

*"considered to be indecent or obscene"*

*--- HM Customs & Excise*



# TRAVIS CITY

18/19

© RIK 96



# TRASH CITY 18 / 19

Yes, it's that contents moment again. Though I'm tempted not to bother, purely to aggravate a friend of mine (hi, Nicolas!) who has this curious psychotic aversion to the fact that we don't have page numbers on the pages. There are all sorts of difficult, technical reasons for this, but if anyone else feels this is a major flaw, feel free to correct it yourself with a Biro. Anyway, what follows will give a rough idea of what to expect, without giving away all the surprises!

Greece	4
Customary Practice	6
Conspiracy Corner	4
Against 'Empire'	2
Lifestyle mags	4
Books	3
Weird News #1	1
Mr Vampire	4
Letters	2
Lino's 'Zine Bit	11
Weird News #2	1
Against 'The X-Files'	2
Faerie Tale Theater	4
DFL	2
Alex Winter	2
Anime Blitz	12
Food	2
Incredibly Bad Film Show	3
Weird News #3	1
In defence of 'Show-girls'	2
Undressed to Kill 2	4
Roni Raye	6
Let's talk about sex	4
Internet Porn	5
Weird News #4	1
Film Blitz	7
Film (Festival) Blitz	5
Weird News #5	1

## The not-so small print

This is TC18/19, edited and published by Jim McLennan, 34 Perran Road, Tulse Hill, London, SW2 3DL. Email: jmcclennan@trashcity.org. All text by him, except as otherwise noted, and he also did most of the layouts, which is why it's 20 months since the last issue, except for "Let's Talk About Sex", and DFL which were done by John Spencer. The printers are Juma of Sheffield, whose address is 44 Wellington Street, Sheffield, S1 4HD.

Subscriptions to TC are £2 per double issue in the UK, £2.50 (\$4) in Europe, £3 (\$5) anywhere else. I still have some copies of TC16/17 left, at about the same price but all other issues are out of print, pending the forthcoming "Best of..." [take that with a pinch of salt]. Contributions are welcome; the more amusing, the better. It's good if you lay them out – or better still, just publish them in such a way that I get all the credit.

Thanks for this issue, in no particular order, go to: Manga/AD Vision/Kiseki for tapes, Steve C, Steve L, Steve W, Mike, Miles, Rudy (Mr. Stella), Roni Raye, Rob, Shade Rupe, Chuck S, Rik, Lino, Trevor/Adrian /the Cinema Store for selling this, Darren, Nicolas, Andy (not had a four-pack for breakfast before!), and Chris "Things to do with a British flag" Fata.

# WELCOME TO THE VIDEODROME

*"Snake Plissken? I heard you were dead".*

**"I notice from issue #62 of 'The Dark Side' that Trash City may be no more. Can this be true? I hope not! I've been with TC for quite a while, it'd be a shame to see "the old dear" finally go under...Hope that Mark Twain's maxim applies"**

This morning, the above plaintive little letter drifted into TC Towers. You will understand that I was intrigued, and rushed out to grab a copy of said magazine. After giggling madly at the letters column (I know at least one person whose hobby is getting fake missives printed therein), I came to Steve Green's 'Fanzine Focus' and read:

**"We've also seen such worthy titles as Dark Terrors, Invasion and Trash City slip into the shadows, perhaps for the duration. No disrespect to the other two, but it's the last which I'll miss most."**

There follows a warm tribute which I am far too modest to re-print. Touching though it is, I do wish that he'd made some attempt to contact me and verify that TC was indeed dead, before writing its memorial! I mean, a postcard would have done. However, after, ooh, twenty months, I can hardly criticise anyone for believing that we'd shuffled off this mortal coil, so I guess it's time to rev up the old word-processor, and deliver the latest issue before any other obituaries hit the outside world. As you can tell, reports of our death have been greatly exaggerated -- though perhaps what you are holding is merely a figment of your deranged imagination and Steve Green was right after all.

The delay is simply a result of competition for my free time. Back when I started, I was a sad git with no life, living in a bedsit in Farnborough, Hampshire. Now, however, I am a sad git with no life, living in a house in Tulse Hill, but also possessing a large amount of things to distract from the task at hand. I've probably contributed several TC's worth to the Internet, notably the alt.cult-movies group. I finally cracked and bought a Playstation. This is the first issue produced 100% under non-celibacy, shall we say. All of this, plus the usual beer-drinking, film-watching and so on. You get the picture.

But I like TC, and would like to state publicly that I have no plans to stop doing it in the near future. It may be very sporadic, but when or if I go, it will not be with a whimper, but a loud bang -- for no other reason than that I've a lot of subscription money to drink my way through.

At the moment, I feel like a character in an H.P.Lovecraft short story, desperately trying to finish his life's work before the (Shapeless, Indescribable, Nameless) Things scratching at his door get in. In my case, the things are biological and viral in nature, as I can feel my head filling up with what promises to be a cold the size of Alabama. Valiant attempts are being made to drive it off, by cramming so many pharmaceuticals down my neck that the cold thinks it's trying to infect Hoffman La Roche. If that fails, I'm off to bed, and this will probably not see the light of day until 1997.



Speaking of which, TC will be sprinting back from it's Christmas vacation for *Shinnekai*, the 1997 European Anime Convention, which takes place from January 3rd-5th at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. There'll be guests, a dealer's room, and yours truly will be in a video room over Saturday night, showing some favourite HK flicks. For info, send an SAE to Jonathan Weeks, 65 The High, Streatham High Road, London, SW16 1EY. See you there.

The bizarre stories scattered through this issue come most from Chuck Shepherd's wonderful 'News of the Weird'. To subscribe, send \$16 to him at PO Box 8306, St.Petersburg, FL 33738, USA or drop an e-line to notw-request@nine.org with the word 'subscribe' as the subject of the message. Or, you could rush out and order his 5th paperback, "The Concrete Enema and Other News of the Weird Classics" (Andrews and McMeel, \$6.95). Just walk up to the counter and ask the salesgirl, "Give me a Concrete Enema, please!"

While talking about publications you might like to buy, as Christmas is coming, after all - or Easter, depending on when this appears! - you might want to consider 'Hog #2' and 'The Lina Romay File'. The former would be perfect for a little nephew, as it's full of delightful comic strips like 'Arseman' as well as the latest adventures of the charmingly named Jack Shit. Call it £2, including p&p, from TC cover artist Rik Rawling, 4a Hardy Ave, Churwell, Morley, LS27 7SL. On the other hand, that "difficult" uncle might appreciate 'Lina', the latest offering from that one-man army, Tim Greaves. Er, except this was done in conjunction with Kevin Collins. A hundred glossy, fulsomely illustrated pages for £5.95; Lino's bit has Tim's address.

I suppose at this stage, I should insert a rant about 'Crash'. But you know about it all, and I've little doubt you think exactly the same thing as me, so I won't bother. I will point out, however, that the Daily Express has called for a boycott of Sony, because they own the rights to 'Crash' in this country. You will not be surprised to hear that I have written to the Daily Mail, to tell them that this long-term reader [well, a bit of literary exaggeration never hurt anyone -- somehow, I think that the truth would be slightly less effective!] has had enough, and will not be buying their newspaper again. I also rushed out and bought a dozen Sony videotapes and three new Playstation games. I would heartily recommend you do the same. We love you, Sony!

It's all down to election fever, and things will only get worse until it's all over. On one hand, you have Tony Blair and his "Christian socialism". On the other, we have the likes of Virginia Bottomley, who seems to think that "National Heritage" = "getting councils to ban films". In the middle, we have the party that spawned David Alton. What do you think I'm going to be doing on election night? I'll give you a clue: it involves lots of beer. Oops, said I wasn't going to get into a political rant. Sorry! Well, that's it. I'm off to open the sluice gates and chug down another six-pack of Lemsip. TC will return, hopefully in 1997, but hell, don't hold your breath!

**"The Attorney General says there's too much violence on TV and that should stop. But even if you took out all the violent shows, you could still see the news. And so, until mankind is peaceful enough not to have violence on the news, there's no point taking it out of shows that need it for entertainment value"**

— Alicia Silverstone, definitely not 'Clueless'!

# Following the...

*The place: a bus heading to Athens Charter Airport. The time: 01:15. Next to us, a New Man struggles to change child #3's nappy as the bus rolls along, clearly desperately trying not to lose his cool with his wife and children #1 & #2. His speech has that strange stress-induced pattern where sentences. Break. Up in funny. Places. Meanwhile, at the back, a bunch of Essex Girls and Essex Men are singing lustily. This upsets New Man's extremely sleepy daughter #2, who starts to sob. In a probably mistaken attempt at pacification, the Essex mob switch to lullabies, albeit still at 120 dB. New Man stalks to the back of the bus, screams for them to shut up (please). Essex Man leaps to his feet and threatens to punch New Man's glasses into his face.*

*Occasionally, there are defining moments when you gain an insight into the inner workings of the universe. As these two low points on humanity's scatter-chart glared at each other, I suddenly realised that the nuclear annihilation of mankind might not be an entirely bad thing.*

I had qualms about Greece as a destination for the 1995 TC holiday. To me, the country had been snoozing on it's laurels for a couple of millennia: the major contribution to world culture since the Romans took over was usually to be found in a pitta bread with salad. It also seemed an act of sheer insanity to leave London in the middle of the hottest summer since whenever-the-last-one-was, in order to go somewhere hotter. My counter-suggestions of Iceland, the Falkland Isles, or any one of Jupiter's outer satellites were received with, ah, frosty responses.

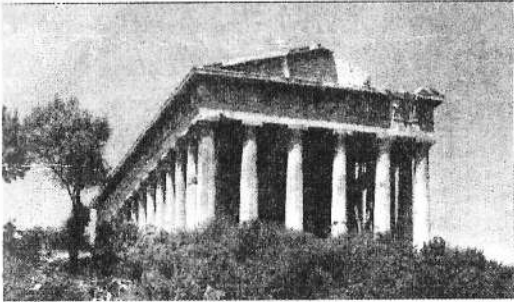
But I have to say, it was a very pleasant holiday -- heat is much more tolerable when you're wearing shorts and a T-shirt, rather than a shirt and tie -- even if the trash factor was inevitably kept low by my inability to read Greek. I can't begin to fathom how even the Greeks manage, since the language looks like someone has been pulling mathematical equations out of a Scrabble bag ("well, I don't know what it means, but I think I can solve it"). It becomes a little hard to track down video shops, comic stores, or any of the other, previously essential, holiday shopping venues when every sign looks like a prescription written by a dyslexic Dr. Jekyll on one of his bad days.

Instead, there was a lot of generic Wandering Around. Athens itself is a major-league sprawl of a city, which seems to be undergoing a perpetual program of carefully scheduled urban decay: the best-looking buildings are the ruins, and the streets are so narrow that gridlock is the rule, rather than the exception. Add in the smog, and lots of tourists who should stay the hell out of the way, and Londoners will feel entirely at home, although the beggars in Greece put our lot to shame by their sheer persistence. I was especially impressed by the boy with no feet, displaying his stumps for all to see. As far as commitment goes, it certainly beats a bit of cardboard with "hungry and hmlss, pls help" scrawled on it in blue Biro.

# ...herd, down...

Great mysteries of life: why did the Greeks only bother to put temples at the top of things? Perhaps it just seems like that: maybe they're the only ones to have survived, because the Persians et al couldn't be bothered to climb up and loot them. Witness the Parthenon, a complex of temples set right at the summit of a hill. This contains not only the Acropolis, but also the first example of corporate sponsorship, the temple of Athena Nike (not to be confused with Athena Reebok, or Athena Converse All Stars). A couple of hints: being cheapskates, we went on a Sunday when it's free. Unfortunately, so does everyone else. Also, take decent shoes – maybe some Nikes? – as millions of tourists, looters and holiday program presenters have ensured that the steps resemble polished ice. I ended up clambering down one section in bare feet. Perhaps the best tip of all is that it looks a lot better from the bottom, nicely floodlit, seen from a comfy seat outside a taverna through a full glass.

Athens' history is also reflected in a plethora of museums, which all specialise in broken pottery. Future archaeologists will thank us in this department, discarded burger cartons take a lot less piecing together than a Grecian urn. The first dozen pots are cool; the second mildly interesting; from the third on, your brain will start to go a bit numb. More interesting are the artefacts which help show that the Greeks were pretty much like us, such as the slab detailing library opening hours.

Θησείο. Ναός του Ηφαίστου. Β' μισό 5ου αι. π.Χ. Theslion. Temple of Hephaistos. Second half of 5th c. BC.	ΑΡΧΑΙΑ ΑΓΟΡΑ ANCIENT AGORA
	
AA 0138808	ΕΙΣΙΤΗΡΙΟ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥ ΑΡΧ DRS 1.200 ENTRANCE TICKET
Παρακαλείσθε να κρατήσετε το εισιτήριο του μουσείου σας μέχρι την έξοδο σας από το χώρο. You are requested to preserve your ticket until you leave the Museum/Site.	

Unless you're very interested in this sort of thing, a couple of days in Athens is probably enough. It's worth seeing, but life is far more pleasant on one of the islands that litter the Aegean Sea like, er, littery, island things. Our one was called Aegina, selected by a careful process that may be summed up as "where's the cheapest?". We flew with a company called PriceRight, whose symbol was a circle - appropriate, as they cut every corner possible. So we took night flights and went to the charter airport (think 'Alcatraz', with less creature comforts): you could probably get a few more quid off the price of a holiday if you hold a current pilot's licence. The two hours after arriving were spent in the lounge of a hotel in Athens red-light district waiting for the first ferry to Aegina, because it was the least expensive option. Sadly I was simply too shattered to appreciate the experience.

# ...to Greece...

However, Aegina had everything we needed within walking distance: restaurants, supermarkets and even it's own ruined temple. For my money, this was rather more pleasant than the Parthenon -- not only no trainer commercials, but fewer people around. Still at the top of a bloody great hill though. We heard a rumour one evening that a certain hotel was full of people in costume, intending to use the temple to perform some kind of sacred rite. No investigation was carried out: I was on holiday after all, and also, we be not from round these here parts. I've seen 'The Wicker Man'.



Ritual sacrifice aside, it was a superb place, totally dedicated to tourists' needs, to the extent that from October to April, the town is closed; everyone shuts up shop and moves out. Unless you're actually going to the island, specific recommendations are a tad futile -- though I'd suggest a visit to the "Genesis" night-club, if only for the barman's pyromaniac tendencies. At odd moments of boredom, he poured spirits down the length of the bar and set them alight, turning it into a river of fire. Try this one at home, kids, but get Mummy to help you open the bottles.

From the food point of view, I can't praise the place highly enough: we ate out in a different restaurant every night, barely paid more than a tenner each for three courses including drink, and had no complaints at all. It was amazing to see how despite a wide variety of restaurant styles, prices were almost uniform - the power of competition, I guess. Most exotic thing tried: swordfish steak; kinda like fish-flavoured pork, weird but nice - made something of a change to be eating a carnivore. Naturally, I also sampled the local kebab, called a 'Gyros' after the device they rotate on (never let it be said that reading TC is anything but an educational experience), and noticed several subtle differences from the Tulsa Hill variety:

- It came with mayonnaise rather than chilli sauce,
- You could have chips wrapped up inside the pitta.
- It was smaller
- It was recognisable meat, far chunkier than the well-processed flesh seen back home.

# ...on holiday!

We tried a few other islands -- Poros, Hydra, Spetsis -- and the main thing that struck me was how similar they were. The same shops selling the same souvenirs; the same restaurants offering the same menus; and maybe even the same horses offering buggy rides round the town. I'm sure they're all very pleasant and have subtly different personalities, but to the casual eye (hell, being on holiday, my entire body was casual) they're hard to tell apart, save the landscape, which comes in two flavours: 'flat' or 'hilly'. Seen one, seen 'em all.

ΚΟΙΝΟΠΡΑΞΙΑ ΠΛΟΙΩΝ  
ΜΙΧΑΗΛ - ΑΓ. ΝΕΚΤΑΡΙΟΣ Β'  
ΠΡΑΚΤ.: ΤΣΑΜΑΔΟΥ 1 - ΤΗΛΑ: 4132.072  
Α.Φ.Μ. 97463504 - Α.Ο.Υ. ΠΛΟΙΩΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑΣ

ΘΕΣΙΣ Γ' № 10173

ΑΔΕΙΩΝ ΔΟΥΛΕΙΑΣ

ΣΥΛΛΟΓΗ  
ΑΓ. ΜΑΡΙΝΑ - ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑ

ΝΑΥΛΟΣ	ΔΡΧ.	800
Ο.Λ.Π.	"	40
Α.Τ.	"	40
Ν.Α.Τ.	"	50
ΣΥΝΟΛΟ		930
Φ.Π.Α. 6%	"	75
ΓΕΝΙΚΟ ΣΥΝΟΛΟ		1.005

Ο υπεύθυνος Πλοίαρχος κ. Αρ. Ν. ΑΓΩΝΗΣ  
βεβαιώνει ότι το παρόν εισιτήριο εκδόθηκε έγκυρα  
των όρων του Επιβατηγού Διαδ. Επιβατών, όπως  
του Πρωτ. Γ' Επιδρομείου.

ΔΙΑ ΤΟΝ ΕΠΙΒΑΤΗΝ

To sum Greece up: brilliant place for a holiday, but unlike previous destinations i.e. the South of France and California, I don't think I'd actually want to live there. With air-conditioning the exception rather than the rule, I'd simply melt; our rep gleefully told us of a heatwave where so many people died they had to requisition the local meat-packers as a temporary morgue. That, I think I can do without - quite put me off my kebab...

*We finally reached the airport: our flight was delayed for two and a half hours; the wine wore off and the hangover kicked in; it was hot, crowded and people were slitting each others' throats for somewhere to sit. D-day was about to be re-enacted between groups of German and British tourists ("Two World Wars and one World Cup, doodah, doodah"). But then a miracle happened.*

*We went to get a snack from the concession stand. Two, small, boring icecreams came to four quid, but I realised the guy serving us was actually **embarrassed** to charge this much. "Hey", I said, "it's not your fault, you don't set the prices", and he gave me my change. Stepping away, I realised I had too much money; looking back, I saw him grinning broadly and giving a big thumbs-up. He'd deliberately only charged us for one ice-cream. Let me emphasize the importance of this event: here was an airport worker, not only unhappy with the casual extortion and outrageous prices, but one willing to stiff his employer in order to give fellow man a break.*

*A wave of warmth swept through me, crossing international borders. There was hope for humanity after all, we do have a common link, maybe we can live together in peace and under...*

*Bing-bong. Passengers on Flight NB826 please note, your flight has been delayed for another two hours. Bing-bong.*

*Aw, hell. Still, it was nice while it lasted...*



## Notice of Seizure Indecent And Obscene Material

To:

JIM Mc LEWAN  
344 PERRAN RD,  
TULSE HILL,  
LONDON,  
SW2 3DL

Reference number to be quoted  
in all correspondence

LPS ( 10863 / 95.

Office address/Date stamp

12  
- 3 OCT 1995  
CHARLTON GREEN  
DOVER, KENT CT16 1EP

The items described below are liable to forfeiture (see 1 below) because:-

- they are considered to be indecent or obscene and are therefore prohibited from importation (see 2 below), or
- ~~they were found with material considered to be indecent or obscene (see 3 below).~~

They have therefore been seized (see 4 below).

If you claim the items are not liable to forfeiture you must tell us in writing, giving your full name and address. This claim must be received at any Customs & Excise office within one month of the date shown above (see 1 below). We are then required to institute proceedings for a court to decide the matter. These are civil proceedings concerned only with liability to forfeiture.

If you do not claim, we will dispose of the items.

You should note that to be knowingly concerned in importing prohibited items is a Customs offence which could lead to criminal proceedings. A conviction in such proceedings may result in heavy financial penalties and, in certain cases, imprisonment.

If you are in any doubt about the effect of this Notice, you should consult the office named above or, if you prefer, a solicitor.

Mark Colisack  
Officer of Customs and Excise

### Particulars of Items Seized

Ship/Aircraft/Postal packet no. .... Date 3.10.95

From RIDE SHAPE PRODUCTIONS, 511 6TH AVE, NO 325, NEW YORK, NY 10011

Quantity and Description 1x MAGAZINE - "FUNERAL PARTY"

.....

.....

#### The Law

1. Schedule 3 to the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.
2. Section 42 of the Customs Consolidation Act 1876.
3. Sections 49(1)(b) and 141(1) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.
4. Section 139(6) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 and paragraph 1 of schedule 3 to the Act.



## Customary Practice: I fought the law (well, kinda)

For the past few years, as readers know, I've been engaged in a sparring duel with the monolithic sensibilities of HM Customs & Excise. They keep opening parcels I'm sent from overseas, and I keep writing sarcastic articles about them. However, the balance in this relationship of Mutually Assured Distrust was shaken last October, when I returned from Scotland to find the letter opposite waiting for me.

I knew what it was immediately -- it had to happen eventually, I suppose - but was surprised at how calm I felt. There was a time when such a letter would have had me frantically shipping half my possessions to a lock-up garage in Lewisham, but those days of paranoia are long past. I knew I was safe because of the word "knowingly" -- as in, "knowingly concerned in importing prohibited items". This time, for once, I was absolutely innocent, simply because I hadn't expected 'Funeral Party', the magazine in question, to pose any significant threat on the Customs and Excise front. Let's be honest, I am not so stupid as have severely dodgy material sent to me -- at least, not in my own name, to my home address.

I'd first come across 'Funeral Party' on the Internet, where one of the editors had posted an ad (*right*) in the cult movies newsgroup. It sounded interesting, so I wrote, offering to trade some TCs for a copy. This was accepted, and it was dispatched by sea mail, to cut back on postage costs. The weeks casually drifted past, and I all but forgot about it -- sea mail being what it is, I wasn't holding my breath. However, the next thing to turn up was the letter from Customs, saying they weren't going to let me have it at all.

### **You are invited to a party! - FUNERAL PARTY!!**

This 112-page book contains four interior pages of colour plus full colour covers, printed on 80# coated paper with a hard card cover.

Including:

•TEN pages of new, never-before-seen H.R. Giger material!!

•Plus interviews:

Dennis Paoli - Screenwriter, Re-Animator, From Beyond, Body Snatchers

Chas. Balun - Writer/Illustrator, Deep Red

Mark Pavia/Jack O'Donnell - Writer/Producers/Director, Stephen King's The Night Flier

The Torture King - from The Jim Rose Circus Sideshow

Jim VanBebber - Director, My Sweet Satan, Roadkill, Deadbeat At Dawn

Peter Sotos - Writer, Pure, Parasite, member of Whitehouse and five other dark masters.

•Six pieces of fiction including Buddy (Combat Shock) Giovinnazzo and J.B. (The Complete Vampire Companion) Mauceri-Macabre.

•Articles on Hermann Nitsch and The GRAND-GUIGNOL Theatre

•Comics, film reviews, artwork and more. Over 100 illustrations!!

Satisfaction GUARANTEED! You will not be disappointed!

The most aggravating thing was the total lack of information, beyond that 'Funeral Party' was "considered to be indecent or obscene". Now, this might be sufficient for a copy of 'Debbie Does Dallas', but in this case scarcely counts as adequate data on which to judge whether or not to mount a court case. A swift re-read of the ad threw up a few possibilities: Peter Sotos and H.R.Giger were perhaps names familiar to the Customs boys. But this was all speculation, I wrote back requesting more detailed information, in order to make a decision. On the off-chance, I also requested a copy of the guidelines used to determine whether material is indecent. Two weeks passed, with nothing save notice that my letter had been forwarded to Headquarters, who'd made the original decision. Then, the reply came back:

***"The magazine contains a cartoon on pages 100 and 101 which includes a graphic and explicit depiction of the buggery of a mutilated body. Although the depiction is in cartoon form, such images are still considered to be obscene. In addition, the magazine contains other questionable pictures at pages 19, 25, 39, 98 and 105. To varying degrees, all of these images depict the tying of people in unnatural positions or sexual acts where actual penetration is shown. Taken together, these depictions are considered to justify seizure of the magazine as obscene and therefore a prohibited import under s42 of the Customs Consolidation Act 1876."***

My first reaction was to take them to court. Very obviously, they had taken the material completely out of context: only seven of the 100+ pages were even "questionable", and two of those were a cartoon! I got back to the publisher, Shade Rape, and asked him for his opinion:

**"100 and 101** - This is so pathetic. From a very well-known Spanish comic book artist named Miguel Angel Martin. He does children's strips and strips for the daily paper in Madrid. He also likes to do these bizarre violence and disease stories that are drawn in extremely simple shapes (but distinctly his style). There is one panel where this is occurring and you only see one line to suggest the male character's penis. Two round lines suggest a butt.

**19** - A still from a Richard Kern movie, I forget which one. The still, in this instance, is used for a flyer promoting a film screening in Seattle. The date and address of the show are printed on the flyer, and also includes right on the image, set diagonally, "Warning! Guaranteed Politically Incorrect." These flyers were just pasted on lampposts. This is so dumb.

**25** - A still from Jim VanBebber's 'The Last Days of John Martin.' I knew very little about printing when we ran this book and I ended up setting the photos a little too dark, for me at least (no one else sees what I mean). A couple people have commented on this image. The film is legally available here through Film Threat Video on a tape which also contains Jim's more recent short feature 'My Sweet Satan,' and a very early one he produced and Mike King, his cinematographer, directed called 'Doper,' about, you guessed it, potheads.

**39** - A Chas. Balun video box cover. This is on display in video stores. It's a fucking drawing.

**98** - Now, this one is weird. Dame Darcy did this drawing. She has a comic book called 'Meat Cake.' The girl in this drawing is lying dead in a pool of blood with flowers coming out of her mouth, chest and vagina. I just don't get it. Darcy's also put out records and sells handmade dolls to a store here, Danse Macabre, and to Courtney Love.

**105** - A Timothy Patrick Butler illustration.

Ya know Jim, it's really funny writing this because as I put the book together I really felt that it was very tame. I actually thought about a commercial audience. Reading what I've been writing, this seems like the book we've all been looking for! It's much like Shock Xpress but more varied. Lot o' film but also art, comics, performance, etc."



We clearly had a difference of opinion here, but without a copy of 'Funeral Party' to look at myself, I was left high and dry – how could I now prepare an adequate defence without being able to see the magazine? I came very close to getting it: one major mail-order outlet had bought copies when visiting the States, but their copies had already been sold. In the end, with Christmas looming, the four weeks Customs allowed for an appeal slid gently past. Presumably, 'Funeral Party' went into the incinerator, alongside 'Teenie Pissie #27' or whatever.

However, neither I nor the publisher were quite finished. At the start of March, through alternative lines of supply, a copy of the magazine finally made its way into my hands. Civilisation has not collapsed. Life has gone on. And Customs' action has completely backfired, because the seizure has guaranteed that **more** people see it. If they hadn't bothered, it would probably only have been myself and Lino; instead, I've already shown it to people at work, canvassing their opinions. Even among the relatively staid people I work with, most thought it "strange", but no-one found it obscene, and so far, nobody has become a serial killer.

Additionally, scattered throughout this article are a selection of the "questionable" and "obscene" images, so you can make up your own mind. According to Customs, this should corrupt at least some of you. Please write in if you feel notably more depraved as a result of viewing these illustrations. Bear in mind that they were spread out through a 112-page book, rather than shown in the 'concentrated' form here.



