childs Play". There's a whole episode modelled around "Goodfellas", with Bart in the Ray Liotta role and another that's almost scene by scene, "Cape Fear" - Bart is hunted onto a house-boat. Musical performances (cartoon characters, real soundtrack) by such luminaries as The Ramones, Aerosmith, Spinal Tap, Red Hot Chilli Peppers and more. Guest voice skills of Michelle Pfeiffer, Elizabeth Taylor, Kelsey Grammer, Sting, Dustin Hoffman, Linda Ronstadt and Brooke Shields to name just a few. In short "The Simpsons" is **the** place to be seen, even in a sometimes less than flattering cartoon form.

I guess some reading this are fans of anime and view all this with a certain mistrust, "Where's the violence?", I hear you cry. Everywhere! "Itchy & Scratchy": a cartoon within a cartoon, cat and mouse that make "Tom and Jerry" look like "My Little Pony" - eyeballs replaced by bombs, tongues tied around rockets, heads cut off with a razor then dancing in the arterial spray, heads eaten by ants...and that's just the printable stuff. There was also an Arnie pisstake called "McBain" with a body-count to rival any "video nasty" (such as "Reservoir Dogs" ...huh??!!) and five (I think) Halloween specials with "Simpsons" versions of "Child's Play", "The Twilight Zone", "The Raven", "Return of the Living Dead", "Dracula" and "Salem's Lot". Kids' stuff? I think not. There's so much that's wasted on young minds, I can only hope it helps educate them to the finer things in life; cult movies, rock music, doughnuts and beer, all in excess and pure heaven!

"The Simpsons" was started by Matt Groenig to "send up the bastions of American culture" and has, ironically, become a major part of said culture, thanks mostly to the merchandising people, though I don't suppose Groenig is groaning...(sorry!) If anyone deserves success it's "The Simpsons" crew - Matt and his gang go from strength to strength with each series more biting than the last, it's unusual to find a programme that gets better as it goes on, but here it is, and believe me nothing is sacred to these guys - these are a few of the tag-lines:

Bart finds 3-eyed fish in a pond next to the nuclear plant.

Homer is put in an asylum for wearing a pink shirt to work.

Homer gets poisoned in a sushi restaurant.

Bart gets run over by Mr. Burns, and the Simpsons sue for damages.

Krusty the Clown is arrested for robbing the kwiki-mart.

Homer discovers he's shooting blanks, sperm-wise; he also discovers a half-brother.

Marge gets obsessed with gambling, Mr. Burns turns into Howard Hughes.

"The Simpsons" was originally intended for, and broadcast on, "The Tracey Ullman Show", but you wouldn't recognize the characters now as they look completely different. All the voice over artists were working on Tracey's show; the woman who does Marge's voice was Rhoda's sister in the series of the same name (remember that old chestnut?). In fact there was a courtcase a few years back when Tracey Ullman tried to get money from Matt Groenig claiming she invented the characters used in "The Simpsons"; needless to say, this failed.

The first 'real' episode as we know it was "Some Enchanted Evening", since when there's been more than 100 episodes and very few aren't worth checking out a.s.a.p. They've tried changing the animation style several times; unlike latter "Tom and Jerry" and "Bugs Bunny" the scripts are still good. There's been speculation about a movie for some years, let's hope it's not far from realisation. Mmmhhh, Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie on the big screen...

"The Simpsons" has out-lived the hype and surpassed every promise ten-fold. It gets more cutting and hilarious with each addition to its, already full, family tree. If you're not already watching "The Simpsons" religiously get down your local video shop or branch of W.H. Smiths and buy, rent, borrow or steal some choice cuts of Simpson humour now! [Steve C.]

UnConvention94

A Celebration of the Strange

For many years now, 'Fortean Times' has been gathering together the "weird stuff" that happens in the world, with a sense of style and humour all it's own. Having read this remarkably cool publication for longer than I like to remember, the news that they were running a weekend convention provoked a sense of delight, that would perhaps only be surpassed by a note from Nastassija demanding a bed for the night.

The beast in question occupied a full two days, each with a designated central subject (Saturday was Spontaneous Human Combustion, Sunday had Alien Abductions), and sundry other topics round the fringe. Unsurprisingly, I received a certain amount of stick from people for attending such an event, and must admit part of the appeal was the thought of hearing people like Mary Seal. organiser of the Wembley conspiracy convention fiasco. and chief proponent of the Global Octopus theory (you don't want to know, believe me). Having previously been on the edges of a couple of UFO groups, I knew just how "fringe" some areas of borderline research can get!



However, what Lino might call the "kook" factor was very low. Mary Seal never appeared - some may call that suspicious and the nearest we got to nonsense was Doc Shiels, a long-time magician, trickster, hoaxer and consumer of Guinness. The last named probably explains any deficiency on the coherency front (he can be forgiven, it was the weekend Ireland beat Italy!). This general lack of loonies is perhaps because Forteans don't lumber their subjects with emotional baggage. On the SHC panel, for example, all three panellists said they'd be entirely happy to find it was the result of something natural. In the world of the paranormal, such a separation of faith from knowledge is pleasant to see.

The other (and more expected) major enjoyment factor was the sense of fun that pervaded the weekend. A delight of FT is the attitude of "we don't know whether this means anything at all, but it's certainly amusing", and this came through in most of the events. Let's face it, topics like SHC are pretty ridiculous when considered in the cold light of day! It was all pretty informal, with most of the guests quite happy to hang round after their talks and chat to the audience, and the organisers also seemed approachable.

Not that I needed to, as it mostly went very smoothly, although the temperature in the main hall provided the audience with first-hand experience of what SHC must be like. Luckily, the event was taking place in the University of London Union, so plenty of cheap, liquid refreshment was easily to hand (to the delight of Doc Shiels!). Sunday was a touch less successful, with two guests not appearing at zero or less notice (illness, rather than abduction by aliens), but these things happen, and no-one seemed to mind too much.

One eagerly awaited opportunity was the chance to get "weird stuff". A large amount of all sorts of reading material was duly bought, though the general restraint on view was also seen in the dealer's room. I ended up with as much sceptical junk as true-believer bunkum. Does this indicate some kind of balance?

Highlights are hard to pick, as there honestly was nothing I didn't enjoy. However, special mention may be made of the all-too-brief Fortean slide show, Jenny Randles' lecture on alien abductions (which sent several chills down my spine - true or not, they make great campfire tales) and Kevin McLure, talking about the visions of the Blessed

Saturday 18 June

Manning Hall, first floor

10.50am Introduction by Bob Rickard, founder editor of Fortean Times.
11.00am Noted playwright and actor Ken Campbell inaugurates
UnConvention94 with a look at Charles Fort, the American iconoclast
and philosopher from whom Fortean Times takes its name.

11.30am A Case of Spontaneous Human Combustion. Our day of debate on the topic of SHC begins with a special screening of a 1989 QED documentary.

12.00pm The Case for Spontaneous Human Combustion.

John Heymer, former Scenes of Crime officer with Gwent CID,
presents evidence for the existence of this controversial phenomenon.

1.00pm The Case Against Spontaneous Human Combustion.

Joe Nickell, sceptic and member of CSICOP, believes there's not enough evidence to prove SHC exists.

2.00pm Hoaxes and Deceptions. University of Hertfordshire parapsychologist *Richard Wiseman* presents a video showing the trickery used by some Indian fakirs to fool a gullible public.

2.30pm Hoaxes and Deceptions. Panel discussion with Richard Wiseman, Hoax editor John Quel & the legendary Fortean Doc Shiels.
3.30pm Spontaneous Human Discussion. Kev F Sutherland hosts a debate featuring John Heymer, Joe Nickell, Jenny Randles and fire

4.45pm The Psychic Delusion. Psychic con-artist lan Rowland presents a full-length show of fake psychic phenomena based on psychical research past and present.

Sunday 19 June

officer Roy Bentley.

Manning Hall, first floor

10.30am Contiguous Humps. Doc Shiels presents an extract from the fabled Fortean play Distant Humps, loosely based on the Loch Ness investigation.

11.30am The Coming of the Saucers. Lionel Beer, vice president of the British UFO Research Association, delves into aliens and abductions with an illustrated talk on UFOs through history.

12.30pm Emerging Patterns in Abduction Research. Abductee testimony is slowly revealing the structure and meaning of the UFO abduction phenomenon, *Dr David Jacobs* argues.

2.00pm Space-napping: a Mystery of Mind, Space or Time? Jenny Randles studies the pattern of alien abductions in Britain, Europe and other parts of the world, and considers whether they suggest extraterrestrial contact is likely.

3.00pm The Evolution of the Monster. French folklorist Michel Meurger, author of Lake Monster Traditions, describes the influence of folklore and oral testimony on cryptozoological archetypes.

4.00pm The Great Fortean Slide Show. UnConvention94 has sifted through the archives of the Fortean Picture Library to present some of its most select material in public for the first time.

5.00pm Aliens and Abductions. The strands of today's alien abduction debate are drawn together as FT contributing editor lan Simmons hosts a panel featuring Dr David Jacobs, Jenny Randles, sceptic Peter Brookesmith and Yvonne Green, lecturer on symbols.

Virgin Mary, and meandering from poltergeists to Charles Manson with perfect Fortean dry wit. But everything had it's moments, often unexpected ones: a former police officer, talking about SHC, mentioned in passing that there's a method for forging fingerprints, a comment worth filing in your paranoia. And even the 'delusion show', designed to expose tricks used by mediums, scored a direct hit on the psyche of one member of the TC crew!

By the end of Sunday, my mind had been suitably expanded - it's surprising how tiring this can be! The advantage of such an event is that after you've heard about aliens, people burning from the inside, big cats, religious visions, and who knows what else, then things like cancelled trains and leaking showers somehow just don't seem of any significance...

"The Price"

14th September

It has taken me four days to summon up the will to write this diary. My mind has been nothing more than a churning black mass since Suzy died. It's very hard to adjust to such a thing; accepting that someone has gone and they are now nothing more than a memory, a face in a photo, a pile of ashes.

I guess Suzy just chose the wrong thing to base her thesis on. It seems terribly unfair when you take into account that she actually succeeded in what she set out to do. She studied all the available facts — and there have never been many. She absorbed every word, pondered every supposition. It quickly took over her whole life. It also ended it. She found out too much and she couldn't write it down; she didn't get a chance to. She told me of her fears though and I was told what to expect, but it just sounded so far fetched.

It was all true though. She proved it by the very nature of her demise. You can't induce something like that, however hard you try. I don't think you'd want to. It is not the sort of thing you'd fake either. There would be no point. You are hardly around to reap any praise, are you?

1st October

I'm terrified. This whole thing of Suzy's death intrigues me. She was my best friend and I saw all the changes in her. I'm starting to recognise them in myself. I'm irrevocably drawn in, but fear I should stop before taking things too far, like she did. Its not easy. Researching this, going over the same ground that Suzy did, using her books, talking to the same people she did. I find that clues are jumping out at me. This thing wants to be found. It yearns to be discovered. I have no time, no concentration for anything else. I have to pursue Suzy's killer. I think it wants me to. It's probably already too late.

2nd October

Suzy's downward spiral began four months ago and in all that time I have never named her fear; my fear. It seems so childish. I can't even write the words.

Deople laughed at Suzy but they were intrigued as well. Secretly, they hoped she'd succeed. Some people asked her to come back to them if she ever found anything. Well, she did — but she couldn't. Everyone held an interest in Suzy's work but they didn't know why she persevered with it. Others had broached the subject; she had all the books ever written on it, but they said nothing. Suzy wanted to write the ultimate solution to an age-old mystery. I know now that it won't ever be written. By anybody.

5th October

I've been awake for three whole days now. I wonder how long Suzy stayed up: writing, researching, inching closer step by step. It has grabbed me by the throat and it won't let go. It wants me. It leaves me dry.

13th October

I wrote a will. I asked that all my notes, and those made by Suzy, be buried with me. Then I realised I won't be buried. It'll save my folks a bundle on funeral costs.

17th October

Very close now. These pages are stained with sweat. It's so hot here. Im hot inside. I've lost weight. My hair is falling out. The room smells of copper.

Soon I will know everything. I will see what Suzy saw; feel what Suzy felt and I'm no longer afraid. I think it will be worth the price.

10:37 p.m: I was wrong. You can induce it. I'm about to go super nova. It's so close. The air crackles. I had the idea of setting up a video camera to tape the whole thing. Research shows that the surrounding area is always left untouched. This film could prompt a thousand similar suicides; oh, it is suicide. I know exactly what I'm doing but I go willingly. I can't eat or sleep. I can only think and that's what it wants me to do. I have to keep on taking through the ashes. The answer lies in thought. It hits some people all at once. It's when it takes time that it really hurts.

Soon. Soon.

12:12 p.m: This will be my last entry. The camera is recording: it's a 3-hour tape. I hope it won't take that long. Such thoughts mustn't hinder my concentration.

I'm now going to sit down dead centre in front of the camera. I have my collected notes in case I lose my way. I leave this life happy, because at the very end I will know where it is I'm going. In fact, I'll know everything: I will access the name of God; the reason for the universe; the given name of every star; why I was put here to learn these things. I will have complete knowledge, absolute understanding, and then my brain will revolt at the horror of it all. No human mind was meant to know these things so somewhere along the line, a defence mechanism was introduced. Who by? Soon I'll know that too. And then my body will crumble, my brain implode and wither. Overload. Short out. Spontaneously combust.

You'll see and you'll believe. The camera never lies.

Sow many will follow?

The Phonetics of Luxury Cars (fo-net'iks)

by P. J. Evans, from a concept by Lee Claydon

Take a quick look sideways, at the person sitting next to you. In three minutes they'll be smiling. Why?

One of the best reasons for getting something new, something big and expensive and shiny, is so you can tell other people about it. Not come right out and say it: a little subtlety goes a long way when bragging on your possessions. Just to drop it into the conversation is the best way, wait until the moment is perfect before impact. Tease yourself.

"Jasmin? Oh, yeah, we've had a thing going for a month or so. She works up in town, modelling, you know. Hadn't I told you?"

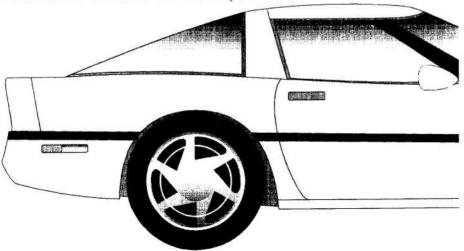
Or: "I guess the Japanese CD players are pretty cool, but since I got mine I really swear by Bang and Olafsen. Oh, about two, two-and-a-half grand. I'm not too sure. My accountant took care of it, but the sound is crisp!."

Or even: "For **real** sashimi, there's this little place in Tokyo, just off Ginza high street. What? Oh, last year, just pottering about, you know. Like you do."

It's important to remember, then, that first impressions really do last. It's a cliché, but like most stereotypes it also happens to be true. Therefore, when your latest braggable goodie is a really luxury motor, take the advice of an old hand: go for the Bentley, and leave the Rolls Royce glittering in the showroom.

Ignore the relative merits of the vehicle in question: remember that the primary purpose of having bought a car like this is to tell people about how cool it is. The cars themselves just don't enter into it. The important thing is the sound of the brag.

And the Rolls just can't hack it. It starts off slow and soft; the 'Ro' is an even worse sound than 'Ra'. Try saying it slowly, and 'Ro' sounds like your batteries are running down. It gets worse. The next vocal sound is 'Lls', followed by another 'Ro'.



The space that should appear in the middle is almost impossible to actually pronounce without sounding like you're speaking to an idiot. What really comes out is 'Arrollzroisss'. You can't even start the word with 'R' because you need an in-breath to say it: you end up with 'Aro'.

The phrase is frankly lousy: it starts with an inhalation, slows up over the vowel, softens in the middle without disappearing, then gears itself up again before finally trailing off in a sibilant 'SSss'. It's too long, telegraphing itself like an overlong joke.

The alternative is the Bentley, a far more impactful name. If someone tells you they've just bought a Bentley the sound is in your frontal lobes before you've heard it, already ricocheting off your jealousy centre and making your stomach hurt. The word alone can double you over.

It's not only shorter: the first phonetic is 'Be', which can only be said with force. The lips compress, then squeeze the sound out like a pip from a squashed grape.

There's a brief respite now with 'En', the lull before the storm. Because what arrives next is so typically British that no other country in the world could lay claim to it. 'Tll' can confound the most practised linguist: an ill-prepared Oriental could physically explode trying. Remember, it's not a 'Bent-lee', but a 'Ben-tlee'. Even said gently, it's a bullet.

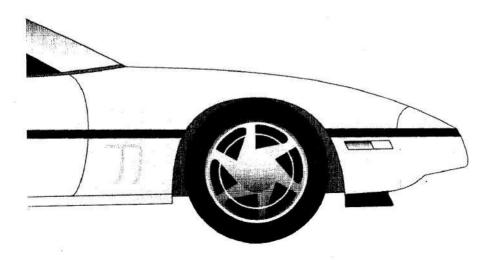
The assault finally ends with 'EEee', a scream of pleasure echoing away into nothing, bouncing around like an orgasm in the woods. And all this has taken place in less than half a second. Try it.

See what I mean? As an added bonus, your Bentley will never submit itself to abbreviation. A Rolls Royce is a Roller and a Mercedes is a Merc, but a Bentley is only **ever** a Bentley.

The cars of little people, the Fords and the Volkswagens, they are cars to be driven. A Rolls Royce is there to be looked at. But a Bentley, ah, a Bentley. A Bentley is there to be <u>said</u>.

So think about it. And while you're at it, take a look back at the person next to you. You've spent the last three minutes mouthing words like 'Arroohh', and 'Tllee' and 'Be'.

That's why they're smiling.



It's always a delight to lay out this next piece - partly because I don't need to bother running it through the spell-checker, proof-reading it, or trying to see if it makes any sense. All I have to do is tone down the BLOCK CAPITALS, and add a few sarcastic comments - yes, once more we meet the Barry Norman of the fanzine world, it's time for the imaginatively titled...

Lino's 'Zine Reviews

Dateline LONDON....AUGUST....1994

Pheww Wot A Scorcher (cue picture of page three stunna <sic> in bikini holding an umbrella underneath a fountain).

I'd like now to lodge a protest about the terrible censorship present in Trash City at the moment, last issues reviews were cut to <snip> just because the lily-livered <snip> was concerned about <snip> contained therein.

I thought Jim was joking about cutting out <snip>, until in the early hours four masked men broke into my house and tried to <snip> the disk containing the reviews. Using my Spider Sense <tm> I took them all on and beat them soundly around the head with the latest edition of Girljock.



They tried to escape but I caught the smallest one as he was trying to squeeze through the bathroom window. Using my web slinging powers <tm> 1 auickly bound him to the toilet and began questioning him on who was and more importantly who had sent him.

Just as I was going to get a name from him he bit down on a cyanide capsule and before he breathed his last he gurgled "Beware The Moon".

Bloody Idiot.

Did anyone here go to the Eurofest '94 festival recently? Good, good. I hope you all enjoyed yourselves and are looking forward to the next two festivals by the same organisers [Both now in the dim and distant past. These reviews are Late.... Next one planned is March, again at the Everyman. Theme is Brit-films; 'Terror', "Satan's Slaves" and possibly "Mark of the Devil", if they can get a print] If you were at the Eurofest did you later read the review of the show in Samhain? I read it and couldn't believe that the person who wrote it wasn't on some sort of mind altering substances, it was rambling and it contradicted itself. Starting off saying that it hadn't heard of Paul Naschy and ending saying how much the reviewer had enjoyed the whole event . Hmmmmmm give that man some Prozac now!

Anyway according to the Editor (and I use that term in its loosest possible sense) the reviews have been becoming a bit stale so he decided that this issues pile of bile should be in rhyme so here goes.....