Personally, I was disappointed: not with 'Funeral Party' itself (well-produced, resembling a perfect-bound issue of 'Divinity' or 'Headpress', with many interesting interviews and articles). No, the letdown was the **"graphic and explicit depiction of the buggery of a mutilated body"**. It's shown on the left. I'm baffled as to how they are so sure it's buggery, but

am prepared to bow to C&E's apparent experience in this area. However, it requires a major redefinition of "graphic" and "explicit" to make them fit this particular cartoon. The standards applied by Customs seem to me to be those of a Puritan era. Personally, I see more obscene things on the nightly news.]

With regard to the rest of the "questionable" illustrations – which, as Shade points out include a video sleeve, an event flyer, and a photo from a film set – it's clear that Customs haven't a clue. About the only one I might be inclined to accept is the truly bizarre illustration at the top of the next page, though at less than three inches square, it is scarcely obvious, and the surreal and fantastical nature leave it in the same realms as H.R.Giger.



Overall, had I known back in November just how "obscene" the magazine was i.e. not very, I might well have gone to court, and think I would have had a fair chance of winning, though in terms of time and effort, it's been a lot easier just to bypass them.

So what lessons are to be learned. Firstly, don't believe a word Customs say – but you should know that already! Next, don't send stuff sea-mail, it seems to increase the chance of examination. Presumably Customs think that they can delay a surface package by a week without anyone noticing, while doing the

same to an air-mail package would be obvious. Better still, use a courier. If the package is moderately heavy, the cost isn't much more than posting it, and delivery takes about two days, leaving Customs with almost no chance to interfere.

Let's also take a look at what Customs say they are looking for, in their answer to the "bonus question" in my letter to them. It starts thus: "**there are no guidelines available to the public on what constitutes indecent or obscene material**". That's a lot of help. This does tie in with what happened when a friend tried to import a laser-disc, but had it stopped by Customs, who said it was on their banned list. When he asked for a copy of this, he was told it

wasn't a physical list, just that certain film titles were illegal as far as they were concerned. At least this silence makes it easy to plead ignorance; it must be all but impossible for anyone here to knowingly import obscene material in, when no-one will explain what obscene means.



[Last issue, it was octopii. This time, it's roses]

However, the letter does go on:

**"A useful 'rule of thumb' for importers is that if a depiction of a sexual act is sufficiently explicit that it is clearly actually taking place (eg. if penetration can actually be seen during intercourse) then it is likely that a court would consider it to be obscene. This applies to drawn as well as photographic material. Depictions of people bound (especially if gags are also used) are taken very seriously by the courts, particularly if the victim is a woman, with courts prepared to condemn comparatively 'tame' material of this kind. I trust that this has clarified the position".**



I suspect the last sentence may be a rare display of irony, since to my mind, the explanation just confused things even more! The drawing they claimed was obscene doesn't actually qualify by their own "rule of thumb", since it's impossible to tell from the image in question whether anything is "actually" taking place. This is leaving aside the little matter of whether anything can be said to "actually" happen when it's not "actually" real, just lines on paper.

Interesting to note that the above comments fail completely to mention violent material. It appears that you can import anything you want as long as no-one has sex or is tied up. I think I shall keep the letter to hand, so that when they come to batter my door down after I try and import, say, 'Blood Feast', I'll just smile, say "No bondage or sex", and they'll go away again. Why do I suspect this might not be how it would work in practice?

My cynicism about Customs and Excise grows stronger every time I have to deal with them. It's impossible to work out who they think they are protecting, and from what. In these days of global communication and travel, they're rapidly becoming an anachronism, a bunch of King Canutes floundering helplessly against an incoming tide of cheap booze, electronic smut, and American horror magazines. It was with great delight that I read about Knockabout Comics, who recently went into battle with C&E after they seized a shipment of comics. It turned out Knockabout had actually previously printed the same comics in this country with no problems. Ker-ching! Six thousand pounds costs against the boys in (navy) blue. This goes to show that it can be done, if Customs' cynical exaggeration and narrow-mindedness don't succeed in getting you to back down. Next time, I might not be so easily cowed...

# CONSPIRACY CORNER

**Warning:** gentle readers, irony & sarcasm can be hazardous in inexperienced (or American) hands. This piece was written by a trained professional. [Yeah, right...]

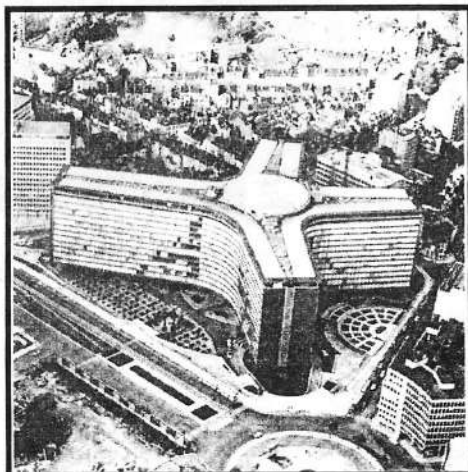
'Satan's Angels Exposed' by Salem Kirban, AMG Publishing, pp.292, £4.90

This issue's helping of loonie fundamentalist Xtian nonsense, comes to us courtesy of Salem Kirban. With that name, he clearly is not going to be a rock musician - the title 'Witchfinder General' must surely also be his. However, wild speculation and religious fundamentalism is not the only string to his bow. As well as 'How to Be Sure Of Crowns In Heaven' and 'Questions Frequently Asked Me On Prophecy' (I imagine number one is "shouldn't that be about prophecy?"), Mr.K is the author of a wide range of books. These include two novels, '666' and the sequel, '1000' - worthy of an entire article in themselves for their straight-line, literal interpretation of rapture, Armageddon and the rest of Revelations - and, oddly, a series of health-care volumes including 'How To Keep Healthy and Happy By Fasting', and the delightfully titled 'Unlocking Your Bowels'.

'Satan's Angels Exposed' was written in 1980 as part of a trilogy, together with 'Satan's Mark Exposed' and 'Satan's Music Exposed'. The style of the pages is interesting; the right-hand side is full text, the left dedicated to cryptic paragraph headings, like "The Sinister Seduction of Gradualism", "Towards A New World Order" and "Originated With John Ruskin", to take two pages at random. BLOCK CAPITALS, **bold print**, and underlining are the order of the day, and Kirban also tends to use imaginative line-breaks to convert quotes from other sources into something resembling blank verse, i.e.

*"In the realm of banking  
the name of Rothschild  
is still one to conjure with.  
One of the great ceremonies  
of the financial world  
occurs on each trading day in London  
when five men gather in the same room  
to set the opening price of gold  
on the world market.  
Of these five expert money managers,  
one is representative of the  
house of Rothschild  
and the room where they meet  
is in the Rothschild bank"*

Got a kinda nice rhythm, hasn't it?



"You are looking at the Common Market Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Antichrist quite possibly could become the head of this union of 10 nations. Turn this page. You will note this building is in the form of a stylized cross!"

The best conspiracies force together wildly disparate elements into a global paranoia where everything can be explained with a wave of dogma. In Salem's world all of them are true. Masons, Rosicrucians, Illuminati, the Fabian Society, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderbergers, the Trilateral Commission and the Common Market(!) are given equal weight in Kirban's world-view. They're all plotting America's – and hence freedom's and Christianity's – downfall. And who's behind it all, the conspirator behind the conspiracies? Satan! Who else? Hence a cover blurb which states (in yellow) *"That popular religious telecast you are watching may be subtly manipulated by the Illuminati!"* and (in pink) *"Those contemporary 'Christian' records you listen to may be produced by non-believers who are controlled by Satan's angels!"*. Phew. Lucky I only watch trash and listen to industrial technogoth.

Each page has a heading such as "Sinister Plans for Future Control", designed like a tabloid paragraph header to suck you in. Then he hits you with a blast of rhetorical questions: *"Is there a conspiracy? Are the Bilderbergers part of it? Or are they merely another group of would-be do-gooders used and manipulated by other unseen forces?"* (that's a sample from a run of **seven** consecutive sentences which end in question marks).

Salem starts by giving us some tips on how to spot a Satanic influenced organization. Number one is "Do they have a love for money?". Well, I guess that's it - every company in the FTSE 100 is a front for Satan. He then goes on a quick tour through the major religions of the world, pointing out how they stray from God's word (er, that's the Bible) though the greatest vitriol is reserved for Humanism which is even (gasp!) compared to Communism.

I am very sceptical about his criticisms. For example, when discussing the Druids, he says they *"...celebrated a number of feast days. At dawn on the 25th of December, the birth of the Sun God was celebrated, The Druids had a Madonna, or Virgin Mother, with a child in her arms; and their Sun God was resurrected at the time of year at which we celebrate Easter. It is amazing how Satan becomes the great imitator."* Damn clever of those pagans to work out Jesus's birthday and sneak in there several hundred years beforehand - December 25th wasn't fixed as Christmas Day until a papal decree in the 4th century AD, and even Kirban admits the Druids date back to the second century BC. Sorry, who was the great imitator?

After this bigot's guide to the world religion, ol' Salem gets down to the core of his conspiracy. Though 'core' is more solid than it ever gets, a rambling concoction of innuendo, rumour and downright paranoia. I'd have said that there was more hard evidence for aliens controlling the US government (TC12) than there is for Satan doing so. The basic theory is, "If you're not for us, you're against us" and since there have been any number of groups which couldn't quite see the relevance of Christianity to hard economics, Kirban assumes they're satanic.

More dodgy history follows: *"At that time, they [the Russians] drew their own satellites together into a Warsaw Treaty Organization in 1955, emulating the European economic community"...*which was actually founded two years later! This sums up the book - basically, it's a load of rubbish, but at least it is wonderfully large-scale, ultra-paranoid rubbish which proves if you're going to see conspiracies, it helps to have all facts surgically removed first.



Since the book appeared, events have overtaken Kirban. Take this passage about the EEC: *"The Bible tells us that in the last days, an alliance of ten nations, from out of what was once the Roman Empire, will control the economic and political life of the world...It is possible that one of these ten nations may drop out of the Common Market, thus making it possible for the United States to become eventually the final 10th nation!"*

The marginal plausibility of this, to put it mildly, must have been badly shaken when Spain and Portugal became the eleventh and twelfth members, and has surely evaporated as EC numbers head towards twenty. However, maybe it just proves that we're not yet in the last days, which is itself somewhat comforting. Guess we've just about got time for another pint, then...

**Waco: The Big Lie 1+2** (Linda Thompson) - £15, 2 hrs, Nexus Magazine, 01342 322854

On this tape are two documentaries which detail the alleged cover-up over the incidents surrounding the deaths of David Koresh and his followers at their ranch in Texas last year. According to attorney Linda Thompson, what happened was highly illegal, and totally disregarded the human rights of the victims. No-one has ever been brought to justice for the events, the official investigation clearing all those responsible.

The thrust of the accusations is two-fold: firstly, the initial charges levelled against the cult were unfounded, and secondly, that the deaths of the Branch Davidians were not accidents, but murder. The first of these would seem to have some bearing in fact: the allegations came from the infamous Cult Awareness Network, who habitually level the same charges of child abuse, sexual promiscuity and brainwashing, at any group who come into their sights. The purpose of the original raid was to search for an alleged machine-gun, but the evidence for this also seems to be weak and tenuous at best. On the other hand, it was staggering to discover that the cult had purchased over 200 guns **from a single shop**. Under these circumstances, it is easy to see why the BATF went in, if not with guns blazing, then with guns certainly ready to blaze.

The second phase is even fuzzier. It relies heavily on video evidence of non-pristine quality, and as this tape is a couple of generations down, you'll need a good TV and eagle-eyes to make out some of the supposed points. The most startling piece of evidence is footage of what looks like a tank with a flame-thrower at the front, seen operating shortly before the fire started which razed the compound. However, even this is inconclusive, there have been suggestions it is just sunlight flaring off metal. Possibly more convincing is gunshot analysis which strongly suggests the BATF agents killed through "friendly fire" rather than Davidian action. Again, it isn't surprising they were just a bit twitchy -- and once nerves set in, loosing off rounds at anything that moves is easy to do, as anyone who's played 'Doom' will agree.

The general impression it made on me was that, yes, there may be a cover-up, but I remain unconvinced it is anything more than an understandable desire, to avoid being blamed for what looks suspiciously like another government cock-up. While it is startling that the BATF agents killed had all been bodyguards to Bill Clinton, this does not yet a conspiracy make, though I'll be watching for developments. Let's face it, if the intention was really to deliver Koresh's Armageddon all along, the Pentagon could have done it from a long way off, and in spades.



**'Behold a Pale Horse'** by ilton William Cooper, Light Technology Publishing, pp 500, £16.99

Never judge a book by its cover, so the saying goes, but in this case the psychedelic awfulness of the William Blake-like artwork on the front is a fairly good indicator of the state of mind to be found inside. This isn't to say that it's dull – the book is a grandiose piece of entertainment – just that if you want anything remotely connected with reality, try Enid Blyton. Or, jeez, try a cornflake packet, you'll learn more about what's going on in the world.

In small doses, this book almost clings onto the far edge of sanity. It is just plausible that aliens operate in collusion with the American government. It's conceivable that the UN are plotting to set up a single world government. It could be that JFK was shot by his driver, because he demanded that the CIA

stop its drug-running operations. But when you take these conspiracies, and many more, and claim that they're **all** true, it's stretching credulity just a teeny bit. In many ways, this is worse than Kirban's book – at least he had an over-riding force, even if it was Lucifer. Here, Cooper's theories simply end up contradicting each other: in one the UN is limited to being a patsy of the Trilateral Commission (or is it the Bilderberg Group? Or the Council on Foreign Relations? I forget...), in the next, they themselves are the cabal out to overthrow the Constitution of the United States (starting with the right to bear assault weaponry, apparently).

There are a host of factual errors ranging from the trivial (The Hague in Switzerland?) to the monumental: it's hard to credit anyone accepts The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, even as neo-fact. On the (marginal) plus side he reprints the document, which I'd never seen in its entirety before. Replacing "Jews" with "Illuminati", as Cooper recommends, doesn't help much.

This book was read over a week's holiday in Greece, and that just about sums it up. File with Jeffrey Archer and all the other purveyors of paperback nonsense, fit only for beach browsing.

# Against **EMPIRE**

*Empire* is one of the few publications I regularly buy. But this once-decent magazine has collapsed into a self-parody, which each month takes less time to read. Gradually, *Empire* has less and less to do with films. Each issue seems to have a new irrelevant section, reviewing CDs, computer games, or god help us, **beer**. Is this freebie whoring at its most pathetic? If I want to read about music, I'll buy 'Q'.

The editor must take the blame for this dysfunctional deviance, happy to commission and publish tedious, opinion-based lists of "100 best", letting his writers stuff their views down our throats. Pieces such as "100 best opening sequences" grind film into snippets for multiplex idiots with no attention span. Almost inevitably containing the complete works of Tarantino i.e. both movies, *Empire* (The Mag That Believes The Hype) and Quentin (The Man That Believes The Hype) jerk each other off with tiresome regularity. He says what a **great** magazine *Empire* is; they reciprocate, using some feeble excuse to tell him what a great film-maker he is. The January 1996 issue ("100 Greatest Films Ever Made") does both: "*Empire* readers salute their favourite movies". Note the logic: "favourite" = "greatest". No actual film criticism here in *Empire*, populism rules. The "Greatest Film Ever" is, surprise, surprise, 'Pulp Fiction' and 'Reservoir Dogs' is #3. If these people picked the England football team, Tarantino would be captain, striker and manager. Then there's the quote from him, completing the circle-jerk: "I'm thrilled that 'Pulp Fiction' has been voted the best film ever by *Empire* readers". Yeah, me too.

However, it tells us about the reader to whose tendencies they pander. The sole concessions to world cinema were five foreign-language movies in the top 100 – and I suspect most who voted for 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' didn't know it was Italian. These handful damningly highlight the readers' ridiculously Anglocentric view. But how should they know otherwise? When *Empire* sent a reporter to Japan to write about 'Ghost in the Shell', he demonstrated his ignorance by interviewing a 'Byuichi Tezuka'. Bad news, guys; Tezuka died years ago. Do they perhaps mean Byuichi Terasawa? Seeing such slipshod journalism in an area I know a bit about, gives me no confidence in their accuracy elsewhere. Screw facts, let's have another list.

Such as "Top 100 Sexiest Movie Stars of All Time" – or rather, "Top 100 Sexiest Hollywood Movie Stars Now". Bar token Eurobabes like Beatrice Dalle, that list again spurned everyone off the London-LA axis, illustrating the obsession with current hip (it's amazing QT wasn't #1), and regardless of the fact that cinema just had its' centenary. Have the 90's seen an exponential beauty surge? Suggesting Johnny Depp has more anything than Marilyn is ludicrous, even allowing for personal taste. Needless to say, being neither from Hollywood nor currently fashionable, Kinski didn't merit a place. Harvey Keitel did. But he helped Tarantino get his big break, which must make him very sexy in *Empire*'s eyes.



It's relentlessly predictable: January rolls around and there will be a review of the past year; February, they will look forward to the next one, and six months later, there will be a summer preview. Plus (yawn!) inevitable reports from Cannes and the Oscars. Perpetually pushing the Hollywood publicity wagon, you can usually guess who'll get the cover. The only mild interest is when megahype movies open simultaneously: Judge Dredd or Batman Forever? Zzzzzz...

A further example of their editorial courage happened when the *Empire* editor had the last interview with Hugh Grant before his evening out. This could have provided an important insight into Grant's mental state but their chat mysteriously only appeared when Grant's movie, 'Nine Months', needed the hype. Things like this give the impression *Empire* has its tongue jammed right up the bum of the marketeers, and runs scared from doing or saying anything that would upset or annoy them, for fear of (shock!) not getting any more interviews.

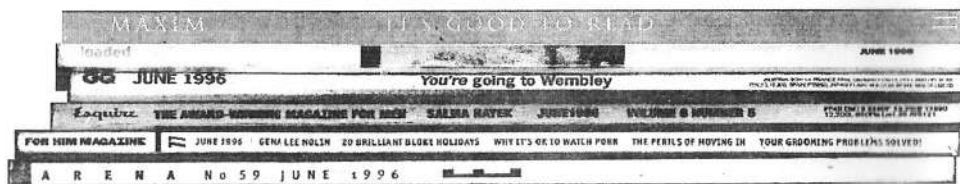
Frankly, this'd be no loss: their technique is so blandly non-confrontational you might as well read the press releases. "How much is a pint of milk?" may be a 'joke' question but is no worse than many they ask. These 'profiles' have been occupying increasing space but if all else fails, they reprint a transcript of a press conference. This scores high for lazy journalism, as does the 'classic scene' feature: an easy way to fill a page by copying dialogue from a script.

There are occasional flashes of honesty and wit: publicising Tarantino's theft of 'Reservoir Dogs' from 'City on Fire', a sharply aggressive demolition job on the plot of 'Waterworld', though these hardly repay the acres of publicity both got. Some writers do know what they're talking about, with Kim Newman an especial aberration in this department, but this makes things worse, showing what *Empire* **could** aspire to. Few of the rest display any individual personality or approach, churning out nothing but homogenised pap. Anything slightly more challenging than the latest studio product is ignored or treated with feeble attempts at sarcasm.

The very first issue I bought had as its cover stars two relatively unknown actors, starring in a quirky low-budget film, with a no-name director, from a minor studio. Those young newcomers were Christian Slater and Winona Ryder; the film was 'Heathers'. If that film was to be released today, the chances of it making the cover would be very, very slim indeed.

*Empire* is the leader in its field, undeniably, but that's only because of the lack of competition. Take *Premiere*, a hodge-potch of elderly reprints from its American parent, held back until the film's British release. Beating that should be at best a light thrill, like taking your grandmother on in a bout of full-contact karate. I've little doubt that there is a market for a film magazine that would provide intelligent criticism, without toppling into the self-indulgent masturbation too often found in *Sight and Sound*. I'm 100% certain that I'd buy such a publication. And I'm just as sure that *Empire* isn't it.





## Mags to Riches

Where I work, I don't tend to go out at lunchtime, preferring to relax in air-conditioned comfort instead of sweating through the City fug. But people tend to assume that if you are at your desk, you should be working, so it's necessary to adopt an elaborate set of rituals to convince people that this is actually your break that is being disturbed, and would they please go away and find someone else to do it. Icons used in the process may, for example, include an open pack of sandwiches, to indicate that You Are Not Available. Another possibility is some form of reading material: a newspaper, book or magazine, obviously not work-related. The ideal publication would, I suppose, be 'Doggie Love' but failing this (I like my job. No, actually I don't. But the pay-packet is curiously appealing), the next most viable is one of the plethora of 'male interest' magazines now on the shelves. In the interests of research, I stacked up on a pile of these, thereby turning my desk into the office reading room. When I eventually prised them from the hands of my colleagues, I was able to read and review 'em...

**Arena #59** - "The original men's magazine", it calls itself. S'funny then how it's managed fewer issues than most of the competition. Maybe it refers to their writing? Not going by the relentlessly Anglophile footie piece (tenuously linked to the European football championships), a feature of every magazine surveyed. Ah, I guess what it means is the term "New Lad" was first used here in '91. Zzzz. Gets the Best Pictures award for a gross portrayal of the effects of a land-mine (another reason not to want to live in Bosnia, should you be considering it) and some striking pictures of Demi Moore as a bloke. The articles lack the same punch, though there's occasionally a well-written paragraph which salvages things by hitting the nail squarely on the head. Slightly interesting, and certainly makes an attempt at intelligence, even if it sometimes ends up so wide of the mark you wish they hadn't bothered.

Highlight: the I-Spy guide to anti-personnel mines.

Lowlight: Sean O'Hagan's whining, complete with excessive use of the word "ironic", or rather ""ironic"", complaining that "New Lad" doesn't mean what he wants it to mean. So what? Is he going to hand back the money he's made from pontificating on the topic?



**Esquire Vol. 6 No. 5** - For quality writing, this one is probably the winner, with a huge range of pieces on everything from Nelson Mandela to jungle survival and corruption in the Yemenese British embassy. This variety is the stand-out feature, there seems no editorial philosophy, though this does mean it feels like "Reader's Digest" occasionally and it does come over as being dry, like a hard-copy version of Radio 4. Subdued babe-count makes it a safe bet to leave around at home. One interesting sidelight is the lack of any real review material; while most of the others delight in telling you what they think about the latest book, film, CD or whatever. *Esquire* avoids this, demonstrating either a commendable desire to avoid freebie whoring, or a complete lack of personality. It says something about *Esquire* that I'm not sure which is true. Like a bottle of Evian, it's good, but ultimately bland and tasteless.

**Highlight:** a piece on dominatrices, in which for once the reporter doesn't make his excuses and leave. And regrets it.

**Lowlight:** four pages of Tarantino's latest screenplay. Oh, joy.



**FHM #77** - Hadn't realised this one has been around for over six years, but even after so long, there appears to be a ferocious internal struggle for control happening. Half the magazine is terribly earnest - there are two female columnists and readers' problems include tooth discolouration and shaving rash (the free gift is a sample tube of face lotion) - yet the picture editor is clearly trying to compete with Sports Illustrated, given the number of bikini shots. Nary a nipple in sight, but undeniably chauvinist, this side of the magazine reached a glorious high in October '95, with their "100 Sexiest Women" supplement, which my girlfriend rapidly reduced to confetti. [It therefore joined the 'Tokyo Decadence' laser-disk, two posters of Nastassja Kinski - eyes gouged out - and an issue of Cameron Scholes' *She* magazine, all of which have met similar fates. A higher

compliment is hard to imagine.] However, overall, the usable content of the mag is too diluted to be of regular interest. Browse carefully.

**Highlight:** "Annoy that customs officer: strap your midriff with six sandwiches wrapped in tin foil. Imagine how pleased the man at the Blue Exit will be when you reveal the novel way in which you chose, quite legally, to transport a packed lunch".

**Lowlight:** an article where women discuss what they don't like about their men - the correct response being, of course, "Who cares?".

**GO #84** - The thickest of 'em all, thanks to paper carved from mahogany slabs, and a massive triumph of style over content. More ads than anywhere else, including a 20-page property supplement of Belgravia flats and country estates (anyone got £2.75m?), and lacking a single article of any interest. Not one. An interview with Burt Bacharach? Nein, danke. They did get rapped by their publishers a while ago for 'getting too sexy', and certainly this issue lives up to it's 'Gay Quarterly' nickname by having few babes, beyond four pages of "Nicole" from the Renault adverts in a push-up bra. Had a free gift: a teeny paperback of short stories which I lost inside 24 hours. I'm not heartbroken. The target audience for this issue appears to be millionaire homosexuals with no sense of humour.

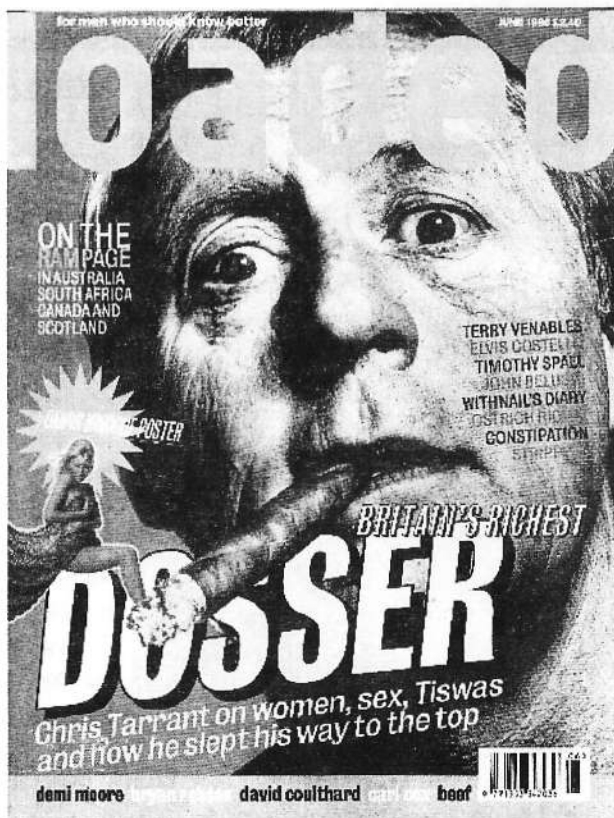
**Highlight:** Er...a page on sporting alternatives to the European championships?

**Lowlight:** Most of it. Particularly dire "single lad's diary" was neither plausible nor amusing.

**Loaded #26** - This is the upstart which blew the Y-fronts off the competition, pioneering the New Lab spirit of beers, steers and leers. It still remains the most politically incorrect of all the mags, with more actual breasts than any of its competitors. It's all a bit relentlessly drunken though, an attitude which pales eventually and you yearn for a slightly more intelligent approach to life. There is more to New Laddism than alcohol induced vomiting, and boasting about it after. Half the articles seem to be "We went to Sydney/South Africa/a Scottish island, and drank till we puked". Perhaps the closest in spirit to TC, and mercifully free of articles on skin care, though still with too much fashion i.e. any. In terms of volume, the pick of the bunch, you're looking at three lunch-hours minimum to get through it all.

**Highlight:** the ongoing comic adaptation of 'Get Carter', done in true 70's fashion. "Your eyes are still the same, Eric. Piss 'oles in the snow." Anyone remember 'Hook Jaw'?

**Lowlight:** A pointless article on Demi Moore illustrated by blurry screen shots from a David Letterman appearance. *Arena* did it much better.