Today we'll look at lots of mags

That Jim gave me in two big bags

Some from here and some from there big and thick but never square ATC and stuff like that mushrooms wearing big, black hats I read them quick, I read them slow I read them high (hmmm), I read them low I laughed, I cried I boiled, I fried And now I write them down (WHAT!?)

So be you French, or be you Hun Just read my words and you'll have fun.

I've read the 'zines from cover to cover and then I had lunch with Brian Glover We talked and we talked about horror & gore I picked his scab and he picked my sore

The End

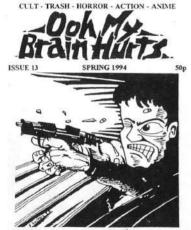
That's going to have to do because I think I was scraping the bottom of the barrel with the Brian Glover line (if not earlier). Any road up lets get on with the fanzine reviews and lets hope I don't annoy anybody (Invasion of the Sad Man Eating Mushrooms). I wouldn't mind but I didn't give them a bad review!

So (a needle pulling thread) lets start with.....Paranoia Vol 2 No.2 - Ahhh, what we have here is probably Jim Mclennans favourite read, Issue 5 contains articles on cattle mutilations (hmmmmm beef) which details the removal of cattle's sex organs and rectums and the refusal of the police to give any answers! Issue 5 also contains an article about an entire British regiment that was abducted by UFOs at Gallipoli during the Second World War (and they didn't even touch Mel Gibson). Not really my cup of tea but this will certainly appeal to people who know that everyone is talking about them behind their backs!



Killer Kung-Fu Enema Nurses No.4 -Issue 4 contains the second part of a huge Peter Jackson interview along a glossary of Blaxsplotation Expressions i.e. "I knew your mama when she was whoring".........An invitation to inevitable physical altercation resulting in death! Also included is a who's who of Blaxsplo cinema (hmmmm Pam Grier) loads of reviews and an article on wrestling women videos (which doesn't mention the Dynasty cat fights?!?!) Any zine that features a back page poster of Shaft gets my vote, so please, won't you buy a copy?

Night of the Living Dead No. 0 - Moan, moan, bitch, bitch. Anoraks times three sitting around a table... Anorak one says "Romero Rules", Anorak two says "Yeah, comic books rule" and anorak three (who with a score of 5 has the highest IQ of the three of them) says lets write a comic book based on Night of the Living Dead. Result, badly drawn, badly written cash in which is licensed by Romero and published by Fantaco (oh, it all makes sense now!). Lets get something straight, Night of the Living Dead was OK as a film but the phrase Flogging a Dead Horse should now be shouted and Mr. Romero (who with the exception of Marfin hasn't made a film nearly as good since) should move on. Avoid! [I liked it. Never felt the movie was great, which may be a good guide. Hate the film, love the comic. Like it, and...]



WILLIAM BURROUGHS, BODY SNATCHERS, SHORT CUTS, SUPERVIXENS, BAY OF BLOOD, BETTY BLUE, DRUNKEN MASTER 2, IN THE SOUP, ANIME INCLUDING TOMBSTONE OF THE FIRELIES, DEVILHUNTER YOHKO, SOL BIANCA....

Ooh My Brain Hurts No. 13 - According to the laws of nature I should really hate this 'zine but I don't, God knows I've tried, but (as I've said before) at 50p it really is something of a bargain. Its packed with reviews and also features a great overview of William Burroughs. It certainly is one of my favourite 'zines and even if I didn't receive a free copy I would still seek out and buy copies of it, (which is really saying something).

Look, OK, I have to slag it off a bit so I'll say that the ummm, errrr, cover art is rubbish, there you go! Happy now! [Sadly, I've heard this is the last issue of OMBH, Daniel Auty is moving on to other things - well, I guess that's another 'zine we've outlasted!]

Hoax! Monster Issue - F'**K ME, what a find, this superb 'zine looks at hoaxes and pranks from across the world (illustrated with newspaper reports) and also suggests some hoaxes you can pull off yourself. Particularly worth mentioning are the articles on urban myths (which reminds me did I tell you that a friend of mine bought a box of chicken from KFC and when he bit into the last piece...), drugs myths and the radio version of The War of the Worlds that was produced by Orson Welles. It's very funny and for people with the minds of two year olds (ME, ME) it makes for a excellent read. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

Girljock No. 11 - Look, it's like this, I'm supposed to review the 'zines not just slag them off because they are for different groups. I understand this now, and I'm sorry, so very, very sorry.

Girljock is a light fluffy read that will appeal to women with sensible shoes everywhere, and issue 11 features naked rock climbers and a feature on women's volleyball. OK!

Alright, when you sit down and read it, it actually isn't too bad and at least one of the cartoons in the back made me laugh out loud. Joe Bob says check it out. (expand your mind! I saw the sign and it opened up my mind, life is so demanding without understanding!)

Kill Me Slowly - A collection of comic strips and short stories from Fantaco (the same publishers of the god awful Night of the Living Dead comic), this has a lot more going for it (i.e. interesting, fairly original stories!).

Best story of the lot is "Bad Luck" and the worst in my opinion is Skin Flick. At \$7.95 it's worth standing in Megacity and reading, but buying it I don't really think so!

Children of a Far Greater God - Volume 1, No.4 WE LOVE YOU MILES WOOD WE DO, WE LOVE YOU MILES WOOD WE DO, WE LOVE YOU MILES WOOD WE DO, OH MILES WOOD WE LOVE YOU

(Miles the above is part of a pathetic attempt to get Notume 184 St Some Christina Applegate stills from you, eh, eh, oh go on please!) The latest (at the time of writing!) issue of Miles lovely 'zine has reprints of an interview with Amanda Bearse (Marcy) about her recent "outing" as a lesbian (*lesbian - see Girljock) and a set report from a recent taping, all this and the usual reviews and cast stills (oh, go on Miles, just a couple, please?). While in the States recently, I caught a late night T.V. interview with Christina Applegate where she appeared with her new short hair and talked about the restaurant she had just opened in Hollywood! Two bums up, as usual for C.O.A.F.G.G.



HANG ON, HOLD EVERYTHING, STOP! What the F**K is Kellogg's up to with Banana Bubbles cereal, I can accept the Coca Pops story, I can accept the Honey Nut Loops story and I can even accept the Lucky Charms story, BUT, banana flavoured rice crispies that turn the milk banana milkshake flavoured I WILL NOT ACCEPT!, and the bloody ridiculous claim that they form part of a nutritious breakfast, WHAT! WHAT! EH! who are they trying to fool. I am so glad I got that off my chest, anyway on with the reviews.

Legend of the OVA Fiend No.4 - OVA launches into it's second year with what I think is their best ever issue, expanding on their live action reviews and including reports on the HTC show and a report on Hong Kong sci-fi by Jim. Comes complete with nice wraparound cover. £1.50 is just a bit too pricey (compared with "Ohh My Brain Hurts") but, that said, it is one of the best anime themed 'zines around!

Animejin No.4 - And talking of Anime themed 'zines This issue contains a battle of the conventions report (Jim McLennan, Steve Whitcher & Simon Devey all going to both the AUKcon and the Anime Day convention and reporting back on both of them). Also included was an idiots guide to buying Anime related product in Japan and the usual Anime news & reviews. Much of a muchness, if you have spare cash and are a animaniac (HA, I cracked a funny!) buy it.

Adults Only No.1 - A new fanzine from Jonny Redman and friends appears and what great value it is, £1.25 for 63 pages! Content swerves all over the shop, from stupid letters to a well written overview of "Blow Up" and a beginners guide to widescreen formats. It represents very good value for money and deserves your support (even though it is a bit two faced in places, see the Redemption praises/slaggings off!). **[And issue 2 is now out as well]**

Luan Peters: Homage to a Seraph - Tim Greaves 1 shot publications comes up with the goods yet again, this time with a lovely booklet on the stunning Luan Peters (whom I'd never heard of!). As usual it contains loads of beautiful photos (I loved the shot at the top of page 8) at a top to tail retrospective look at her career. This issue was supposed to be a Luan Peters/Anouska Hempel but for reasons Tim goes into on page 31 it never transpired (and who said fanzine editors were boring!). As usual, very highly recommended although a few colour pages (prohibitive as the price might be) would make it a must buy! [except it's sold out, anyway!]

Tim

losé

Brian Smedleu

Aston

Greaves

Daughters of the Night (Carmilla on the screen) - I think Tim Greaves must live his life on a different timescale to the rest of the planet, Tim how many hours are there in one of your days? 40 hours? 50 hours? I ask because he manages to come up with so many well researched, written and typeset 'zines a year I find it hard to believe he has time to do anything else. This new one critiques all the different film versions of Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's "Carmilla" that have been made, from the well known Hammer versions to a Seventies 8mm British Porno version called "Blood Lust"! Once again very highly recommended (If it hasn't sold out by the time of review!). One gripe, sorry Tim! Am I alone in thinking that Ingrid Pitt is at best plain and at worst down right ugly? Well, her picture makes for a frightening cover and centre poster I suppose!

[Tim Greaves has come up with still another publication, a revised edition of his earlier "Vampyres" issue. The main reason for the upgrade is that he's managed to track down one of the stars, and the resulting new information adds interesting new light on the production. If you didn't pick this up already, it's even more essential now - and if you did, I'm sure he'll do a trade-in! I am joking, Tim!]

Little Shoppe of Horrors No.12 - Does Richard Klemensens fanzine *REALLY* need reviewing? Does the word fanzine do it justice? Can't Jim supply me with a 'zine I can really, really slag off? Oh, well. The 12th issue of LSOH comes an incredible FOUR years after the last effort! Was the four year wait worth it? YES, YES, YES!

130 pages packed with Hammer information, reviews, news and interviews and EVERY page worth reading (not to mention the Horrors of the Black Nylon Museum picture gallery at the back packed with superb pictures of semi clad Hammer starlets WHOO HOO!). Reading LSOH you can tell that Richard has a great love of Hammer and that love is bursting out of every word he and the other LSOH staff writes. I really cannot praise LSOH 12 highly enough. Certainly well worth buying although I would imagine that it has already sold out by the time this review sees the light of day. I only hope that Richard doesn't go through with his plan to stop writing LSOH after issue 15, if the standard keeps up I'd be happy to wait 10 years between issues! An honourable mention must also go to Steve Karchin for the amazing artwork on the front cover!

Time for another review break. I started writing the reviews in August and it is now November of the same year and Jim has just given me more fanzines to review. Now lie back and listen to this, four months and still no sign of a new Trash City! AMAZING! I know that they say that quality takes time and I can accept that but it doesn't explain why it takes (at least) six months for a new issue to appear.

O.K. I have a plan.

COMPETITION TIME

I am offering a prize (at the time of writing the prize is still undetermined but after last weekend it will probably consist of bottles of Brody's cider) to any Trash City reader that can come up with the best reason for the 'zines sporadic appearances. Just mark your entries "ITS THE CORN CIRCLES I BLAME" and send them to the usual editorial address. The winner will be printed in the next edition (due out sometime in 1998!)

[To help you, here is a clue towards the actual reason for our late appearance: "Hey, Lino, have you done the fanzines yet?". Here's another one: "When will your article be ready, Lino?". And why not have a third one too? "Oi! Where are the "titte" 'zine reviews, "titte"?" Are you getting the idea? Well, actually, it's not fair to totally blame Lino for the late appearance of TC, but it certainly is far more fun than any of the real reasons

Right, sorry on with the reviews!

Frontal Lobe No.1 - A bizarre mish mash of poems, short stories and weird photo collages from people such as Jello Biafra and the incredibly named Vladimir Distakophnaphinth! It's all a bit too strange to detail and even stranger to read. All I can say is seek out a copy!

Article 19 No. 9 - Compact, nicely drawn, funny Canadian comic. No.9 comes complete with a free UFO or unicorn photo! Editor Robin Bougie really seems to love drawing and likes receiving mail (hint) so send some money to Canada enclose a letter and make his day! Only one gripe and that is that he is SO in love with his new wife Rebecca he seems to mention her on every second page! (Don't you just HATE people in love!!!).

Saccade No.3 - A fairly good fiction 'zine from Sheffield with some well written short stories. One thing I could have lived without is some of the terrible art that has been included within it's pages (If this is the stuff he chose to print God only knows what the standard of the stuff he rejected was like!) That minor quibble apart, if fiction is your bag Saccade is certainly worth seeking out.



Movie Mania - Jim I love reviewing the fanzines for you, I really do, I even enjoy reading some of them, BUT, this one is in German and my German is virtually non-existent! Hell, lets just make something up, after all that's what I do with the rest of the 'zines! The latest issue of Movie Mania (in German!) contains reviews of Hong Kong & Japanese movies (Robotrix, Evil Dead Trap 2 etc.) also with a Caroline Munro interview and loads of other (German) type stuff. Highlight of which is an interview (in German!!) with that Wunderkind Director Alex Chandon (who is a hack really and his film Drillbit is only saved by a superb performance by one of the killers!) Wonderfully entertaining fanzine (if you read German) and highly recommended if you want to catch up with the latest releases in Germany (and you can speak German!).

Plain Brown Wrapper - Which comes supplied (surprisingly) in a plain brown wrapper with a nifty velcro fastening! This American 'zine is really very entertaining containing ramblings and short stories from a deranged Yank! The stories in P.B.W. are embellished with lyrics from songs the author wrote and performed in San Francisco! Incredibly strange & incredibly funny (in places!) Look for the address (see below) send off your money and prepare to be entertained. (Hmmm sex with alien Lizard women!)

Girljock No.12 - See what I mean, it's been so long since I started writing that issue 12 of Girljock has found its way into my podgy little Italian fingers! This issue contains articles on how to cruise for fresh meat if you're a butch (best tip being not to do the splits or dance the polka on the dancefloor! <smirk>), along with articles on women's football (I am tempted to mention the old line about looking forward to the end of the game when they swap shirts! but I won't), a good cartoon strip about Lilane the Reluctant Rugby Wife! and (worth the price of the 'zine on

its own) a hilarious picture of Barbara Bush posed in front of the USA Eagles National Rugby team about to throw a rugby ball!!!!!

Recommended (God, I've changed my tune!) to girls to like to play around (although they cover sports other that golf!! Haa Haa) and to men (sexist pigs that they are) who like to see pictures of girls playing around (see above!).

Camera Obscura No.2 - And to finish (finally!) we have Alex Low's second edition of Camera Obscura (which at 100 pages and glossy cover is better described as a book!). I haven't seen No.1 but if this new edition is anything to go by I'll have to get my hands on a copy (*Eh*, *Alex*, go on mate please!) This issue looks at and reviews genre films from 1940 to 1970 (not a mean feat!). It contains many well written, informed reviews and some great artwork. Very well worth a look, and ideal for anybody's Xmas present! (Think of it as a mini Aurum at a fraction of the cost, with less mistakes!). All this and it's a limited edition! Very highly recommended!

Right, that's that then. Before I disappear into the toilet with issues 11 & 12 of Girljock let me take time out to wish you all a happy Christmas (or I hope you enjoyed your Christmas depending on when this appears!).

And remember, I love you all

P.S. You can send your competition entries or any general questions to me direct via E-Mail just post to me at lino@mail.on-line.co.uk (ohhh Internet!)

I REALLY look forward to reading your comments!

By some miracle, I got the 'zines back from Lino this time - though Girljock arrived three weeks later and in a state I'd really rather not describe - so we should be ok for names and addresses. Of course, there have been some new issues since I handed the last batch over to Lino - indeed most of the editors have probably died of old age and several new continents have formed. Leading the "let's make Jim feel terribly guilty about TC's schedule" race is Animejin: we reviewed issue four, they are now up to issue seven. Sob. There's even been another issue of Girljock too, which I've little doubt Lino will want to, ah, peruse.

I was sent a copy of Inferno, a very glossy magazine that looks superb - wish there was an English equivalent as unfortunately, it's all in Danish. This is a slight problem, (but, hey, we're all Europeans now) and especially galling as they teasingly drop in English quotes, titles or paragraph headings! But worth it for the adverts; if you want to find continental sources for films, there are some promising ones here (some adverts are even in English - hmm...). Also from Denmark is the first issue of the Scandinavian Manga Club newsletter, Mangazine: slim, but in English, and with a useful "check-list" of anime titles.

A mention to Dementia 13 #14 (if you see what I mean). Another wraparound cover - seems to be the fashion this year!) wraps around a mix of "arcane and macabre"



fiction (which I liked) plus interviews with, and articles on, and interview with, a lot of people I haven't heard of (which I skimmed). A similar mix can be found in Midnight in Hell 12, back after a rather lengthy absence, even by our standards:-)

Finally, Scapegoat, the anti-censorship magazine, which has contributions from just about everyone in horror fandom - including Stefan Jaworzyn being kind to John Gullidge, which must be a first. A slight element of preaching to the converted, and a pointless article, allegedly to do with David Irving but more about parading the author's right-on views, don't detract from 1994's most essential purchase, critical ammunition in the never-ending war.

Or maybe <u>not</u> finally. Microsoft Word suddenly decided not to load our documents, claiming "someone else" was using them. Weird, as the computer isn't connected to a network. Where's Dana Scully when you need her? A swift exorcism did the trick, but meantime more magazines arrived. It'd be a shame to make them wait another 11 months till they get their plug... Anything else you want to say, Lino?

It's been years in the making, doesn't feature the Horror Consultant (WHY!!) and it is — the all old-look Cold Sweat!! Trevor Barley now holds the British record (beating Jim McLennan) for the longest time between issues. Well, he has reasons, the main one being his organisation of the Eurofest horror festivals held last year [Current date for his next Festival is March 25th, but sadly, no 'Mark of the Devil']. The new double digit issue contains a long article on Redemption video giving short reviews of all their releases; a patchy look at the Loch Ness Monster in the movies, and an an article on Trevor's recent trip to Rome (he got mugged, ha, ha, ha!). If you want to know how easy it is to organize a film festival, just read his account of the trials and tribulations behind the first Eurofest. Rounding up the issue are short articles on home made English horrors (an outfit called Giallo) a Debbie Dutch filmography and a look at a small American video company called I.D.E. Add some great pictures of Michelle Bauer and a stunning picture of me!! Certainly worth acquiring (Trevor did send me a free copy of Draculina to an attempt to get a good review. He didn't have to, If you know Cold Sweat you'll want to buy the new issue, if you don't splash out 1.75 and educate yourself!)



GLOBAL MAIL 6 is a cross-cultural, cross-media listing of all kinds of art projects, collaborations and mail art events.

#10 (Jan '95) has 500 listings from 45 countries. Topics include: mail art, ad Rob's been spending!), swaps; BBS; books; compilations/portfolios; computer; conceptual; congresses; added style, easy on swaps; BB3; DOOKs; compilations/portrolled, samples and dreams; email, erotic, exchanges; fax; messages; networks; newcomers; postal the eye. The same is artistamps: queer: resources: rubber stamps and video.

Send 2 IRCs for sample back issue, or 4 IRCs for current issue: GLOBAL MAIL true of the text, too, PO Box 597996, Chicago, IL 60659, USA.

NOW AVAILABLE IN THE UK! Send 4 x 25p stamps (or 2 IRCs) to: between your neurons. The Mechanic, 51 St Luke's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH3 7LR, UK

This end, I start with another 'zine less frequent than TC(!), Dark Star, but always worth the wait. Looks very cool these days. new layout (proof that which slides

Nice 'n' relaxed.

Found a bunch of anime-zines from the last con. A mixed bag: another OVA Fiend (#5 - snarl, they're catching up!), Animace #5, including a great Power Rangers piss-take and Daniel Auty (that's where he went to!) plus Animenia & Tinsel City, both sadly marred by dodgy copying, the latter especially losing out as it's an amateur manga-collection. Shame, the stories deserve better. And out of the box marked seriously strange, there's Red Leopard. Any magazine that manages to write about cheese and porn deserves your support.