**Maxim #14** - New kid on the block, barely a year old, and nearly missed from this survey since the July issue turned up before I got round to buying the June one (a tip of the TC hat to Pascale at work, who supplied the missing link). A slim creature, at a mere 160 pages, yet it fights back with a lot of good, solid content. The interest in health is worrying - the only mag to give more space to it than to clothes. Yet here there is a nicely ironic approach which helps defuse the tedium: the main fashion item is a selection of Greek statues in shorts. Sleaze factor moderate: gratuitous swimwear and women talking about masturbation - the former with lots of pictures, the latter regrettably without. Steers a difficult path with some skill, managing on the whole to be intelligent and entertaining and, on this month's showing, the best read.

**Highlight:** Probably the blackline racing piece, about the real speed kings, but lots of good stuff.

**Lowlight:** A well-intentioned but pointless article on sexual harassment.

Conclusions: So, after £15.30 and 1140 pages, what have we learned? I know more about overpriced clothes than before. I am aware that the European Football Championships are on, featuring England and a load of foreigners. I own a Danni Minogue poster, some facial scrub and enough scratch-and-sniff after-shave ads to stock a Turkish warehouse for years. And ' Fargo ' is a good movie, apparently (actually, didn't like it much myself). I detect hints of a New Lad backlash, which is odd, given the whole thing is pretty much a backlash anyway. Some questions remain, such as why *Arena* has a large 'E' on the spine. But what was perhaps surprising was the differences rather than the similarities; while undoubtedly male, each had a personality and could be matched to, say, movie stars. The following chart does this, in order of TC appeal, shows the pages each gives to various areas, and provides other useful statistics:

	Pages	Ads	Fashion	Health	Useful	Babes	Price	Cover Star	Personality
<b>1. Maxim</b>	160	49	6	11	94	17	2.50	Elle McPherson	Pierce Brosnan
<b>2. Loaded</b>	236	103	11	1*	121	47	2.40	Chris Tarrant	Charlie Sheen
<b>3. FHM</b>	180	73	30	12	65	28	2.50	Gena Lee Nolin	Tom Cruise
<b>4. Esquire</b>	194	78	15	3	98	11	2.70	Salma Hayek	Dustin Hoffman
<b>5. Arena</b>	172	35	23	8	108	14	2.50	Demi Moore	Kevin Costner
<b>6. GQ</b>	198	118	27	11	42	10	2.70	Andy Garcia	Richard Gere

\* - And that's a not-exactly-serious piece on, er, constipation.

My overwhelming feeling is relief. I've stared into the drunken, impeccably well-coutured face of New Laddism, and will not be taking out a subscription. While they all had their merits, the last thing I'm in need of is a magazine to tell me what to wear, watch and do. That's what girlfriends are for, isn't it?



# The Good, The Bad, and the Printed

**Steve Aylett - Bigot Hall, Serif, £8.99, pp153.**

Aylett's first book, 'The Crime Studio' was reviewed last TC, and was a highly enjoyable selection of hyperviolent splinters in a fast, loose style. "Bigot Hall" replicates the short vignette approach, but is notably less successful. The hero remains nameless, a child advanced for his years, trapped in a family of misfits and weirdoes. That's it, which is the main problem. While "The Crime Studio" had enough characters to mean the interplay between them offered sufficient variation for latitude, here the restrictions prove too much. There is no detectable character development; at the end, something happens; precisely what is impossible to say.



On the bright side, Aylett's technique remains as sharply infectious as ever, his ear for the English language is great. Someone should hire the man to beef up movie scripts; if it's sharp word-play that you want, he can out-Tarantino Quentin, with one frontal lobe tied behind his back. I mean, "*the lake was infested with boss-eyed cartoon characters which ghosted up, stared like lost souls and dipped away again. Inbetween were swirling volume levels and swarms of seahorses with tiny training wheels*". So what you have here is a book where the sentences are pretty good, and anything beyond the paragraph is on shaky ground. More rigour needed, please.

**John McCarty (ed) - The Sleaze Merchants, St.Martin's Griffin, \$16.95, pp211.** It's interesting to compare and contrast the style of this book with 'Immoral Tales', as both cover the world of exploitation film. 'Immoral Tales' deals with the European flavour, and this one mostly looking at its American brother -- the only common name is Jess Franco. Apart from him, it's a trawl from the early pioneers, David Friedman et al, through those McCarty describes as the "Honorable Practitioners" (Franco, John Waters, Al Adamson and Ted V.Mikels) up to those who've carried the torch for sleaze in the 1990's.

Some of the choices seem slightly arguable, and appear to be a case of, "well, we can talk to them, let's give them a chapter". Why else does Bret McCormick (yeah, who?) get one of his own, but not Roger Corman? Generally, the best sections are those that divert from the standard interview technique -- though Fred Olen Ray comes over as well as ever -- and go into more analysis. Lots of illos, ad-mats and photos (David DeCoteau looks exactly like you'd expect) enhance the flavour, though it's nowhere near as groundbreaking as McCarty's earlier 'Splatter Movies' book. It's a solidly researched and interesting book, which never attempts to attach artistic pretensions where none were intended. Given the near-death of the B-video here, this is sadly as close as most people will get to the recent works of Jim Wynorski!

**Edward Margulies + Stephen Rebello - Bad Movies We Love, Plume, £8.79, pp330.** There's a great book waiting to be written, about the ethos of bad movies, their appeal, how and why they become that way, and so forth. It's still waiting: this book proves even worse than the much-loathed Medved Brothers' 'Golden Turkey' works. It shares a common meanness of spirit: the authors don't appear to actually love bad movies, They love being snide about them, trying to prove a superior intellect through vapid insults, they love to poke 'fun' at them. Ho-ho-ho: it's a good measure of how effective their criticism is, that they spent an entire chapter trashing Sharon Stone, and she still writes their foreward! She clearly doesn't give a damn what they think, and neither should anyone else.

Worse still, writing about bad movies should be fun, reflecting the enjoyment they offer. This book fails even on that score. What might have been entertaining as one-off articles – the book started off as a magazine column – rapidly becomes grindingly repetitive. With no variation in style, the authors have all the imagination of a literary pit-bull. There is not one single movie in the book where reading the review makes you want to see it.

There's little challenging about their targets: the movies in their "Hall of Shame" had an average age of over 30. Taking the piss out of old films is like stomping on puppies, no measure of skill is needed at all. And once you've read their opinion on '9 1/2 Weeks', why bother with their views on 'Zandalee' (we get the point), 'Two Moon Junction' (We Get The Point), or even both 'Wild Orchid' and 'Wild Orchid 2' (WE GET THE POINT!). Dreadful, truly dreadful. About the only thing in its favour, is that it makes you want go and do better yourself. In which case, expect the 'TC Book of Badfilm' before this year is out.

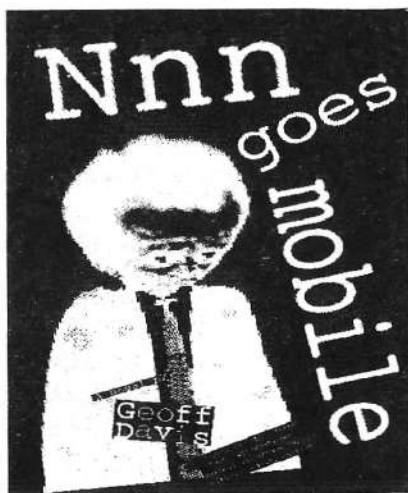
**Michael Sauter - The Worst Movies of All Time, Citadel Press, £11.99, pp342.** After the above debacle, this book came as a breath of fresh air, mainly since it's written in a far better spirit. The central thread is a look at fifty films, from 1932's 'Sign of the Cross' to 'Christopher Columbus: The Discovery' from 1992; there's also a random grab-bag of almost bad-enoughs, and a broad selection of B-movies, including the usual classics from Ed Wood and others of his ilk.

The book is not perfect. To start with, it's far too American-oriented, with all 50 of the "worst" coming out of Hollywood. No book about bad film can be thought of as complete unless it includes something by Jess Franco. The author also has a tendency to twist facts to fit his views: misattributing dialogue from 'Faster, Pussycat', and claiming that the spoof 'Casino Royale' "was the Bond spoof to end all Bond spoofs", forgetting perhaps the best of them all, 'Top Secret'. However, it covers a broad spectrum of eras, without any obvious axe to grind against specific genres, and, most importantly of all, you come away from the reviews actually wanting to see a lot of the films (though there are exceptions to this, it would take a better writer even than myself to make anyone want to see 'Howard the Duck').

Most of the targets are obvious ones such as 'Ishtar' and 'Heaven's Gate', though many of the older titles were new to me; I'll be scanning the daytime TV schedules for 'The Fountainhead'! But if you want coverage of turkeys from major Hollywood studios, this book is hard to beat.

**David Kerekes and David Slater - Killing for Culture, Creation Books, £12.05, pp286.** Now issued in a revised second edition, bringing it up to date with recent developments – though embarrassingly, since the first edition never made it off my "books I ought to buy" list, I can't give any specifics about new material. What I can say is that it remains a comprehensive review of that mythical creature, the "snuff" movie, in all its forms from mondo to mainstream.

The book is at it's best with a clinical deconstruction of all such alleged snuff films, calmly and logically pointing out the factors which prove they are faked or staged. The authors do so with a clear critical eye, unhesitatingly scathing when they feel it's deserved. Copious footnotes and references back it up and give some much-needed authority, in a field dominated by the hype and the gory. On the down side, the book sometimes slides into a catalogue of atrocities, listing the nastiness in films whil avoiding much comment on why these films are made, or remain so popular. This is especially true with some of the pictures: blurry, b/w screen shots of state treasured Bud Dwyer committing suicide are a pointless exercise in geek-show mentality, and almost turn the book into mondo of its own. Otherwise, it's immeasurably useful, essential reading for anyone who wants an informed viewpoint on the topic. Sadly, those most in need of reading it – certain MP's, media pundits, and indeed Hollywood stars like Charlie Sheen – are unlikely to do so.



**Geoff Davis - Nnn goes mobile, Juma, £3.95, 114pp.** Sent to me by TC's printers, with a "this seems like your sort of thing" message, Davis writes parodic cyberpunk characterised by a charming, deliberately incoherent depiction of what the world might become i.e. a total mess. The hero, Nnn, has risen from the gutter to become a technical innovator specialising in nanotechnology. He's just invented a living zipper, but is then kidnapped by guerillas keen to use his talents. His employers send out two hitmen, Fluffy and Kitch, to get him back before he does something they might regret. In this future world, Prague has been successfully duplicated, and the Old Kent Road has relocated to cyberspace.

And it's in there that Davis's strength lies; none of Gibson's sleek data blocks exist in Nnn's world, VR looks more like a drug trip animated by crazed Nintendo employees and directed by Ed Wood, Jr in one of his more enthusiastically ambitious moments. There are a lot of madcap characters here, and warped imaginings of self-propelled computers with personality disorders, public domain cultural icons based on Mickey Mouse, and eyepopping virtual sex. This is hideously plausible, as futures go – can't wait, personally. Flashy, fast and effective. [Juma, 44 Wellington Street, Sheffield, S1 4HD]



# "Stupid is, as stupid does"

It seems there are times when stupidity is a revered trait rather than a handicap. Of course, there's nothing intrinsically wrong with stupid people. Who else could do the tedious tasks which would send intelligent folks round the twist in an hour? We need people to work in McDonald's. We need checkout assistants. We need night-club bouncers (ok, strike that last example). If nothing else, they provide amusing clippings for TC... In modern life, idiocy often goes unpunished, people aren't responsible for the consequences of their actions, and intelligence is no longer cherished, rewarded, or necessary. Back in primitive days, if you were dumb, you died. The stupid didn't live to pass on their genes to any offspring. Thus, the gradual improvement in humankind, through the slow but steady process of evolution.

Certain individuals still bravely sacrifice themselves for the gene pool. The "Darwin Awards" honour those who do away with themselves in spectacularly stupid ways. This year's winner came after the Arizona Highway Patrol found a pile of smouldering metal embedded in a cliff above a curve on the road. It looked like a plane crash, but turned out to be a car, though it was impossible to tell what sort until the forensics had been over it. It appears the driver had stuck a Jet Assisted Take Off unit – used by heavy army transport planes taking off from short runways – onto his Chevy Impala, found a stretch of desert road, and put his foot down...

"The facts as best as could be determined are that the operator of the 1967 Impala hit the JATO ignition at a distance of approximately 4 miles from the crash site" said the report. If the JATO worked properly, it would have reached maximum thrust in five seconds, causing the Chevy to hit well over 350 mph. The driver, "soon to be a pilot" as the report puts it, would have felt G-forces of the type experienced by dog-fighting F-14 jocks under full afterburners, "basically causing him to become insignificant for the remainder of the event." The car remained on the tarmac for 2.5 miles before the driver tried – and completely melted – the brakes, blowing the tyres and leaving thick rubber marks on the road surface. It then became airborne for an additional 1.4 miles, hitting the cliff face 125 ft up and leaving a blackened crater 3 ft deep in the rock. Most of the driver's remains were not recoverable; however small fragments of bone, teeth and hair were extracted from the crater and fingernail and bone shards were removed from a piece of debris believed to be a portion of the steering wheel...

Winners in the 'team' category were the six people, including four from the same family, who drowned when they jumped into a well to save a chicken in South Egypt. According to al-Ahram newspaper, the chicken had fallen into a farmer's well in the village of Nazlet Emara in Sohag province. The farmer's son (18) quickly dived in to try and save it, but slipped and drowned. His two brothers and sister, aged 20, 16 and 14 respectively, jumped in one after the other to save him, but all met the same fate. Two neighbours who came to the siblings' rescue also drowned. A police team which removed the corpses from the well found the chicken alive and floating in the water. [Reuters, 1-8-95]

**[continued elsewhere in TC...]**

# Hopping Mad



'Mr. Vampire' is one of the most enduringly popular of Hong Kong films, still winning fans more than a decade after its original release. This applies in Britain as well, thanks almost entirely to Channel 4's screening as part of the 'Chinese Ghost Stories' season. Less well known are the myriad of sequels it inspired which have yet to appear on our shores; plus countless spin-offs on a similar theme.

There are two common elements in most of these films: Ricky Lau as the director, and Lam Ching-Ying as the star. The original movie made Lau's name, and he has since wasted no opportunity to cash in, with three direct sequels as well as other films with titles like 'Ultimate Vampire' and (*appalling pun alert!*) 'The Vampire Strikes Back'. He's also directed more straightforward action pics, though the titles of even these seem to resound with supernatural

overtones - 'Nocturnal Demon' is actually a serial killer film. Lau plays to his strengths admirably in the 'Mr. Vampire' series, with a restrained use of special effects; the films are firmly rooted in a real world, even if not quite this one. Stunts and action, naturally, play a big part in the series, but they're never allowed to overshadow the characters, who are far less two-dimensional than in most of their Western genre counterparts. Even in the sequels, while many would happily to ride the same tracks again, Lau pushes the envelope, twisting and modifying the genre further, changing locations and era at will.

Star Lam Ching-Ying has a long and honourable acting career, going right back to perhaps the original horror-comedy, 'Close Encounters of the Spooky Kind' - even before that, he was a noted stuntman, appearing in 'Enter the Dragon' as the main double for Han in the 'hall of mirrors' end fight. He's especially noteworthy for an exceptional screen presence, in his perpetual role as "sifu", or master. When things go wrong - as they inevitably do - it's only his knowledge of folklore and legend that save the day, especially if the films have a contemporary setting. When this is the case, his major problem is not the vampires, it's trying to convince other people to take them seriously. The audience doesn't have this problem, since Lam Ching Ying projects such a resounding air of authority that whatever he says must be right. Unfortunately, this competence did not extend to his directorial debut, a remake of 'The Green Hornet', which set a new record low at the Hong Kong box-office.

Apart from these two, many other performers who appeared in the first movie returned later in the series: Wu Ma (part 4), Pauline Wong (part 2), Billy Lau (part 3), and even Moon Lee, who appears in both of the first two entries. Though you'd be hard pushed to recognise her, especially in the original film, since it was before the cosmetic surgery which left her with that highly distinctive wide-eyed look, like something out of 'Project A-ko'! You can also spot Sibelle Hu, Yuen Biao and Samo Hung, making the series something of a Golden Harvest All-Stars production.

It's important to be relaxed about the rules of engagement depicted in these movies, because we're dealing with something totally unfamiliar. Everyone knows to use garlic & crucifix if dealing with Western vampires, but for their Oriental "blood brothers", a new set of rules are in play. Some examples:

- a) Vampires can't see you if you hold your breath...
- b) ...or are covered in tar.
- c) If "infected" by a vampire you need blood from it to cure you...
- d) ...or maybe sticky rice.
- e) You know someone is possessed if their heels don't touch the ground.



Ok, fine. Of course, there are some similarities. Vampire corpses don't decay, their bite will turn you into one, and if anything is attached to them – such as stakes or magic spells – removing them generally rates low on the IQ scale. Not that this stops most of the characters in the Mr. Vampire series, which shows another point of similarity between East and West - regardless of location, participants in all horror movies are inevitably cerebrally challenged!

**Mr. Vampire** - Lam Ching-Ying, Ricky Hui, Moon Lee, Chin Siu Ho, 1985. This first entry remains a landmark in the genre, and introduces many of the ingredients that recur repeatedly in the series: well-intentioned but bungling assistants, *femme fatale* spirits, lots of fun poked at authority figures (though I'm not claiming any subtle political subtexts!), and the inevitable "Lock this door and don't open it whatever happens" gag. Lam is a 'spiritual advisor', whose attempts to rebury a corpse go horribly wrong when it turns out to be a vampire. His knowledge lands him in hot water with the constabulary, who suspect him of the murders it commits; he has to handle both them, and his two assistants, one of whom has been bitten, and the other of whom is trysting with a beautiful lady ghost. The amount of invention on view is impressive, with subplots spiralling away in all directions, though the whole fits together beautifully. *Major silliness*: lady ghost, with a head which can detach itself, grow hedgehog-like hair, and attack independently of her body. B+

**Mr. Vampire 2** - Lam Ching-Ying, Yuen Biao, Pauline Wong, Wu Ma, Sibelle Hu, 1985. After the historical stance of the first film, it's a surprise to discover the sequel is firmly rooted in the present day. It starts with grave-robbers stealing mummy, daddy and baby corpse, but before long the vampire kid escapes, taking up with a local family. There's a sequence strangely reminiscent of the garden shed discovery of E.T. -- it's also invoked during the inevitable song, while the vampire and human kids play together: "You're ugly but your heart is not, they take you for an ET"; fortunately, the child actors aren't too unbearable, so it's sweet rather than sickly. Meanwhile, Ma and Pa Bloodsucker are looking for their son, and Lam Ching Ying turns up as a pharmacist called in to treat a vampire bite, who realises something is going on. In what has to be an all-time classic euphemism, he isn't going to kill the vampires, but "help them to an early and successful reincarnation". Bet they'll be chuffed. At time of writing rumours suggest this may be shown as part of an imminent second C4 season, so keep an eye out for it (knowing TC schedules, it's probably already been on by now...). *Major silliness*: slow-motion fight sequence after vampires and grave-robbers are accidentally dosed with sedative. B

**Mr. Vampire 3** - Lam Ching-Ying, Billy Lau, Richard Ng, Lui Fong, 1987. Back in time again, though it's not immediately obvious for the first 15 minutes. Here, the central character is a Taoist priest who's got a nice exorcism extortion scam going, thanks to a pair of accomplice spirits who haunt places at his behest, until he exorcises them. Life is fine until he meets honest Taoist Lam Ching Ying who captures the spirits in jars; and adds them to a mega-collection. Their human friend releases them, but also accidentally frees a less amenable female ghost. In fact, the words "seriously" and "pissed-off" come to mind. This is my least favourite of the films; it fails to provide any new angles or approach; there's not much here that wasn't seen in part one. While Lam Ching Ying is his usual forceful self, the other "hero" just can't quite cut the mustard, being neither interesting nor amusing. It all gets terribly manic, needless to say, but it's just smoke and no fire, which not even a cameo by producer Samo Hung can save. *Major silliness*: possession by invisible spirit leads to bout of self-wrestling. D-

**Mr. Vampire 4** - Wu Ma, Anthony Chan, Yuen Wah, Chin Kar Lok, Loretta Lee, 1987. Shock! Horror! Probe! No Lam Ching Ying! He was presumably too busy working on one or other of the many Mr Vampire clones in which he appeared, so we get another actor with enormous eyebrows, Wu Ma (anyone know if they're real, or stunt doubles?). The set-up continues to vary; from the previous entries' urban setting, we're now out in the country, with two neighbouring priests, one Buddhist, one Taoist, and their acolytes. The first half of the movie is devoted to their bickering and perpetual attempts to make the other look foolish, which is amusing, although scarcely anything to do with vampires. Things perk up notably in this department later on, when a passing funeral procession spills an especially unpleasant example of the genre. We're then treated to a spectacular display of physical comedy which, for me at least, makes this the most purely enjoyable of the series. While the ending is a slight cop-out, as far as methods of killing the unkillable goes, this doesn't detract much from a thoroughly entertaining ninety minutes. *Major silliness*: a conga-chain of limbo-dancing hopping vampires. A-

After this, the series went into something of a decline, and neither 'Mr Vampire 1992', nor 'New Mr Vampire', did anything new or remotely interesting. There is, however, one further entry in the genre worthy of comment. While not an official part of the canon, it has been listed on occasion as 'Mr Vampire 5' (though some claim 'Mr Vampire 1992' is a more likely contender for the title). Its release in Britain, and general high quality, mean it deserves some consideration:



**Magic Cop** (dir. Stephen Tung Wai) - Lam Ching-Ying, Wilson Lam, Miu Kiu-Wai, Michiko Nishiwaki, 1989. The film starts with a puzzling case where an arrested criminal is found to have died some time before being arrested. With Mulder and Scully presumably unavailable, Lam Ching Ying, a cop and part-time exorcist from the provinces, is brought to the big city to investigate. After initial disbelief from his partners - rapidly changed after an encounter in a mortuary - he discovers that corpses are being re-animated by sorceress Nishiwaki to act as minions in her crime empire. Viewers may be reminded of 'Dead Heat', which took a similar line - though Western

policemen had much more trouble coming to terms with the concepts! Nishiwaki delivers another excellent supporting performance (as 'God of Gamblers' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle Lucky Stars' showed, she can steal a movie with one scene, and she gets a little more here) and provides a fine foil for Lam, who also helped out as action director. Director Tung Wai had himself graduated from that role on 'A Better Tomorrow', so it's no surprise this is perhaps the most effects-laden entry, especially in a spectacular final battle. Sadly, the version that came out in this country features all but illegible subtitles, destroying the atmosphere somewhat. *Major silliness:* magical battle between hero and villainess, using a rather confused cop as an intermediary. B

# HIGH WEIRDNESS BY ANDY COLLINS

It's time once more to trawl through the nineteen (count 'em!) months worth of letters, and find out whether anyone has said anything a) interesting and b) still relevant as we scream towards the end of <whichever year it is by the time I finally get this out>. My, some of these letters are so old, they appear to have been written on papyrus... But, wait! Next to a scroll from William the Conqueror asking why I haven't returned my Domesday form, we find that golden treasure chest which can only be a letter from Andy Collins. In fact, here's two of them! Sorted -- and this way, I don't have to give him a contributor's copy...

**Andy Collins, October 29th, 1995** -- Firstly, I must comment on this. Roswell. Bollocks... [Yup]...Am now into my third week of the Canterbury College Radio, Film and TV course. A major shock to the system. As suspected, the usual clutch of Eisenstein questions, the pricks in the lecture hall - "Ur, yar, ur, that particular piece of footage had amazing mise en scene, and extrapolated the characters from the objective to the immensely subjective." Fuck off! Guy in question has been dubbed Schumacher (both of equal popularity)... Apparently, he entered the quiz, and took being a wanker from a mere personality trait to a full-time professional vocation. He is littering the campus with enemies. A Christmas lynching might be in the offing. "Analyse that, you bastard!"

On the whole it has been a very positive move... Impossible to get lost, obviously, as there is a huge, great Landmark, which seems to be giving itself standing ovations every time I look at it, gazing down awesomely at everything beneath it... With a nod to the Vatican, Canterbury Cathedral seems to have amassed quite a coinage (perhaps the law of Tithes is still in effect round these parts!). The clergy all drive top range motors, slowly, through the tourists into the Cathedral grounds. Now, if that is not indicative of what it's all about...

**Autumn...winter...spring...summer. Cue pictures of pages being torn off calendars, clouds across the moon in time-lapse, buds bursting into bloom. And then:**

**Andy Collins, July 2nd, 1996** -- Canterbury has gone all wrong. I feel like I am undergoing Caesarean Section, and am being organically removed from this highly precocious, somnambulistic place. I started here with good intentions - as we do with every endeavour - but mentally and spiritually, this self-delusionary bourgeois pretty-city has suffered crucial disfigurement. And I don't much like looking at it anymore...

Disappearing for a month to Mexico gave me a beautiful taste of the other-world, the special life that there is out of Britain, away from Trainspotting tide and perverse materialism. Mexico was a magic place - certainly not the garden of Eden or a third world spiritual Mecca, but a total shock to the system. They are a bunch of macho bastards and have enough American products to make them even more corrupted. But the society has a proud stance, and a weird innocence, a great sense of community. Mexico is what you make it...you can mould your experiences accordingly - it's not set - a country still changing.



Memorable moments, apart from actually being there. A bar manager forgetting himself for a moment, and running after us down the street as we had left due to closing time, apologising for not offering us any drugs... Another bar, in Palenque, near the famous ruins. Apart from trying to get antiseptic cream in a vet's (I somehow missed the huge picture of a dog), this bar was one of the few places worth visiting. Sleaze has never been so cultivated. There were huge iron grilles over the windows. The drinks were housed in cheap shelving, a little compartment for each bottle. Unbelievably tacky decor assailed my eyes – yeah, the mirrors, small coloured bulbs as the sole illumination (the 10W candle bulbs, that is). Somewhere over towards Hades was the deep blue-lit 'dance floor'. Empty, of course.

Including the Australian guy my brother and I had hooked up with, there were about seven of us at the bar. The bartender, a cross between the underground club manager in 'Vamp' and your worst disco bouncer nightmare, was not so much imposing as infuriating. One would expect such a lack of passion for your work from egg-sorters, or Co-op cashiers. But this man put them to shame. I mean, you felt guilty asking him for a drink. And what drinks! I was surprised, somewhat, not to see an optic or measuring cup. Starting out with a tequila, of course, by pointing and merely saying uno, por favor (what else could I say to Marvin the Bartender) – he plonked a tumbler on the bar and freely poured the spirit in. Not gently, or carefully, but slugged in a hearty measure of brain-damage juice. The quarter of a pint stared at me, as did the large, suspicious Mexicans to my left. And the bartender who wanted paying. I was anticipating a phenomenal ticket, a bastard giant bill for this shot which would have knocked out the Jolly Green Giant.

Ten pesos, he said. Ten, I repeated. Si, ten. One pound for the lot.

Needless to say, two hours later (or around that), I had visited most of the compartments behind the bar, and was clinging on to the wooden structure for dear life. Now, I couldn't even see the bar tender. Who cares if he's a miserable fucker! I was trying to crack jokes with him in fractured Spanish and drunken English. The posse of dodgy Mexicans? Fuck 'em! I'll take them all if it comes to it... Alfonso, the resident piss-head also befriended me. Though this geezer was a little worried. He wasn't quite sure about my nationality. "Americano?" he kept saying, and grinning madly through crooked teeth and deranged mental processes.

"No, no, Inglaterra. England!"

"Ahhhhhhhhh! England.....that in America?"