Global Mail (above) is a severe information overload, very dense, and undoubtedly containing a wide range of gems (and/or rubbish!). Lowlife (opposite) is co-edited by TC-writer Phoenix Hitch, and gives me the chance to tell my Gothic joke. Q. How many Goths does it take to change a lightbulb. A. None, the lights were off anyway... If you find that funny, get a Lowlife. After a spell away, Kevin McClure (ex-Lino fave. The Wild Places) is back with his new 'zine Promises & Disappointments. This one is 50/50 reviews and articles, with his open-minded scepticism a healthy blast. Down at the 'ruff' end, is China in Your Hand, the Frankenstein 'zine. A tad expensive for 20 photocopied pages, but the man certainly knows his stuff.

Anyone who read the Black Lace article and thought "I can do that" should read Caress, a slim newsletter by/for erotic writers. While not cheap, the info therein is sure to repay the cost quickly; it also reviews lots of interesting, ah, "product". Second to last, we have Popular Culture, a great 'zine from Denmark (in English, Lino!) with lots of snappy short articles on anything from Jackie Onassis to Shonen Knife, a Reader's Digest of, as it says, pop culture. And the coveted last spot goes to Raimi-zine, like Article 19 another Saskatoon-'zine, telling you all you need to know (and then some!) about the excellent 'Darkman' this issue. Fascinating stuff.

CONTACT ZONE

Addresses for publications reviewed follow. Prices exclude postage except where noted.

Adults Only (1.50?) - Jonny Redman, 61 Scott Street, Padiham, Lancs, BB12 6NW Animace (£1.50) - Paul Cook, 5 Brookland, Tiptree, Colchester, Essex CO5 0BU

Animenia/Tinsel City (?) - Josh Clark, 2 Birkdale Drive, Immingham, Grimsby, DN40 2LB

Animejin (£1) - Jonathan Weeks, 65 The High, Streatham High Road, London. SW16 1EY

Article 19 (\$1.50) - Robin Bougie, 928 Main St, Saskatoon, Saskat. S7H OKS, Canada

Camera Obscura (£5.50) - A.J.Low, 1265 Pollokshaws Rd (A7), Glasgow, G41 3RR

Caress (£12/5 iss) - The Write Solution, Flat 1, 11 Holland Road, Hove, BN3 1JF

Children/God (£1.50) - Miles Wood, 2nd Flr, 221 Ashmore Rd, Queens Pk, London W9 3DB

China in your Hand (£2) - M.J.Simpson, Flat 3, 113 Lichfield St, Hanley, Stoke, St1 3EB

Cold Sweat (£1.75) - Media Publications, 12 Elder Avenue, Crouch End, London N8 9TH

Dark Star (£2) - 64 Arthur Street, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 OPR

Dementia 13 (£2.30) - Pam Creais, 17 Pinewood Avenue, Sidcup, Kent, DA15 8BB

Hoax! (£3?) - 64 Beechgrove, Aberhonddu, Powys, Wales, LD3 9ET

Kill Me Slowly + Night/Dead - Fantaco, 21 Central Ave, Albany, NY 12210, US

Frontal Lobe (£1) - Organism, 18 Stile Common Rd, Primrose Hill, Newsome, Yorkshire

Girljock (\$3.95) - Rox-a-tronic, PO Box 882723, San Francisco, CA94188-2723, US

Inferno (Dkk 45-) - Esromgade 12, 4.tv. DK-2200, Kobenhavn N. Denmark

Killer/Nurses (£2) - Rowlf, PO Box 27-432, Upper Willis St, Wellington, New Zealand

Legend/OVAFiend (£1.50) 1 Ullswater Ct, Greenmeadow Way, St Dials, Gwent NP44 4RW

Little/Horrors (\$6.95) - Richard Klemensen, PO Box 3107, Des Moines, Iowa 50316, US

Mangazine Scandinavia (Free) - Mega Scandinavia a/s, Linnesgade 14A, DK-1361,

Copenhagen K, Denmark

Midnight in Hell (£3) - George Houston, The Cottage, Smithy Brae, Kilmalcolm, PA13 4EN

Movie Mania (7- DM) - Postfach 1207, 73278 Schlierbach, Germany

Ooh My Brain Hurts (50p) - Daniel Auty, 9 Andrew Close, Wokingham, Berks, RG11 2HY

Paranoia (\$4) - sorry, "need to know" basis. Oh, ok: PO Box 3570, Cranston, RI 02910, US

Plain Brown Wrapper - Malthus Press, 2317 B Carleton St, Berkeley, California 94704, US

Popular Culture (£2.50?) - Soren Kjellberg, Norreport 16, 8400 Ebeltoft, Denmark.

Promises/Dis'mnts (£2) - Kevin McClure, 42 Victoria Rd, Mt Charles, St Austell, PL25 4QD

Raimi-zine (\$2.50) - D.Sean Maclaggan, 3617 Chaben Pl, Apt #209, Saskatoon,

Saskatchewan, S7H 4E9, Canada.

Red Leopard (£1.50?) - 329 Finchampstead Rd, Wokingham, Berks, RG11 3JT

Saccade (£1.75) - 148 Ulsterville Park, Portadown, Armagh, N.Ireland, BT63 5HD.

Scapegoat (£3 inc p&p) - Stray Cat Publishing, PO Box 146, Plymouth PL1 1AX

Vampyres (£3), Daughter of the Night (£1.95) - Tim Greaves, 118 High Street, Eastleigh, Hants, SO5 5LR. [Prices include p&p, money payable to Tim Greaves, please!]

Spirit of enterprise

Whale organs to move mountains?

Oslo - A Norwegian businessman, rebuffed in an attempt to export skeletons of whales caught in a controversial hunt off Norway, hopes to sell the mammals' giant penises in Japan to help male potency, a Norwegian daily said on Sunday. The Independent Verdensgang said Lasse Jahnsen wanted to sell the 50 centimetre (19 inch) long, deep-frozen penises of minke whales caught this year in defiance of a 1985 moratorium by the international whaling commission. A whaling expert at Tromsoe University, Tore Haug, doubted the penises would help, saying: "I don't believe that it can help potency but you know, faith can move mountains."

Cambodian bar offers valentine's day substitute

Phnom Penh - Lonely? Cupid's arrow off target this Monday the 14th? One watering hole in Cambodia is offering a solution to people suffering St. Valentine's Day blues. Phnom Penh's Rock Hard Cafe, a shameless rip-off of a similarly named international bar and restaurant chain, recommends a day spent drowning sorrows. "Lonely? No one to love? Why not come and drink heavily," suggests the Rock Hard in an advertisement in the Cambodia Daily newspaper.

German baby-sitter sells the baby

Hamburg, Germany - A baby-sitter in Hamburg thought of a novel way of earning extra cash — she sold the child while the parents were out. Police said she had received 3,500 marks (\$2,090) for the four-month-old Albanian baby. They said the baby was recovered unharmed, eight hours after the 35-year-old baby-sitter reported it had been kidnapped from the hotel room where she was watching it. Police were questioning the baby-sitter and the couple in the town of Viersen to whom she had sold the baby.



Hong Kong meat vendor roasts lover's wife

Hong Kong - A Hong Kong court has sentenced a roast-meat vendor, who killed, chopped up and burned the wife of her lover, to six years in jail for manslaughter. Chin Yin-Ho, 47, who pressed her 10-year-old granddaughter to help dispose of the charred and dismembered remains, was acquitted of murder but found guilty of the lesser offense. The court had heard how Chin, consumed by jealousy, overpowered her lover's wife, tied her to a chair with a baby's harness and strangled her. A local newspaper quoted police who mentioned unconfirmed rumours the victim's remains were sold as barbecued pork.



Emmanuelle Beart: Born to be Cute

French starlets tend to the longevity of may-flies. They rise, make a film, appear on the cover of 'Sky' magazine, then evaporate like dew. After 'Betty Blue', Beatrice Dalle turned in a whole series of movies deemed too awful to be let out of France - then blew her street-cred totally thanks to the dire Mercury ads. Mathilde May, acclaimed the best thing about 'Lifeforce', vanished from our screens for years, until the even more wonderfully tacky 'Naked Tango' slithered into view (though she did record a nice jazz-funk LP). The only one to buck this trend is Emmanuelle Beart: she's appeared in several highly-regarded films and picked up a string of Cesar nominations, yet a poll in 'Paris Match' still named her sexiest French woman alive (see side-bar overleaf).

French director Claude Chabrol once said Beart had "a face in total contradiction with her body". Further light on this came from Beart herself, who explained "Chabrol thinks I have the body of a whore and the face of an angel"; this seems to be a view accepted by others, as in her career she has played both angels and whores.

The former was her only Hollywood movie so far, the vacuous yet highly watchable 'Date With an Angel', which she steals despite her angelic dialogue being limited to barely three sentences. Director Tom McLoughlin has a cameo, as someone so entranced by Beart that he sets himself on fire without noticing. This sums up the tone of the film; it's heart-warming stuff, surprising because McLoughlin's previous movie was, er, "Friday the 13th Part 6". Phoebe Cates goes charmingly psychotic as her boyfriend falls for Beart; though she tried hard, she's totally overshadowed.

The whore was in "J'Embrasse Pas", probably also the most annoying film she's yet made. As I complained at the time (TC12), while poster and title imply heady amounts of Beart, it is a heinous lie. What we get is a not exactly cheerful story of a <u>male</u> prostitute, with Beart playing the only sympathetic character in the movie, who turns up now and again in the second half. It can, and should, be ignored, despite Emmanuelle's effusive praise for it's director: "like every actress who has worked with Techine, I fell head over heels in love with the way in which this guy handles the players. He works with extraordinary finesse and gentleness...During filming I realised that at a point, if you're tuned in, trusting in the director, you can truly metamorphose and the scene clicks together." (Premiere [France], July 1991)

Most people will have first seen Beart in "Manon des Sources", the second part of Claude Berri's international hit, following on from "Jean de Florette". An understandably drooling Sunday Times feature on Beart was the first I'd heard of her, and was sufficient to get me to lose my virginity with respect to subtitled movies. The two are effectively a single entity; "Jean de Florette" works away at the body, leaving the viewer open for the sucker blow at the end of "Manon des Sources". The result is reminiscent of Polanski's "Tess", which Berri produced and of course, it starred another rather pretty girl... Note that "Manon des Sources" is a PG, despite full-frontal Emmanuelle and body piercing; maybe Quentin Tarantino should take heed if he ever wants to get "Reservoir Dogs" released? Yet even after being seen by seventeen million movie-goers in France, she's managed to avoid becoming too typecast. While Beart's career has been limited slightly by her beauty, in that most of her roles have been as an object of desire, she usually manages to be highly effective, even when (as often) she's given little to do with her acting skills.

In 'Un Coeur En Hiver' she once more plays opposite Daniel Auteuil, and this movie would seem to have "Art Film" written across the top of every script page. Long, meaningful glances are the order of the day, but as a whole it isn't too bad, thanks to strong performances from everyone involved (at least, when they get the chance between long, meaningful glances). This picked up no less than nine Cesar nominations, including one for Beart: her devotion to the job was such that she spent 18 months with a tutor learned to play the violin for her role as a concert musician. My mind inexorably wonders how she prepared for "J'Embrasse Pas"...



...or "La Belle Noiseuse" - plenty of nude sunbathing needed there, as much of this tale of artistic obsession is real-time painting of Beart's unclad form. And never mind wimpy stuff like "Schindler's List" or "Dances With Wolves", "Noiseuse" comes in at just under four hours. It does provoke a faint suspicion that someone is taking the piss, when you spend ten minutes watching a sketch being drawn, only for the creator to crumple it up and bin it. However, the whole effect is insidiously engrossing: as scrawls and smudges gradually become a painting (to paraphrase Rolf, "Can you see what it is yet? It's a nekkid French babe..."), it is possible to get so into these sequences that it's annoying when they end and the acting re-starts. For the limited attention spanned, there's a two-hour remix, but the 'PG' rating suggests most of the footage removed is to do with Beart's body. Which there is a lot of in the full version, but it's Art, so I guess that's alright.

Top ten French babes:		
1. Emmanuelle Beart		14.96
2. Carole Bouquet (ex-Bo	nd girl)	14.90
3. Isabelle Adjani		14.63
4. Estelle Hallyday (model)	14.57
5. Sophie Marceau		14.02
6. Catherine Deneuve		13.67
7. Patricia Kaas (singer)		12.98
8. Claire Chazal (TV pres	enter)	12.81
9. Juliette Binoche		12.54
10. Anne Sinclair (TV pre	esenter)	12.20
Among those lower down Dalle (11.68) and Vanessa		
Selected non-French b	abe sco	ores
Claudia Schiffer	15.68	3
Cindy Crawford	15.67	7
Kim Basinger	15.35	5
Sharon Stone	14.88	3
Julia Roberts	14.51	, i
Lady Diana	11.93	3
Madonna	9.06	

Is Emmanuelle Beart the sexiest Frenchwoman alive?

In September last year, the magazine 'Paris Match' published the results of a poll to find out who the French thought were the sexiest people in the world. A representative sample were asked to mark candidates from 0 to 20: topping the female section was Claudia Schiffer, closely followed - 1/100 of a point behind - by Cindy Crawford, actually the No.1 choice for men. Third came Basinger, again scoring notably higher with men than women. And what fine taste these French people have: the top score for a Frenchwoman went to (dramatic pause) Emmanuelle Beart!

So as not to be too sexist I'll add that top man was Paul Newman, Vincent Perez led the French (Perez is only really known here for having been involved with Jacqueline Bisset) and Gerard Depardieu limped in 24th. With a 69-year old winner, and the average age of the top seven over 55, it does perhaps tend to suggest that more "mature" male TC readers might consider moving to France...

Her latest movie is "L'Enfer" (literally, 'Hell', though translated on the poster as 'Torment'), directed by the aforementioned Claude Chabrol, one of the few members of the French New Wave still active. In this psychological thriller, she is the wife of a hotelier who suspects her of infidelity; starting off just a tad jealous, he eventually ends up utterly paranoid, psychotic and possibly murderous - it's deliberately left open. The problem is that once this central theme is established, not much more needs to be said. Still, Francois Cluzet is excellent as the tortured husband and Beart again really doesn't have to do much, but she's suitably sparky (and wears some very sexy costumes!). It's a remake of an uncompleted film from 1964 - in the original, her role was played by Romy Schneider, who is one of Beart's heroines, and the person most responsible for making her want to go into cinema. Imagine the 'Psychiatrists' episode of 'Fawlty Towers' directed by Hitchcock, and you'll be heading in the right direction.

"One day I shall probably stop being an actress. At the moment I'm in a state of real happiness. Perhaps making movies is my way of driving at 200 km/h; this desire for danger which in fact everybody has. But at the bottom of it all, I'd rather save my characters" In addition to these six, there have been many Beart-films that have not been officially released here. This is kinda suspicious, given the quality of certain French movies that do get across, but there are probably good enough reasons somewhere. Her appearance in the title role of 'Marie Antoinette' a French TV movie, while entirely satisfactory in a let-them-eat-cake sort of way, would probably not be interesting to British audiences, much as a film about the English Civil War would be unlikely to get a release in France. [Note that Yanks no longer do 1776-movies since Limey Hugh Hudson, screwed up 'Revolution'. Now, any chance of a 'Nam pic, Hugh?!].

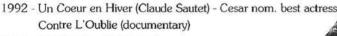
At time of writing, she's filming 'Une Femme Francaise', which reunites her for a third time with Daniel Auteuil, so going on past record, this probably has a reasonable chance of getting a UK release. Whatever the future might hold for Ms. Beart, she has already managed to prove that it is possible for a French actress to possess both ability and watchable breasts.

Emmanuelle Beart - Filmography

Born 14th August, 1963 in St. Tropez, daughter of singer-songwriter Guy Beart.

Films:

- 1976 Demain Le Momes (Jean Pourtale)
- 1983 Premier Desirs (David Hamilton)
- 1984 Un Amour Interdit (Jean-Pierre Dougnac) Cesar nom. best newcomer.
- 1985 L'Amour en Douce (Edouard Molinaro) Cesar nom. best newcomer.
- 1986 Manon des Sources (Claude Berri) Cesar, best supporting actress.
- 1987 Date With an Angel (Tom McLoughlin)
- 1988 A Gauche En Sortant de L'Ascenseur (Edouard Molinaro)
- 1989 Les Enfants du Desordre (Yannick Bellon) Cesar nom. best actress
- 1991 Le Voyage du Capitaine Fracasse (Ettore Scola) La Belle Noiseuse (Jacques Rivette) J'Embrasse Pas (Andre Techine)



1993 - L'Enfer (Claude Chabrol) Ruptures (Christine Citti)

1994 - Une Femme Française (Regis Warnier)

TV Work:

1983 - Raison Perdue (Michel Favert)

1984 - Et Demain Viendra Le Jour (Jean-Louis Lorenzi) La Femme De Sa Vie (Michel Favert)

1989 - Marie Antoinette (Caroline Huppert)

Theatre:

- 1986 La Repetition
- 1988 Double Inconstance
- 1989 Le Misanthrope



Blancmange!

Winona Ryder plays a hooker with a penchant for Shetland ponies, off on holiday with her sister (Phoebe Cates). The plane is shot down and they're forced to struggle through the jungle clad only in lingerie. They are caught by a band of renegade Nazis, led by Nastassja Kinski...

Fantasy? Yep. But those with active imaginations can get the dream closer to reality - through a game called 'Movie Mogul', for a few quid a week, you too can be a Hollywood producer.

Movie Mogul is a Play-by-Mail game, or PBM for short. For those unfamiliar with this concept, a short introduction may be useful (I'm tempted to say that Play-by-Mail games are games you play by mail...). Almost any game with well-defined turns can become a PBM. Chess is a good example: send a move to your opponent, he posts his response back. 'Diplomacy' is another: turns go to a central controller who resolves resulting conflicts. The intervals between turns make it easy to engage in the mutual plotting, conniving and back-stabbing which are the game's core.

PBM's have been around for a while - probably, almost as long as mail - and a mini-industry has sprung up running them, ranging from bedroom amateur to seriously professional. They had a phase of popularity in the late 80's, led by "It's a Crime!", which achieved notoriety as players played the parts of mob bosses and "won" by ordering their gangs to mug, rob and push drugs. This is one example of a game invented specifically as a PBM: most such fall into four categories: war; role-playing; space exploration; and sport simulations (such as fantasy football). However, Movie Mogul is really rather unique, which is why it's appearing in TC.

Frof	Name	Advance	% Fee	Per7
Act1:	Beat Takeshi	200,000	.0	82
Act2:	Yasuka Matsuda	120,000	0	70
Act3:	Steven Seagal	130,000	Ŏ	62
Act4:	Michiko Nishiwaki	130,000	O	70
Dir:	John Glenn	300,000	1	64
Edi:	Jack Hofftra	150,000	0	29
Cin:	Bill Butler	200,000	O	47
Wri:	Jim McLennan	0	0	44

Players in Movie Mogul run film production houses. Each turn, they can send in a film plan: 300-400 word synopsis, cast list, and budget breakdown. These are processed with the help of a computer, generating simulated box office figures based on genre, budget, certificate, stars, director, etc. You get back results showing how well everyone performed their jobs, plus a booklet containing all submitted synopses, press releases from the players, and a table giving summary data for every film. How to "win" is to a certain extent up to you: some want box-office smashes, others critical acclaim. The choice is yours, Emma Thompson or Sharon Stone?

It's not as easy as it sounds. Firstly, you start with just one million dollars, and rapidly learn that even low-grade stars like Tom Berenger want a <u>minimum</u> of \$500K. The first few movies, you'll end up directing and acting in yourself, simply because you can't afford anyone else. However, lack of budget is no barrier to imagination or invention! It's nice the fantasy actors seem to have no scruples: hire Roseanne Barr & Traci Lords to wrestle in mud, and they'll do it (for a price).

The major problem is other people. You want Winona Ryder desperately, but let's face it, who doesn't? If another producer offers her more, it's bye-bye Winona, hello Pia Zadora. Rule #1: "There's always someone with more money", and it is a problem that if outbid, a replacement choice is automatically selected for you, and might not match your mind's eye. Oddly, you can state backup directors and writers in case your top choice is unavailable, but can't do it for actors. And the choice of crew seems odd: I'd rather be able to specify soundtrack composers than editors, though it has to be said, my knowledge of technical credits has certainly improved - "Adam Greenberg? Oh, yeah, cinematographer on the Terminator movies".

In any case, other people are also half the fun, with sincerity, openness and honesty every bit as common as in Hollywood: studios happily snipe at each other in press releases, under the guise of anonymity. Plus, there's no reason why your mogul's name has to be the same as your real one: my company, Channel 83, is run by the irrepressibly psychotic Max Renn. It's made 40 films, has a bank balance around \$250m, and aims towards the 'exploitation' end of the market.

Basically, it's a game for those with imagination, though if you're short of ideas, you can 'buy' the rights to books, TV series, or just about anything else, and turn it into a movie. The potential is there for enormous profits - or enormous losses, the live-action version of 'Aeon Flux' is still spoken of in the same way as 'Ishtar' and 'Heaven's Gate'. Initially, the challenge is provided by the limited assets at your disposal, but eventually this really ceases to be significant. The main problem is then the struggle to come up with fresh ideas: difficult though it is to believe, there is a limit to how many times one can portray Emmanuelle Beart having strawberry cheesecake licked off her. And originality is valuable: while standard action fare does ok, most big hits come from ideas not so much in left field, as sitting in the top deck of the stands.

This barely scratches the surface of the game: also involved are things like investment, advertising, long-term contracts, film festivals, etc. I've been playing for over a year and haven't sussed out how it all fits together; Channel 83 have just come through a nightmare period of four total turkeys in three months, so I guess I still have a lot to learn. The entire universe is at your disposal - I'm still trying to work out the plot involving Nastassja, Winona, Phoebe...oh, and the blancmange too, of course. See you in Hollywood.

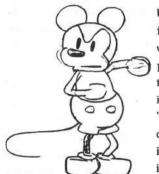
	Cert		Box Office S(million)	BOB	State	16
1	R	The Fight for Survival/Zephyr Films	233,963,104		6555	dez
2	R	The Tunnel/Twilight Films	228,408,160		2063	
3	R	Family Portrait/Somerset Films	130,715,664	3	4224	
1	R	Warzone:Gotham/New West Productions	79,783,384		6205	
5	R	The Chase/Knighthawk Entertainment	71,314,208			1
5	R	Robbing the Dead/Quicksilver Films	62,122,488		5090	7
7	PG	A Generation of One/Miskatonic Picts	45,285,456		7944	
	PG-13	Mogul Aid - The Movie/Phoenix Film	38,358,120		2728	
•	R	Unit 731/Fourth Man	37,194,788			
	G	The Hobbit/Trail Blazer Films	31,130,680		4699	
	PG	Ninth Wave/Red Blue Green Productions	27,820,736		4557	
2	R	Heroes/Clingg Films	18,670,470		989	L
3		Extremely Upset Tartan Zombies/Hammer	18,492,044		3181	
4	NC-17	Justice?/Odyssey International	14,159,921		3110	
5	R	Two Women in a Deli/Gaudete	13,730,324		815	5
6	R	Shadowplay/The Tavern Collective	10,240,413			
7	R	Edward is Dead/Greenfield Films	8,483,445		4089	
	R	Eye for an Eye/Caliban Productions	8,024,265		784	
9	PG-13	Celluloid Hell/Channel 83	1.455.069		480 4917	

Oh dear. Not the best of weeks for Channel 83...

[Contact Andrew Perry, 55 Martley Road, Worcester, WR2 6HG. Send an SAE for info, or if you've already been convinced, £5 gets you the necessary rule-books, cast/crew list and first turn. Further turns cost from £1.50, depending on synopsis length and other options you select]

Against Disney

Munich, Germany - The mayor of the Bavarian city of Dachau has banned Mickey Mouse and other American cultural emblems from fairgrounds, in a letter to the Bavarian Showman's Society made public on Wednesday. "Why in the world do Bavarian and German fairground entertainers find it necessary to decorate their worthy and highly valued businesses with these stupid and tasteless decorations and names?" Mayor Lorenz Reitmeier asked. Dachau would no longer tolerate fairground rides bearing such "idiotic" slogans and designs, Reitmeier said.



Unquestionably, Disney are <u>the</u> greatest producers of animated features. But recently, I've experienced growing disenchantment with the current state of the studio, partly based on their output, partly on the behaviour of the Disney corporation. Now, I could talk about concepts such as the proposed "Disney's America", including an attraction which, according to one executive, would "make you feel what it was like to be a slave" (a comment rapidly disowned!). But the TC libel lawyers are still working through the ideologically-loaded concepts that litter Disneyland, so let's start instead with an important subject in the Magic Kingdom: money.

In 1993, Disney's chairman Michael Eisner was paid a cool \$203m. Doubly stunning, when you realise the entire company's profit that year was less than \$300 million. Is this the same company who sent round that famous memo decrying the rise of the blockbuster and telling everyone to think small? Clearly the advice did not apply to Eisner's pay cheque. Indeed, Jeffrey Katzenberg, then head of Disney Studios, reputedly once declined the vice-president post as he'd then be legally obliged to disclose his (embarrassingly large) salary. This sort of hypocrisy may help explain why Disney, together with McDonald's and H.Ross Perot's EDS, rank high among companies I'd least like to see running the planet.

To discuss the studio's current state, we need an awareness of Disney's history. It may be hard to believe now, but there was a time when cartoons were for everyone: an evening at the movies would include a B-feature, a newsreel and, before the main attraction, almost always a cartoon. This could be sexy - or at least, as sexy as was permitted in those days - and violent almost to the point of sadism; many Warner Bros. and almost all of MGM's 'Tom and Jerry' cartoons have a level of aggression that Van Damme would find tough to match.

However, Disney were first to move into feature-film production, with high quality, feature length movies such as 'Snow White'. The horrendous costs involved discouraged others: most stuck to shorts, leaving Disney with a virtual monopoly on films. But given the frightening price of intensive full-scale cel animation, for a movie to be financially viable, it had to be seen by the biggest audience possible. A 'G' rating was therefore an economic necessity.

Walt did not, I feel sure, intend to drive animation down into the ghetto of family viewing, but because of this restriction, that's where it spent thirty years, in America at least. Other studios, unable to compete in quality, cut costs by simplifying backgrounds and reducing the effective frame rate. The world of animation entered what we might refer to as the Dark Ages, populated by such "masterpieces" as Scooby Doo and The Flintstones.

Today, Disney remain the number one studio in the world, a position they could use to help animation become an art form worthy of respect and success, both critical and popular. Instead, they still insist on that 'G' rating for every Disney animation, confusing family values and family entertainment. This stifles the creativity of some of the best animators in the worldit's as if someone had told Salvador Dali he could only paint portraits. Little wonder they rebelt witness the snatch of Jessica Rabbit (pun intended) in 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit?'. Until it was pulled, the laser-disc also had an advert saying 'For a good time, call Alyson Wonderland', giving chief executive Michael Eisner's home telephone number.



As an example, look at "Beauty and the Beast". It had moments of real tension between the two eponymous characters. But whenever the pair threatened to achieve the heights of real drama. on would come the talking crockery and dancing candlestick, destroying the whole effect. I'd love to see the Disney animators given full rein to unleash their talents on a more challenging subject than light romantic comedy.

Look through Disney's catalogue, you'll see a frightening percentage of public domain stories: "Aladdin", "Sleeping Beauty", "Snow White". Nor were the authors of "The Jungle Book", "Peter Pan" and "The Little Mermaid" around to negotiate good deals or complain if their stories were sanitised ("The Little Mermaid" doesn't have a happy ending - and have you read The Brothers Grimm? Not nice...). Even the supposedly original "Lion King" bears certain resemblances to Japanese series "Kimba the White Lion". This parsimonious approach extends further: Robin Williams played the part of the genie in 'Aladdin' for a minuscule fraction of his standard fee but Disney still broke their agreement by using his voice for a burger commercial.

Such morality is scarcely unique. 'Aladdin' saw a rapid change to the lyrics of one song after complaints from the Arab community, and Disney also took the unprecedented step of withdrawing and changing all the prints of a live-action film recently, after a couple of kids were run over imitating a stunt therein, where people lay down in the middle of the freeway. The sensible reaction might have been to enquire precisely what the victims thought would happen if they lay down in the middle of the freeway, but once again, Disney were the caring studio. 'screw art, let's be socially responsible.

Or at least, pretend to be socially responsible. Much was made of the fact that Belle in 'Beauty and the Beast' read books (wow, welcome to the 20th century), while the bad guy was a jock, brawn and no brain. However, it was badly blown in the final reel when the beast turned into an almost exact reproduction of the villain, only to have Belle swoon over him like any other bimbo. If there's one thing I hate more than political correctness, it's fake political correctness.



Quick question. Name the hero in '101 Dalmatians'. Tough, huh? On the other hand, no points for remembering who the villainess was! It's not generally known that Cruella de Ville was, to a large extent, inspired by Myra Hindley - the blond hair, the cruelty, the fur coats. Okay, actually this is complete fabrication, but the very fact that it seemed vaguely plausible, even for a single sentence, tells you something about Disney villains. The heroes and heroines are nowhere near as memorable, because they are all ground down to the point of blandness.

Things would be ok, if Disney were just one colour in a spectrum of animation studios. But while in live-action movies, there exists a rainbow of producers with almost anything possible, virtually every feature film animation made in the States over the past thirty years has been "Disneyfied". Chief among the D-clones is Don Bluth, an ex-Disney animator who now makes features which are indistinguishable from the original product, except by their technical inferiority. In this country, it's Nick Park and his bloody plasticine penguins that occupy the same position, with their relentless repetition of a bland comedy theme.

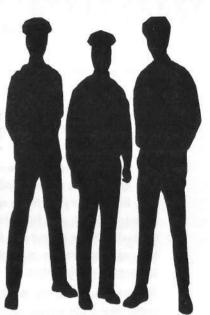
However, there has recently been an upsurge of hope; names like Plimpton and Chung have shown that there are still animators willing to work outside the system, and have shown that there is more to the field than banal rehashes of familiar tales. Unfortunately, it may be a while before anyone gives them \$20 million dollars for a movie. The major cause for optimism is that of the trio responsible for Disney's "success", Katzenberg and Wells have gone, and Eisner recently underwent quadruple bypass heart surgery. I wouldn't sell the man any life insurance.

But just as non-stop pizza deadens the palate, so Disney's unending supply of cloying entertainment is detrimental to movie-goers in general, and animation in particular.

Spirit of enterprise 2: boys (d girl) in blue

Police poseurs in Chinese cop couture

Beijing - China's streets teem with uniforms but checks in one major city alone found only seven of 37 people in police uniforms had the right to wear them, a report in the official China Daily said. "People from factory guards to minor officials and drivers to travelling salesmen are defying a state ban on unauthorised wearing of (police) uniforms. Some have used them to get involved in crime," it said, adding the problem is nationwide. Fake cops are also obtaining police cars, allowing them to race through traffic with impunity while tending to their blackmail and prostitution operations, it said.



Police try to shake down...their boss

Lagos - Two policemen in Nigeria's Kano state ended up with more than they bargained for when they stopped a private car at a roadblock late at night and demanded money. Nigerian radio said police commissioner Haliru Zakari was travelling in the car with his wife. Zakari, who was not amused, sacked the two men and warned other officers under his command against terrorising the public. Newspapers say policemen in Nigeria are owed 3 months' salary arrears. Motorists in cities say officers at checkpoints can be quite forceful in demanding "kola" (gifts).

Policewoman offers sex in uniform

Rome - Italian police who raided a massage parlour where sex was on sale were surprised to find one of their female colleagues among the prostitutes, Il Manifesto reported on Thursday. The woman cashed in on her double life by offering sex in uniform at prices of around one million lire (£400) per session at the Turin brothel, the daily added. She now faces police disciplinary proceedings and possible criminal charges.

Bizarre murder defence?

Bangkok - Seven Thai policemen have been charged with robbing and murdering at least ten ethnic Chinese tourists. The gang preyed on Chinese-speaking tourists and may have killed as many as 40 people, police said. Victims were befriended by a Chinese-speaking member of the gang, Corporal Somchai Opaso, then lured into cars on the pretext of going sightseeing before being robbed and shot. "I am a junior policeman and earn very little... The police department should look after the police," gang member Somchai said. "I can only warn those responsible for tourists to look after them better."

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Nothing in Between

by DF Lewis

Virgins don't have nipples on their breasts.

There were two men in the back room and one of them had come out with a statement which made the other realise that this was not the routine conversation at all, but one where nothing could be proved or disproved — and very little in between. And he who had spoken took off his hat and continued . . .

My first love was my mother. She was also the first to tell me of the likes of God — a real eye-opener. As a baby, I used to crawl over her body like a large pink fleshy spider with half its legs missing. She took me into the bath with her, where I sucked at her useless paps. I shared her bed, because my cot was far too small for both of us. It was easier to kneel and pray by a proper bed, in any event, whilst she fed me tampons like holy wafers.

My father had died the day I was born and was passed from coffin to coffin like a hot potato, until finally stuck fast up the chimney flue where, I was told, he became the corpse of Santa Claus — but, like all children, I thought it all sounded pretty hollow.

My second love was my sister. She was older by a long chalk and she took over where mother left off. She told me that virgins cannot grow nipples on the boobies and that was why hers were unfinished moulds of semi-solid cones, the heavy-duty crucifix dangling between each one. But it was her face I remember most, like a flat-faced vixen, with a widow's peak and eyebrows which crawled about across her forehead from ear to ear.

Being told my sister used to change my nappies, I felt certain she must have innocently examined my privities which a baby knows no reason to conceal. A little later, when I was fully potty-trained, she invaded my secret places to see if her first impression could be believed. She tried to tongue me up, but I had no ulterior motive to respond. In fact, I recall being surprised that she apparently wanted to suck out my weewees, because what else was that part of my body for?

She showed me her own nether regions but, again, I had no interest in them. I merely wanted to play ludo or snakes and ladders. . . .



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However, time is a destroyer or healer of all things. Both of us, under our mother's very nose, dilly-dallied behind curtains and, as the clock struck five for high tea, almost reached fulfilment.

But the problem of breasts remained. Even I, a boy, had vestigial nipples, whilst she couldn't even grow the eeni-meaniest end products upon her swollen mammaries. She'd stare at herself in the mirror for hours, stripped to the waist, like a snake-charmer humming tunes that fitted more with the dark sweaty seed-beds of working-class people than the brightly lit chambers of the civilised world of nobility and nonchalance to which I was accustomed.

Technically, she told me, she was still a virgin since the congress between us so far had been innocent. I was now mature enough to suggest she obtain a boy friend, but she said she didn't want complete strangers mucking about inside her. I was not fully knowledgeable about the ways of the world, so I could only agree with her. Keep it all in the family and any outsiders at arm's length. So I tried to muscle up, but no amount of foreplay gave me sufficient get-up-and-go.

She tried fingers, every finger of her hand; even the coal-tongs hanging by the roaring log fire in the lounge were brought into service. But her titties, although ripe enough, did not nipple forth into what she considered to be her Godgiven birthright.

The man finished talking, a look of resignation on his face. The listener responded by pointing out that virginity had nothing to do with nipples and, come to think of it, the sister could never have been a virgin in the first place, because there were no such things as virgins, anyway. It was all a myth since God had fucked them all before they were born.

The main speaker replaced his hat and left the smoke-filled room, whilst he sadly recalled overhearing, all those years ago, the muffled prayers of his sister to that same God for a spanking new pair of nipples in her next Christmas stocking. His eyes were full of tears, since he now began to realise that his dearest sister had been little better than circus freak, with nothing between the ears.

The one who had listened so patiently, upon trudging home through the crisp and even snow, smiled to himself. He wondered:- If the speaker's father was really Santa Claus, who was Santa Claus?



American Animation Round 3: Tiny Toon adventures

Since my first encounter with the TTA movie, 'How I Spent My Vacation' (see TC12), this has been one of the few TV programs I've made any significant strenuous attempt to catch. If you haven't seen it - likely, as ITV file it away in the children's slot - the central characters and themes are mostly updated versions of the old Warner Bros Looney Tunes ones. Thus, Buster Bunny is a 90's version of Bugs, with the same street smarts and wise-cracks, and the supplier to Wile E.Coyote, Acme, now operate a home shopping channel. However, there are additional characters such as Montana Max, an archetypal rich brat; his bodyguard is a white Doberman called 'Arnold' who speaks with a strangely familiar middle-European accent...

One difference is that while the old crew were almost without exception male (despite Bugs' fondness for cross-dressing), equality of the sexes has hit even the toon world. As a foil for Buster, there's now Babs Bunny - "no relation" - and Pepe Le Pew is replaced by Fifi, as these days Pepe's activities would get him slapped with a sexual harassment suit. The basic psychology, however, remains the same.

But the undisputed queen of Acme Acres is Elfnyra, the most wonderful and frightening of the new characters. Best described as 'She-Wolf of the Primary School', she sports a skull-and-crossbones hair-clip and can even send the Tasmanian Devil spinning off in terror, by the simple expedient of treating him like a soft toy. Her perpetual obsession is "furries"; any animal (and thus most of the TTA cast) are fair game to be snatched and smothered in affection: "I want my very own animal to love and hug and perform animal experiments on".



Being a Spielberg production and a Warner Brothers series, TTA is free to plough into vast herds of cultural icons with tongue firmly in cheek. This was most obvious in 'Batduck', parodying a certain superhero who battles villains over...T-shirt merchandising rights? With references to 'Dork Knight', and a partly-obscured graffito on a wall reading "Who watches the W...", it may be closer to Frank Miller than Tim Burton has yet managed to get.

Luckily, traditional animation concerns i.e. gratuitous violence aren't forgotten. Take 'The Anvil Chorus': after repeated demands to be the star, Plucky Duck finally gets his wish. Unfortunately, the plot involves him being hit with anvils in every conceivably amusing way. This abuse is punctuated with

an interlude explaining the history of the anvil, a commercial for the Acme Anvil Company, and a protest by a spokeswoman for Adults Against Funny Cartoons, complaining about the level of violence. Her diatribe is interrupted by, yep, an anvil landing on her head.

Admittedly, it has good days and bad days. Part of the reason for this is obscured in Britain by an odd quirk; we always get the same credits (trivia note: they're taken from episode 108), instead of them varying from episode to episode. This is detrimental in at least three ways:

- a) it fails to give the cast proper acknowledgement, which is a shame, not least because it can include some famous names, such as Tim Curry, playing Prince Charles?
- b) it removes the delight of spotting the different in-jokes hidden in every title sequence. This is taken to it's inevitable, ultimate conclusion in 'How I Spent My Vacation', where the end was more like a series of gags with the odd credit here and there
- and c) hides the fact that different episodes are animated by different companies. Generally the best are done by Tokyo Movie Shinsha, one of Japan's leading animation houses, who work from American storyboards (leading to debates over whether Tiny Toons can be classed as anime!). Irrelevantly, I've seen an episode dubbed into Japanese: a salutory experience, perfect lip-synch and superb voice acting. Why can't we get dubs of that quality here? Of course, I can't really comment on the accuracy of the script...