By this time, the bar entrance was shut. I could barely move or think. I decided to get some soft drink inside me, a bid for survival. "Coke, por favor". Well, that was that. Julio practically lunged at me, offering a gram for £30, "good sheeet!". Alfonso was still trying to get my nationality out of my other arm, the bartender still doing his impression of an Easter island statue...

**Well, if anyone wants to make a bid to knock Andy off his position as reigning TC Heavyweight Letter Champion, you know what to do. Sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll will enhance your chances of success. As will bribery. Go for it!**

[This machine just died for the Nth time today. England beat Spain in a penalty shoot-out. I've to be in work on Monday by 07:30. I am thus in a mean mood; a perfect time to hack, cut, tear, shred and edit Lino's reviews. 14 pages submitted. The (naively optimistic) target is eight. It's a dirty job but someone's got to do it...]

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Started 15/1/96!! [...delivered 22/7/96] Hmm, funny old world isn't it? What the hell is that supposed to mean? Funny old world? I don't think so! What was that all in aid of? Who knows. I think I'm just stating a case, that when I actually sit down to "write" (HA!) the 'zine reviews I don't have the first idea what I'm going to write, OK, that's not strictly true, Jim gives me a bag full of 'zines, I take them home, lose them, find them, read them and review them, but all the other stuff... [what, the intervening six months?] It's not as if I have a set plan, or visions... [I have visions. Mostly involving Lino and a band-saw] Why am I telling you this? Well, for a start it fills some space, and the unconscious stream of thought that you are reading will undoubtedly be hugely funny when put into print...then again...

OK, It's 1996, brave new world and all that junk. Odd, isn't it, that although I have a PC and have spent a retarded amount of money on software, the game I find myself playing over and over again is Solitaire!!!!!! What's the story there then? I don't know...weird... I've bought into the hype and connected to the Internet [Gentlemen, this could be the end of civilization as we know it. Buy shares in BT, certainly] - this happened at the start of '95 but it's taken me a year to find enough stuff to bore you rigid with. I've been totally sucked in by Internet Relay Chat: it really is quite remarkable... I can spend hours of my time, without an anorak on, cruising through different channels. Myself and a few friends (when not indulging in stupid games like joining the Alcoholics Help channel and asking in block capitals for ANOTHER FUCKIN' PINT PLEASE MINE HOST as many times as we could before being booted off the channel - the record being 13 times - it's amazing how easy going alcoholics are!!), carried out an experiment the other day, gave ourselves the most ridiculous girls names we could think of (I christened myself Babette) and set up a channel called (cover your eyes now if you are even a little PC) #WETPUSSYLOVERS. Within a matter of minutes the place was swarming with guys all looking for a little action, and the more people that arrived, the stupider we got, to the point of reverting to guys' names...to no effect, they all still jumped up and down wanting to talk to hot babes...try it...

Otherwise, I can be found in #GB and #gasman along with several sordid channels whose names I'm not going to tell you about now! :-)(oh look, a smiley! you can now start calling me Mr Anorak). IRC also has quite a few points, but I might tell you about those later! (you know who you are!). At the end of the day though, when all is said and done, what good is the Internet? [Sorry, Lino - I had to cut out all your comments about the delights of Internet pornography] Yes, you can download 5th generation sound bites from your favourite band or a 30 second commercial for some idiotic Hollywood blockbuster (this is after you've spent up to an hour trying to connect to the site then another few hours trying to download the clips)...but is it any good for anything else? Nothing that I've found yet, if you do use the Internet for anything useful, do me a favour would you? E-mail me and let me know what you do?!!! [Personally, I use it to nag slacking columnists about these things called 'deadlines'] And while I'm moaning about slow download times... You'd think that a company the size of Microsoft would have European mirror sites...I've spent at least 5 hours connecting to it's US site and trying to download the Microsoft Explorer V2....!! AARRRGHHH!

Enough of my rambling, I'm not here to tell you what I think of life, I'm here to tell you what I think of some photocopied pieces of paper that have been stapled together and sent to Jim! [I was beginning to think you'd forgotten about that! The 'zines have probably died of boredom and decayed into some form of peat bog by now] So, finally, if you're still awake, here we go...



**Cashiers du Cinemart 1-4** Four issues, we really should pull our fingers out Jim (Insert caustic comment by Scotsman about this issue being ready AGES ago, but not going to print through lack of 'zine reviews...it's a lie I tell you, a lie!! [Nice of Lino to do my editing for me]). Detroit, that's the Motor City isn't it? Yes, you know the one, features at the beginning of True Romance, yes, that film written by Quentin Tarantino ...interesting links, I've got 'em! [Not by the time I've finished!] It's nice to see the first four issues of "Cashiers..." side by side, for no other reason than to see it pull itself together layout wise. Mike Barnett, the editor is obviously stricken down with Tarantino-i-tis (See Jim McLennan) but I can't as yet work out if he's pro or con! Written by film fans and Blockbuster Video employees, #1 sees the unearthing of the Reservoir Dogs/City On Fire links, an article on cinematography in S&M videos (!!!!!) and all sorts of potted reviews. #2 is instantly more reader friendly (and the staples stay in!! Hooray!). We're straight back to Tarantinoland, this time covering his fixation with toilets amongst other things! There's a wonderful piece about the Sundance Festival, a small but well written review section in the back includes a book review of the Dictionary of Cultural Literacy (huh??!) and some top ten lists.

#3 is the nicest of the lot, the layout has settled down (and one of the guys on the front cover looks a hell of a lot like me!!). The letters page features a letter from Jim McLennan (Yes, another 'zine with his name in!) and Jim, surprise, surprise, vents his Tarantino hatred yet again (A tip for readers, if you ever meet Jim, start whistling "Stuck In The Middle" or start going on about that really funny Madonna scene and watch him twitch!). The whole Tarantino/Reservoir Dogs /City on Fire thing goes into overdrive in #3 (I'm not about to explain it all, write to Mike and buy yourself copies of the first three issues). There are a couple of (in my opinion) very funny full page cartoon strips, more potted reviews and a promise of a Blacksploitation special for #4 ...which is just as good as the other three. Now in handy digest size, don't be fooled by the purdy cover, the inside is still as manic and unorganized as ever. GET IT FOOL! And it's also got an article on Rudy Ray Moore who came to London in August for a film festival and one night live act!! Oh oh oh Mr Peavley!! All in all bloody lovely! Write to Mike for issues and tell him we sent you!



**Linda Hayden: Dracula And Beyond** Huh, huh huhhuh, boobs Beavis...huhhuhhuh... Tim Greaves comes up trumps yet again with another pictorial 'zine, this time dedicated to that great piece of skirt (PC? What's that?) Linda Hayden. Nothing I can say here will stop you buying it, and hell, it's probably already sold out so tough!! but I was horrified to see the haggard tyre-like face of Ingrid Pitt grinning insanely at me, to quote Harry Enfield, "Oi, Pitt, Noooooooo", but then, one man's meat is another man's mad cow. (Please note that as you read this you are probably already infected with Mad Cow disease and will be dead or barking mad in the next 10 days...according to the Daily Mirror...but then they are the same paper who promised the same thing with the horrifying flesh eating Ebola virus last year so I wouldn't worry too much if I were you...)

**Ingrid Pitt, Queen of Horror** Queen of horror? Too bloody right, one look at her is enough to give anyone the shits... OK, my hatred (totally unfounded of course) of Ingrid Pitt is well known...in fact at a recent Eurofest I was shaking with anger when she arrived...so much so that I had to leave the bar (WHAT!!). Having said that she does has a large fan following (with a bloody big axe I would hope) and they will lap this up. By now, you know what to expect from Tim Greaves and he doesn't let the side down here..full of wonderful photos (of her!!). Tim does mention in an epilogue that he was disappointed with the way that his Linda Hayden 1 shot 'zine turned out... I have to disagree with him...Tim...stop it!

**Bakya 1** WHAT????!?!?! Oh right, it's a word that did mean wooden sandals and now means crass in Filipino, there, now don't tell me we don't teach you anything! This is a fanzine dedicated to... HmMMM, it's only 4 pages long, and covers everything from...Hell I don't know, as I said, it's only 4 pages long, I've been through it 3 times and I still don't know!! It's got a letters corner, a what to do in San Francisco section, and well, that's it, odd, small, compact and ohhh, fuck it, recommended!

**Hitomi Takaya** Well, it's a UK drawn manga, with some nifty artwork, and loads of manga type doings... You like manga and want to support home grown efforts? Well, buy it... You think manga and anime in general is really incredibly boring don't buy it, simple huh?

**Ariel High School Devil Girl** Gaijin Press strikes again, from the home of Hitomi Takaya (see above) comes Ariel...Read what I said about Hitomi and it will follow for Ariel, what I will add though, is although some of the artwork is a little rough around the edges (Who am I to talk, my happy faces look like someone's nightmare) You can tell that the artists are fans and they are drawing for fans so bloody good for them!

**Tinsel City** Gaijin Press AGAIN! Geez, it's getting difficult for me to be objective now...but hey, what the hell, I don't get paid for this gig so you can stick "objective" right up your arse!! Tinsel City is a bleedin manga...UK drawn...It's really pretty damned stinky...BUT if you're a completist and a fan it's only £1.50 so get yourself a copy. Me? I'm getting really VERY tired of the whole thing... Jaded? ME!! NO!!! *[I'd just like to point out that, even though there has just been a whole page without need for editorial intervention, I am still here, carefully monitoring Lino's output. Your safety and comfort is, as ever, paramount!]*

**Bio Mecha** Ok, it's ANOTHER Gaijin Press comic...I'll keep it short (that way I can't offend anyone). Of the GP stuff I've seen so far, it's by far the best drawn and written... On the other hand anime does really leave me cold so...make your own minds up!

**Dark Star 12** Gaijin Press strike...THUMP...what? ohh, sorry, it's not Gaijin Press at all! I was getting into a habit there...! Dark Star #12 is (putting my reviewer's cliché hat on) a mixed bag... I loved the Alex Winter interview and the Godfrey Ho interview...on the other hand (and these are both personal things) I hated the anime feature and the X-Files write up. Don't let that stop you getting your hands on a copy though as other things in there (book reviews and something called "Strangely Dismissed") more than tip it into the readable section.

## Red Leopard III



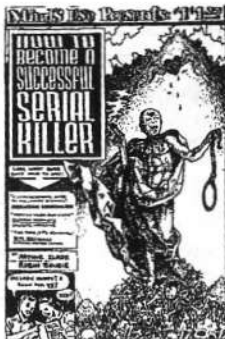
**Red Leopard III** Not another damned anime 'zine! Well no, actually, it's a little more than that... While Red Leopard is essentially centered around anime, it's by no means as anal as some of the other genre 'zines around, it has a sense of humour and shoots off in all sorts of different directions (Rocky Horror Show, a piece on Pinky and the Brain and an A-Z of cult movies ...although how they can have Police Academy and not Summer School in there is beyond me...). Chunky fun and 50p cheaper than Trash City...which is really funny when you think about it, because by the time you read this it's too late as you've already bought TC!!! HA! The jokes on you!! YES, YOU!!

**Weird West 1** OK, this is published by Fantaco (see last issue for my rambling hatred of them). That's a bad mark... BUT, really the only bad mark I can give it. It's a comic based around ancient Red Indian legends but throwing in all sorts of other references, werewolves etc. It's set in 2093 (ish) after a large portion of the Southwest United States has been evacuated due to "earthquakes" I'm not going to go into any more details as it really would take me hours... I'll put it this way, if you like the X-Files (Argghh another 'zine that mentions the programme! Sorry Jim!) You'll like Weird West. Two unrelated stories per issue, great art and spooky stories. Recommended.

**Rabid** If it's not bloody Anime (I do hope I haven't offended anyone there) it's ARSING Fantaco. Rabid is a collection of short comic strips with a horror sci/fi theme and, hand on heart, the only one I can recommend is "The Feasting" the rest of the 'zine is pretty worthless... Stick with Weird West Tales!

**True Teen Crime Stories: Heartburning** Only last issue I told you about Robin Bougie and his excellent Article 19 comic, now he has True Teen Crime, again excellent, a whole world away from most of the other stuff Robin does, very chilling (more so when you consider it's based on a true story) I've just finished reading it and I'm so stunned by it that I can't even think of anything stupid to say! Very highly recommended, as is all of Robins work... [Hang on. That's two pages now. I guess the drugs we surreptitiously give to Lino - cunningly hidden inside chocolate bars - must be having the desired effect]

**How to Become a Successful Serial Killer** More great work from Robin Bougie (artwork) and Arthur Slade (writer) this is a world away from HEARTBURNING [Is that a different world away or one going back in the same direction?] Basically a damned funny comic with loads of hints and tips for budding serial killers ranging from which tools to use (the Sword of Trauma or the Filing Cabinet of Pain?) to hints on how to avoid capture and some handy serial killer horoscopes (Capricorn...Today you feel very paranoid, just lock yourself in your house and order a pizza, don't eat it of course...it could be poisoned!). Order this when you order the rest of Robins stuff...OR ELSE!



**Interesting! 2** OK, I've got to get it out of my system... Hmmm, this is Interesting! (Thank you, I needed that). Richard Sagall has sat down and written a 'zine about the stuff he finds interesting, that's about it really... I'll give you an example shall I? (Yes Uncle Lino YES!!) "Restore crispness to soggy potato chips by wrapping them in a paper towel and zap them in your microwave for 30 seconds". See, interesting! Question is...how the hell did his chips get soggy? It's almost impossible to give you an opinion on this one as one mans interesting is another mans ZZzzzzzzz, but for \$3 it's worth a shot and you can get a sample copy of the first issue for free to see if you like it!

**Sierra Heaven 1** A new fiction 'zine that tries very hard to impress...but when your first story is a rehash of an old Hammer House of Horror story you know you're probably going to waste your time...In fact the best part of the whole thing is a short story section towards the back (just before another ZZzzzzzz-Files piece).

**Eastern Heroes 5** I'm getting really tired of Hong Kong movies...(As someone keeps asking me: "Do you like horror more, or kung fu more.?" "Horror, mate!")...that said you have to say that the latest issue of EH is packed full of information, reviews and articles (Including the first part of a "Teach yourself Cantonese" course!). While some people might accuse the magazine of being there only to sell EH's own product there is no denying that everyone involved has a love for the genre. Me? Well...gimme some more cat III product and I'm happy...

**Brains on Toast** Robin Bougie has a wife called Rebecca Dart...and the good news is she draws as well as Robin does!! Brains On Toast is a preview issue of a comic being published by Phoenix Press...and is basically a bizarre twist on the Alice in Wonderland story...it's got some really bizarre, disturbing images in it...holy cow, I didn't know Canadians could be quite so twisted!

**Michelle Mystique** Michelle Bauer....ahhhhhh there's lovely isn't it.....Full on tits out entertainment..... recommended. WHEHEY! [Apologies for the break in transmission. Normal service will be resumed, as soon as we can find a bucket of cold water to throw over the reviewer. Thank you. Boys and girls, isn't it nice to have the Lino that we know and love back on board? He was getting worryingly...professional there for a paragraph or two. Heavens, he might be wanting paid next!]





Here...that BBC programme...with all those soap people in it..."BUGGERME" or something ...God, isn't that shit? And what's the story with Shane Richie? He's shit too... And as for that arsehole Anthea Turner...Do me a favour... (I hear the Guardian are looking for a new TV reviewer...what do you think then?? Hmmm?)

**BEER! TOP 100 HORROR! BEER! MARS FACE! BEER! MAD MAX! BEER! WRESTLING!**

# MANGSPLAT



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ISSUE #3 SUNDAY, 1994

**Mansplat 1-3** It's newspaper sized...it's FREE and anything that has "Bathroom litter-ature for men...but chicks can read it too!" on the front cover gets my vote. Funny funny funny...from it's handy, home made vomit guide to it's pisstake UFO article...Will they send free copies to the UK? I don't ruddy know...find out for yourselves you lazy gits! #3 has the "1st Annual Barbarella Awards for loose standards and loose pants!", Male bag (letters from men!), Ma'am-o-gram (letters from chicks) and a look at the 100 great moments in horror/sci-fi (No 69 <snigger> is Cocoon just in case you were wondering)... Hell this thing is free.. what are you waiting for!!!! NOW GO ON!! NOW DAMMIT!!!! [Actually, it's no longer free, but what the hell. Still worth it]

**Flesh and Blood 5-6** Ahh...this is it, a beautifully put together horror 'zine that has stuff in it you actually NEED to know...and it also boasts a picture of Marilyn Chambers so it's a must have! (Talking of 70's porn stars...did you see NYPD Blue last night? Damn my eyes if Vanessa del Rio wasn't in it! And boy did she look goooooood!). Give the editor Harvey Fenton a break and buy this NOW!!! And just so I can have a quote in the next issue I'll say "I've seen the future of fan publications and it's name is Flesh and Blood" [As in Steven King's "I have seen the future of horror and it's name is Clive Barker" - so, horror's pissing off to Hollywood, developing an American accent and writing crappy fantasy novels, eh, Steve?] Damn that's good!! #6: GREAT IT'S GOT AN ARSE ON THE FRONT!! Damn, I'm getting too old for this you know (insert aserbic comment by editor here no doubt [such as how to spell "ascerbic"?]). I should really call this latest issue of FAB the Eurofest issue as most of the interviews contained (Joe D'Amato, Catriona MacColl etc) were conducted at the Eurofests. The British horror filmography reaches '81 and as usual you get a extensive review section. Add a Tinto Brass interview (TITS BUMS!!) and a look at Jezebel video and there you have it. Nicely put together and a bloody interesting read. My only complaint would be that they didn't like Jezebel videos title "Au Pair Girls" - Harvey, sort it awwwwwwt, Au Pair Girls is without doubt one of the finest films ever made. And the theme song?!! A-bloody-mazing: "They come from here, they come from there, no matter where they may come from...they're always welcome everywhere... Au pair..." GREAT STUFF! E-mail me now for a full song sheet...in fact I think I'll have to dig a microphone out and make a .wav of it! Available soon!!



Right, that's about it for another issue. If I had a dream, it would be that all Anime 'zines would join forces and bring out one big issue...that way I wouldn't have to spend my entire life trawling through pages and pages of the same stuff... Oh, sorry, thinking aloud there... Right, this won't be out till after the Eurofest on the 1st June with Jean Rollin...so if you were there you would have seen me and bought me a drink (I would have arrived late as my gitty brother decided to get married on the same day...swine!) And hopefully this issue will be out before the Rudy Ray Moore festival in August. It will, won't it Jim? Eh? So, I'll see you there and you can buy me another drink!!

Let me think...who shall I thank? Well, because they'll probably be reading this and I'll be in all sorts of trouble if I don't, I'd like to say hello to Jaime. There are quite a few other things I'd like to say to her...but I'll leave that to another time!! Also, hello to the mad woman in Camden who causes three normally sane humans to throw themselves behind doors, under counters etc. whenever she show up... (Sample of one of the conversations I've had the misfortune to have with her: "Hello. <pointing to a pack of Camel cigarettes on the counter> Can I have a dromedary?"; at this stage I was unaware of her exact mental state. She then asked "Have you seen Paul?", "Paul?" I replied, "No, sorry I haven't." This is where it started getting a bit bizarre. she said "No, no-one's seen him. He's special forces you see. He used to be a singer. I saw him in a church then it blew up and he was in a cafe in 1940's Germany." Being the intelligent sort, I knew then that she was barking, so I suddenly remembered something very important I had to do, and started ignoring her. I later found out it was the same woman who had walked into the shop and asked if we sold knickers, then stood in the doorway for five minutes shouting at the top of her voice for someone to, and I quote "FUCK ME". Yes, madness is a wonderful thing. I embrace it, in fact, I've been eating beef non stop in the vain hope of catching BSE. Fingers crossed, eh! Right...

**\*\*DIT DITT DAA DAA\*\*LATE BREAKING NEWS\*\*MORE REVIEWS\*\*DIT\*\***

Well this is just typical isn't it? I get all the reviews done and Jim decides to land some more 'zines on my desk at the last possible minute (The previous statement is there only to gain me sympathy...truth be told..I found the following fanzines in my bag and decided that I'd better review them). So, once more crushed by the fascist boot that is the editor, I am pleased to announce. MORE ZINE REVIEWS (aka Son of the Zine Reviews...aka The Anime Free Zine Review section...aka Zines: The Reviews)

**Vex 1** Did you see OJ on Richard and Judy the other night? Sweet, wasn't he? Anyway, do I care if he did it or not? Well if he did, he's been acquitted and has gotten away with it. If he didn't? Well, he's free now... VEX looks at the films of OJ Simpson with a filmography and listing of his movie deaths (It also has a GREAT picture of OJ in full Rambo mode complete with a knife in each hand!!) Other stuff included in the first issue are: fav fat actors (Highly offensive if you ask ME!) and a look back at the life and movies of everyone's favourite murdered director Al Adamson. VEX, if it keeps being as entertaining as the first issue will, be a 'zine to watch out for!!

**Headpress 11** Offers no real surprises but that's not a bad thing. As usual, Headpress is packed with extensive reviews and articles. My favourite has to be Simon Whitechapel's look at the darker side of the Bible (Yes, I'm a Catholic...how COULD you tell!).. Also worth mentioning is Andrew Darlington's article which covers celebrity junkies (Just say NO!). Recommended.

**Video Junkie 1** It's new, it's American and it's got a picture of Godzilla on the front.. (What? read it? Hmm ok, I will...) This is actually quite good you know! As well as being available in print form VJ also have a web site (<http://www.isle.net/~vidjunki/index.html>) although as yet I haven't had a chance to check it out. The first issue covers all sorts of bases from the most recent Godzilla movies (get a clue...it's a puppet!! <grin>) to a great article covering Hammer Studios output in the 70's. Also included is a look at the directors cut of 'Hard Target' and a whole bucket load of video reviews. And the best part? No bloody mention of Jim!!! Look up the address at the end of this ramble and order yourselves a copy!

This draws to a close our fanzine review for this year. [I trust that's not sarcasm, Lino] I do hope you all enjoyed it... I'd like to say thank you...to no one really because I'm a selfish bastard!!! And if any anime fans that I might have offended would like to drop me a line, you can... Any complaints (just you try!) can be e-mailed to me on one of the following: [lino@lino.demon.co.uk](mailto:lino@lino.demon.co.uk), [lino@atlas.co.uk](mailto:lino@atlas.co.uk), [lino@mail.on-line.co.uk](mailto:lino@mail.on-line.co.uk) (yes, 3 different addresses, don't ask me why!) You can also send offers of work, and interesting JPG's to the same addresses... So until next time, remember, don't be offended by any negative reviews, you have to understand I don't actually read any 'zines, the reviews are based solely on my moods at the time!! (Now is that a joke?) Second thoughts, be offended...be very offended!! (heh)

Ohhh before I go just a little hello to JB... you know who you are and look!! You are now officially famous... well... not REALLY famous... not like me... but you know what I mean! Great!! And it's only taken me 6 months! Till next time... byebye...

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Eire.

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Right, aren't we glad that's over. The hot news is that Harvey Fenton has asked Lino to also do the 'zine reviews for 'Flesh and Blood'. Ah, where TC leads, others follow... This means two things; a) Lino will be writing reviews reviewing his own reviews, and b) Flesh and Blood will rapidly slip to a 18-month schedule. Are you sure about this, Harvey?

Robin Bougie is now doing a 'Mind's Eye Presents...' series, which showcases a wide range of talents from humourous to the deeply gross. Look - why don't you just send the guy some money (probably in US\$) and you'll be kept amused for life! Much the same goes to the guys at 'Mansplot', who've now got Joe Bob Briggs aboard. A marriage made in heaven if ever there was one! On the electronic front, check out Survival Kit e-zine - they cover a lot of weird at heart stuff, and are good for several hours phone bill, purely for a list of links to other places, even disregarding their review section. Hopefully the TC web site will look as nice!

*Back in the land of the printed, there's Delirium 4, with a comprehensive look at 1981 Italian trash cinema (er, it looks comprehensive to my ignorant eye!) and interviews with directors Cozzi, Soavi, Margheriti and D'Amato as well as (inevitably!) David Warbeck, and some truly eye-popping colour stills from 'Cannibal Ferox'. Hooray! Looks like 'Little Shop of Horrors' is still alive, with #13 apparently on the way (maybe out by now - they talk of a 'spring release', but it's unclear whether they mean 1996 or 1997! I can sympathise...), and they're already planning number 14. Tim Greaves is also looking ahead - while both mags reviewed by Lino are now out of print, there should soon be his Lisa Romay file which will be good as ever!*

*Finally, was sent a very odd CD - 'Thing and Nothing' by Tasm Lab. It's sort of an opera, for want of a better word, about a future world where the hero buys a simulated woman and tries to rescue her from her creator. It's not exactly easy listening, but is worth the effort; always intriguing and challenging. Imagine a musical version of 'Brazil' perhaps.*

**The Info: prices given below do NOT include postage**

- Animenia/Ariel/Hitomi Takaya** - 43 Poplar Road, Cleethorpes, S.Humbs, DN35 8BH  
**Bakya** (IRCx2) - 527 Jones St, Suite 484, San Francisco, CA 94102, USA  
**Brains on Toast/Heartburning/...Serial Killer/Mind's Eye Presents** (var.) - PO Box 1653, Chemainus, British Columbia, VOR-1KO, Canada  
**Cashiers du Cinemart** (\$1) - PO Box 2401, Riverview, MI 48192-7417, USA  
**Dark Star** (£2) - 64 Arthur Street, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 0PR  
**Delirium** (£3.95) - 14 Thorpedale Road, London, N4 3BL  
**Eastern Heroes** (£3.50) - 96 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W1V 7DH  
**Flesh & Blood** (£3.95) - PO Box 178, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 2YU  
**Headpress** (£3.50) - PO Box 160, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 4ET  
**Pitt/Hayden/Lina Romay** - Tim Greaves, 118 High St, Eastleigh, Hants, SO5 5LR  
**Interesting!** (\$3) - PO Box 1069, Bangor, ME 04402-1069, USA  
**Invasion** (£3.50) - PO Box 7, Upminster, Essex, RM14 2RH  
**Little Shop of Horrors** (\$7.95) - Dick Klemensen, PO Box 3107, Des Moines, IA 50316, USA  
**Mansplat** (\$2?) - 2318 "nd Ave, Suite 591, Seattle, WA 98121, USA  
**Michelle Mystique** - Michael Shuter, PO Box 8936, Cincinnati, OH 45209, USA  
**Rabid/Weird West** - Fantaco, 21 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12210, USA  
**Red Leopard** (£2) - 329 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 3JT  
**Sierra Heaven** (£2.95) - 29 Harrier Way, Evelyn Mews, Beckton, London, E6 4YP  
**Streetmeat** (£1.50) - Bad to the Bone, 18 Landsdowne Rd, Sydney, Crewe, CW1 5JY  
**Survival Kit** (e-zine) - <http://users.hol.gr/~diceman>  
**Thing & Nothing** (\$10) - TASM LAB, PO Box 351, Cambridge, MA 02142, USA  
**Vex** (\$3) - PO Box 319, Roselle, NJ 07203, USA  
**Video Junkie** (\$6) - PO Box 4051, Ventura, CA 93007, USA


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## "Stupid is as stupid does": The administration in action.