But even at it's most moral, it remains fascinating due to the OTT approach. When Plucky Duck stole a choccie bar, his guilty conscience took on the appearance of something suspiciously like a bad trip; I say "suspiciously", as director Art Vitello worked on "Fritz the Cat", so is bound to be aware of how many illicit pharmaceuticals make five!

One episode was actually written by three teenage fans of the show, who sent an unsolicited script to their local station, who promptly filed it in an official folder and fowarded it to Amblin, the producers. The author-ettes were then invited in, and to cut a long story short, their episode ended up getting made. However, as the in-joke at the end was something like "please send all unsolicited scripts to...some other show", I think it's a 'mistake' unlikely to be repeated.

The TTA series led to a spin-off show, 'Animaniacs', starring the Warner Bros (and Warner Sister), three...beings who inhabit the studio back lot. This is perhaps even more overtly non-child orientated, with the core frequently being movie parodies of such kiddie fare as 'Apocalypse Now', 'The Birds' and 'Goodfellas', the last named starring three pigeons and retitled 'Goodfeathers'. While occasionally hitting the mark with precision, the shows are padded out with less amusing material, which dilutes the overall effect a little too much.

Despite this recent aberration, for my money TTA is one of the best, and thanks to it's time-slot, is quite probably also the most subversive of the new wave of American animation yet to be screened in Britain.





While I definitely remember my first trip to the drinking establishment known as Brown's, it's difficult to work out where I originally heard about it. Maybe it's ingrained on the collective race memory of those who work in the City of London; I certainly don't recall being told. The first visit to said location came courtesy of a couple of guys at work, whom I'll call Nick and Dave - whether these are their real names depends on how much they pay me - who used to vanish every Friday lunchtime for "a game of pool". I was eventually invited along, only to discover that their idea of "a game of pool" seemed to involve standing around watching cute girlies take their clothes off. But, hey, I'm willing to adapt.

Brown's, y'see, is a pub with entertainment, where lunchtimes and evenings, a congregation gathers to worship at the temple of Venus. But what distinguishes the place is how remarkably unsleazy the whole affair is. The Soho cliché - as exposed by unimaginative tabloid TV shows - is 250 quid drinks, enforced withdrawals from cash machines, etc. Brown's proves this need not be the case: there's no entrance fee, and drinks are pretty standard City prices (though I appreciate that to Northern readers, two quid a pint is sufficient to bring on apoplexy anyway). I suspect the reason behind this is licensing, though the exact legal status of the place is uncertain, anyway. The tight-assed City of Westminster council would certainly require a public entertainment licence, and probably a ultra-costly sex show licence too - thus Peter Stringfellow's attempts to open something sounding slightly similar to Brown's in central London are unlikely to be prove as amusing or good value.

However, out in the wilds of the East End, no-one seems to bother. Or perhaps the authorities realise that when strip-clubs are outlawed, only outlaws will run strip-clubs; better to have a civilised place than one run by a Kray wanna-be. This seems to me to be an enlightened view, as Brown's hurts no-one: it gets increased custom; the girls make more in an evening than they could generally expect to earn in a week, and we get to see pretty girls take their clothes off, without all the expense and tedious effort of talking to them, buying dinner, etc. All-round benefits, as far as I can tell.

Due to the relaxed attitude of the authorities, the area is something of a Golden Triangle, with at least three in a 200-yard radius, though Brown's is the undisputed champion. These included the well-named 'Spread Eagle' pub, whose most memorable act was notable less for beauty than an uncanny resemblance to Edwina Currie. Last time I passed, the place was boarded up, but I wasn't quite able to decide whether this meant it was closed, or was just some new form of post-holocaust decor. All these places share a marginal sting in the tail, in that between sets, the girls meander round with a pint class, soliciting contributions. You don't have to give anything, but c'mon, we're not cheapskates; it's their only pay-cheque, and girls displaying their all for your delectation and delight surely deserve something in exchange. A quid per request is standard; fail to chip in and, well, the girls can do a very effective job of making you feel like something scraped off a shoe. Expect to be hit half a dozen times over an evening, and it's still pretty good value.

The girls work in pairs, alternating their acts. The stage is chest high, maybe 25 foot long by 10 deep, with a ledge on the outside for the pints of those skilled enough to edge their way to the front. [Generally, the height and size of the stage is a good guide to the quality of the joint: seedier establishments have a lower or smaller stage, and some truly low-brow places don't have one at all]. Each girl generally performs four times: the first and third are relatively mild, minimally clad dance routines, while the second and fourth are not. The content seems to be left to individual girls, but are generally at the hard edge of soft-core, for want of a better phrase (firmcore? floppycore? crumblecore?) - just about anything short of actual penetration goes. I've even had the unquestionably novel experience of seeing a girl mime selections from 'Grease', taking "lip-synch" to whole new dimensions, if you know what I mean, and I think you do. Prince, Madonna and Enigma are perennial favourites as far as music goes, but I've heard everything from Tom Waits to The Human League.

What makes a good stripper? That nebulous term "charisma" is probably more important than anything else. The best aren't usually the prettiest, who seem to think "I'm here and I'm beautiful, what more do you want?". The less stunning apply more effort, and the results can be startling: "We try harder", to borrow an ad-line. The key talent is being able to convince each and every member of the audience that you are taking your clothes off for them alone. Important here is the viewer's attitude; as in the cinema, you have to be capable of suspending your disbelief. To gain the full sock-knocking-off effect, you must be utterly convinced that when the babe gazes deep into your eyes, she means it. Of course, two seconds later, someone else is getting the treatment, but that's show-business, and you can play the same game - in five minutes, you're looking into another girl's eyes. This must be the ultimate open relationship.

A pair of independently suspensioned hips are also useful, the sort only loosely attached to the rest of the body (cf. Kate Bush). Otherwise, there seems to be no obvious common factor; tall, short, young, old, blonde, brunette, redhead, it doesn't make much difference. But the best raise taking clothes off to an art-form worthy of comparison with ballet dancing; it's sometimes hard to link the girl you see slipping quietly out the side door at the end with the angelic creature on the stage, who could probably teach De Niro a thing or two about method acting.

A bird in the hand, or two in the bush?

My experience of Brown's was an interesting and enlightening one, but perhaps for the wrong reasons. While the evening was certainly highly enjoyable, having a few beers and watching a couple of young, naked ladies dancing about on a stage, to me it was far from an erotic experience. On the one hand, perhaps my feminist sympathies - as mild as they are - wouldn't let me take pleasure from such one-sided entertainment; i.e. a large group of men standing around and watching a woman stripping, etc. While it might generally be considered grossly degrading to the women (and to "woman"), to me it also, paradoxically, degraded the male viewers - transfixed. tongues out, salivating like a bunch of dogs, virtually brought to their knees by the sight of "sex". It was often more fascinating to look around the room at the audience, at these faces, for amusement than at the act itself. How weak men can be, believing in such superficial illusions.

That's what it's all about: illusion. What prevented Brown's from being even remotely erotically stimulating to me was probably the incomplete nature of this illusion. It was perfectly clear the female performers were there for the employment, and the money - coming round with a glass to collect financial contributions hardly helps you forget what they are really there for, whatever their practised smiles may say on the stage. And when the show's over, you see them get their clothes on and toddle off home, the apparent "sexual excitement" utterly extinguished. I would suggest that other forms of "pornography" are far more effective, since whatever the reality of the sexual state of the performers - whether they are really enjoying it or not the illusion of the acts and the performers' enjoyment is more complete. With Brown's, it is perhaps seeing "behind the scenes" and being reminded of the financial relations involved that enhances its falsity and undermines its erotic potential. Although I don't claim that all performers in hardcore (for instance) actually enjoy their work, at least the illusion is preserved that they do, and we see nothing to suggest otherwise. Unlike at Brown's...

more than "Phwoar!", but for a Southern pub, this counts as unprecedented levels of informality. It helps that to reach it requires moderately serious effort, thus only true students of beauty make the effort So behaviour is generally highly civilised, to the point of chivalry; "Thou shalt not touch the girls on stage" commandment #1, obeyed by virtually all, even when there are interesting bits of babeshaped anatomy within licking distance. Precisely what would happen if someone got overheated, I don't care to think, but peer pressure seems to be a very effective restraint. Noone really wants to risk the

wrath of fifty cavemen, denied

their gynaecology lesson.

Brown's position on the fringe of the City means customers

are a strange mix of suits and

donkey jackets, one of the few

pubs where both are found.

But despite this flammable

cocktail, the phenomenally

high levels of testosterone presumably present, and the

alcohol factor. I've never seen

anuthing even approaching

customers. Indeed, it's one of

the few pubs in London where

I've talked to people I didn't

know - admittedly, not much

aggression

between

A.W.

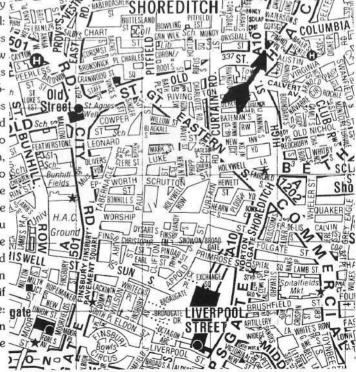


Most people attend in groups, though a few, generally pretty sad, individuals come alone, then stand around reading newspapers between the acts. Personally, I garner much amusement from taking visiting friends to Brown's, and monitoring their reactions. Watching a formerly streetwise, cool dude get reduced to a pile of shambling drool is a salutary experience. Even better is seeing an alleged 'New Man' revert to a more normal condition: it's amazing how much can be undone by a 'Prudence' or 'Jennifer' set to stun...

But I carefully ration my visits, because it's a fair trek, and part of the appeal lies in the delight of rediscovery. I'd hate to grow a tolerance to cute girls undressing, a fate which seems to have befallen the DJ. He exhibits a frighteningly impervious air, far more interested in cueing up the next record than anything the girls were doing - terminal Beauty Shock, I imagine.

In these days of increasing political correctness, it is nice to know that part of London remains proudly and defiantly non-PC. And hopefully while Browns' is open - pause to switch into Winston Churchill mode - the forces of darkness shall never, ever prevail!

Brown's - 1 Hackney Rd. London, E2. Tel: 0171-739-4653. Times are uncertain: I know they operate evenings during the week from 6lunchtimes Mon-Sat from 1-3. I'd recommend getting to the place about 8 pm. as that allows you to catch the end of one shift, and the start of the next, thereby letting you maximise Quotient! But be warned !!SWA that Friday evenings can be very busy, so avoid if possible. Nearest tube: Old Street, about a ten minute walk away. See map for details. \rightarrow]



Different Strokes

A Users' Guide to the Top Shelf by Rik Rawling.



My first exposure to the then-unknown female form was thumbing through the pages of my brother's "nuddy books" in the hazy morning light when I thought he was asleep. I think these early experiences of hushed secrecy and (literally) dawning revelation have shaped the way I look at these publications today. When I go into a newsagent and scan across The Top Shelf, I feel that childlike sense of mystery and wonder flush through me every time. Having sampled virtually all the legal variations on the available themes, I've obviously found personal favourites, and quite a few that are nothing but a sad waste of trees.

Based on years of dogged research, I've compiled the following, which is by no means exhaustive, but hopefully gives those about to embark on adventures into the SuperUnknown some pointers to keep them out of the ditch that is Readers' Wives.

Level 1: Escort/Razzle/Parade/Park Lane/Adult Fantasy

This is by no means the general initiatory level. I usually equate these sort of mags with that mythical archetype: the Dirty Old Raincoat. Something about these titles implies that you've sunk to a level below that which you originally had your sights on - a bit like shopping at Poundstretcher. The women who appear in these mags are of two types:

a) Readers' Wives: these are either home shot Polaroids - the favoured hardware of home pomographers, avoiding as it does those embarrassing trips to Boots - emphasising that old truism, 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder', or special photoshoots when the least foul are invited in for a proper session on satin sheets with what appears to be a Kodak Brownie.



b) "Proper" "models" that can't quite cut the mustard to get into Mayfair or Men Only. The shots are usually ineptly staged, poorly framed and reproduced on the crappiest sort of glossy paper. alows almost Pink flesh fluorescently from the pages, and the overdone make-up and Ann Summers underwear lends the entire venture air of desperation and silliness.

The letters and 'Confession' stories tend to be of the "Scrubber has three truckers" variety, with heavy emphasis on multiple penetration and oral sports. These scenarios can be easily imagined taking place in grotty front rooms amidst crusty coffee cups and furniture smelling of old dogs.

About as arousing as shit on your shoes - or if this is not clear enough, let's say it explicitly: you can have these, I don't want 'em.

Level 2: Men Only/Knave/Model Directory/Men's World/Club International

Now we're talking. Really good-looking models ranging from drop-dead gorgeous to eminently agreeable 'girl next door' types. Well-staged poses with appealing (and occasionally bizarre) backdrops, and good graphic layout allowing the eye to roam freely and smoothly from page to page. The best 'posers' appear regularly in the different titles (changing names with each appearance) and 'seem' to develop a genuine fan-following amongst the regular letter-writers. All yer basic fetishes are catered for - lingerie; high heels; bikinis; leather and rubber - with occasional interesting variations. As for the letters and "Ladies Write" (I'm not fooled for a second), they're quite varied in their settings but usually degenerate into lively oral and doggy sessions. Some titles have special features like agony aunts, but my favourite, "Men's World" has the amazing 'You Lucky Git' where an alleged reader writes in and gets the chance to pose near naked on a bed with one of the mag's regular "Stable of Stunnas". At the end of each session, there's a picture of next month's model and an invite for readers to write in. Basically, if you're lucky, you get to pull the model's clarts off with your teeth, or lie under her while she squats suggestively on your boxer shorts/Y-front trapped member. It doesn't look too awful... I'd be half tempted myself, if I got a chance to cavort with 'Amy'/'Patricia', the one true goddess.

As these are the most popular titles, they are the most widespread in circulation, and therefore the ones 8-year old boys are most likely to find in bushes, or under big brother's LP's. Basically, we've all seen 'em and we like 'em. Unless your tastes are particularly 'different' or you really do like the cottage-cheese thighs and bulldogs-licking-piss-from-a-nettle faces in Razzle, then you can't go wrong here.

Level 3: Mayfair/Playboy/Penthouse/Hustler

Not much different to level 2 really, but these are the titles that really hang on the "Men's Magazines" euphemism, by featuring articles on vintage cars, windsurfing and Dr. Crippen, along with woefully inept, unfunny, comedy skits and the obligatory Hunt Emerson fan-club illos. Playboy and Penthouse play on the 'celebrity nude' deal, which can be anything from a proper photo-session with Pam Anderson (yes!) to fuzzy shots of someone who might be Madonna on a beach that could be Copacabana or Cleethorpes; the former has a nasty habit of furning up on British shelves in an emasculated format, with a sticker on the front saying "certain pages have been removed for legal reasons". Make of that what you will...

Mayfair has some good models in more 'tasteful' than level 2 poses, but the American mags really go for air-brushed Barbie perfection, and after a while you get tired of the preposterously tiny 'cute' noses, sultry heavy eye-lashes and strawberry blonde bangs, and long for a dark broody Amazonian fire queen to spice things up. Hustler is almost a law unto itself, but I include it here because of it's origins and price. It's articles are actually of interest to thinking humans and the photo sessions go for a no-nonsense, splayed-legs, split-beaver approach (known in pro video as 'The American Shot') which leaves nothing to the imagination, thereby losing it for me. Stories are your standard 'Nympho Wants It' type, and serve to fill in the gaps. Overall, not bad, but expensive. Give me "Men's World" any day.

Level 4: Playbirds XXX/Whitehouse/Derriere/Rustler

Definitely not in Kansas anymore, Toto. Pricter again than Playboy and Penthouse, these titles point to the darker fringes of what 'porn' can be to some people. What you get for your extra cash is a massive reduction in production values, but thicker, shiner, wipe-clean pages (ahem!) and occasional card covers. Some of the models are ex Men Only stable, but some are so rough that they obviously bypassed all that and went straight out to the edge of the map.

Graphic, gynaecological close-ups of almost painfully splayed vaginas, simulated lesbian licking sessions and splayed buttocks to reveal rosy pink anal ducts. Occasionally, you'll see dildos in here, but never fully inserted. Once upon a time, Whitehouse was notorious at our school for featuring a session where two fat old bags reamed each other out with a broom handle. It doesn't go quite that far these days, but I still find their contents so blatant and crass that I have to feel sorry for those out there who can only get the blood rushing with this sort of material.

Absolutely no imagination is required.

Level 5: ???

This is the far fringe of newsagent availability as far as porn is concerned. Expect to pay around a fiver for dull-looking girls, wearing back of the market underwear, in simulated sex scenes with building site rejects sporting penii flaccid enough to hang below the crucial 45 degree legal limit. Looking at the girls and the settings (like a wing of Auschwitz painted by blind children), it's easy to see why these men have got the flop on.

Beyond this sort of crap, you're into sub/dom SM territory, contact mags, and the sort of shrink-wrapped strangeness that regularly gets advertised in 'The Sport', as there is an enormous range of what might be called "specialist" material, going down to incredibly refined levels. I can see the possible market place for a magazine catering to those who like Oriental females; I can just about cope with the existence of a publication specialising in women without hair on their genitals; but the existence of "Shaved Orientals" magazine leaves me shaking my head in awed disbelief. My interest is definitely not picqued by 'Dwarf Sex', 'Golden Shower', or the well-known fuck mags like 'Color Climax'. I leave that to the connoisseurs.

So there you have the top shelf as I see it. However, everyone has their own definition of pornography, be it good or bad. I just like looking at pictures of women. But if your interest has been triggered, and you do intend to reach 'up there' for something, just remember:

This is not a library. If you do not intend to purchase, please do not read.

Thank You



Blood and Black Lace

In the preceding pages, Rik has given us a introduction to life on the shelf, for at least the male side of the genre. The selection for the fairer sex is a lot more restricted, especially in the 'pictorial magazine' market. There are several possible reasons for this: the stigma attached to buying them, the plethora of women's magazines which already deal with sex to a greater or lesser decree (no-one who has ever read the aptly-named "More!" could possibly need to find out any more about the subject), or the daft laws in this country which equate an blood pressure increase in a certain organ with obscenity. Whatever the reason, it's a fact that the sales of the few titles there are do not come close to living up to their masculine cousins.

However, in one market, women's "erotica" (god, don't you love a good euphemism) has stormed ahead of men's. In the paperback book world, series like 'Black Lace' have achieved highly respectable sales figures, and according to informed sources (hi, Mum!) evaporate off the shelves of libraries, even in the far North of Scotland. Again, the reasons are complex; women have always been avid readers of "romantic" books, the Mills & Boon imprint being merely the best-known, and this provides an easy jump-off point for something...harder.

In the interests of research, I subjected myself to reading one of them. I appreciate that to some extent this is a pointless exercise: I'm not the target market for this kind of literature, so it's a bit like me carrying out a tampon trial. But curiosity finally overcame these qualms - anything that might help to get a handle on the psyche of the female race (an endless, fruitless task) deserves some attention.

And so one night, I settled down with a Wall of Voodoo LP, and started reading 'Gemini Heat' by Portia da Costa (I wonder if that's her real name?). This was a random choice - it could have been "Fiona's Fate" by Frederica Alleyn (ditto), or even "Avalon Nights" by Sophie Danson, (which does show a spark of punning ingenuity in its title, being about King Arthur and his men) - and I appreciate that a sample of one is maybe not statistically significant, but life's too short. I wanted to find out if the publishers had succeeded in their quest to "provide the brightest, best-written, bonk-filled books you can buy".

The first point of similarity between male and female porn is that bad writing seems to be a universal constant. Ok, I appreciate we are talking about a genre where implausibilities are as common as verbs, still...have a representative quote from the first couple of pages:

"Only an idiot or a masochist would come to an exhibition of erotic art when she was dying of frustration. But what else could you do when you were alone on your birthday and fed up?"

Oh, I dunno; take in a movie, get a carry-out, phone up some friends. As the rest of the book reveals, the heroine would seem to fall into both the categories mentioned: idiot <u>and</u> masochist. I say heroine, though as the title implies, there are two, identical twin sisters. The main male character is a bisexual, half-Japanese billionaire whom the girls take turns having sex with. As you do.

This lack of writing credibility is perhaps not surprising. At the back of the book is a questionnaire, where readers are invited to tick boxes and mark up their favoured characters and settings i.e. medieval, barbarian, Victorian, modern, futuristic. I can see these responses getting poured into the back of a computer somewhere, which then spits out plot synopsis to Portia, Frederica and Sophie for their next novels. Echoes of '1984' may be ringing round your brain at this point; do the authors exist at all, or are they just the result of a Julia somewhere, pulling switches?

Ok, while they may not be the "best-written", I can't argue that they are most definitely "bonk-filled". The trio go at it like knives from about page seven; without question, a task helped by the fact that the twins appear to be a single massive erogenous zone, and are capable of climaxing at the drop of a pheromone:

"And she orgasmed again from the intoxicating scent of his body and his intimate wildflower cologne"

Never mind Linda Lovelace, this woman appears to have her clitoris stuck somewhere up her nose.



There are some significant differences in the type of sex scenes present here, from 'male' stories. The latter are fiercely heterosexual; in 'Gemini Love', a rather freer approach is taken. This isn't necessarily a problem - I'm not averse to a spot of all-girl action - but the live sex show involving two men was skimmed over rather hurriedly, and I would also speed past a scene in any male-oriented story with detailed descriptions of the hero masturbating!

Perhaps the most startling point of note was the almost universal presence of what can only be described as rape fantasies. Virtually every sexual encounter in the book begins with the female partner being unwilling yet ends with her begging for more. In the world of 'Gemini Heat', "no" does <u>not</u> mean "no", it's far more likely to mean "yes...Yes!...YES!!". Now, this is only a single book, and it is possibly just catering to a specific group of women who ticked the "Submission" box, but I still find it hard to comprehend. I imagine the major appeal is that with control taken away, you can do whatever "bad things" you want, without having the associated angst; it's not your fault. Despite this, I confess to feeling a certain guilt myself, at reading these sections.

However, it's all in the mind, and if there's one thing which I'm sure of, it's that any sane person will be able to separate reality from fantasy - despite the innumerable differences between the sexes, I'm sure this applies just as much to women as men! So I'm more than happy to write "Gemini Heat" off as harmless rubbish, no worse than it's male equivalent - but certainly not any better.

But, as mentioned, I'm not what you would call the expected readership - so I passed the book on to a reviewer with the correct chromosomes...

If you want to have any kind of a sex life, there are two key pieces of information; what turns you on, and what turns your (intended) partner on. The difference between male and female eroticism has always intrigued me. Why is it that watching blue movies reduces women to fits of giggles, while the men sit there and discuss the quality if the shot? And the giggling is nothing to do with embarrassment, it's to do with the

50. When Jim asked me to review 'Gemini Heat' for him. I willingly accepted but purely in the interests of research you understand. What did I expect? Best case was that the book would be imaginatively and well written, focusing on mood rather than detail, with positive female role models to relate to. Worst case — a regurgitation of stereotypes, clichés, and male orientated situations, going for the easy marks.

complete absurditu

What did I get? Two women, identical twins, and a charismatic and mysterious man who takes control of their lives - exactly whose fantasy are we dealina with here? The book is unimaainative and poorly written. stretching my patience with its absurdity to the limit. These two innocent girls, who are so awakened by the on-sowonderful Jake, just happen to have a collection of modern porn literature hidden on the bookcase. I think not, and that's just one example.

Every time the writing was broad enough and simple enough to allow my own imagination to Rick in, some absurd and out of place detail would intrude and bring me firmly back to reality (I did try to get into the book in the right spirit, honest, but it was hard work!).

At the end of the book there's a questionnaire, a bit of a survey to check on what the readers want. 'Gemini Heat' seems to have taken the list of possibilities and tried to tick off as many as possible, even down to a small interlude written from the male point of view. It doesn't work, and there's absolutely no reason to suspend your belief and get involved.

There may be those of you who believe I read this book expecting it to abysmal (and I wouldn't have been disappointed). These things often turn into self-fulfilling (singularly prophecies appropriate given the subject matter), but I can assure you I approached the subject with an open mind. I am happy to be tested on this; if you can suggest a book which would fit my best case scenario. I will undertake to review it in an open and honest manner, no holds barred (burely in the interests of research of course).

As for 'Gemini Heat', it's written for people with no imagination — Illy Cooper's books are more erotic. I don't know who the target audience is, but it's not me.

CAT

Life imitating art



Heartbreak leads to death on demand (I Hired a Contract Killer)

Athens - A Greek dentist found dead after being shot at point-blank range paid an assassin to kill her because she could not cope with her husband's extra-marital affair. Athens police said Georgia Vagena, 41, persuaded Mattheos Monselas to kill her for an unspecified amount of money. "She did not have the courage to commit suicide and

persuaded Monselas that killing her would be the only way to solve her family problems," police said. "A few days before the murder she had told a psychologist that she had finally found somebody who had agreed to kill her. The therapist unfortunately did not believe her."

Love-stricken man digs up fiancee's corpse (Nekromantik)

Rio de Janeiro - A 21-year-old Brazilian, unable to recover from the accidental death of his fiancee, confessed to having sex with the woman's corpse three months after her burial, the Estado news agency reported Wednesday. Roberto Carlos da Silva told police in a small town in Sao Paulo state that his fiancee Raquel Cristina de Oliveira died a few days before their wedding in a motorcycle accident. Three months later he dug up the body, which was dressed in a wedding gown, and found it to have been well-preserved because of chemicals that had been applied. "I was desperate and needed her," da Silva said.

Calf's head sent to anti-Mafia mayor (The Godfather)

Corleone, Sicily - The mayor of Corleone, the Sicilian town immortalised in the movie "The Godfather", has had a calf's head left on his doorstep in a classic case of Mafia intimidation, Italian television reported on Monday. It was the second time in less than a month that Giuseppe Cipriani, a member of the ex-communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and an outspoken critic of the Mafia, has received threats from organised crime. Television reports said that other mayors in the area had also received threats.

Students keep decomposing body secret (River's Edge)

Kansas City, Missouri - Dozens of Kansas City high-school students toyed with a decomposing body for several days, some of them poking it with sticks, before authorities were tipped off, police said. They said two boys from North Kansas City high school discovered the body in a field near where they were fishing May 26. The man apparently died in the field in early March after walking away from an area hospital. Police were not informed about the corpse until May 30 when they were contacted by a relative of one of the teens. The cause of death could not be determined due to the decomposition.

Anime Blitz

For reasons of space, extended reviews are only given for those deemed worthy (or that I can slag off in 'amusing' ways). A full check-list of titles and TC ratings is at the end.

Ambassador Magma (Episodes 1 to...far too many) - The best way to sum up is to say this isn't anime, it's a cartoon. It looks very little different from the usual Saturday morning crap: the dubbing is reminiscent of "He-Man" or "Thundercats" and everything is sanitised for our protection - even an impaled dog generates no blood. You might as well watch a Disney series.

Based on a manga by the first recognised anime king, Osama Tezuka, I can only assume his story got lost en route; there isn't much visible here. Alien invasion, blah, Earth's salvation, blah, only hope, blah, girl. Even giant robot freaks will be disappointed, as you only get about two minutes of the promised mecha per episode; thank heavens for small mercies. While a chance of reaching the tolerable is provided by occasional nice paranoias - the alien invasion is being covered up - it's mostly unendurable, though after lots of Guinness, the heroine looks like Phoebe Cates. Mind you, drink enough and any girl looks like Phoebe Cates. Readers are advised to hold on for 'Giant Robo' if they want this sort of thing done well. Note the sleeve of tape one uses a picture that isn't from 'Magma' at all, but 'The Wind of Amnesia'. Tut, tut! E

Battle Angel Alita - Probably the best anime of '93, and the magic is still there: spectacularly imaginative setting, driven heroine, and intense drama. In the future, the elite inhabit a city in the sky, while the masses scrabble for survival on the discarded scraps below. Police are replaced by bounty hunters; one such is Alita, a cyborg with no memory of the past. Effectively a clean slate, she has to learn everything anew, from her own name to the nature of love. 'Alita' is class, with the best animation you'll see outside a full-blown movie. It doesn't pull punches, but certainly has more to it than splatter, with the second part especially relying more on storyline and characters. Having seen one favourite, "Project A-ko", sacrificed on the altar of lip-synch, I was worried this wouldn't survive. But it's fine; while synch is near-perfect,



characters fit the voices well. though Alita herself is a tad whiny, with hints of political correctness which I'm sure weren't there originally. This is the opinion of a serious pedant - as dubbed anime goes, they don't come much better than this. A-

Black Magic M-66 Miniaturisation is a speciality in Japan, i.e. the Walkman, and this OAV neatly compresses James Cameron's career into 45 mins. A) killer robot, programmed to seek and destroy it's target. B) heroine, bravely fighting the monster while protecting a young girl. And C) finale atop a skyscraper, complete with VTOL craft - especially remarkable as this was made in '85, slightly before 'True Lies'. All that's missing are some flying piranhas. Available in dubbed and subbed versions (guess which to buy?), this is still inventive and original, adding several nice touches to a common anime topic, industromilitary tech gone wonky (c.f. 'Akira', 'Bubblegum 'Grey'). Energetic, intelligent and cool, it's sharp as you'd expect from the creator of 'Dominion'. I think we can confidently expect Cameron's next movie to include a pair of Puma twins... B+



The Cyberpunk Collection - This title links three disparate series, AD Police, Genocyber and Cyber City Oedo 808, but with 30+ anime to review, I'm not complaining! What they have in common are futuristic dystopian settings, with power in the hands of corporations, and individuals ground underfoot. The execution, however, varies widely. Genocyber is a total mess, with too much crammed into one episode. By the end, you feel like a Viet Cong soldier who has just experienced what "back to the Stone Age" means. Extending this military metaphor, Cyber City is a blunt instrument. While it has some good ideas, it's hard to pay attention when the dialogue has more cursing than a Tarantino script, without the wit. By far the best of the three is AD Police: a blow-dart at a mere 30 minutes per part, it hits the mark with precision. Next time I want to watch "Blade Runner", but haven't time, this will do admirably: rogue androids, sex, and plenty of dark 'n' moody lighting.

Galactic Pirates - Lots of great ideas here. Unfortunately, none involve a coherent storyline; the overall impression is "45 minute trailer for cool movie". The chief reason for this is the central character, an unconventional galactic cop called Apollo, with a taste for junk food, the ability to control minds, a 30,000 rpm mouth and an irresistible attraction to trouble. Oh, and he's a cat (voiced by someone who clearly watched too much 'Red Dwarf'). All of which gets slammed into your face early on. While reeling from the overload, I vaguely caught other plot elements zooming past at high percentages of c. Pirates using a device for recording & projecting memories and experiences to take over the universe? Apollo getting fired as bait for the pirates? Sofas sprouting out of the ground? Any of these may or may not be significant. Certainly, it's non-stop action - "something" happens about every fifteen seconds - but you may well need to lie down in a dark room afterwards. A bit too hyper for it's own good. C-

Genesis Survivor Gaiarth 1 - Almost as incomprehensible as "Galactic Pirates", but here, it's too little information rather than too much. Feels like you're dumped in the middle of a series, with hero Itai coming out of the wilderness after his "father" war-droid is killed by enemy forces - the war finished a century ago, but the machinery keeps fighting. However, the reasons behind the war are never explained, nor the resolution, nor the current state of play. Itai arrives at a city and teams up with a bounty hunter, but little else is clear, apart from the ending, when he repulses a threat to the city. I also found the animation style flat, and the music sounded worryingly like Yes. The lesson to learn is that while imagination is the key to good anime (and there is plenty of it on view here), it isn't enough, when setting and storyline are over-thin. D

Gunbuster - Dubbed anime sometimes has unexpected advantages. In the first subbed tape to get a wide release since 'Akira', much obvious care went into animating...well, put it like this, the effect is slightly spoiled as the subtitles have a nasty tendency to be about chest-height. Baby nutrition will <u>not</u> be a problem in the future, if you get my drift. Bounce, jiggle, bounce. Noriko, daughter of a star-ship captain who died in the line of duty, wants to follow her dad's footsteps and defend Earth from alien invasion. To this end, she joins the Space Academy and struggles against petty jealousies, a bra shortage and the problems of getting a giant robot to do press-ups, plus the machinations of the instructor (a survivor from her father's ship) who wants her to operate Earth's secret weapon. Phew: I spotted a kitchen sink nestling in the corner. too.

You can tell from this and the attention to mammorial detail that it's not *too* po-faced. At least, I don't <u>think</u> so, but I can never take giant robots seriously anyway. Give the creators the benefit, and call Gunbuster a lovely genre spoof, pumping melodrama up to hideous levels, accompanied by stirring music, with no plot cliché or animation device unused. Some of the humour is more subtle, indeed obscure: a character called Smith Toren is amusing only if you know translator/author Toren Smith, who actually does the character's voice. This is the crux. Casual viewers may miss the irony, as few true examples of the 'Gundam' genre have appeared here. To a novice, while nicely animated, it might seem overblown and wet, just as 'Rabid Grannies' is crap horror unless you realise it <u>parodies</u> crap horror. Therefore, for the full effect, watch 'Dangaioh' and see the sort of thing 'Gunbuster' rips the piss from mercilessly. **B**+

Guy - Similar to 'Devilman', not surprisingly, both are by Go Nagai, with bounty-hunter Guy meeting something nasty which lets him become a flesh-rending monster on cue - handwave, handwave - plus additional gratuitous sex (part one is conveniently set on a mixed race prison planet), an allegedly "adult" feel increased by lots of swearing in the dialogue. Ooh, naughty. The second half is notably better; it possesses a story to start with. Guy's sidekick, Raina, enters a religious cult to locate a sacred statue, but finds she's bitten off more than she can chew. [Another sympathetic view of the Church, hehe] Maybe it's me; I found her more interesting than Guy, your usual macho bullshitter about as deep as a puddle. Overall, okay sex-gore-SF-soap, and possessing just enough beyond that, to keep awake those who prefer real girls. C

KO Century Beast Warriors - The unusual hook here is that we humans are the bad guys, looting an alien planet; the hero/ines are the natives, seeking a mysterious power to help defeat us, and who can become animals at (in)appropriate moments. My major complaint is a cloying taste of saccharine; the heroes are just too nice, a fault more often found with Disney than anime (see elsewhere) - with the worthy exception of native prince Badd Mint, who lunges at anything in a dress, even 6-year olds. Luckily, the villains are generally less flat, and it grew on me; given cute-furry-fantasy is a genre for which I've low tolerance, by the end, I almost got into it. It's a parson's egg of a dub: parts are good, but others stink to high heaven: if you want a Scottish accent, get a Scotsman to do it, or don't bother. I also disliked the use of 'real' kids to play children; while perhaps more authentic, these simply didn't cut the mustard. Children should be seen and not heard, maybe. I'd probably have liked it more subbed; a highlight of the film was the the opening song, bonus points for rhyming and scanning subtitles. Still, there've been far worse debuts, and it's hard to envisage anything further from the Manga-stream. C-

Lupin III; The Fuma Conspiracy - As entertainment, this is perfect, an anime "Indiana Jones", three separate groups (the good, the bad, and the ugly?) all chasing after a pot giving directions to a fabulous buried treasure. The bad news is, it's a spin-off from a long-running TV series - imagine a Japanese person watching, say, a movie version of "Coronation Street" and you'll get some idea of the problem. The characters and relationships are all taken as read; for example, it's never explained that Inspector Zenigata is chasing the hero, Lupin because he is a master thief whom Zenigata has been hunting for years. However, allowing for this, it's still a great piece of throughly enjoyable fun, with a great sense of invention, and prior knowledge is really not necessary. B+

Moldiver - This and 'Tenchi Miyo' mark the Big Boys arrival in the UK marketplace, Pioneer being major players in Japan. Consciously avoiding tits 'n' tentacles, they go for a comedy/ superhero series around a technology which makes the possessor invincible (as well as providing a natty line in superheroic fashion). Unfortunately, once the suit is established as utterly invulnerable, most of the <u>point</u> evaporates; you know the result of any battle. As with 'The Guyver' there's only so much that can be done with this theme, and after four episodes, I felt distinctly ennui-ed. That is, however, three more than 'The Guyver' managed, and how can I truly dislike any anime with bad girls called Brooke, Nastassja and Jennifer? This sums up the show: all the frilly edges are there, but there's nothing significant to hang it on. **D**

Ninja Scrolls - This bears certain resemblances to "Wicked City", with a strong-yet-silent hero, aided by a woman who may not be on the same side but is anyway no fragile petal, and a sprightly old geezer manipulating everyone to his own advantage. It also believes in "plot advancement through gore"; when hero Jubei kills one of the members of a gang of dark ninjas after a gold shipment, you just know he's going to have to kill the rest of the gang (the snake woman, shadow man, etc), in a variety of spectacular and imaginative battles with an enormous quantity of red stuff going everywhere. Still, I'm not complaining; switch brain off, detach critical faculties to prevent dubbing from grating, and wallow. **B**+

Rumic World - Maybe it's a flashback due to bad Kinski in the 80's but 'Laughing Target' reminds me of, er, "Cat People". Both have mysterious, orphaned, virgin girls who transform into something life-threatening, endangering themselves and those they love. Ok, there are differences - no thigh-length waders here - but the sex/horror mix is familiar. While cramming a lot in, to the extent that it sometimes seems to be a series of set pieces, 'Target' remains near-traditional fare, favouring atmosphere over in-yer-face gore (making it closer to Lewton than Schrader). My only disappointment was that the "lurking secrets" in the heroine's background weren't quite lurky enough. When I finally saw them, my reaction was "Is that it?"! B+



Stuck behind the worst video sleeve ever (the picture, left, doesn't capture the technicolour awfulness!), 'Maris the Wondergirl' is a hyper-strong interstellar policewoman, perpetually broke through paying for damage she and her family cause. Fortune beckons when she's assigned to the kidnap of a millionaire's son, but things are not as they seem. Sadly, nor are they as funny. The weakest Rumic World tale, while still strong on animation, it possesses no real punch, almost as if Takahashi used her best humour in Urusei Yatsura. The funniest joke - a Jackie Chan style sequence of out-takes behind the credits - is wrecked by squeezing them into a corner to make way for the English titles. C-

'Mermaid's Forest' is the gloomiest anime yet released - pain, mutilation and cannibalism, a bit unexpected from the author of 'Ranma 1/2'. Intensely dark and moody, it's based on a myth that eating mermaid flesh makes you immortal albeit, in FRP-speak, with a bastard of a saving throw. The villainess drank mermaid blood, getting eternal youth with a side effect: a perpetual need for body parts from (presumably) unwilling donors. While some atmosphere is lost from the subtitled version, enough remains to make this pointedly nasty and tastefully tasteless. B-

Tenchi Muyo 1-6 - For some reason, I took an instant dislike to the first episode finding it cliched, limited and pedestrian. Not bad going for a show that revolves around a demonic extraterrestrial babe capable of totalling property on a whim, unwittingly freed by a teenage boy. Screwing that scenario up takes a serious lack of talent. Normally, that'd be it, in the dumper. However, there were two episodes on the tape, so what the hell? And curiously, I found myself thawing out...