Washington, DC - twelve hours before a massive, extensively-planned drug raid was to take place, the D.C. Department of Public and Assisted Housing issued a press release praising its role in the raid. Officials thus had to call off the operation, rendering practically useless eight months' planning, co-ordination among four law-enforcement agencies, and a large number of arrest and search warrants obtained by thousands of hours of investigation, surveillance, and undercover drug buys. [*Washington Post*, 23-3-95]

A jury in Pensacola, Florida, awarded nearly \$600,000 to Pedro Duran, 56, in his lawsuit against the CSX company. Duran lost his left arm and suffered a broken back and leg when a CSX train hit him as he lay on the tracks, passed out from a round of drinking. According to trial testimony, an engineer spotted what he thought was a lump of trash on the tracks and sounded the whistle as a precaution for 54 seconds before the collision. However, the "lump of trash" -- Duran -- didn't move. [*Orlando Sentinel-AP*, 1-5-95]

The Army issued the Bronze Star for "meritorious achievement" to seven soldiers of the 3rd Armoured Cavalry Regiment firing (mistakenly) on stranded U.S. troops during the Persian Gulf war. The Army had originally awarded three of the men medals "with valour," but revoked that distinction after criticism by the General Accounting Office. The medal-winning soldiers killed one American and wounded another before realising their mistake. [*St. Petersburg Times-Washington Post*, 5-5-95; *Greensboro News & Record-AP*, 16-4-95]

Judge Philip Mangones in Keene, New Hampshire, declared unconstitutional a drug-producing search of the dormitory rooms of two Keene State College students. The students consented to the search, and more than six ounces of marijuana was found, but the judge said that the men were too stoned to know what they were doing when they consented. [*Exeter News-Letter*, 5-3-96]

**[A tip of the hat to Chuck Shepherd and News of the Weird, for many of these stories -- see the editorial for details on how to order it]**



# *Against* The X-Files

Very few series succeed in generating the sort of mass fan hysteria seen so quickly with regard to 'The X Files'. Even 'Star Trek' took a relatively long while to build up a cult following, but within two seasons, Chris Carter's baby acquired a horde of rabid, devoted fans, the "X-philes", endlessly poring over fine details of the show, down to the colour of Dana Scully's underwear. But is the show worth it? Frankly, no. It may be the best thing on American television, but that's scarcely saying much. And while there have undeniably been memorable episodes (The Erlenmeyer Flask, E.B.E.), the vast majority are far more forgettable, with some pure dreck.

Let's take a look at one such, possibly the worst to date, '3', dealing with a group of modern-day vampires, which showcased some of the major weaknesses in the series. This was the first episode after Dana Scully's abduction which, as any sad bastard will tell you, was caused by her pregnancy. The producers had to spend several shows trying to conceal it, with amusing, escalating desperation: first, baggy clothes; then, only close-ups; and finally, she had to remain stationary, her walk presumably too much of a waddle. This ludicrous farce eventually ended, though one can imagine Chris Carter's anguished squeal as they wheeled her into the delivery room: "Come back, Gillian, we've still got five scenes to shoot!". It's understandable why they kept her on; the relationship between the two agents is the show's strongest element. In '3', and indeed most of the partner-less episodes, Mulder flails around like a landed fish, operating in a vacuum when no-one says "But surely there must be a rational explanation for all this".

At least Mulder's solo pursuits made a nice change [though the series' heavy debt to 'Kolchak' was clear]. The series has been remarkable for sheer predictability, the majority of episodes follow a single form: Scully and Mulder investigate something; he comes up with a way-out theory, she doesn't believe it, but he is inevitably shown to be right. With this hyper-natural ability to solve cases, you wonder why the FBI have him looking at Forteania. Give the man a week, he could probably catch every serial killer going. It would be nice, just once, to have a prosaic explanation. For instance, researchers estimate at least 95% of UFO's are misidentifications of normal objects, so you think Mulder would stumble across J.Allen Hynek's "swamp gas" now and again. The other series cliché is the final five minutes: the evidence will be lost, destroyed, stolen, bent, torn or mutilated, and Mulder has no proof of what happened. It strains credulity way past breaking point.

The vampire episode was a perfect example, albeit with a sceptical LA cop replacing Anderson's sceptical FBI agent. The finale has the blood-suckers conveniently incinerated – what a surprise. The only unexpected twist was that we didn't get the near-compulsory torch-lit forest ramble, and the most entertainment was watching the struggle to make a small fragment of Canada look like Los Angeles. [In the earlier episode allegedly set at the Arecibo telescope, all the signs had 'Puerto Rico' at the bottom – a touchingly naive attempt to convince us it wasn't just the same coniferous woodland with a tape of tropical insect noise added].



Our vampire episode also demonstrated the tendency for the series to seek "inspiration" from classic SF/horror films; anyone who's seen 'Near Dark' will have spotted bits of the film poking out. One vampire was even a Keifer Sutherland look-alike! This fondness for homage is frequent, notably in 'Ice', with an alien life-form insidiously taking over a polar base, a cast member at a time, and no-one knows who is infected. Er, John Carpenter's 'The Thing'? Right down to one victim being a dog, just without the stunning FX which made the movie so memorable. In comparison, The X Files were pallid, and toned-down for TV in every way.

Perhaps the poorest section in '3' had Mulder discovering an ink stamp from a club on the skin of a dead vampire. He went along to the "wittily" named Club Tepes (as in Vlad Tepes, a.k.a. Vlad the Impaler, a.k.a. Dracula, hoho), where the music was nice 'n' quiet -- mustn't interfere with the dialogue -- and at the same volume regardless of where he was in the establishment. Have these guys ever been to a night-club? Wheel on the tired Goth clichés, and lo, the first person Mulder talks to, happens to be the episode heroine. Having a character called "Spooky" apparently lets you get away with any ridiculous plot twist you want to foist on the audience.



*Daryl Hannah in 'Clan of the Cave Bear'. Oops, my apologies, it's actually the New Jersey Devil. Easy mistake to make, I'm sure you agree.*

This failure to get details right pervades whole episodes; one involving a malevolent computer provoked hoots of derision here for its wildly inaccurate portrayal of technology, harking back to bad 60's thrillers. Makes you wonder just how much bull they spew with respect to the fields of parapsychology and UFO research. Basically, Carter and team can cook up anything they want to, and do -- I imagine many viewers now think the New Jersey Devil looks like Daryl Hannah did in 'Clan of the Cave Bear', a cutely smudged wild-girl.

I admit the show has strengths. It's nice to see paranoia and it's adherents, portrayed in a good light, and labyrinthine, tentacular government has never been so well demonstrated. Plus the in-jokes are amusing [I've heard rumours that Duchovny and Carter are big porn fans...]. But -- for the real paranoiacs -- is the whole thing a PR exercise for the FBI? It's not the first such whitewashing by a long way; from 'The Untouchables' on, the FBI have been the bastion of truth, justice and the American way. Compare and contrast how the CIA are portrayed in the media: inevitably, scummy and hateful. David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson follow the Kyle McLachlan tradition of cuddly, lovable FBI agents. No-one would have qualms about letting them into any aspect of their lives. The X Files works, very nicely thank you, as propaganda for a police state. Bear **that** in mind next time you watch it.

Pleasant dreams. And remember, The Truth Is Not There...

**[The Smoking Man]**

## Once Upon a (television) Time...

'Fairie-tale Theater' is the collective name given to a series of 50-minute films produced by Shelley Duvall, inspired by the classic stories from the Brothers Grimm and others. The project was a long-standing interest of Duvall's, who had been collecting illustrated volumes of the tales since she was a teenager. Some 20 episodes were made between 1982 and 1984, and their major strength was the high-profile actors attracted to the projects: from Robin Williams to Elliott Gould, virtually every one has a star or two headlining.

Sometimes, this doesn't quite come off. Mary Steenburgen as 'Little Red Riding Hood' is at least a decade too old for the role – though having said that, Emmanuelle Beart recently took it on in a French TV adaptation. But when the casting does click, the effect is startling, leaving you to wonder why no-one thought of it before. Pee-Wee Herman as Pinocchio? Vanessa Redgrave as an evil stepmother? Inspired stuff. The actors who come off best are those who tend towards the "over" end of the dramatic scale, since fairy tales provide much scope for scenery-chewing in one form or another, with subtlety and understatement negative influences. This lifts the show way out of the humdrum, and there are some truly great performances.



With such, presumably expensive, stars, it's surprising how often the show comes across as having the production values of a porno flick. Most obviously, some of the optical effects would have been rejected by 'Blake's 7', and few boast cast-lists which stretch to double figures. The stories are also shot on video, and even the outdoor scenes are mostly filmed on sets, but this does generate a faintly surreal air which doesn't seem out of place -- the Japanese anthology film 'Kwaidan' adopted a similar approach for its ghost-stories.

There's little skimping on the icky bits, though TV constraints naturally preclude overt grue. The tales are straightforward, generally accurate to Grimm, have satisfactorily few Disney-style concessions and no gratuitous 'Little Mermaid' happy-endings. The best have tongue slightly in cheek, enough to keep adults interested without sacrificing child-like charm. Not all manage: some, such as 'Sleeping Beauty' are just too po-faced for their own good (prince Christopher Reeve could presumably now relate rather well to someone in a coma...). And at the other end? 'Jack the Giant Killer' with a Jewish giant. Oy-veh, and similar Yiddish exclamations...



**Beauty and the Beast** (Roger Vadim) - Mercifully free of dancing clocks and Tim Rice, instead this adaptation is obviously, and heavily, influenced by Jean Cocteau's version. At first, it's disconcerting to see Susan Sarandon as Beauty since from a 1996 viewpoint, she would not seem an obvious choice for the role, shall we say. But she certainly takes the right approach, giving the heroine both strength and vulnerability. The beast is Klaus Kinski, who plays it in

Nosferatu mode - same fangs, just much more hair - which is still rather appropriate. Obviously set-bound, the look is subdued, though this may be deliberate, to give the actors full rein. While they are entirely satisfactory, the main problem is running time: condensing the story into the allotted time means large swathes are of necessity hacked out. This leaves, for example, Beauty's sisters (one of whom is Anjelica Huston) all but superfluous. and the ending seems terribly rushed, failing to tie up loose ends at all. Not all fairy tales fit nicely into a 50-minute format.

**The Boy Who Left Home to Find Out About the Shivers** (Graeme Clifford) - Probably the best cast of the lot, with Christopher Lee, Vincent Price, David Warner and Frank Zappa (as a hunchback mute). Not a story I know, the title says it all: a boy wants to know what fear is like. He gets the chance when local king Vladimir (Lee) needs his castle cleared of ghosts, offering the usual kingdom/treasure/princess thing in exchange. [Trivia note: princess Dana Hill voiced Jerry in the abominable 'Tom and Jerry: the Movie!'] Hero Peter MacNicol is sympathetic without being wimpy, somewhat like a young Billy Crystal, while Warner and Lee dead-pan admirably. Highlights include zombie bowling - skull for a ball, bones for pins - and a couple of nice twists at the end. Set designs are based on Durer and Albrecht, it plays like something Tim Burton might have knocked up, though perhaps more telling is that director Clifford was editor on Rocky Horror! Best line: "When I was a boy, all I wanted to do was think of naked Greek statues...!"

**Hansel and Gretel** (James Crowley) - How can a starving family afford to keep their offspring surgically well-scrubbed? Precisely what caused the death of the evil stepmother? And how is it connected with the new patio? Ok, forget the last one, but this barnstorming version features Joan Collins as both wicked witch and a stepmother **so evil** she thinks nothing of stealing bread from her kids. The plot needs no resume and is all here: gingerbread house; force-fed children, etc., etc. Definitely skirting round the boundaries of good taste, especially a Collins rant (in witch mode) about the joys of eating young flesh. Needless to say, it all ends happily ever after, though as mentioned at the start too many open questions are left unanswered – expect a ‘Rough Justice’ documentary soon, proving that the wicked witch was innocent...

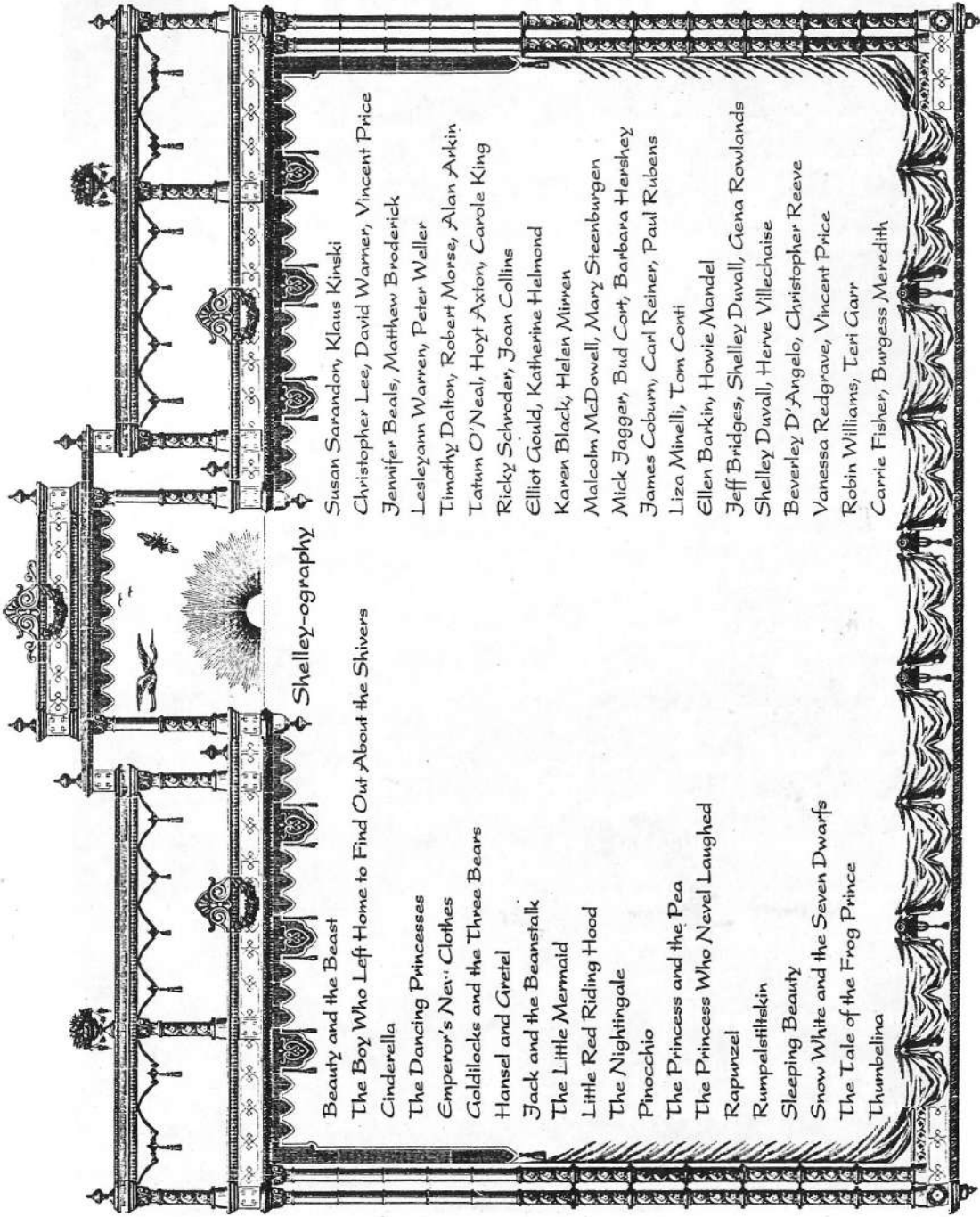


**Little Red Riding Hood** (Graeme Clifford) - Doo Bee Doo Doo... Malcolm McDowell's casting as the wolf was presumably influenced by his then-recent appearance in ‘Cat People’ (at the risk of repeating myself, it's the same fangs, just much more hair...), but is actually far closer to Clockwork Alex; any second you expect him to shout "Viddy well, my brothers" and leap on top of Granny. He doesn't, though it is nice to see the wolf portrayed with some intelligence. The psycho-sexual aspects of the tale explored in

‘The Company of Wolves’ are also more present than anticipated, even if Mary Steenburgen plays Ms.Hood as more Jewish princess than innocent teenager. Indeed, few characters are quite what you expect, with even Granny displaying an aggressive streak unusual for a senior citizen. It's all most enjoyably warped.

**The Nightingale** (Ivan Parser) - Again, in this one the original story is basically unfamiliar, so I'm unable to comment on whether liberties have been taken. It's about the Emperor of Cathay, who discovers that a clockwork nightingale (made in Japan – read into that what you will) is no substitute for the real thing. Given the setting, the cast are an odd mix of Western and Asian, led by Mick Jagger as the Emperor, who delivers a suitably dissolute performance. It appears to be more targeted at "mature viewers" with a bizarre nightmare sequence in which Death comes for the Emperor, that as far as Jagger-turns go, appears to be straight out of the ‘Performance’ book of weird. The production values are comparatively lavish, save the titular feathered critter which signally fails to be remotely convincing. This aside, it's well told, providing dimension to a charming story, and on occasion is genuinely effective.

The above are just a sample of the delights on offer, opposite is a list of the titles of which I'm personally aware. To follow up, Shelley Duvall also produced ‘Tall Tales Legends’, which concentrated on American folk-tales and history. The casts were just as impressive, for example Jamie Lee Curtis as Annie Oakley, in a story that features 1903 footage of Oakley shot by Thomas Edison. As kid-TV goes, just *slightly* better than the moronic Trev and Simon...



Shelley-ography

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Beauty and the Beast                                | Susan Sarandon, Klaus Kinski                 |
| The Boy Who Left Home to Find Out About the Shivers | Christopher Lee, David Warner, Vincent Price |
| Cinderella  | Jennifer Beals, Matthew Broderick            |
| The Dancing Princesses                              | Leslyann Warren, Peter Weller                |
| Emperor's New Clothes                               | Timothy Dalton, Robert Morse, Alan Arkin     |
| Goldilocks and the Three Bears                      | Tatum O'Neal, Hoyt Axton, Carole King        |
| Hansel and Gretel                                   | Ricky Schroder, Joan Collins                 |
| Jack and the Beanstalk                              | Elliot Gould, Katherine Helmond              |
| The Little Mermaid                                  | Karen Black, Helen Mirren                    |
| Little Red Riding Hood                              | Malcolm McDowell, Mary Steenburgen           |
| The Nightingale                                     | Mick Jagger, Bud Cort, Barbara Hershey       |
| Pinocchio   | James Coburn, Carl Reiner, Paul Rubens       |
| The Princess and the Pea                            | Liza Minelli, Tom Conti                      |
| The Princess Who Never Laughed                      | Ellen Barkin, Howie Mandel                   |
| Rapunzel  | Jeff Bridges, Shelley Duvall, Gena Rowlands  |
| Rumpelstiltskin                                     | Shelley Duvall, Herve Villechaise            |
| Sleeping Beauty                                     | Beverly D'Angelo, Christopher Reeve          |
| Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs                     | Vanessa Redgrave, Vincent Price              |
| The Tale of the Frog Prince                         | Robin Williams, Teri Garr                    |
| Thumbelina  | Carrie Fisher, Burgess Meredith              |



# Mummy's Boy

*by DF Lewis*

I scribble a few notes about my dream. I was squatting on a hillside, having climbed through steep woodland, at the bottom of which I had left my son in the park. He was playing on the roundabout, in the care of someone whom I could recall neither in the dream nor now during the note-scribbling. I watched the gliders taking off and landing on a raised airstrip across the valley. Each soared into the sky like an angel in splints, crested the thermals, dropped the winch-line and circled over the model town below.

My notes fail to cover the precise nature of the town and are very sketchy concerning the duration in dream time - but, in writing the notes, new visions come, ideas for future dreams and undercurrents of old forgotten dreams which will otherwise never see the light of day.

The sky gradually filled with gliders, sunlight sparkling on their wings like loose stars on a clear night. I was strangely unhorrorified to see two gliders collide and cartwheel down.

That was when I woke - or so the notes tell me. I am concerned about my son whom I apparently abandoned ill-attended in the park. My own real life children are now too old for such worries.

I look across at my wife who knits in front of the gas fire. But it is not my wife at all. I study my notes for clarification - for comfort - for some clue as to whether I am now embroiled in a new dream without the prior warning of falling asleep.

The woman masquerading as my wife seems to knit her own brain as it coils from the spindle of her revolving ear. The white glistening wormthread is clotted with headblood. The finished product of the



extrusion flows over her lap and becomes the yellow grid of the gas fire, the blue flames of which flare ever upward along the wormthread. She smiles and says: 'Time for bed'. I cannot remember the exact words, nor do the notes help, since they are merely marks on the paper in a language too sculptural for translation.

A paper aeroplane skims past my nose, obviously constructed and launched by the creature with the brain-knitting. She stares imbecilically with one smile on two quivering lips. The dart glided into the next dream, where he still squatted on the familiar hillside, and plummeted with a crumple to his feet. He picked it up and read the message: 'Your son has a broken back - unless you hurry down.'

Some gliders still hung in the sky, hovering like silver dragons, so close he could actually see the dream aviators, smiling, waving - at him.

The distant airstrip bore the glistening groundling craft and, men as small as insects, careered hither and thither, busy rewinding the various winches into the shape of a childhood cat's-cradle game. An arc of a new moon rose early above the activity.

He felt compelled to hurry down to the park - he had ignored the message on the origami dart for at least an hour of dream time.

But he woke before he could start down the wooded slope - which he was suddenly desperate to descend, since he dreaded that whom he most loved in the real world was in dire danger. The child who was the man.

The utter frustration of pulling out of a dream too early was like not pulling out of a dive early enough.

The sky was below; the ground above. He soared speedily towards a small child whose weight was being tested on a see-saw by a strange woman wearing what appeared, at this distance, to be a red felt hat. Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin.

# A Winter's Tale...



Alex Winter is best known for starring alongside Keanu Reeves in two very successful *Bill and Ted* movies. But before that, he spent several years on the stage alongside thespians

such as Yul Brynner before getting his break in the dreadful vampire 'comedy' *The Lost Boys* (Winter describes his role as "a wardrobe prop with fangs"). Since then, Winter has made a series for MTV, directed more pop promos for cult bands than Richard Stanley, wrote, starred in and co-directed the mutant human comedy 'Freaked', and has been responsible for several UK National Lottery TV ads(!). Rob Dyer met Alex in the London office of his production company and chatted about the more esoteric parts of his work and his love of comedy and cartoons...

## **You've done some work for Jim Thirwell's band Foetus.**

Jim's a good friend of mine -- I did his record cover which they totally screwed up.

## **You did the sleeve photography?**

Yeah. The newest one [album], it's called 'Gash', it's just come out. He hasn't done one in eight years I don't think, and I did the video. The Foetus one is really fun. That video's a lot of fun. It's three minutes long and has 4,000 edits!

## **So how long did it take to edit?**

Two days - it was incredible how fast we jammed that one out, once we got into the rhythm. But it's a lot of single frame intercuts, so it's sort of like being beat up in an alleyway [Laughs]. Yeah, Jim's great and it was a lot of fun to do that vid.

## **I understand you've also worked with Tim Simenon of 'Bomb the Bass'.**

I dragged him all over the world actually. I took him to Morocco and the jungle in Belize. It was great to work with Tim because of the type of band Bomb the Bass is. It's not one of these 'sell the band' type of videos. So you can really do something interesting filmicly, because it's not all about seeing someone with their shirt off in a garage pounding out the chords! For me, that's what's great about videos, is the cinematic experimenting you can do. There's no other medium I can think of where you can go completely into your own head as a filmmaker and try things out. I haven't had that kind of freedom since film school.

## **You directed some of the National Lottery TV adverts, which ones?**

I did a bunch. My favourite National Lottery commercial I've done is a business man walking down an office corridor, he's scratching his Instants card and doesn't notice that he falls right down the stairs. He falls down an entire office lock, 40 flights of stairs - it's really violent too! But he doesn't pay any attention because he's scratching his card. Then I did two Littlewoods pools ads. They were just 10 second numbers, incredibly fast - a bank manager polishing this guys shoes is one of them and the other was a silly bit of vaudeville business, but they're all really kinetic, fast, blindly quick ads.

## **Do you think your affection for cartoons comes out in these?**

Oh yeah, definitely. My general feeling towards anything is... [pauses], the kind of drama I like is extreme drama. The kind of comedy I like is extreme comedy. You know, I'm not going to truck off to see 'Boomerang' or some boring Hollywood mainstream comedy. I like them to be pretty extreme. The old cartoons were amazing. They were so innovative, and the way they used rhythm and the way they paced their jokes was just so fantastic.

## **What about the old school of comedians?**

Keaton's my favourite and the Three Stooges definitely, especially in 'Freaked', there's a lot of Stooges gags in that. I even like Abbott and Costello, which I know is a real no-no. Python, Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan and all that stuff. Again, it was all these people who, on one level or another, were quite extreme.

## **What about Laurel and Hardy?**

A lot of people are huge Laurel and Hardy fans, especially over here [in the UK]. I just haven't seen many of them. It's one of those things. I should just spend a day watching Laurel and Hardy movies. Pete Hewitt [director] kept talking about Laurel and Hardy all the time when we were making 'Bill & Ted 2' and I was like, "Pete, I've maybe seen one Laurel and Hardy!". They made no impression on me at all when I was a little kid. I've got to check it out. I'm sure I'd like it. I'm not the biggest Chaplin fan because I always found Chaplin to be a bit melodramatic and I prefer to have more kinetic, dynamic energy to it. I always wanted a piano to fall on the old tramp [laughs].

**There was a newspaper report which said that people spent money on the national lottery rather than go to the cinema. So it could be said you're helping bring down cinema attendances.**

To be honest with you, as bad as movies are these days, I think I'm probably doing everybody a favour. If they don't go trundling off to see 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' and spend their money [on the lottery] instead then I've probably saved them from intense boredom. If anything, maybe that's a call to the film industry to start making better films so people won't do that!



# Anime Blitz

**Angel Cop** - Life imitates art, #273: this OAV has Japan attacked by terrorists, and opens with an American government building getting blown apart. Seeing this the day after Oklahoma City was impressive, even though the building turns out to be the American Embassy, and its eerily predictive nature is destroyed by making the bad guys Communists rather than gun-mad Americans. Precognition aside, this nastily violent tale has anti-terrorist cops who shoot instead of thinking, rather than before. Between this gore and the none-too-subtle fascist political sympathies (the original Jewish banker conspiracy angle is curiously AWOL!), liberals will hate it, but naturally, no complaints from this corner. One episode will leave you wanting more (or rather, more! Specifically, more beer, more raw meat and more shotgun cartridges), and subsequent episodes use the room to manoeuvre, with sub-plots both prosaic and supernatural spinning off in all directions. Definitely cool. B+

**Armitage 3** - Well, if you're going to steal, do it from the best, and vast chunks of this show look to have been lifted from TC-faves Bubblegum Crisis and Battle Angel: we have the tech-gone-wonky feel of the former, and the angst-ridden-cute-slaughter-machine from the latter. Hell, she even looks like Gally/Alita. So why does this not really work? Probably the same reason I don't like Tarantino movies. If you lack original ideas, stealing them from others is not a good idea - it only shows up your own shortcomings. If you haven't seen the aforementioned shows, you could do far worse than Armitage 3; but then, if you haven't seen 'City on Fire', you probably think 'Reservoir Dogs' is original and inventive. Docked several notches for unsubtle *homage*, despite buckets of impressive style. D

**Bubblegum Crisis** (dubbed) - We at TC Towers do not have a problem with subtitles. Thus, for us, a dubbed version of this cyberpunk classic is like something out of 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers': it looks the same as ever, yet it's...changed. The plot is still there, robochicks vs. big, bad corporation, the animation is fluid and effective, but the overall feel has been subtly, and irrevocably weakened. The dubbing is just about okay, what really grates are the translated songs, which now resemble Debbie Gibson rejects. However, at least the buyer can take their pick, for which credit to Anime Projects - a good job, too, or I'd have been much harsher. Buying this is utterly, totally, completely pointless and so it gets just E+. But it's harmless rather than anything else.



**Castle of Cagliostro** - Reviewed all the way back in TC14/15, but worth mentioning again here, as it's the first time in the new wave of anime that work by the acknowledged master, Hayao Miyazaki, has been released. Given the amount of crap we've seen in that time, the question has got to be, "why has it taken so long?". For even though this was his first feature, it's streets ahead of most releases, combining action, comedy and even r\*m\*nce in a charming and engrossing way. The curious thing is that though this is definitely a Lupin III adventure, the hero is renamed 'Wolf', allegedly for copyright reasons. Oh, well. In this case, he's tracking down those responsible for running the world through counterfeit money, while avoiding arrest by his Interpol nemesis Zenigata, rescuing the odd princess, etc. Truly wonderful stuff, miles away from the clichés, and fresh and invigorating despite being almost 20 years old. A-

**Digital Devil** - Speaking of the clichés, apparently this is "more than a science-fiction horror tale", according to the press release. Could have fooled me. All the components we've come to expect from the lower, blunt end of the genre are here – schoolgirls, demons, body-parts going squish. For what it's worth, the plot is about a guy turning to Satanism after he gets beaten up, only to find he has unleashed forces beyond his control. Blah de blah. Nothing to recommend it above the other dozen or so series using similar themes and ideas. E



**Dragon Half** - Oh god, where to start? This is one of those films where any synopsis is utterly pointless, and would only lead you to doubt my sanity even more than usual. On one level, it's a love triangle between idol singer Dick Saucer and two fans who vie for his affection. Except one girl (left) is 50% dragon – rather unfortunate, as Saucer is a part-time dragon-slayer – and the other is 50% slime and a princess (don't ask). This is only the tip of a Titanic-compatible iceberg as far as plot elements go, but the whole thing is a superb showcase for animation, mixing styles and approaches in a way that no live-action movie could possibly hope to imitate. Probably not for the novice, as their head will spin with the intensity of it all, but thoroughly ridiculous, completely stupid, hysterically funny – and that's just the theme song, which will have Beethoven spinning in his grave, and appears to be about making an omelette. The rest is impossible to describe, but I have little hesitation in recommending it to any fan with a sense of humour. A



**Eight Man After** - Another revival of a show probably better left dead. I'm sure all the similarities here to Robocop are totally coincidental: dubious developer keen to rebuild the city, guy blown away by druggies, but brought back as a super-enhanced cyborg, who suffers flashbacks to his previous life. Get the picture? As these became apparent, my interest slowly waned; one episode is quite enough, especially since by the end, it starts to look like we're heading towards 'Guyver'-style tedium, as the hero ploughs his way through an infinite supply of cannon fodder bad guys. More to follow, it seems; I'm not holding my breath. D-

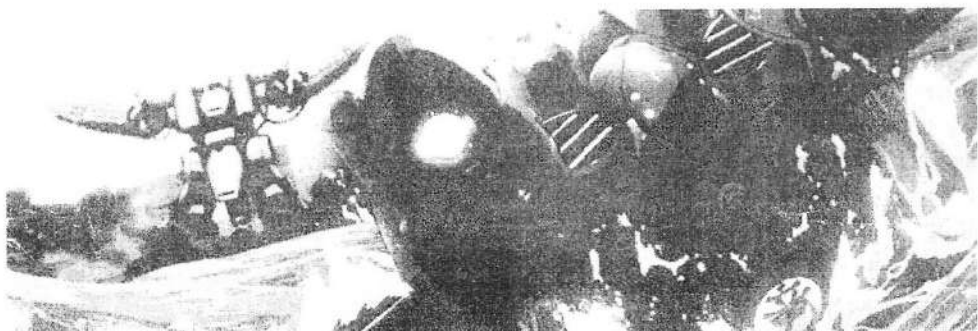
**Ghost in the Shell** - An interesting movie this, the first co-production between the Japanese and Manga Video - I fondly imagine the Manga rep yelling "More blood! Make the breasts bigger!" during production meetings. Much in the style of 'Akira'; dystopian future, heavily plot-laden, technology getting out of hand, and like 'Akira', while the technical aspects are hard to fault, and are indeed often amazing, mixing computer graphics and traditional methods to good effect, it's all a bit on the chilly side, emotionally speaking. It's hard to empathise with any of the characters - though this might be deliberate, since half of them are cyborgs. The action sequences are impressive, but then the film has a tendency to grind to a halt while some plot exposition happens. And don't ask me what's going on; even after three viewings, I still couldn't give you a definitive answer C-

**Giant Robo** - Part one doesn't hang around, opening straight into a major set-piece which would be the envy of many a cinematic climax. With a sweepingly melodramatic orchestral score, this plays like a Saturday serial, bad guys out to destroy the world, and only our dedicated heroes (and heroine - Ginrei has a significant following of her own!) can stop them. The style here is "faux classical", similar to the animated Batman, film noir gone futuristic, and while it's tough to shake off the feeling that you're watching a kid's cartoon, it is a damn impressive one. However, subsequent episodes never quite live up to this opening burn-out, the style rapidly becomes more aggravating than appealing. Just rewatch #1 instead... Overall, D-

**Gunsmith Cats** - If ever there was a case for borrowing a friend's copy, this is it, as what we have here is truly a tape of two halves, Brian. The first 30 minutes are a fine, thoroughly enjoyable tale of female bounty hunters with a passion for weapons, who get blackmailed into working for the police to take down a bunch of gun-runners. No problems here: tongue is appropriately in cheek, attitude is good, animation is slick and one case where an American setting means the dubbing isn't anachronistic (it's also available with subtitles, for which applause is once again due). So, you get half-way through, and are thinking "Roll on part 2". Ah, no - what you get instead is a "making of" documentary, which actually runs significantly longer than the episode it's about! Interminable shots of car engines mix with talking heads and scenes of the creators taking in some dull parts of downtown Chicago. An exercise in monotony, it's guaranteed to have you FF-ing. This pure filler means the £12.99 price-tag is bleedin' extortionate, given most of the tape is highly unlikely ever to be watched again. Had we get two episodes of the anime, we'd be looking at a B rating without any trouble, instead, taken overall, a definitely mediocre D.



**Kekko Kamen** - I fervently pray the tabloid press don't get hold of this, as I'm sure it would be exposed as disgusting filth: bondage, torture, Nazi imagery. All of which is entirely accurate: just omitting the slight detail that it's a comedy. Okay, we're not talking Woody Allen – more like 'Allo, 'Allo – but it's still pretty amusing. Set in a school run by the intriguingly named Satan Toecheese, Kekko Kamen is the masked but otherwise nekkid superheroine who saves students (well, the cute girls, anyway) from vile torture at the hands of ultra-sadistic pervert teachers. As you can imagine, it is *incredibly* non-PC ("Auschwitz College"?!), but unlike many entries in the genre, doesn't take itself seriously, and while the animation is technically not awesome, that's no problem. No wonder Jim Furman's first reaction was "no way" -- almost everything is calculated to offend, right down to the heroine's nunchakus – but for the moment, it's delightfully tacky. Imagine 'Reform School Girls' crossed with 'Grange Hill' and you'll be in the right area. Bonus points for the closing song, whose subtitles rhyme and scan, offering you the chance of Kekko Kamen karaoke. Kool... B+



**Kishin Heidan** (above) - Well, this is certainly different, putting giant robots in the era of World War II, throwing in Albert Einstein and Eva Braun's twin sister too. Oh, and did I mention aliens with sub-machine guns are invading Earth as well? This is my major gripe; too many things are crammed into the plot, which tries to cover more disparate genres than is good for it (c.f. the much-maligned "comedy horror"). One twist is quite enough per alternate Earth, thank you. The animation is good, despite some of the stupidest haircuts I've seen in anime, which badly jar otherwise good attention to period detail. There are probably three good stories in there somewhere, and if they'd stuck to telling just one, the end result would have been less of a rat's nest. C-

**Ladius** - For thirty-five minutes, this is battling quietly away, doing it's best to be a condensed version of 'Laputa' (a struggle for the long-lost powers of an ancient civilisation). It's got interesting characters, a nice sense of humour: what could possibly go wrong? Answer: the mecha arrive. All decent ideas go out of the window in favour of the usual posturing and stereotypes – would anyone in battle really say "Ha! The goddess of victory is on my side!?!". This pointless exercise in robotics rapidly gets very tedious; in five minutes you don't care, in ten you're praying for it to stop. Luckily, it does. A perfectly good tape ruined by gratuitous model kits. D-

**Love City** - Despite its title, this isn't another dubious tentacular epic, it's an 'Akira' clone, with psychic powers, body morphing and even a bad guy who looks suspiciously like the Colonel (and I don't mean Sanders). The hero is a renegade ESPer, accompanied by a young girl who multiplies the psychic powers of anyone she touches and is thus highly valuable. The group he left are out to retrieve her, but are riven by internal splits. While not without interest initially, and possessing the occasional trippy interlude, it hasn't enough ideas to sustain a movie: for most of it, the hero just beats up one set of bad guys, then another, and another. Would have made a good 50 minute OAV, rather than a dullish movie. D+

**Mad Bull 34** - It would be helpful if this show could make its mind up what it wants to be. Any given episode will swing from wild farce to savage brutality in the blink of an eye, leaving the viewer unsure whether to wait for a punchline, or just another punch. On the whole, the humour works well: juvenile and totally puerile, certainly, yet funny nevertheless, like an adult Tom and Jerry. Wonder whether respected writer Kazuo Koike, who co-scripted it, is to blame for lines like "I had the feeling the evening might end up like this, so I used these grenades as a jock-strap"? Does give you some idea of its level. As in 'Gunsmith Cats', the American dubbing works in its favour since the characters are New York cops, and the ferocious swearing ('NYPD Blue'?) thus isn't too jarring either. The viciousness, for example a truly nasty beating in episode two, doesn't sit comfortably in the humorous milieu. While its casualness reminded me of 'Dominion' (so did some of the character designs), it seemed more intentionally sadistic. Either jokes or carnage would be effective: as is, it's not quite the sum of its parts. C

**Orguss 02** - Yes, folks, it's giant robot time again, in which a number of beautifully animated, enormous, model kits fly around, piloted by cardboard characters as flat as pancakes, in a plot full of mind-boggling clichés. No, hang on - what's this? Intelligence? Innovation? And actually, not that many tedious battles either. This feels slightly 'Honneamise'-esque, with an alternate world teetering on the brink of war, and political machinations dragging in the unwary, in this case hero Lean, who only joined the military to pay off his mother's debts. He finds himself dropped behind enemy lines and a long way from home. Surprisingly good, all in all. Now, where did I put the Airfix? B

**Patlabor** - Delighted to see Manga releasing this both dubbed and subbed; ironically, just as their dubs have, in general, been getting pretty decent (now, can we go back and have a subtitled 'Project A-ko'. Pretty please, with sugar on top?). The first such dual-version is a mecha-based story centring on attempts to build artificial islands in Tokyo Bay. The police discover the operating system used by the robots is flawed; unfortunately, the man responsible had committed suicide, leaving only cryptic biblical quotations behind. Worse still, the police mecha use the same OS, so failure would leave the city a tad exposed. Technically excellent, which you'd expect from a film originally destined for the cinema, this is very worthy, just a teeny bit dull. The problem with mecha-oriented anime is a tendency for the robots to obscure everything else and while 'Patlabor' isn't bad, ultimately it's sunk by a lack of totally believable characters. Not a failure, by any means, but not an enormous success. C

**Peek the Baby Whale** - Got to wonder what market this is aimed at, as the obvious kidvid angle would seem to be negated by the subtitles. Still, good way to teach 'em to read, and I reckon, the sooner they get used to subs, the better! Ideally, this should be viewed cross-legged in front of the TV, with bottle of pop and bag of crisps - I tried to replicate this with a four-pack of Newquay Steam and a kebab, and it seemed to work. This is childlike, rather than childish stuff: injured baby whale Peek is rescued by a young boy, then whale-napped by a circus, from where he must be rescued again. Made in 1991, I get the feeling 'Free Willy' may have lifted chunks from this, most notably the climax. Animation is a little oddly styled, but effective, it's not in the slightest patronising or condescending, and is generally a little remarkable, given that Japan probably currently does more than any other country on the whale-extirpation front. Guess not all their citizens see one and think, "lunch"! C+

**Project A-ko 2** - Much delayed sequel, with a story similar to the original: A-ko and B-ko battle over C-ko, as aliens and agents effect anarchy all around. Part one will forever live in infamy ("infamy, they've all..." - nah!) as one of Manga's worst dubs: this is an improvement, but still isn't exactly brilliant. The actors remain unaware it's a comedy f'heavens sake. The review tape had 25 mins of subtitled trailers and other stuff after the OAV, and it's a real revelation to find yourself laughing at the same scenes that left you cold in the dub. Understandably, this footage will not be appearing on the commercial release... It truly hurts me to say it, but I simply can't recommend it, in this version. C-



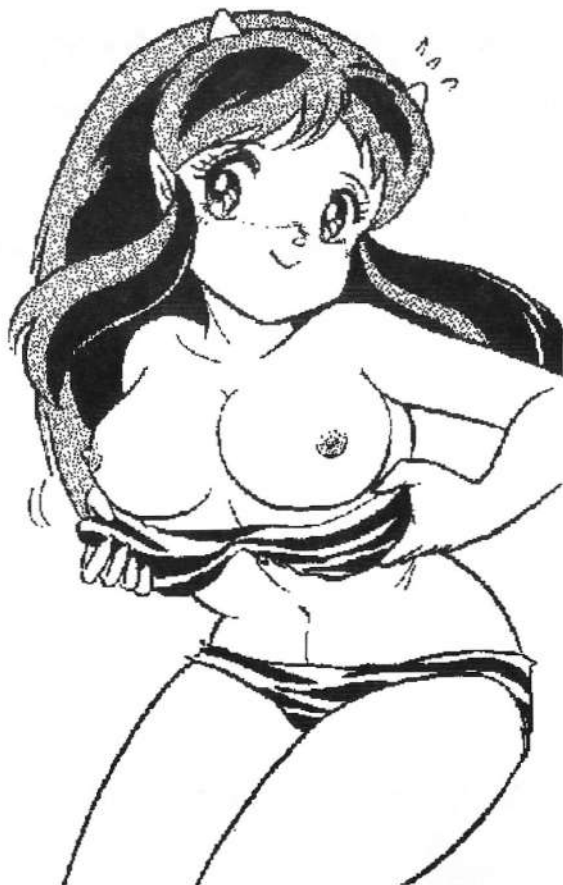
**SD Double Bill** - You get from this one very much what you put in, since this is little more than an hour of anime in-jokes, admittedly including some very amusing ones. If you're not familiar with 'Bubblegum Crisis' and 'Gall Force' -- very likely, since the latter isn't out here yet! -- this won't make much sense. There's a spoof documentary on the "Making of Gall Force", plus "Scramble Wars", which is probably more accessible, being a 'Wacky Races' clone involving teams from various anime series, and some tedious live-action fillers of interest only if you want to see people sing the theme song. Any novice should stay well away, but if you know your stuff, the anime chunks should certainly be right up your street. Assuming this is so: B

**Space Adventure Cobra** - Another Manga Mangle, with the original music removed, and replaced by Yello; while I feel they should leave well alone, I like Yello a lot, and they are often startlingly effective here. The film itself, despite some uncertainty about whether it should take itself seriously or not, is an entertaining SF romp with a sure touch. The title is nonsensical, as Cobra is actually the galaxy's most wanted man, who simultaneously is the only one standing between it and destruction at the hands of Lord Necron, a villain resembling Judge Death with a hangover. Stylish, in a 70's sort of way, and with a bleak ending that makes its contrived nature worthwhile. B-

**Space Firebird** - A milestone in terms of anime production, one of Osama Tezuka's landmark works tells the story of the hunt for the semi-mythical creature of the title. While undoubtedly deserving of much respect, it now shows definite signs of age; while much of it is years ahead of its time, unfortunately its time was a couple of decades back, and things have moved on since - the Max Fleischer-styled elements especially look past their best. However, the "heroic bloodshed" aspects are still impressive, there's lots of tragic bravery and destruction on view. What this really needs is a 90's remake, with a harder edge to replace the cutesy animals. D+

**Streetfighter II** - Anime kung-fu is at a disadvantage: anything that's impressive done by Jackie Chan, is less awesome done by hand-painted animation cels. Having said this, the anime version of SF II is certainly better than Van Damme's film for martial arts, notably a cracking bout between Vega and Chun-Li, staged with an excellent eye. The problems, however, are similar: with a dozen characters, even after relegating some to cameos i.e. Zangief & Cammy, there's little room for plot (basically the same as the live-action one, Bison takes over the world). It'd make a better ongoing series than a film, and indeed, AD Vision UK are soon releasing the TV show, which might have a chance in the story department. Here, there's an "improved" soundtrack; a mixed blessing; any gain through KMFDM is countered by Alice in Chains, ugh. Certainly more faithful to the game, though this is not necessarily a good thing - Guile's haircut, questionable as a sprite, looks plain stupid when animated! C





Okay, in *Urusei Yatsura*, Lum never really gets her baps out, but hey, this is supposed to be the X-rated edition of TC...

demons, Ushio almost losing before bravely returning with big spear and Tora to kick supernatural ass in the last reel. Two tapes of this are fine entertainment, but left me in need of variety. Luckily, the final volume, part 6, is totally different, with superdeformed versions of the characters engaging in utterly manic silliness; the best of the lot, at least for this uninitiate. B-

**Vampire Princess Miyu** - I suspect Manga aren't sure what to do with this one; I had to phone up and ask for it, when normally the problem is them sending tapes you don't want i.e. 13 'Guyver' episodes. For 'Miyu' is a horror story, but is incredibly restrained - a PG certificate - and has hardly a drop of blood. It's unlike any I've ever seen, with the heroine a young vampire girl who only bites those who want eternal life, and who eternally hunts her colleagues who give this 'gift' to those who don't want it. Incredibly stylish and cool, nice touches ooze from every pore, and it makes clever use of animation's strengths to create a world both plausible and surreal that's reminiscent of classic Japanese ghost movie 'Kwaidan'. If you liked that, 'Miyu' will be right up your (eerie, atmospherically lit) street. A-

**Urusei Yatsura** - Let's take a sample volume. Number 7, featuring episodes 25-28. Even though I've missed the preceding dozen or so instalments, this was not a problem: UY is basically an exercise in manipulating the elements of a love triangle (lecherous boy, jealous girl, extra-terrestrial female) in as many ways as possible. Character progression: nil. But that isn't the point: this is more sitcom than soap. The animation is TV quality i.e. low, but the scripts are sharp and the characters are endearing. How long can they keep this up without becoming dull? Only another 43 volumes to go... B-

**Ushio & Tora** - Having missed the start of this series, I can only presume it explains the link between hero Ushio and irritable tiger-demon Tora. Taking that as read, however, it's enjoyable horror-action, with odd comedic moments, tho' the eps I saw were very similar. Both went from demonic slaughter to slaughtered

# ANIME STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...

Inevitably, there was a rush of titles too late to include in the main reviews -- indeed, if they keep arriving at this rate, there'll soon be more in this than we've got in the main bit. But, keen to be on the cutting edge (even if it's been, er, nineteen months since last TC), we're going to review them, though we can't be bothered to set the section out again. They are included in the chart overleaf though -- that had no graphics and so could be easily updated without tedious faffing around. Anyway, here they are...

**Bubblegum Crash** - Just when I think Manga Video have finally got the hang of things, out comes another atrocity. Bubblegum: Crisis is perhaps the #1 cyberpunk series, and this is the sequel -- not that you'd know it from a dreadful cover which turns it into a soft-porn toss-fest. No, **no, no!** BAD Manga! Add in some truly dreadful dubbing which turns the heroine from a biker girl into...well, a Spice Girl...and you're left with a compelling case for buying an NTSC-compatible VCR and getting the subbed import -- unlike Bubblegum Crisis, there's no freedom of choice over format. The faint echoes of storyline (rebellious androids, psychotic mercenaries and a grandstand finale under an atomic power station) are like a breath of breeze on a too-hot summer day. At least they left the songs intact, so 0.25 of a point for that, bringing it up to E.



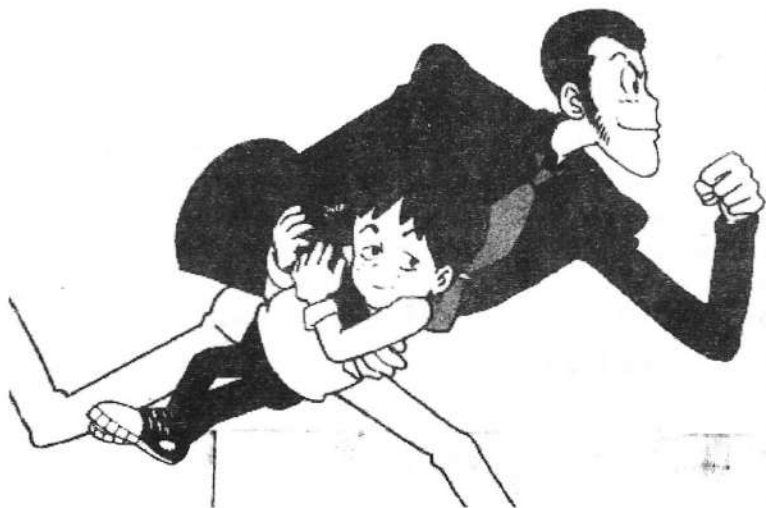
A public information announcement: the four above are really a gang of tough female mercenaries, and **not**, as it might appear, a group of brainless bimbos with nothing better to do than flounce around in a varied selection of naff costumes. All together, now: "If you wannabe my lover..."

**Burn Up W** - The 'W' stands for Warrior, for no readily apparent reason. This is a small-but-perfectly-formed mix of silliness and action, when a band of incompetent terrorists take over a building and make demands involving nude bungee jumps by idol singers, there's only one thing to do. Call in the incompetent mostly-girl SWAT team, of course! Ah, but things aren't quite as they seem, there may be method in the terrorists' madness. Another micro-edition, at a mere 25 minutes or so, so down-graded for value, but it's an enjoyable romp and I'm interested to see what happens in the remaining episodes. C



**Goodbye Lady Liberty** - Like 'Castle of Cagliostro', this is another Lupin III (aka 'Wolf') film, though the atmosphere and feeling here is different. There's less romantic comedy here, we seem to be sliding closer to James Bond territory, with Wolf fighting the imaginatively named Conquer The Universe, Inc., a vaguely satanic group who need a diamond that's hidden in the Statue of Liberty for, oh, the usual world-dominating reasons. Trust our hero to think laterally and steal the statue itself. [Even with today's CGI effects, some things are still easier to do in animation!] The plot is fitted together like a Swiss watch, double-, triple- and N-ple crosses abound, and sidekick samurai Gomen steals the show with his bizarre Zen-like koans for every occasion. Perpetually entertaining nonsense of the best sort. B+

**Princess Minerva** - Starting off as a parody of the sword-and-sorcery genre, the writers would appear to have run out of jokes half-way through, as from about 20 minutes in, the humorous elements shrivel up and die. What you're left with is a fairly straightforward tale of monsters 'n' magic, where most of the imagination has gone into costumes which, in the real world, would prove structurally unsound. This is a shame, as the first chunk showed some promise, with a tomboy princess fed up of palace life, who adopts a ludicrous secret identity for reasons too complex to discuss here. Brightly animated, and with the subs making a brave attempt to keep up with what looks like a horrendous collection of in-jokes, it tries hard but ends up being the very thing it starts out lampooning. D



#### **Secret of Mamo**

- Have some more Lupin III/Wolf. The 'Mamo' of the title is an evil villain who is blackmailing both superpowers, and only Wolf can stop him, since he has the artefact which the bad guy needs to complete his (inevitably) fiendish scheme. The usual

pack of supporting characters turn up - Zenigata, rival thief Fujiko, etc - and there is much more surreal parody going on: at one point, for no immediately explicable reason, the animated backgrounds switch to a selection of classic works of art, including Dali and Escher! It's very much a case of take it as it comes, the dubbing will eventually sound easier, and there are more than enough humorous touches to keep it all bubbling on the entertainment hotplate. While perhaps not the best introduction to the show, if you know that you already like the series, this is unlikely to disappoint. B

**Sukeban Deka** - Not just an anime, but also a popular TV series which has generated several movie spin-offs (hated by Tomoko – my copies bit the dust!), this demonstrates that the best way to get away with a totally ludicrous storyline is to play it dead straight. And, ladies and gentleman, we are deep in ridiculous territory here: a reform school girl is freed, on condition she becomes an undercover cop investigating a school more or less run by three evil sisters, who offed 70+ schoolmates purely to make some room. Oh, and she wields a mean yoyo. But it's all done without knowing camp, which makes it work better than it sounds. By the end of the two episodes, I was prepared to believe anything, even if I had been distracted by the promotion yo-yo AD Vision UK sent with it. Look forward to seeing what they're gonna do if they should release a raunchy title: maybe I'll get PR girl Glenda herself, wrapped in brown paper? We can but hope [no, Tomoko, put that carving knife down, I was joking, hone...] C+

**Suikoden - Demon Century** - "Tokyo 21st century: the aftermath of a devastating earthquake and the city is controlled by a network of brutal criminal gangs". Clearly a thin excuse for a collection of bloody fight scenes? Got it in one. Little of real interest here, apart from the nice idea of a trannie martial-artist (no, that's not a mis-spelling of "trainee" – I mean a bloke in a dress, and as a serious character rather than Jackie Chan doing Chun Li). I think I lost interest just about when the hero decided to help save the orphanage. Ho-hum. D-

**Super Atragon** - One of those Frankensteinian anime, which feels like it's pulled together ideas from a disparate range of series rather than bothered to come up with anything original. Here, the influences include Nadia, Giant Robo, Yamato, and even Independence Day, as mysterious alien ships appear at the North and South pole, and get ready to deliver a massive assault on liberty, justice and the American way. Despite the lack of real novelty (the only major twist is that the craft come from inside a hollow Earth, Thule Society-style), this actually works rather well – I got to the end of the episode and was keen to find out what happens next. Fairly epic in scale and content, it pushes no boundaries, yet is worth a look. It also continued the, by now traditional, line of interesting giveaways from AD Vision – here, it was a stick of rock, on the spurious grounds that, and I quote, "AD Vision rocks". Mind you, it was of such a diameter that it's going to have to wait until Traci Lords pops round. Er, where was I? Oh yeah: C

**TTS 801 Airbats** - Now, this truly is aggravating. The American version had three episodes on one tape. Even the time-code had three episodes on one tape. The British release has...one miserly episode for your £12.99. Going by this, and a lot of their other releases so far, AD Vision UK is rapidly become the *nouvelle cuisine* label of British anime, releasing tiny portions of very nice series at extortionate prices. Harumph! Bearing this in mind, you'll not be surprised to hear that this is actually entertaining stuff – just don't blink or it'll be finished. A new airplane mechanic is sent to an all-girl aerobatics display team whose pilots all have bad disciplinary records. Despite stumbling in on them in the shower, he's soon part of the crew, as they struggle to avoid being disbanded. While not exactly pushing any boundaries, the animation is good, characters are well-drawn and sympathetic and it's a nice twist on the girl-in-a-man's-world plot. But is it worth the money? Your call... C

## Return of the handy, cut-out and keep TC anime guide!

Title	Company	Rating
Dragon Half	AD Vision UK	A
Castle of Cagliostro	Manga	A-
Vampire Princess Miyu	Manga	A-
Kekko Kamen	East 2 West (RIP)	B+
Angel Cop	Manga	B+
Goodbye Lady Liberty	Manga	B+
Orguss 02	Manga	B
Secret of Mamo	Manga	B
SD Double Bill	Anime Projects	B
Urusei Yatsura	Anime Projects	B-
Ushio and Tora	Western Connection	B-
Space Adventure Cobra	Manga	B-
Sukeban Deka	AD Vision UK	C+
Peek the Baby Whale	Kiseki	C+
Super Atragon	AD Vision UK	C
TTS 801 Airbats	AD Vision UK	C
Burn Up W	AD Vision UK	C
Mad Bull 34	Manga	C
Streetfighter II	Manga	C
Patlabor	Manga	C
Ghost in the Shell	Manga	C-
Kishin Heidan	Pioneer	C-
Project A-ko 2	Manga	C-
Space Firebird	Western Connection	D+
Gunsmith Cats	AD Vision UK	D
Princess Minerva	AD Vision UK	D
Armitage 3	Pioneer	D
Love City	Western Connection	D
Giant Robo	Manga	D-
Suikoden - Demon Century	AD Vision UK	D-
Ladius	Western Connection	D-
Eight Man After	Kiseki	D-
Bubblegum Crisis (dub)	Anime Projects	E+
Bubblegum Crash	Manga	E
Digital Devil	Kiseki	E
Babel	East 2 West (RIP)	E

## Eating Miss Daisy

or why I stopped being a vegetarian, by Mark Samuels

Meat is very tasty. There's no getting away from it. Even vegetarians, with their meat-substitutes à la soya or quorn, enjoy the fleshy texture. But is meat-eating wrong? I used to think so. In fact, I was a vegetarian myself for ten years. So what made me go back to sausages, bacon, steak and the rest. One reason is that I was consuming so much of the meat-like substitutes that vegetarians eat, it didn't seem like a big difference. Another was being confronted with a menu in a restaurant and having my choices made for me. But these reasons fail to address the question: is meat-eating wrong? So let's deal with that issue head-on.