Don't really know why. The cast expands beyond two, with the arrival of other ET's intent on finding the babe for various reasons, allowing greater flexibility than 'Boy gets chased by demon'. And there's certainly much more imagination on view, such as a cute, carrot-eating, baby rabbit/cat/spaceship [sic]. In any case, by episode four, I was charmed and heartily looking forward to the conclusion, which managed to warp most of the usual "final battle" cliches. Full of nice touches and, unlike 'Moldiver', unpredictability seems to be it's aim. **B**-

Tokvo Babylon - In the month between the two parts, I somehow forgot absolutely everything about episode one. Even more scary, reading the sleeve didn't help. However, on rewatching it, this was because the blurb lied. Phone sex? Gang rape? You've got to wonder what the Advertising Standards Authority would say about such misrepresentation. After the re-view. I realised why the first part had been so eminently forgettable: hero Subaru is a medium who looks and sounds like Michael Jackson (sensitive = wimpy, it seems), accompanied by an annoying comic relief sister. I guess "medium" here = "neither rare nor well-done".



Luckily, part two is decent enough to beg a pardon, with <u>interesting</u> psychic Mirei, who can see the past history of objects. She's called in by the police to help catch a serial killer stalking the city subway. Coming on like a telepathic version of 'Halloween', it's nicely handled, right up to the conclusion which blows it by seeming to semaphore part 3 (though as yet there is no sign of it appearing!), which destroyed the nicely self-contained quality. Animation is excellent in both, but you're better off not bothering with part one at all; you won't be missing out on anything significant. **D-** and **B**

The Wind of Amnesia - Nice idea. Mankind's memory is wiped by a mysterious wind that leaves almost all civilization in ruins, and humanity teetering on the brink of Neanderthalism. Hero Wataru still retains some knowledge and drives across America seeking a solution, accompanied by a mysterious girl who can communicate with the savages. Poor execution. Every plot twist is semaphored a long time in advance; it's stultifyingly moral (I <a href="https://hate.org/hate.new/hate.new/hate.org/hate.new/hate.ne

Wings of Honneamise - Oh, wow. Put simply, one of the best animated films you will ever see; only Miyazaki ("Totoro" et al) has done better. Indeed, it's a great film full stop, managing to be simultaneously entertaining and thought-provoking. The setting is an alternate world, where one country is on the verge of getting into space: the hero is training as the first astronaut and the film chronicles his hopes and fears as take-off nears and war approaches. Though nominally SF, the technology is irrelevant, what matters are the characters, and those here have more depth than many live-action films. The level of imagination is startling, with every facet of the world fully realised, and Oscar-winner Ryuichi Sakamoto's soundtrack is up to his usual standard. At two hours long, it may be a test of stamina, but I didn't want it to end. Not Manga's usual fare - Guyver groupies will hate it - so they deserve enormous praise for releasing such a piece of sheer class, and with an almost un-noticeable dub. Excellent. A



The Trash City Handy Anime Chart

Title	Company	Rating
Wings of Honneamise	Manga	Α
Battle Angel Alita	Manga	A-
Black Magic M-66	Kiseki	A-
Lupin III: Fuma Conspiracy	Western Connection	В+
Gunbuster	Kiseki	В+
Ninja Scrolls	Manga	B+
AD Police	Manga	B+
Rumic World	Manga	В
Tenchi Muyo	Pioneer	В
Grey	Western Connection	B-
Devilman	Manga	C+
Cat Girl Nuku-Nuku	Crusader (RIP)	C+
Devil Hunter Yohko	Western Connection	C+
Monster City	Manga	C+
Tokyo Babylon	Manga	C
Samurai Gold	Western Connection	С
Guy	Animania	С
KO Century Beast Warriors	Anime UK	C-
Appleseed	Manga	C-
Galactic Pirates	Western Connection	C-
The Professional	Manga	D+
Starblazers	Kiseki	D+
Return of the Overfiend	Kiseki	D+
Moldiver	Pioneer	D
Genesis Survivor Gaiarth	Anime Projects	D
Cyber City Oedo	Manga	D
Kama Sutra	Western Connection	D
Genocyber	Manga	D-
Adventure Duo	Kiseki	E+
Wind of Amnesia	Manga	Е
Ambassador Magma	Kiseki	E
The Guyver	Manga	E-
Dangaioh	Manga	E-

Kawaii, desu ne?

Lethal Panther + Deadly China Dolls (Eastern Heroes, 13.99) - Ok, pay attention. "Lethal Panther" was not actually originally called "Lethal Panther", but "Lethal Panther 2". However, when the rights to it were bought, no-one had got the first part, so it underwent a quick renaming for the UK release. Okay. Except, now they <u>do</u> have the original "Lethal Panther". Obviously it needed a name-change, thus it will appear here as "Deadly China Dolls". Luckily, this is not a serious problem as the two films are almost totally independent.

To take **Lethal Panther** first (that's the <u>UK</u> tape of that title...I begin to wish I'd thought of something else to fill in two random pages!): what we have is a cheap quickie, probably shot in the Philippines, starring Yukari Oshima and Philip Kao. Or rather, "starring" them, as the guy who gets most screen time doesn't even rate an English-language credit! But it's still a competent little film. Said hero, with Interpol, is out to get the gangster who killed his wife. However, in a nice twist, he previously put the gangster's brother behind bars, where he died. Or put another way, "you killed my wife and must pay, but hang on, didn't I kill your brother?".

Oshima is always worth watching - the recently rereleased 'Iron Angels' (aka 'Angel') is great fun, though we must still wait for 'The Outlaw Brothers' to see Oshima at her best. Here, she excels in an opening sequence that seems more like an arcade game than a realistic portrayal of a gun-battle. Unfortunately, the editing in all the action sequences is awful,, choppy and disjointed, which does no-one involved any service at all. This is most notable in the climax, which also blatantly thieves music from "Terminator 2"! Lightly enjoyable tosh, with a high body-count and mortality rate: put it this way, the hero will be renting a telephone box for his next family get-together... C

Deadly China Dolls is from shlockmaster Godfrey Ho, an engaging bloke, the Hong Kong equivalent of Fred Olen Ray, who specialises in making truly cheap movies, or even splicing together footage from unfinished ones into totally incoherent messes. A real character, his exploits include a sequel to the notorious "Men Behind The Sun", made in China, which used bits of real corpses when the special effects weren't up to task. However, DCD is one of his better, more polished movies, sporting a cheery mix of sex and violence. The former is supplied by Japanese actress Yoko Miyamoto, who takes her clothes off so regularly throughout the film, that you could probably set your watch by the appearance of her nipples. The violence is from Sibelle Hu, whom I'd have said was far too nice a girl to appear in something like this.

As for the plot, your guess is as good as mine. It's something about counterfeit money, and Interpol (almost the only link with the firs...secon...ah, other movie). It has to be said, I originally saw this film in a German language print, and don't think I'm any the wiser after seeing the English language version! It is also derivative as hell, with one notable "Basic Instinct" ripoff - remarkable because it came out two years earlier... But who cares? This is one to watch for ass-kicking and nekkid babes, and on that score, it's a palpable hit. Put your brain in the fridge when you're taking out the six-pack and the double-chocolate chip ice-cream. **B**-

Plastic Little (Kiseki, 10.99?) - "Maris the Wondergirl" this ain't: the cover leaps out and grabs you by the hormones. propelled by a wonderfully sleazy picture of three worryingly young-looking babes wearing thin coats of red or grey paint. [And it seems chilly...] I notice no VPRC logo, incidentally, so will it get to the shops? Regardless, viewers will soon see why it's known in fandom as "Little Silicone". You may think "Gunbuster" was obsessed with breasts, but this lot are a tad ahead in that category. At least 'buster had three hours to work with, poor old "Plastic Little" (a title of uncertain origin) has only 50 mins but still fits in just as many busts.



Unsurprisingly, this results in slight weaknesses - like after about half an hour, the plot runs out. Until then, it's not been too bad. Heroine Tita (34B or thereabout, yet a mere teen. Queue joke about "big breaths".) is a Pet Shop Hunter; no, she doesn't stalk wild buildings, but gets creatures for pet shops. [Animal activists are picketing Kiseki as we speak] She hits trouble when she rescues a girl from military police (Elysse, 16 and, oh, maybe 36D!!!), taking her craft and crew into the sort of danger from which only the wildest pseudo-science will rescue them. Beautifully animated, unquestionably. However, if you're a fan of more petite babes, you might wish more attention had been paid elsewhere! B-

Dominion Act 5 (Manga, 5.99) - Or New Dominion, Act 1? There's debate on this point. Whatever, major problem on the kawaii front is the absence of the Puma Twins, among the cutest creations yet released on the anime marketplace. Their absence is galling: it means we're left with the small-but-perfectly-formed Leona Ozaki (left) in the cute stakes, and she's a tad tomboyish for my tastes. I don't generally find a fondness for armour-piercing ammunition a great turn-on.

So, it is the next instalment of Masamune Shirow's story of the polluted near-future, with the Tank Police still trying to take out criminals, and usually "redeveloping" a few block en route. This situation is exacerbated by the arrival of an "expert" from HQ, who is not what he seems...

This was slightly disappointing: Manga have cut from two episodes per tape to one, which as well as using extra shelf-space, leaves you with no real sense of continuity. Though whether there actually is any won't be resolved until the next tape, I guess: the first four episodes did seem to have a thread, with common characters and plots, but it's hard to see how anything can develop from the mayhem which ends this one. Mind-candy, no more; let's hope for better over the next five (groan) tapes - especially the return of Annipuma and her pseudo-sis! C

Crime (clever)

Dutch police hunt striptease market robbers

Amsterdam - Dutch police are hunting a gang of supermarket robbers who rely on female accomplices stripping to create a distraction while they strike. Dutch news agency ANP said on Sunday the striptease gang had staged successful heists in the towns of Zwolle and Groningen but another attempt in Zwolle had failed. Shoppers and staff looked on in amazement as the women peeled off their clothes and it was only when the tumult had died down that store managers realised they had been robbed.

Bus passengers toast thief who robs them

Rio de Janeiro - Brazilian police are hunting for a thief who invited a busload of passengers to toast his birthday with drinks laced with drugs before robbing them as they slept, a police investigator said. The thief chatted with many of the 22 passengers before buying them all drinks during a rest stop. The man slipped some drugs into the drinks and within minutes of resuming their journey, the passengers fell into a deep sleep, he said. "The driver's cabin is separated from the rest of the passengers." Santos said. The didn't see a thing." The thief stole cash and jewellery and got off the bus.

Hyena exorcist sought by police

Harare. Zimbabwean police are hunting a witchdoctor who raped a teenage schoolgirl saying he was exorcising a hyena that reportedly troubled the girl by making love to her at night. A police spokesman said the traditional healer had twice[!] raped the 18-year-old girl, each time telling her it was the only way he could catch the hyena.

Burglars steal the guard dog

Amsterdam - A Dutchman who invested over £600 in a policetrained guard dog woke up two days later to discover burglars had stolen it, police said. "There are clear signs the house was broken into while the man was asleep." said a police spokesman in the central Dutch village Schalkhaar. "It is possible the dog just walked off - but that's unlikely as it was trained and certified by the police," he said, adding that nothing else was stolen in the raid.



Crime (stoopid)

Live-wire poacher killed while catching fish

Moscow - a Russian poacher was electrocuted when he tried to catch fish by putting a live electric cable into a pond, Itar-Tass news agency said. The 25-year-old from Tula, south of Moscow forgot to disconnect the wire before getting into the water to collect his booty.

Girl's show and tell leads to mother's arrest

Sydney - An Australian woman was arrested after her 12-year-old daughter took her mother's marijuana to school to show her class, the Sydney Morning Herald reported. Teachers at the girls' school contacted police who raided the mother's home in the town of Bakers Creek on the northern Queensland coast after the girl "took mummy's marijuana to school for show and tell", the newspaper said. Janine Ella Kilgour, 32, pleaded guilty on June 16 to unlawful possession of a dangerous drug and unlawful possession of a pipe. She was fined \$A475 (£225).

Dutch burglar hides in cupboard with victims

Amsterdam - Dutch police said they had arrested a burglar who spent 10 minutes hiding in the same bedroom cupboard as the couple he was trying to rob. The thief unwittingly roused the Amsterdam couple when he broke a window, prompting them to raise the alarm and hide in a large walk-in wardrobe, police said. When the thief heard the police arrive, he dived into the same hiding place. Only after about five minutes did he spot the pair, who were holding their breath. He asked them to tell police he was an acquaintance, but after some discussion they refused.

Doggery foils skulduggery

Tokyo - A Japanese thief's pet dog gave its owner away by leading police back to his house, police said. The thief, a 23-year-old truck driver, tied the dog to a railing near a parking lot in Sapporo, northern Japan, while he forced a car door open and tried to steal a television inside. But the car's owner returned unexpectedly and the thief ran off, leaving the dog behind. When police untied the dog, it led them to the man's home several hundred metres away. They arrested him for attempted robbery, a local police spokesman said.

FBI arrests agent in mail-order heroin scheme

Philadelphia - The Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested one of its own drug agents for trying to sell heroin by offering free samples through mail order to drug dealers. The FBI accused Special Agent Kenneth Withers, 33, of trying to sell nearly 45 kg (100 lb) of seized Pakistani heroin with a street value in the tens of millions of dollars. The probe followed reports from drug dealers who received identical letters offering high-quality Middle Eastern heroin for about half-price. Included in the letters were one-ounce free samples. It was, in the experience of the FBI and others, described as an extremely unusual marketing strategy.

Comix'R'ZIS

Here we go again, time for some comics reviews...

Stuff About Comics

Indy

Basically a zine about independent comics, pushing for a "professional" style & content. The latest issue (#8) gives us a Tim Vigil cover, interviews with Mike Allred, Teri Wood, Paul Chadwick and Mike Diana, plus editorial comment, a couple of pages of news, and 12 pages of comics reviews. Well worth supporting, and getting better at spelling each issue. Hassle your local comic shop into picking it up and help the cause of independent comics...

\$2.95, 48 pages, standard (American) comic format but heading up to magazine size soonish, Published by Blackmore Publishing





Understanding Comics

This is a comic about the art of comics. That's a bit odd. Even odder is the fact that it works. Scott McCloud has managed to get lots of people into what comics can be, whilst showing his opinion on what comics are & how they "work" [you look at the pictures, you read the words, that's it...] Difficult to explain without sounding extremely silly, so I'll stop here and just recommend it to anyone interested in comics as a medium rather than just as entertainment...

£13.95, 215 pages, Graphic Novel format, Published by Kitchen Sink Press

Filibusting Comics

A spoof "missing chapter" from Understanding Comics. This is not worth, as they say, the paper it's printed on... It's just not funny. No point in telling you the details, as you're not buying it.

Paradox Press

In an attempt to keep readers who've got past the DC Universe, through Vertigo and are heading into independent territory, DC have set up their new Paradox Press imprint. This offers readers frightened of the world of independents

a chance to dip their toes into nonmainstream work, whilst still under DC's watchful eye. Not that I can complain about Paradox so far, as they're doing fine work...

Big Book Of Urban Legends

This was the first title to come out from DC's new "Paradox Press" imprint, and is an impressive work, if only for managing to co-ordinate comics









professionals into producing a single work. It's an anthology of about 200 "friend of a friend" stories, done as 1-4 page strips, each using a different artist.

It's fun - proved by the fact that it can be read in a single sitting (even if you do start feeling that you've heard the stories before...). This is the first of the "Factoid Books", and bodes well for the "Big Book Of Weirdos" (out now!), "Big Book Of Death" and "Big Book Of Conspiracies"

\$12.95, 223 pages, A4ish sized, Black & White, Published by DC/Paradox Press

Big Book Of Weirdos

The second "Big Book" looks into the lifes of assorted odd people... from Ivan the Terrible, to William Randolph Hearst passing through Nikola Tesla and Harry Houdini on the way. It covers 67 people (or so the cover says...) and so long as DC/Paradox don't start bringing these tomes out monthly, they've got me hooked. Also announced were "Big Book of Little Criminals" and "Big Book of Freaks"... both of which sound suitably amusing.

\$12.95, 223 pages, A4ish sized, Black & White, Published by DC/Paradox Press

Brooklyn Dreams

A four issue series, all of which have now appeared, Brooklyn Dreams is the reminiscences of Carl Vincent Santini... telling of his childhood, his misspent youth and, along the way, giving hints of what he is today. It has a nice feel to it, and the new "digest" format that Paradox are using is great - small enough to carry about, but plenty of pages, so you've got something to get stuck into.

\$4.95, 94 pages (at a guess, it's the same sort of size as La Pacifica, but the pages aren't numbered...), "digest" format, Black & White, Published by DC/Paradox Press





La Pacifica

A three issue series, and again, they've all appeared by now, this tells of a mysterious woman, and a trail of violence that follows her around America. After a gunman shoots up his motel, Don Cooper sets to work tracking down the woman... This is the first Paradox Mystery title and is a good start - maybe not outstanding, but I've no complaints.

\$4.95, 94 pages, "digest" format, Black & White, Published by DC/Paradox Press



The Family Man

This is the second Paradox Musteru, and swaps the wide-ranging road-movieness of La Pacifica for New York... date unspecified, but it looks a bit in the future (well, it definitely ain't the past). Alonzo and Charles are brothers. They're a hitman and a priest. Well, sort of ... Charles is a priest cast as spiritual advisor to the NYPD, cleaning up the streets for God and glory. Alonzo used to be a mob hitman... but now the Mafia have been wiped out, apart from a few pet Don's from the old days. So Alonzo (the Family Man) is confined to his apartment, and watches New York decay outside his windows. Soon it's getting too much for Alonzo, and he has to get involved... The priest/mobster thing is a bit of a cliche(or at least it seems so to me...) but the setting here works, the story getting more interesting as the first issue goes on. Joe Staton's art is suitably nitty-gritty (emphasis on the gritty) and the mean streets really look mean. Definitely well worth a look.

\$4.95, 94 pages, "digest" format, Black & White, Published by DC/Paradox Press

<u>Old Favourites</u>

From Hell

Gosh. This almost seems to have become a <u>regular</u> series. Issues are managing to come out frequently, and the story is galloping on apace. Not much more to say than usual here, as it's still the story of Jack The Ripper... However, rumour has it that Touchstone Pictures have forked out for the film rights so we may see the Disney version of JtR soon... That could be very funny especially the musical numbers... Basically, go out and buy this, it's very good... and you can probably find the early issues around somewhere...

\$4.95, 64 pages, squarebound, B & W, Published by Kitchen Sink Press

From Hell - The Scripts

This contains the original scriptes for From Hell 1-3, and I haven't got round to reading it yet... and I haven't got the time to read it before TC goes to press. However, given the size of the From Hell appendices each issue, I have no doubt that this will be interesting & informative for all and sundry into From Hell, Alan Moore stuff or just plain old Ripper stories...

Hellblazer

So, From Hell features Eddie Campbell artwork, and recently Hellblazer's been scripted by him... are there no limits to the man's talents? Good question and one I can't answer until I've actually read the issues in question (hang on a few minutes, and I'll dash upstairs and read them now...).

Okay, that's better.... we have lots of urban legends coming true (generally in unpleasantish ways)... we have JC having flown to Australia with a ghost and we have an aboriginal shaman... This is getting odd. JC's attempting to help the ghost (of Sir Francis Dashwood, founder of the Hellfire Club and general purpose bon viveur) save the world... but isn't quite as sure as to the ghost's qualifications anymore... A nice little story to fill the gap between Garth Ennis/Steve Dillon and errmm... they don't seem to have mentioned the "new creative team" in the last couple of issues... maybe they've been sacrificed in some pagan ceremony... or maybe not. Anyway, Hellblazer's still way up there with the bestest comics about, so keep supporting it fanboys...