Firstly, by what criteria does the statement 'meat-eating is wrong' have any authority? Is it wrong simply because a group of people who don't eat meat say it's wrong? In that case, it's only an ethical judgement which belongs to a given set of persons and has no claim to be a universal imperative. This set does not even have the added significance of being in a majority in their opinion, therefore it could not be claimed to be a democratic imperative.

Nevertheless, it must surely be a possibility that vegetarians are right and everyone else wrong but - and this is a big but - it would require the sanction of divine authority. In accepting this view, there is no inconsistency between a minority of person being right while the majority are wrong. One obvious example is in the case of abortion which, in his book 'Crossing the Threshold of Hope', Pope John Paul II firmly rejects, irrespective of the climate of current thought: "It is not possible to speak of the (woman's) right to choose when a clear moral evil is involved". Vegetarians, of course, have no recourse to divine authority. It's true that certain religions, the Hindus with their sacred cows and Jews with idea of pigs being unclean, have peculiar individual laws relating to specific animals but there is no injunction against meat-eating per se. I suppose Buddhism *may* be an exception -- but it is a virtually atheistic system of belief that merely seeks to facilitate a state of Nirvana or non-existence as the world is, in itself, the source of evil. In any case, there is no divine authority in Buddhism.

Cut the sophistry, I hear the veggies cry. Our case isn't one that requires an over-riding moral principle universal to all. Animals are entitled not to suffer. Why should meat be eaten when it is the cause of so much cruelty? To which one would ask: cruelty to whom? Cruelty to animals of course. Which begs the question, do animals have rights?

This question, I think, is a very strange one. There is no concept of 'animal rights' within the animal kingdom itself. It is purely a human conceit. It is something which we have developed, of which an animal would have no understanding at all. The concepts of the 'right to existence' or the 'right not to suffer cruelty' would be completely confined to the human side of the equation. Is it therefore correct to extend human rights to creatures without understanding?

I think that those who answer "Yes" to this last question regard animals with as much concern as they do human beings. Indeed, some would maintain that animals actually matter rather more than human beings. Of course, the most glaring feature of this frame of mind is the anti-human prejudice that has crept in under the guise of a much wider sense of brotherhood. Not, you understand, the brotherhood of evil man, rather the brotherhood of animals, human being forming only one part of this association, and at that, a rather troublesome part.

If you really believe that human beings are nothing more than animals themselves, then you cannot eat meat. But just how far will you allow this bit of reasoning to take you? Some vegans regard vegetarians as little better than meat-eaters, and even vegans seem like devils to those who have taken up a completely macrobiotic diet. My advice to vegetarians is to try and start a revolution with a herd of cows. That day that Daisy mans the barricades is the day when all good men stop eating meat.

# The Trash City Diet

Ah, that time of year once more, after the summer holiday pig-out, yet before the pig-out which is Christmas. You look at yourself in the mirror and think, "Better go on a diet". Easier said than done. Diets are hell, and anyway, your body knows best what's good for it – even if that involves an entire cheesecake, straight from the freezer. Go with your body. But for those who need some kind of regulation, we proudly present the TC diet. You may not actually lose any weight on it, but it'll certainly be a damn sight easier to follow than anything involving large quantities of yoghurt. The absence of guilt thus enjoyed will also be far more beneficial to your health than trying to reach some weight loss target supplied by a hyper-active TV presenter....

## Breakfast 08:00

- 1 grapefruit
- 1 slice whole wheat toast
- 8 oz skimmed milk

## Lunch 12:30

- 1 tin vanilla flavour SlimFast
- 1 McVities chocolate digestive

## Midafternoon Snack 12:35

- rest of packet of digestives
- 2 bags crisps
- 3 Mars bars (or equivalent)
- Bacon and sausage torpedo

## Supper 18:00

- 2 pork pies
- 1 pepperoni pizza (family size)
- 4 cans beer
- 6 packets Doritos

## Late Evening Snack 22:30

- Large doner kebab and chips

## Rules for use:

1. If you no one sees you eat it, it has no calories.
2. Drinking diet Coke with it negates the calories.
3. When you eat with someone else, the calories don't count if they eat more than you do.
4. Food eaten for medical purposes should be ignored. Examples include: hot chocolate, brandy, buttered toast and Alabama Chocolate Fudge Cheesecake.
5. If you eat with a person fatter than you, you lose calories. The exact process still mystifies science, but follows the Newtonian principle that large bodies attract smaller ones toward them. This leads to a gravitational pull upon the smaller body's calories.
6. Small pieces contain less calories. Hence, instead of eating a chocolate bar whole, eat it in little pieces and you take in fewer calories. The process of breaking causes 'calorific leakage'.
7. Film-related foods have no calories because they are part of the entire entertainment package and not one's own personal fuel.
8. Foods with the same colour have the same calories e.g. mushrooms and white chocolate.

9. Bear in mind the common misprint on many packets – where it says 'serves two', it actually should read 'serve two'. This applies especially to "Weight Watcher" meals where any normal person needs at least three for a decent helping. Remember, only count one set of calories!
10. Remember, if it tastes good, it probably does you good.

**IMPORTANT: anyone who is embarking on any slimming diet, especially if pregnant, nursing, has a health problem, or wants to lose more than 40 pounds or more than 20% of their starting body weight should consult a doctor before starting this or any weight-loss programme. SlimFast should not be used as your sole source of nutrition; eat one balanced meal a day. As with any high-fibre diet, it is important to drink at least 6-8 glasses of water, black tea, coffee or low calorie drinks each day. This diet can help slimming or weight control only as part of a calorie-controlled scheme. Store in a cool, dry place.**

# The Incredibly Bad Film Show

**Fists of Steel:** "This world is too full of shit to be weak."



**Cynthia Khan and Dale 'Apollo' Cook meet Gregg Douglass, a.k.a. Wallpaper-man...**

There's a key difference between American fight flicks and their Oriental cousins: the Western versions lead with martial artists trying to act, while most Hong Kong action stars are first and foremost actors, with fighting skills secondary. The latter approach makes more sense: what you see in a kung-fu film bears the same relationship to tournament fighting, that a porn flick does to real sex. The ability to beat someone up in ten seconds, while impressive, is irrelevant when stunt doubles and sharp editing can make anyone a decent fighter – it's much harder to shoot round a crap actor. Thus, almost by definition, any Hollywood martial arts movie is a Bad Film: discerning buffs sit up and take notice when the major star of a film has "American middleweight kickboxing champion" tacked onto his credit, as this basically translates to "we apologise for his total lack of acting ability". Unfortunately, such deficiencies rarely suffice to make the films incredibly bad: few build on the non-acting (or amazingly, even notice it), and plod along lines that were hackneyed when Bruce Lee was still a lad.

'Fists of Steel' looks like it was made by a gang of mates over a weekend in the Arizona desert. While undeniably awful, for the above reason, it has definite charm: like that time at school you managed to produce *something* in Art – by exterior standards, it still wasn't very good, but you were  proud of it, and could appreciate that, for once, Something Had Clicked.



So it is with FoS. The whole is more than the sum of the parts – unless one of the parts is "beer". This is the kind of movie necessarily preceded by a trip to the off-licence, as steady alcohol input infinitely enhances its pleasures. Diet Pepsi will not do: sober, you won't achieve oneness with the director, able to second guess what's about to happen. Now, our beer-fuelled idea of "cool" is so warped that, even in cult films, the director will usually wimp out. But FoS had an unerring knack of getting it right, to growing applause from the living room. audience.

The sole reason for acquiring this film was that it starred fave HK action-actress Cynthia Khan. Ten minutes in, I regretted my hasty purchase, despite a fondness for movies set after the apocalypse (or at least, after the stock-footage-of-60's-nuclear-tests). For stealing Lyssa (Khan), hero Amp (Dale 'Apollo' Cook) is staked out by gladiatorial rival Mainframe (Gregg Douglass), and Lyssa herself, to my shock, was offed. A sinking feeling, tied with the discovery that the front cover depicted a piss-poor Cynthia lookalike, told me I'd been sold a cameo, filmed while Cynthia was delayed at LA airport on her way back to Hong Kong. The prospect of 85 more minutes of Dale 'Apollo' Cook's non-acting was terrifying, especially as he looked like Harrison Ford on a bad hair day, circa 'Regarding Henry'.

Fortunately, things started to perk up after he breaks free, to be rescued by a desert-living tribe of pacifists including the unfortunately name "Wind" (Cynthia Khan again – hooray!). Living by the tenets of "The Book" – it's never actually named, but no prizes for guessing which religious text talks about "loving thy neighbour" – they grudgingly fix Amp up, then insist he leaves. When he does, Wind follows, dressed in a natty canary-yellow lounge suit, doing her best 'lost puppy' impression. After a day of this he decides, unsurprisingly, to return her to her clan, only to find that, in the tradition of pacifists in martial arts movies, they've been slaughtered. Mainframe's men, discovering Amp is still alive, have taken revenge on the tribe who helped him.



Here Wind enters "you killed my family and you must pay" mode, and literally throws away The Book, though she could have hung onto the Old Testament, which I seem to recall being pretty keen on "an eye for an eye", etc. Her pacifist philosophy is totally destroyed when she's nearly mugged by a beggar. Only Amp's intervention saves her, but it also marked the turning point of the film, from an Incredibly Bad angle. Amp gives the expected lecture on "these people will kill you for one drop of water...toughen up!", and our reaction was "Wouldn't it be cool if Cynthia kicked the helplessly sprawled beggar?" To our delight & joy, she did. Four times. We sat up and took note: the director was clearly one to respect when it came to fascistic, gratuitous violence.

**Cynthia before... Note the lounge suit.**

Amp is back at the bottom as a fighter, in the Beazer Homes League so to speak, reduced to battling for water and gas. [While unlikely to lose Jackie Chan sleep, the fights are plentiful and not bad, especially as most take place on sand-dunes, scarcely solid footing. However, the usage of two sound effects in strict rotation eventually becomes slightly wearing.] After a bit, Wind fancies a shot, despite the canary-yellow lounge suit. "It's gotta go", we muttered, and lo, during training (CK incidentally looking much better in the flexibility department than DC), the jumpsuit was replaced by a far more aesthetically pleasing black leather number. This responsiveness to audience demand was getting worrying close to interactive cinema.



**Cynthia after... Nunchakus and leather.** Wind go.

Meanwhile, we bump into Scutter (James Gaines), a figure from Amp's past, with the scary responsibility of moving the plot on. He reveals this began when Mainframe started gladiatorial death combats: Amp would never kill his opponents and was more popular with the crowd, so Mainframe used Lyssa (remember her? So very long ago now...) as a pretext to get rid of Amp.

Amp gets drunk and randy: "Let's screw!" he says to Wind, whose response is swift and unchristian. "Guess a blow-job's out of the question?" counters Amp, which may or may not be a subtle homage to 'Repo Man'. Speaking of blow jobs – or rather, blow, kick and punch jobs – Amp is also progressing through a competition. It does help that he wields nunchakus, while the poor victim in one bout has an obviously rubber axe. Unsurprisingly with such an edge, he wins, but the tournament promoter, rather than pay out, betrays him to Mainframe's sidekick Wires (Don Nielsen), whose men have hubcaps on their chests for reasons never satisfactorily explained.

The film now hurtles to its inevitable conclusion with all the subtlety of a runaway juggernaut. Nothing can stop it, no crisis of conscience ("Ever since I met you, my life has changed". "We can just forget about it and leave"), change of heart by Wind regarding the sex thing, or Scutter's murder by Mainframe. We reach the end-product of the past 80 minutes: climatic battle between Amp, Wind, Mainframe and Wire. I won't spoil things by revealing who wins – though there's little inherent in FoS to 'spoil'. But it springs one last surprise in the end titles, where it's suddenly revealed to be operating under a pseudonym, and was really called 'Eternal Fist'. Well, I'll be damned. But somehow, this just sums up the entire delightfully dumb experience...

Her abilities are soon put to good use, when they are attacked by a masked tribe. Who are they? Damned if I know, not until the end credits does it transpire they were apparently a bunch of lepers - - yes, lepers. Doing martial arts. No "Flying Fist" jokes, please. Amp kills their leader, which confuses them so much they, er, let Amp and Wind go.



**"Bet ya can't do this, Dale 'Apollo' Cook!"**

## "Stupid is as stupid does" - The criminal classes

Smuggler Morteza Farakesh was convicted of possessing \$2m worth of morphine during a layover at Kennedy Airport. According to the prosecutor Farakesh was on his way to California and could have picked a less Customs-intense airport but chose to make his connection there in order to take advantage of an Alitalia super-saver fare. *[New York Daily News, 26-5-95]*

At a September hearing for Charles Hocq, accused of battery in Springfield, Illinois, Judge Roger Holmes asked Hocq the standard questions to determine how much his bail should be (e.g., do you have any family in the community?). Hocq said he didn't understand the question. Holmes then asked the direct question: "If I made the bail amount lower, would you flee the area and not come back for trial?" According to the Springfield Journal, Hocq replied, "I would." Holmes then doubled the proposed bail, to \$250,000. *[Springfield Journal, 22-9-95]*

Johnny Lee Nichols, 25, was arrested in Rogers, Arkansas, and accused of knocking on doors of several homes around 3 a.m. and asking if anyone was interested in exchanging drugs or sex for some dynamite he had in his car. *[Northwest Arkansas Times-AP, 10-8-95]*

Police in Ft. Worth, Texas arrested a man just after he robbed a Nations Bank branch. Cops were waiting because a bank customer had walked next door to police headquarters to summon them after becoming suspicious that a man was waiting in a bank line wearing a ski mask. *[St. Petersburg Times, 14-12-95]*

Juan Morales, 18, and Juan Mendoza, 18, were arrested as they robbed a Coastal Mart convenience store in Weslaco, Texas. Police had been tipped off to the crime because the cashier on duty the day before reported that the two men had threatened to "come back and rob you" the next day. *[Valley Morning Star, 30-11-95]*

Pittsburgh - MacArthur Wheeler, 46, received 24 years in prison, a conviction made possible by clear photography from the bank's surveillance video. Wheeler and his partner did not wear masks, and in fact were not concerned about the camera at all, because they had rubbed lemon juice over their faces beforehand believing this would blur their images. *[USA Today, 8-1-96]*

Dallas, Texas - an 18-year-old dockworker at Roadway Express was arrested at a local Western Union and charged with forgery after improperly trying to cash a check made out to his employer. The man produced a photo ID that gave his name as Mr. "Roadway V. Express." After questioning him, the Western Union manager said, "Okay, Mr. Express, I'll be right back [with the money]," but went into another room and called police. *[Houston Chronicle, 31-3-96]*

Little Rock, Arkansas - Donterio Beasley, 19, called a police station to say that he was stranded and needed a ride downtown, but the dispatcher told him that was against policy. A few minutes later, Beasley called back to report a suspicious person loitering around a phone booth and gave a description of himself, believing that police would come, give him a ride downtown for questioning, then release him. He was charged with making a false alarm. *[Dallas Morning News-AP, 7-8-95]*

# In defence of 'Showgirls'

It's been a while since a movie has run into such a wave of consistently poor reviews as 'Showgirls'. These things tend to be self-perpetuating. One bad critique leads to another, and after half a dozen turn up, it'd take someone very brave -- or very stupid -- to put their head above the parapet and write something like:

**'Showgirls' isn't actually that bad.**

There, I've said it. Governments have not collapsed. The Earth still rotates around the sun. And Paul Verhoeven has probably just fallen off his wife in surprise.

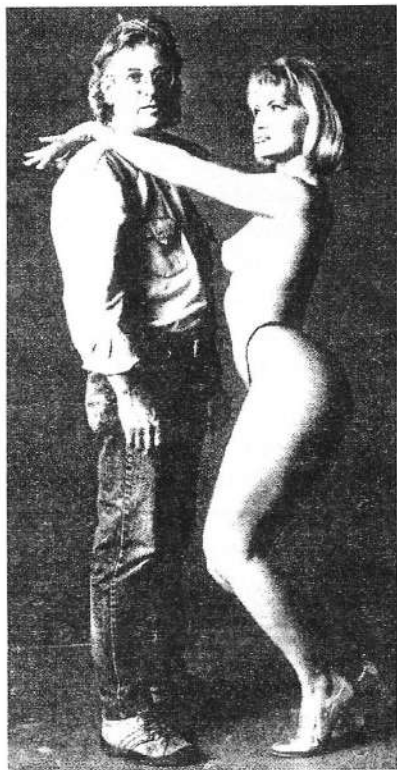
The problem is, a lot of reviewers seem to have totally missed the film's point. To illustrate this, let's take one specific review, from 'Time Out', in which the appropriately-named Wally Hammond goes off at the deep end, starting on the wrong foot by describing it as a "sexploitation movie". Nope. Exploitation, yes, but it can hardly be about bonking, when there is precisely one sex scene in the whole 135 minutes. Nipples abound, for sure, but it's all incredibly **casual** nudity, clearly not even trying to be erotic. Now, I can understand people being peeved about this, given advertising which promised an awful lot more than the film delivered, but 'Showgirls' simply didn't deserve to be an NC-17 film, banned in Ireland, and cut in Britain, I think the French got it about right: uncut, and with a '12' rating.

For this is unquestionably a moral tale, illustrated by the fate of the heroine's friend Molly, who spends the whole movie gagging to meet a rock star. When she does, she is gang-raped by him and his entourage. That's a miniature version of Nomi's rise and fall: sometimes, when you get what you want, the price is just too high. It's all about power, not sex.

Wally's next complaint is that the film is "*completely free of sympathetic characters*". I guess he hasn't been paying attention to Verhoeven's career, or he'd have realised that the director of 'Basic Instinct', 'Flesh + Blood' and 'The Fourth Man' doesn't exactly tend towards the standard, rubber-stamped heroics beloved by Hollywood. Even in 'Robocop' and 'Total Recall', he warped things significantly from the norm. If you want a sugar-coated, fluffy-pink view of America, do not watch a Paul Verhoeven film. Hammond, incidentally, appears not to have watched this one, judging by his inability to tell the difference between "hot-pants" and "jeans". That kind of dumb error does lend credence to any suggestion that some reviewers wrote their pieces before, or even instead of, seeing the movie!

Sure, 'Showgirls' is tacky and sleazy -- with some of the most startlingly vapid dialogue I've ever heard. But it's about **Las Vegas**, f'heaven's sake, possibly the leading place in our Solar System as far as tack, sleaze and vapidness goes. Whaddya you expect, Noel Coward? That even discounts the irony obviously present behind comments like "if you want to last longer than a week, you give me a blowjob", which went well over the heads of many writers. Bearing this in mind, there was hardly a false note in the movie. Every incident on its own was eminently plausible, all 'Showgirls' does is condense them in time & space, standard TV soap technique.

Wally bemoans: *"the ample opportunities for camp excess are stringently avoided"*. But if he'd take the whole movie as an exercise in serious, rather than camp, excess – after all, Verhoeven is probably the **least** "camp" director in Hollywood – he would probably have had a far better time. Note that I mean serious, and not *serious*. Taken on that level, it's two hours of solidly melodramatic entertainment, like a Busby Berkeley musical with tits. With MGM one of the co-producers, Verhoeven is undoubtedly aware of the historical precedents.



Certainly, Eszterhas's script is not worth the alleged \$3m+ fee, being little more than a tarted up Harold Robbins novel. And while we're complaining, it's at least half an hour and two minor characters too long, the Princ...er, Mr.Symbol songs grate horribly, and I don't know where the \$40m budget went. But the director plays with the audience more than it seems at first sight; even in something as carnal as the lap-dance sequence, there are interesting questions raised about precisely who's screwing who. I do think history will be kind to it, and it will be better remembered than, say, Oscar-nominated movies about talking livestock. Already, it's done a lot better on video than at the cinema, which isn't too surprising since it's hardly a date movie, is it?

Here's one final quote, from 'What's On in London':  
*"An impressive, wide-ranging cast in what is, at twisted heart, a decadent morality...not one of the characters commands our sympathy or affection ...Betrayal, double-dealing, alarms and skirmishes follow each other in florid succession against suitably impressive - yet crumbling - backgrounds."*

Oh, this didn't relate to 'Showgirls', but to 'Flesh and Blood', Verhoeven's 1985 period piece. Despite being set several hundred years and the odd continent apart, the two movies seem to have generated similar critical reaction, and met with equal financial failure, 'Flesh and Blood' being described as *"Too politically incorrect and morally dark for the American market"*. And there are distinct parallels with 'Keetje Tippel', another decade further back, in which Paul Verhoeven previously told the story of a young girl trying to make her fortune in the city (see TC16/17). Although in that movie, the heroine never looks back once she sets out on her career path, it is definitely a pointer towards 'Showgirls'.

One note for optimism is that he bounced back after 'Flesh and Blood' with 'Robocop'. It'll be interesting to see what he makes of 'Starship Troopers', the Heinlein adaptation which is his next project. It'd certainly be a shame if one of the few true maverick directors in Hollywood was driven out because of misconceived and ill-considered reviews.

## “(Un)Dressed to Kill 2”

Our esteemed editor's article last TC performed a valuable service in praising the merits of Brown's, a pub which holds a special, warm, slightly moist place in my heart. But it only scratched the surface, both in terms of venues and philosophy: this sequel attempts to expand further on the topic which, after all, is one of almost unlimited interest.

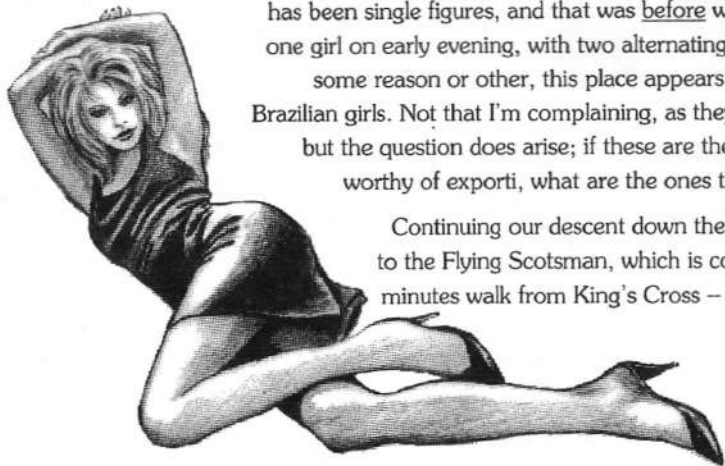
Firstly, venues. While I can't argue that Brown's is to London strip-pubs what the San Siro is to football, there are other places which offer similar entertainment and are not quite so well known. For my first example, take the Lord Nelson. Situated down a side road just north of Old Street, from the outside it looks absolutely normal; the first time we visited it, my friends insisted I go in alone and check whether we had the right place! We did, and it has now become a regular stop on the circuit, thanks mostly to the relaxed and laid-back atmosphere. While Brown's is very new and modern, with a lot of chrome and glass, in the Lord Nelson the pub grub is limited to dodgy-looking rolls and positively lethal pork pies, the toilets resemble a swamp, and the bar staff are surly and uncommunicative. In other words, it's a traditional British pub, and as such, can only be loved. The most novel feature is a "wall of business cards", which shows that the place is a favourite of people from companies as diverse as Harrods', the Bank of England and Italian 'Vogue'.

The stage is low, perhaps knee height, with mirrored backdrops and a few chairs for favoured punters. On the plus side, there are none of the topless-only "dance" routines, every act delivers the full bacon sandwich. On the other hand, they are spaced further apart, which can make it slightly tedious, but this depends on the company you keep, just as in any pub! At least some of the girls also appear at Brown's, and generally they're entirely acceptable, with one or two stunners randomly present (Anastasia will ensure that Pulp's 'Common People' never sounds quite the same again). It's usually a lot less crowded than the Big B. On occasion the audience

has been single figures, and that was before we left. You tend to find one girl on early evening, with two alternating from about 8:30. For some reason or other, this place appears to be mostly staffed by Brazilian girls. Not that I'm complaining, as they are utterly wonderful, but the question does arise; if these are the ones that are deemed worthy of export, what are the ones they keep in Brazil like?

Continuing our descent down the quality scale, we come to the Flying Scotsman, which is conveniently located two minutes walk from King's Cross – though maybe the best

way to describe its location to TC readers is to reveal that it's virtually opposite the legendary Scala!





This place is the McDonald's of stripping: fast, cheap, and with the quality you'd expect at the price (I mean, have you tried those 49p hamburgers? Does anyone know what they taste of? It certainly isn't ham – or indeed any animal native to this planet). Perfect for a half-an-hour visit while waiting for your train home, but not the sort of place you'd want to spend an entire evening. It would in any case be damn expensive – not because this is a clip joint, but just down to the sheer pace of the action. At the Nelson, it's maybe one girl in 15-20 minutes. In the Flying Scotsman, you'll see four or more in that time, which of course means the same number of pint jugs circulating, though 50p is acceptable here when it would get you a Hard Stare at Brown's (and not a hard anything else). You leave, feeling like a horse that's just been lowered into the Amazon.