\$1.95/£1.25, 32 pages, standard format, colour, plopped out by DC/Vertigo

Kane

More fun from Paul Grist, now onto a regular schedule as he's done his stint on Grendel Tales. Cool black & white futuristicish noirish cop story. Issue 5 managed to get away without people speaking, and I only noticed no-one'd said anything after I finished it. Issue 6 is out now and seems to be starting a new era in Kane, plus it's a UK indie, so support it. Anyway, issue 6, what is there to say... there's a bust going down with Kate Felix and various others involved... something seems not quite right. This issue sets the scene and the story looks like zoomin' out into loads of interesting stuff... If you don't buy Kane, then you won't know what you're missing... Imagine an English "Sin City", and then make it just plain wonderful.

£1.80 (\$3.50), 32 pages of pure comic (no adverts, no text - letters page is inside back cover), bimonthly, standard format, B & W, Published by Dancing Elephant Press (which is Paul Grist in disguise... yes, he self-publishes). 6 issue subscriptions available from: Dancing Elephant Press, 207 Marlcliffe Road, Sheffield, S6 4AH, England. Cheques/Postal Orders payable to Paul Grist for £10.80 for UK subscribers, dunno how he deals with US subscriptions, but they cost \$27.



Ren & Stimpy

I keep buying this, but I have a suspicion the R&S joke has done it's time with me. Another joke would possibly keep me going, but I guess "that's all folks" for me and this title... Not that it seems bad, it's just that it now seems to be repeating what the first two years of issues said... especially when we're talking a title whose toontime innovation stopped about three years ago... If you don't know R&S but like weird humour, try it... Otherwise... well... hmmm... it's up to you...

\$1.95, 32 pages, standard format, colour, published M*rvel... damnit! I've mentioned the M-word...

Sandman Mystery Theatre

Wow! This goes from strength to strength... I'm a detective story fan, so SMT twitches into a personal fave literary genre. If you want dark detective fiction (like Andrew Vacchs but set 50 years ago) then this is wonderful. Each story digs into another personal tale, and shows people out of control and not necessarily to blame for their actions... Good guys & bad guys are fairly obvious, but this has a bad habit of showing you their reasons. I guess this is what Batman & co seemed like to their original audiences... Recommended to be bought as a whole storyline before reading it - that approach <u>really</u> screws you up...

\$1.95, 32 pages, standard format, colour (or maybe "color"), published DC/Vertigo

Dinosaurs

GON

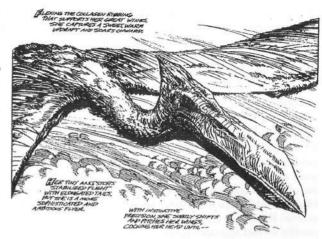
This is from the new "Equinox Manga" line, published by Mandarin paperbacks. It's about Gon, a dinosaur unlike any other you've seen. The eight stories in this book tell of Gon meeting bear, lions, beavers, eagles, sharks, ticks (well, a tick actually), squirrels, and penguins. This title is amazingly good fun and hugely recommended. There's no words (animals really don't talk, no matter what some people think) just page after page of silly-dinosaur-meets-modem-day-type-animals tales. Gon seems to have a bit of a problem with his self-image, as most of the time he seems to try and copy what other animals do, but he always manages to go completely OTT with it, and he isn't a patient little dinosaur, not our Gon...

£8.99, about 160 pages, paperback, Black & White, Published by Mandarin paperbacks



Tyrant

A serious dinosaur comic. Again somewhat short on words, but this time it is actually narrated... This is an attempt to tell the story of a T-Rex from it's birth to it's death... with about 20 pages per issue covering Tyrant the story, and the rest giving info on the time-period in which it's set. historical (in)accuracies etc. etc... An interesting project, but as a long-running series I don't know whether it'll manage to keep my attention... however, at the moment, a bimonthly dose of prehistory is quite enjoyable thankyou. Well worth a look.



\$2.95, 32 pages, normal comic format, b&w, Published by Spiderbaby Graphix

Oddities

Action Girl Comics

Featuring an all-girl crew, this is an anthology of random "cool indie stuff by women"... Issue 2 featured stuff by Kris Dresen, Elizabeth Watasin, Leanne Franson (see "Liliane" below...), Chantale Doyle, Patty Leidy, Carolyn Ridsdale, Sarah Dyer and Jennifer Sorenson... Sadly missing from 2 was Jessica "Artbabe" Abel... but she's back in issue 3, and her stuff in number 1 was great....It's good, well worth a try, even for blokes... "Stuff"covers slice-of-life (wonder at how women behave when no men are to be seen, dicover the truth behind all those arcane bottles in the bathroom... their secret is out hahahhahaaa), plain old indie weirdness and just plain coolstuff.

\$2.50, 24 pages, normal comic format, b&w, Published by Slave Labor Graphics





Agents Of Law

This isn't quite the usual sort of thing we review here, but I grovelled a freeby review copy of the first two issues all the way from the U.S. of A. (black & white, pre-release style) and it's pretty decent. Not what I'd choose to read day-to-day personally, but an interesting take on eutopian / dustopian / superhero stuff. Seems like it's a title that's going to be as political as it is violent (story-wise... as in that the story seems to involve politicking rather than just the usual "hey, lets go zap some bad-guys today, make the world right and expect the government to agree with us" type of stuff...). In black & white, the art's a bit flat, but it'll probably overcome that when Lovern Kindzierski covers it in colour and brings it to life. I guess it's nittygritty super-anti-hero time at Dark Horse. Good, but not odd enough for me personally... Then again, supertypes never did too much for me... Oh ves, Keith Giffen's on "plot" so it's probably going to be pretty odd... If I wasn't getting too many comics already, I'd definitely be tempted to give it a proper looking at...

Dunno anything about the final version for sure, but I guess it'll be a standard format type thing... oh yeah, it's published by Dark Horse (part of their revamping of their "universe" [hack, spit, vomit])

Attitude Lad

From Paul Tobin, the man who gave us "Fringe", we now have this. And it's odd. With "Zena. White Princess Of The Jungle" and "Keela, Queen Of The Jaguar Tribe" cut-out & dress dolls, a couple of tales of the titular lad, "Flemmy the Cat in: Do The Hawka Hawka", "Torch Singer" (a somewhat more serious tale), and assorted random oddities, this is an insight into the workings of deranged minds everywhere (Hi Jim!)... Oh yes, and it also has some Phil Hester scribbles for any of his fans out there.

\$2.50, 24 pages, normal comic format, b&w, Published by Slave Labor Graphics



the Biologic Show

Weirdness from Al Columbia... Dark, weird, depressing and generally wonderful. If you appreciate misery and suffering, then this comic contains something for you.

Issue 0... \$2.95, 32 pages, big, like about A4 size, b&w, Published by Fantagraphics Books

Billy Joe Van Helsing: Redneck Vampire Hunter

Not surprisingly, this is somewhat tongue-incheek in style... BJ goes after the undead in his own inimitable style - "Billy Beer" instead of holy water, the "southern cross" rather than a crucifix (actually the "stars and bars", but, hey, BJ didn't know that...)... 'Tis fun, different, and shows those goddamned vampires a thing or two into the bargain. Heh.

\$2.50, 32 pages, normal size, b&w, published by Alpha Productions

Crap

J.R. William's Crap isn't... crap that is. In fact it's very good. An ongoing tale of a buncha folks that share a house (somehow reminds me of chez TC in places...) and the doings they get involved in. Weird, crude, and trashy with cool b & w art.

\$2.75, 32 pages, normal size, b&w, published by Fantagraphics Books





Drawn & Quarterly

This anthology is published in Canada and has a nice slightly European slant to it - guess it's that good old Canadian multi-lingualness. The quality of the thing is wonderful. but the quarterly schedule makes it necessary to take it very much an issue at a time - the nearest to an ongoing series in it is Tardi's series of individual war stories. Assorted indie type comics-stuff appears in this - generally erring on the "arty" side. Two issues of volume 2 have now come out, number 2 has a David Mazzucchelli "fictional autobio" piece, Loustal & Fromental's "The Ghost Of Whitechapel" and "It Was The War Of The Trenches" by Jacques Tardi. For readers so mature they may smoke pipes. Well worth trying, even at the price of ...

\$5.95, 48 pages, uniquely it's own format, but glossy & possessing "high production values", Published by Drawn & Quarterly

Ghostdancing

Jamie Delano & Richard Case offer this tale of native American rituals and rock music... Dropped out hippies who failed miserably first time around get inspired to try again seems to be the plot so far... It's a six issue series, and I'll stick with it, as it's bound to get more interesting as JD hits his stride.

Okay then, so I've now read issue 2, and it's definitely getting more paranoid. There's whole institutions of bad guys, the good guy's meant to be dead, the lead female's a smack-head, and the young guy trapped in the middle's just done a runner.

\$1.95/£1.25, 32 pages, standard format, colour, from DC/Vertigo.

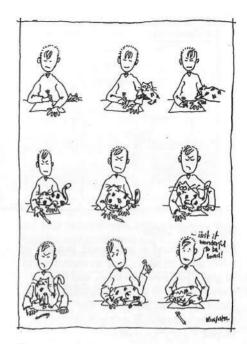
Grendel Tales

The tales continue, and continue to be good. The latest tale ("Homecoming") gives us Susan from "War Devil" returning to her roots after becoming disillusioned with her career as a Grendel. As usual, she proves herself to be a true Grendel rather than just a career-based wannabe-Grendel. Plus Matt Wagner's "Devil Quest" continues (hopefully this'll be published as a single volume soon...). Very good, this is a really strong series. Next up is "Devil's Choices", set ten years after "Devils & Deaths" and featuring the adult Goran.

\$2.95, 32 pages, standard format, glossy colour painted artwork, Published by Dark Horse

Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm and Such More supernatural Western stuff here. Having had Western-meets-voodoo-zombies with their previous outing, Joe R. Lansdale & Tim Truman now get tenticular with weird chulhoid beasts living beneath the earth. I like it, but then again, I like westerns, horror, JRL's writing, TT's art and so that's not at all surprising. 'Tis 5 issues in length, and a couple of issues in so far...

\$2.95/\$2.00, 32 pages, standard format, colour, from DC/Vertigo.



Liliane

Bisexual comic character alert!

"Liliane" is a mini-comic published by Leanne Franson, out of Canada, but recently in the UK... Hence a UK version of the minicomics (each containing 2 issues of the original series). The mini's cover the adventures of Liliane as she discovers her bisexuality, meets lesbians, and generally comes out. Amusing to TC readers in the same manner that Girljock is, but cheaper and easier to get hold of.

£1, 28 pages, black & white, A5, published by Leanne Franson, available from...
"Leanne Franson c/o 61 Abbeyfields Close, Park Royal, London NW10 7EG", so add some postage to the cost. Also available are the original mini-comics, of which there are now 27, the exact price for these I don't know, but I suspect you're looking at £1 again (as the Canadian/American version's are \$1.50...).



Not Quite Dead

NQD are a band. A good band. But they've never done an album, just an eternal round of gigs. Their fans love them, and this comic's all about the fun they have on tour. Done by Gilbert Shelton & "Pic", issue 2 features a fan club & a dog. It's fun, it's stupid, it's worth a read.

£1.99, 32 pages, standard size, black & white, from Knockabout, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (free catalogue available!)

Palmolive Square

A UK mini produced in Hove, this is the sadness that all soap operas aspire to. But it does manage to be funny... See the sad geeks try and go out at new year, gawp at the extremely tacky christmas present leather jackets... Silly, and, unfortunately not cheap... Probably because of the wonderful purple & pink printing and extremely glossy paper... Tacky, tacky, tacky... But fun...

£1.20, 16 pages, A5, purple&pink&white, from Cool Cheese, c/o Girl Frenzy, P.O. Box 148, Hove BN3 3DQ (that's England in case you hadn't guessed).

Preacher

NEW! From Vertigo! You've heard the hype, now read the series. No comics fan is complete without this title. Well, it's actually another Garth Ennis/Steve Dillon tale (see recent Hellblazer's...) and seems to be



branching off from one of the Hellblazer plotlines. Vaguely interesting first issue, with an assortment of interesting characters. I guess I'll keep on with it until I figure out what it's up to... Has "potential".

\$2.95/\$2.00, 44 pages, standard format, colour, from DC/Vertigo.

Scenes From The Inside

UK indie anthology, with lots of weird indie strips... like *really* weird... but it gives you a weirdness-yardstick with which to compare other things, and it's British, so what are you waiting for ??? Well, probably for the next issue, as it seems to be about as regular as TC (no insult intended...) Variable, but with a high "hit-rate".

£2.75, 60 pages, same sort of size as "Drawn and Quarterly", but a bit wider, b&w, published by Drat'N'Blast Books, 5 Borough Road, Isleworth, Middlesex. TW7 5DY





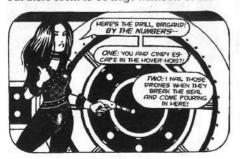
Seth Throb Underground Artist

Sequel/Follow On/Renamed Version Of Oblivion City. Cool shit. Featuring denizens of Oblivion City "make that five denizens and one demon", snowbound in their apartment building, issue 4 covers art, death, love, sex, and supernatural visitors... If I'd realized earlier that this was "Oblivion City continued" I'd've got the first three... Ah well, the "complete" Oblivion City's out soon, so that'll be something to get the pennies out for.

\$2.95, 24 pages, standard size, b&w, from those nice people at Slave Labor graphics

Strange Attractors

Science fiction on the silly edge, with a touch of that "slice of life" stuff rubbish thrown in for good measure. You know, real(ish) characters, spongeing sympathy off the readers and all that... not that it isn't good, but there seem to be huge numbers of this



sort of good black & white stuff in this list. Try 'em all, and settle on whatever suits you best...

\$2.50, 32 pages, the usual, b&w, from RetroGrafix, 67Emerald St., Suite 623 Keene, New Hampshire 03431-3626

Stranger's in Paradise

Like, wow! This is fun, funny and generally hugely recommendable. Not surprisingly, given how much folks recommended it last year... Terry Moore's first comic and it's stunning. Katchoo & Francine are friends that stick up for each other, Francine's got bad taste in boyfriends, Kat's got a taste for Francine and straightens out the dastardly blaggards that upset Francine.



Volume 1 collection: Collects the initial three issues, plus assorted bits'n'bobs. \$6.95, 96 pages, usual size & shape, b&w, from Abstract Studios.

Volume 2: Three issues out so far.

Tale Of One Bad Rat

Four issue mini-series from Dark Horse, hopefully finding it's way into a trade paperback soon. Very good... mixes Beatrix Potter, pet rats and child abuse and manages to work. Some of Brian Talbot's finest stuff...

\$2.95, 32 pages, normal size, colour, published by Dark Horse Comics



THB

More cool shit... this time from Paul Pope. This title's a slab of science-fiction weirdness... Well, it's futuristic weirdness anyway. Odd robots, bouncy balls that turn into giant demony-looking beasts, a (human) school-girl and it's all set on Mars. This isn't as quick read (for one thing the art isn't very skimmable, you need to study each pic as you go along...) but is well worth the effort.

Issue 1: \$5.50, 100+ pages

Later issues: \$2.50, 48 pages...

All standard size (if a bit chunkier than usual...), black and white, all from Horse Press, PO Box 3112, Columbus. Ohio.

They Call Me PussPuss

Hunt Emerson tales about a crude cat. Funnier than "Firkin"! Actually somewhere between "Firkin" & "Tom and Jerry"... deadpan crudity... Funny, funny, funny... Read it, and smirk.

£1.99, 32 pages, standard size, black & white, from Knockabout, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (free catalogue available!)

Too Much Coffee Man

Shannon Wheeler's TMCM is a cautionary tale about caffeine addiction and the slippery slope on which coffee drinking lies... Well, sort of. TMCM requires caffeine to function, and has reached the stage of one-ness with coffee in which he bears the mark of the coffee-cup on his head.

Standard size, black & white, from the author, wish I could remember the details, as I can't find it at the moment



Also seen in Dark Horse Presents #92+, as the "TMCM Meets His Coffee Maker" storyline. DHP still comes recommended, even if I don't seem to have seen a copy for months... Maybe it fell off the standing order... maybe I'd better get it put back on.



Underwater

Chester Brown's new title has managed to confuse people even more than Yummy Fur did! In the first issue, there are about three intelligible words in the story... It's got something to do with a pair of twins - best guess on the gibberish language is that it's language filtered through the kids (who, currently being new-born, don't really understand a word of what's going on). It's cool, it's odd, it's impressive... It's Chester Brown's Underwater. Unfortunately, only 14 of the 28 pages are actually "Underwater", the others being given over to more of "Matthew" (you know, the one from the bible)... However, if you read Chester Brown, you get Matthew, so you've gotta either like it or, as they say, lump it.

\$2.95, 28 pages, standard size, white & black, from Drawn & Quarterly





Vogarth

It's a UK independent! And it's good. The best comparison I've managed is that it's like a Hunt Emerson science-fiction tale. Starring Astro-Punk & Katika - a skeletal chap & a somewhat feline female - the two of them zap around the universe (or whatever) doing silly things, enjoying themselves, and defeating the bad guys by judicious use of APs "magic pipe"... Also contains little stories from other folks in the back (including one from Neil Gaiman & Bryan Talbot in issue 20 (issue 1 "New Format"), so all you NG/BT completists'll have to give Vogarth a try. won't you?). Currently having problems getting the latest issue lettered (sniff!), but earlier stuff is being reprinted (yippee!)

First 19 issues £1, 28 pages, A5, photocopy style b&w, assorted of them currently unavailable...

Issue 20 onwards... £1.95, 32 pages, normal comic format, b&w, Published by Vogarth Comix, P.O. Box 260, Preston PR1 &JU

Wolff & Byrd: Counsellor's of the Macabre

Issue 4 is compulsory reading for all TC readers that think video is the only medium to suffer at the hands of the censors from hell... W&B is about two solicitors (okay, so I'm biased, I can <u>like</u> solicitors...) whose cases have a habit of being "from beyond"... This

issue it's the "Bier-Meister", and ex-host of horror comics, and the whole issue revolves around the comics code authority and censorship... Filled with bad puns, this is fun personified (or should that be comixified?) and well worth possessing (even if only for the spoof "Vertigo" back cover...)...

\$2.50, 32 pages, normal comic format, b&w, Published by Exhibit A Press

Summary

Hmmm... maybe I'm maturing... there seems to be a huge amount of black and white stuff here...



Other bits worthy of mention, but that somehow missed the nearly-but-not-quite-ever expanding deadline...

Triple-XXX: Dystopian thingy, set in a corporate-ruled future from the Pander Bros via Dark Horse. So far, so interesting.

Sandman: Dashing on towards the conclusion of "The Kindly Ones", and the end of the current Sandman series. It's been fun, but it makes a pleasant change for a series to remember to quit while the going's good.

Sin City: Continues to impress, more for the interpretation & execution than from any pure originality.

****THE END****



The following items are among those that have entertained, amused, or otherwise cheered us over the long and desolate period since the last issue:

Eric Cantona, Michael Moore's TV Nation, THE CROW, The Downward Spiral.

Toshinden on the Sony Playstation,

Cat People (wide-screen), The X-Files, Laibach - Union Chapel Islington,

the Cardiff movie database, OKJANA BAIVL.

baiting Quentin Tarantino fans, "WIRED". double chocolate doughnuts, bathrooms,

Doom (+ the Aliens patch), Kinski back in Hollywood, Sheep on Drugs Greatest Hits, Fortean Times.

Shallow Grave, Leeson & Barings, BASIC INSTINCT (WITH PAUL VERHOEVEN COMMENTARY).

SERVAL MOM, The Day Today, getting paid for writing, DOS DEDOS MI AMIGOS. the Tokyo nerve gas attack, carpets,

bacon and sausage torpedoes.

Leon (not the pig-farmer), watching America in the £2.50World Cup, Daytona.