These little piranhas obviously rate a little lower on the lust scale: you won't find many supermodels in this venue, but if you like the slightly sleazy type – tattoos and piercing are common – you'll have no complaints. With its sawdust on the floor, and generally questionable location, it's not for the faint-hearted (while I may have criticised the Nelson for its toilets, the ones in the Scotsman simply defy description – I'm sure they inspired 'Trainspotting'), but the clientele is varied enough: dodgy blokes with mobile phones and half of South Africa's annual gold output round their neck, mix with suited commuters. Amazing what a common interest will do, though for the former group of customers, it's more likely a financial interest in the girls than an aesthetic one!

There are probably some of you out there wondering, "Yeah, but is anything more available at these places?". Can't say I've ever been offered anything myself, but if you believe the News of the World (which I'm sure you all do), then in 1992 at the Nag's Head (see overleaf), the pub menu didn't stop at dry roasted peanuts...

*"In an upstairs room of a seedy backstreet pub, leering punters queue up for Britain's most depraved bar room 'entertainment' ...Male customers lie in rows on the beer-stained carpet as four strippers perform disgusting sex acts on them [They mean 'hand relief', in case you wanted to know] ...Some have saved their dole moneys for the monthly show - two even walked from a Salvation army centre a mile away for the afternoon of wicked welfare...A Salvation Army spokesman said 'People using our hostels are allowed to come & go as they please'."*

The piece was about a 'private party' -- albeit one where anyone (even a NotW reporter!) could buy a ticket for £12.50. Unquestionably such events do offer a significant bit more, as anyone who's ever been to a stag party will corroborate! Also somewhere out in the realms of darker dubiety, beyond the pubs, there are uncorroborated rumours of 'members-only' places, where performances also go further than those establishments which are open to the public.

Hunting these down is roughly comparable to trying to join the Mafia. Membership is open only if you know the right people, and know enough about the 'regular' places to prove you're not a cop (or, indeed, a reporter...). This behaviour, without doubt understandable, just makes them more intriguing. As a quest for next time, I'll be working on getting into one such group, and have got to the 'friend knows someone who might be involved' level. If I have any success, I'll let you know. There'll be none of this "made our excuses and left" nonsense here!



And then there's the Nag's Head, at Aldgate East – coincidentally, near KVJ Fairdeal, probably the cheapest place in Britain to buy video tapes. Not technically as sordid as the Flying Scotsman, it could probably stand accused of "moral turpitude", since the audience there consists almost solely of people pretending to read newspapers. Between acts, with none of the buzz of conversation you find in a normal pub – or even in the ones reviewed previously – the atmosphere is that of a public library. Gentlemen sit at rows of tables, studiously ignoring each other, pretending to be there for a quiet pint, nothing to do with the imminent spreadeagled pussy, good heavens, no. The stage is hardly six foot square, and the girls deserve better, as they have included some of the best seen. However, the morgue-like atmosphere means this is only really interesting as an example of how sad things can get. It does have a place in my heart, as it was the first I ever found, but after discovering Brown's, you, like I, will probably be less keen to return. Not even a 'News of the World' expose (see side-bar on previous page) could save this place.

Right at the other end of the spectrum is Metropolis, at the opposite end of Hackney Road to Brown's. This place seems to have been custom built as an exotic dancing venue. with a circular, central stage upon which there are two vertical poles for feats of gymnastic excellence. There's a little roped-off area where the dancers relax between sets, and video monitors scattered around which show soft-porn at these times. They switch to showing the dancers themselves when they're performing, which is very convenient, as the odds favour a basketball player standing in front of you. Or maybe it just seems that way, the 'seeing' is perhaps the worst in all of these places, thanks to the low stage, the flashing disco lights, and the gushes of dry ice sprayed in at intervals, all of which combine to make a pair of sniper's night-sight goggles almost an essential. Personally, I find there to be something far sleazier about staring down at a girl with no clothes on, rather than gazing up at her. There's perhaps a psychological reason for this, some kind of pedestal effect, but it is part of the reason why I don't rate Metropolis as highly as many of my colleagues; it's just a bit too artificial, glossy and superficial. However, I certainly can't argue that the girls are of uniformly good quality.

Enough of the travelogue – a few thoughts on the logistics of these places. They all seem to operate almost entirely by word of mouth. Metropolis is the only one I've seen advertised anywhere, in 'What's On in London', and many don't even seem to be in the phone book, a discretion which may be related to licensing laws. Brown's now has a little gilded sign claiming to be London's #1 strip pub, a title which I can't dispute, the Flying Scotsman has a hand lettered sheet in a window saying "Exotic Dancers 1-11pm", and the Griffon (a rather disappointing Brown's offshoot near Chancery Lane) has a notice **warning** people about the

strippers, asking them not to enter if they'll be offended. Chance would be a fine thing, but it's a nice example of negative advertising, as if Tennant's Super Strength had the slogan "Don't drink this unless you want to get pissed". The Lord Nelson is even more subdued, and positioned down a side-street, isn't the sort of place you'd stumble across accidentally. Still, it seems to survive.

The girls appear to operate on circuits: you may see the same babe in the Lord Nelson & Brown's, or the Nag's Head & the Flying Scotsman, but there seems to be limited overlap. Maybe there's promotion and relegation instead, with the best from Circuit B getting promoted to Circuit A. The turnover can be quite high, any outing is likely to spot at least one newcomer, though you will find yourself recognising...faces if you return on any basis. And babes such as Jennifer are difficult to forget – not that you'd want to, anyway. My personal bête noire is Rebecca, whom at one point I was fated to see on every strip-pubcrawl I attended. She's not bad, but after seeing her do the same moves 30, 40 or 50 times, I get the feeling I know her better than her gynaecologist.

Another intriguing factor is the occasional presence of women in the audience, albeit inevitably accompanied by men. I personally find it a slightly disturbing exercise, possibly because while the woman on stage is acting as the focus for a great deal of lust, there is inevitably some seepage. Witness the tube journey home, when thoughts drift onto what that pretty girl opposite would look like up on stage. It also restricts the candid expression of opinion somewhat, but perhaps most importantly, the presence of "normal" woman hinders the suspension of disbelief, by reminding you that (sadly?), it's still a world where not every girl is a sex-kitten. Reality is something best kept as far away as possible from strip-clubs.

**Flying Scotsman** - Caledonian Road (King's Cross)  
**Lord Nelson** - 17 Mora Street, City Road (Old Street)  
**Metropolis** - 234 Cambridge Heath Rd (Beth. Green)  
**Nag's Head** - 17/19 Whitechapel Road (Aldgate East)





# PORN TO BE WILD

**Somehow, describing Roni Raye as an amateur porn star doesn't seem appropriate. Perhaps 'independent' is closer to the truth, as she has become a veritable cottage industry of adult entertainment, doing everything from phone sex to videos to custom letters to used underwear, plus appearances in Velvet, Cheri and Hustler, all on her own terms and with no 'exploitation' apparent. Recently, she recruited sister Tamara into the fold -- next stop, the world!?**

**Tell me a little bit about your background -- was there anything in your upbringing to suggest you'd become a glamour model?**

My father was in the military, so we moved around a lot - we were basically raised on army bases. My high-school years, we lived in a town of 45,000: there was enough going on, we kept ourselves busy. I was raised in a big family, five girls, one boy, therefore I was constantly fighting for attention, and modelling filled that need. I loved being able to show off and getting all the attention, it's the perfect way for me to get it out of my system! I did some regular modelling with a photographer in the town I was living, put together a portfolio, and had talked to an agency, but nothing had actually progressed with it. He started the idea with

me, about doing the posing, and I thought, "Well, I don't know if I could do that or not", so I did some with my husband first, and then went to another town and did some with a lady photographer. After I had become comfortable with it, I went back to him and did some nude stuff with him. I didn't think I'd like it at first, but when the pictures came back I learned that you can do a lot with photography! Not like on video: the video-camera doesn't lie. That's one good thing about amateur -- I think I was probably a little bit insecure, because I had all these expectations of what people might think I should look like. Amateur is so different from 'Playboy'. Guys would much rather speak to somebody like myself who is not 'perfect', because I'm more approachable.

**When did you first become interested in adult entertainment, and what made you want to get involved?**

I lost some weight and thought it would be fun to pose nude in a magazine, so I posed for pics and sent them in, and here we are! After I did that, I thought it would be fun to do some home made amateur vids. I loved it, the feeling of all those men watching me, it really gets me turned on, even to this day. I love that so much, it really is the best part. I do the phone calls from home, right in my bed, and I do have a lover every now and then and we do live sex calls on the phone - whether it's a blow job or me really being fucked, it's great!!

**How do people react when you tell them what you do? What do your family think? How did your sister get started?**

Those that I do tell - very few - think that I don't look the part and are surprised. It's not like "Hi, I'm Roni Raye and I do porn movies". I am a real down to earth person, I do normal things like everyone else, I put my pants on one leg at a time just like everyone else. My family thinks that as long as I'm happy, it's ok. My sister wanted to earn some extra money and likes showing off as much as I do, and started doing phone sex, then tried doing a vid or two and really enjoyed herself. My family doesn't know that she's done vids or the phone lines.

**Though you did lose your job in a dentist's, as a result of your first appearance in a magazine.**

I was the only full-time dental assistant in the office and we had just hired a girl to fill in. There was a mutual friend - a bit of a trouble-maker - when I told him I had posed

in the magazine, he went and got a copy and thought it would be funny to show it to the boss's wife, because he didn't much like her and wanted to make her jealous. When she found out, she wasn't too happy about me working with her husband. She said, "We don't have enough hours to support you", and the part-time girl got my job. That's when everything started going full-force with me in the business. I'd started doing the posing because I was kinda burned-out with my job. I didn't want to quit, but thought if I did something else on the side, it would make it a little bit more exciting.

**How much control do you exercise over your output? Do you get to choose the specific pictures, etc?**

The only actual layout that I've posed for somebody else, was the one in 'Velvet', where I went to New York. All the other ones, basically I've just sent my pictures in, and won different contests. During this whole business, I've been in control of everything. It's full time, because I'm constantly filling orders from the catalogue, and I have a phone sex line, and I set my own hours on that, but it's how I want to set everything up. I don't have to go and pose for all these different men, or do talk shows. Since it's me up there, I have total control over when and how much of me they get to see. If not, then it wouldn't be me would it? I am the product of their fantasies - and judging by the response to what I've done, I can't imagine how many wet dreams I've been part of! I have 3 PO boxes just to keep up with the mail I get, sometimes over 100 pieces a week. I get letters from all over the world and I've been featured in many magazines.

**Born:** July 3, 1967 - Elkhart, Indiana.

**Stats:** 5'11", 150 lbs, 38D-26-36.

**Hair:** Brunette (originally a blonde!).

**Eyes:** Brown.

**Turn-ons:** Long, slow sensual massages, oral sex, role-playing, being dominant, hugs and kisses! Lots of attention!

**Turn-offs:** Close-minded hypocrites who try to force their beliefs on you, egotistical males.

**Favourite Movies:** Rainman, Terms Of Endearment, any comedy.

**Favourite Tunes:** Anything alternative, any dance tunes.

**Age When I "Lost" My Virginity:** Age 16 (and I haven't gone looking for it since!).

**Favourite Sex Position:** Doggy-style.

**Favourite Sexual Act:** Giving blow jobs and finishing it to completion by swallowing every drop.

**What One Word Best Describes You:** Exhibitionist - I love to show off, and to have sex in a public place.

**Favorite Clothes:** Sexy, provocative, lingerie such as garterbelt with stockings, teddies, matching bra and panty sets.

**Hobbies:** Lifting Weights, Aerobics, Dancing, Writing and Traveling.



**Do you see what you do as business, pleasure, public service or what?**

All of the above, a little bit of everything combined. Doing the vids has nothing to do with profit, and selling them has nothing to do with sex - unless you're being fucked out of some money! And I do like pleasing men, so there's the public service part.



### **What part of work do you enjoy most?**

Number one, I enjoy the phone calls. I get to talk to so many different guys, in so many different lifestyles, and they don't always talk to me about sex, they talk to me about their families and their life, and their problems. Things that they need a second opinion about, that they can't talk to their friends or wives about. I'm kind of a sounding board, this phone friend – a little bit mysterious because they've never met me – but that's my favourite part. The second part, I enjoy any writing that I do, immensely, I've started writing columns for different publications and eventually, I'd like to write some short stories and books. But I like the photos and videos as well, especially when I get feedback; "this turns me on", "I like this", that makes it all worthwhile.

### **On your phone line, do you get many repeat callers?**

I got a lot of regular callers, some guys call me eight times a night! Very few call once and then never call again. I have a clientele, basically. It's just like they're talking to a doctor about therapy; I hear all kinds of stories!

### **What's the weirdest request you've ever had?**

When I first started this, everything to me was, like, "Whoa!" because I'd never heard of it before – I was raised in a strict Baptist family, we went to church twice a week, so when I first started to hear guys wanting pictures of me going to the bathroom... Or I have this one particular customer that likes me to fart, on audio-cassette, and now he wants me to do it on video. I have one guy that has a fetish for women who are missing toes, he sends me money and has me tape

my big toe back and take pictures of it. A lot of them on the phone lines have their different fantasies. Some of them like the little cheerleader, or nurse. There are some that are kind of risqué: I've had guys call me and talk about wanting to rape little girls. And I'm like "I don't want you to do this in real life". Should you analyse this? I'm not a doctor, but if I think somebody is a little bit bizarre, I'm going to tell them, "call someone else, you sicko!"

### **In some ways, you could say it's better for them to get it out over a phone line than to go out and do it, but are they getting rid of the feeling or are you just building it up?**

And I'm the one that has to draw the line there. I have guys that have specific fantasies about younger girls, which they would never go out and do, and they always specify that. I feel in my heart that it's just a fantasy, it's nothing they'd ever do, but they get turned on by it. I can handle doing a call with someone like that. One never can tell, but I imagine I have a little bit of experience under my belt, I've done it for three years, so I think by talking to someone for a while, you can get a feel for what kind of person they are.

### **What do you say to people who claim pornography is a bad thing, or is degrading to women?**

That's usually said by men who don't get enough at home from their wives, or women who are anal retentive, or by your local congressman! Anyway, I look at it this way: I'm not forcing any one to watch my vids, so don't bother me. I mean, there are a lot worse things going on in this world than sex vids, don't you think?

### **You're planning to retire and write a book - have you a fixed time scale for that?**

I always say this; I'm probably going to do the phone lines till I die. There's gonna be a certain point in life where my body doesn't hold up - photos and videos aren't going to go on forever. I'm going to take time out to have children, but as far as the phone lines do, I can't see why I can't go on doing that forever. I really don't want to write a book right away because I feel I should get a couple of years more experience under my belt before I go and try to be an expert on anything. It would probably be 'fiction-based-on-true-stories', because I know a lot of people won't want their names mentioned. Every day is a new chapter! Just the letters that I have, that guys write to me, would be a book in themselves. We're all to a certain extent voyeurs. If people could read through a book of these letters, they would just be amazed.

### **How would you like to be remembered? What epitaph would you like to see carved onto the Roni Raye monument?**

I came...we fucked...and you came first! Really? That I'm an honest Midwest girl, who had some fun while she was here - and left no dick dry before it's time!



**For more information on the wonderful world of Roni, send \$10 for her illustrated catalogue to:**

**Roni Raye,  
P.O. BOX 502210,  
Indianapolis,  
IN 46250,  
USA**

***[The editors of this magazine accept absolutely no responsibility for any resulting hassle from HM Customs, which is strictly, absolutely and completely your own problem! Though I guess you should probably be okay if all you've done is send off for some of Roni's underwear. But with these Customs geezers, who can say? Anyway, you're on your own...]***

# Roni-ography

<u>Title</u>	<u>Distributor</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1-900-RONI	Roni Raye Productions	93	s
Balcony Bliss	Roni Raye Productions	95	s
Bedroom Window 51	Homegrown Video	93	q [1]
Bush League Volume 20	Pearl Necklace Video	93	f
Bush League Volume 22	Pearl Necklace Video	93	f [1]
Bush League Volume 23	Pearl Necklace Video	93	f [1]
Cousin Bubba's Country Corn Porn	Visual Images	93	q
Gorilla-Gram	Video Alternatives	93	f [2]
Homegrown Video Volume 402	Homegrown Video	93	q [1]
Honeymoon Hottub	Roni Raye Productions	95	s
Images Of Roni	Roni Raye Productions	95	s
Looking At You	Video Alternatives	93	f
Mistress Roni Reigns	Roni Raye Productions	95	s
Nurse Roni: Nasty Fuckin Movies	Rumpus Video	93	s [1]
Oral Cum Fun	Roni Raye Productions	94	s
Peek-A-Boo	Roni Raye Productions	93	s
Roni and Private Parts	LBO Entertainment	..	q [1]
Roni and the Peeping Tom	SVE	93	s
Roni At Play: Up the Skirt	Roni Raye Productions	93	s
Roni Blind Date	Rumpus Video	93	s
Roni Cooks	Samuel's Company	93	s
Roni Does It Good	Samuel's Company	93	s
Roni Flashes	Roni Raye Productions	93	s
Roni Gets Wet	Roni Raye Productions	94	s
Roni's Treasure Hunt	Roni Raye Productions	93	s
Slippery Sex 1	Roni Raye Productions	94	s
Slippery Sex 2	Roni Raye Productions	94	s
Voodoo Doll	Video Alternatives	93	f

**Key:** s-Starring role, f-Featured (more than 1 scene but didn't star) q-Quickie: compilation in which she appears in one scene, [1]-Pictured on the Box [2]-Nominated for award

<u>Magazine</u>	<u>Month/Year</u>	<u>Description</u>
Velvet	May 1993	P
Gallery	Jul 1993	P
Amateur Hours	Aug 1993	P
Cheri	Sep 1993	P
Hustler's Busty Beauties	Dec 1993	P
Amateur Adult Videos	May 1994	P
Naughty Amateurs	Jul 1994	P
Adams Amateur Porn	v1#4 1994	P
Adult Video News Directory	1994	
Amateur Hours	Jan 1995	P
Rocky Mountain Oyster #958	Mar 1995	I page 5
Amateur Hours	Jul 1995	P
Homefront, The	v1#4	IC

**Key:** A - Article, B - Back Cover, C - Cover, F - Centerfold, I - Interview, P - Pictorial, R - Movie Review

LEY  
cks up  
D  
VESI  
If you won't believe what you are hearing!  
D 592 244 643  
JT SPUNK Fuck Julie's ar'e then spunk it her face.  
D 592 244 644  
ATERSPORT 18yr old Dave will suck your k then pi's all over you.  
D 592 244 645  
JYS WITH TITS & big stiff hairy cocks int to fuck your ar'e 'til it hurts!!!  
01 809 4961 685  
JACY & VIKI Hear them masturbate each others fanny in 2 minutes. No long intro!  
D 592 244 647  
JAR ENTRY Girls whose ar'es are made be fucked and sucked!  
D 592 244 648  
ACK COCK Daniel wants you to suck his black cock. Then he wants to cum in your juhs.  
D 592 244 649

# Let's Talk About SEX...

with a 14" dildo. Loud & noisy, nothing cut!  
00 592 244 653  
HOT PI'S Hubby let his mates pi's all over me before they fucked me in the rear.  
00 592 244 654  
INSTANT WANK No boring intros, no build up 30 seconds of hard core sex! (24hrs).  
00 592 244 655  
TOILET SEX Mandy wants to use your tongue as toilet paper. Hard hot sex talk.  
00 592 249 785  
STRICT WOMAN Let me thrust my truncheon up your tight ar'e until you scream!  
00 592 249 786  
GAY BUILDER 2 gay builders want to fuck your mouth and ar'e!  
001 809 4961 687  
SPUNK OVER ME Put your stiff 9" cock between my tits - thrust it up and down until you cum over my face!  
00 592 249 788

dildo up her tight ar'e. Filthy talk. The real thing (French sex sounds).  
00 592 591 337  
30 SECOND WANK OFF ACTION No long intros, no boring subplots, dirty fuck talk!  
00 592 591 338

**001 809 4961 505**  
The All-Time Gang Bang These hot girls take cock - after cock to their mouths & up their ar'es.  
**001 809 4961 508**



**FUCK MY TIGHT AR'E**  
The hottest an'l sex anywhere. Our girls are sordid filthy tart. Your credit card discreetly billed, anonymity guaranteed!  
**0171 814 1009**  
ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS Billed per min.

**30 SEC. AN\*L ACTION**  
We're wet and waiting to scream with pleasure.  
**001 809 4961 511**



**1 to 1 FUCK & WANK TALK**  
LIVE SEX CHAT  
**00 592 475 837**  
FUCK MY AR'E WITH MY DILDO  
**001 809 4961**



WET KNICKER Suck my wet knickers as I wank you off. (Our most popular service!)  
00 592 591 339  
LESBIAN SEX 2 sisters fuck each other from behind with black 10" dildos  
00 592 591 340  
SEX WORDS You won't believe you're hearing two housewives being fucked!  
00 592 591 341  
TIGHT HOLE Jane wants your stiff cock up her hole until she screams. Instant relief  
00 592 591 342  
GO SEF DUCKIE That'll be one straight

**100% HARDCORE**  
**DIRTY LESBIANS LICK EACH OTHER!**  
**001 809 4961 516**



I felt my heartbeat quicken as I lifted the receiver. This was new territory for me. I carefully, hesitantly dialled the number. What if there is someone on the other end? As electronic clicks and beeps signalled my connection I reminded myself that this is England and no way would 38 pence per minute get me live one-to-one sex talk with Mandy who likes it doggy style. And sure enough, I was right. A pre-recorded message kicked in and a breathy accentless Englishwoman's voice could be heard telling me about the late night cocksuckers' party. I let out a sigh of relief as the perpetual teenager in me realised I wouldn't have to make any effort and talk to a real live woman. All I had to do was listen. So I did. And it went on from there.

**1 to 1 FUCK & WANK TALK**  
**001 809 4961 500**

**LACTATING LADIES**  
Milky Mamas are full of milk (Tits Dripping with milk) just for you. Lots of squirting and fucking and sucking!  
**001 809 4961 507**  
FREE YOUR DESIRES!



Five years later I'm still bemused and intrigued by the whole phone sex phenomenon. Since I started my 'investigations' it's gone through several changes as the 'service providers' have faced up to public and political criticism. In each case they've adapted accordingly and admirably. Floundering industries everywhere should take a page out of their book. But then again, when you know you've got as surefire a product as 'sex' to sell, you'll do anything to get it to the punters and then just sit back and count the money.

**SPUNK OVER OUR FACES!**  
Two Girls Suck & Fuck you Dry!  
**0171 814 1039**  
ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS Billed per min.



And it's gotta be good money. Back in '92 it was 38 ppm cheap rate and 48 ppm at all other times. Now with the various restrictions set in place the calls are charged at a variety

**PREGNANT & HORNY**  
She's horny, juicy & hot for fucking. Do it sideways or from the rear. She needs lots of hard cock!  
**001 809 4961 510**



**TOILET TRICKS**  
Kinky & fun-Lesbians who like to Pi's on each other!!!!  
**001 809 4961 523**  
A WATER SPORTS SPECIAL 001 809 4961 898



of International Rates. Not to mention the genuinely LIVE 'talkback' calls that are usually charged to credit cards, though some accept cheques/PO's or put hugely inflated charges on your phone bill. It's gotta be good money. However your average user - the dedicated punter - the phone sex 'addict' - isn't worried about cost (as long as it's 'discreetly charged' to their credit card bill). They want to get their rocks off. After a hard day's toiling as a Captain of Industry or as a Kwik-Fit fitter they want a quick, satisfying and effective release of tension. Bollocks to wasting hours 'romancing' wives and girlfriends on the off-chance of getting a dull routine tumble. Your man of the 90's is used to fast service - shopping, eating out, transport - and sex shouldn't be any different. So he gets his well-thumbed copy of Men Only, flips to the back pages and browses. Whatever he wants, whatever his fetish or perversion, there is a phone line for him.

You want it, they've got it for you. But what are they actually like? Nowadays it's really down to two different types - 'Raunch' and 'Rip off'. It takes some practice to be able to differentiate between the two but your starter for ten is - the more the advert promises the less you'll get. And I'm not talking about the specific content of the advert but rather the blurb that comes with it. 'No long boring intro's' actually means five minutes of long drawn out tease as a pre-recorded voice continually promises to connect you to a hot horny girl in 'just one moment' whilst advertising other services. 'Straight into the Action' means two minutes of shite keyboard music with sampled moans and groans in the background. It's a bit like buying carpets - the decent shops don't need 'Top Quality' signs written on fluorescent card. And so the real 'Raunch' lines just play it straight, tell you what's on offer and how much it'll cost you and that's it.

But what are they actually like? Be it 'Raunch' or 'Rip-off' you'll still get two minutes of adverts for other services beforehand. This is to ensure you're hooked - you've listened this far so you might as well hang on for the rest. Unfortunately in many cases the advertised service - eg. French Slut Licks Your Hairy Balls, turns out to be Filthy Lesbian Pisses on You. This can be a severe disappointment to the committed fetishist but if you're an open minded adventurous kind of guy then you may find yourself sent off down a whole new avenue to explore. However, with the 'Rip Off' lines - despite what the advert says - you don't get much more than the sort of innuendo-loaded banter you get in your average office conversation between friendly colleagues. The girl introduces herself, gives a teasing rundown of vital statistics and then starts on the foreplay. She'll tell you she's playing with her nipples (that are always highly sensitive) and running her hand down to her 'love hole' and it goes on from there. If she gets herself to 'climax' and you're still on line the message abruptly cuts and another girl comes on and it starts all over again.

At one time there was a service offering a range of about 15 numbers - none of which had adverts or any kind of warning beforehand that this was adult material. You were straight into it. And they were the first I came across in the UK to offer 'services' hinting at anal, watersports and girl on guy strap-on action. It wasn't unusual for there to be two girls on the tape and occasionally a guy which totally blew any chance of a fantasy developing because once he intruded you weren't there anymore and it became a bit like sitting in a hotel room listening to the couple next door fucking.

There are some true 'Raunch' lines out there. The legendary 0898 numbers (that were obliterated by BT requiring all desirous users to apply for PIN code numbers to allow access) could never have been as hard-core as these lines. The adverts say 'Our girls use all the filthy sex words' and they mean it. You still get recorded ads prior to the service but these go on for longer by occasionally tantalizing the listener by dropping on the odd 'fuck' or 'pussy'. To be fair the girls 'talking' on these lines really do sound like they're into it and if they really are breastfeeding their babies or knitting as they record then they are genuinely talented and entirely convincing. Particularly when it's a one-on-one scenario - 'I'm going to take hold of your cock and...' etc. The 'last night my boyfriend and I tried something we've never tried before' are just not as involving and a bit like reading graffiti on a bog wall. Seeing as they've got you on International Call Rates they try to keep you on as long as possible with a slow steady build up going into great detail. If you're into it it's got to have an effect on you and if it doesn't maybe you should try another line - 'Gay Builders Gang Bang' perhaps? All vaginal and oral fantasists are well catered for and at present there seems to be a growing fixation with 'anal'. As buggery is still illegal in this country they get round it by putting well-placed asterisks where vowels should be or cloak it with the none-too-subtle 'tight stinging hole'.

But for some that's just not enough and you can always trust the British to take it one step further. Beneath our facade of respectability and decency we're all sick fucks - if the ads are anything to go by. Below are some examples:

S&M, Sub/Dom, humiliation, piss & shit, whipping, spanking, rubber fetishists, TV's and everything else. If you can't find it here babe they ain't doing it.

Meanwhile the Yanks are having none of this nonsense. All they are interested in is the penetration of orifices and discharge of semen. And yet they've managed to make their adverts for this limited repertoire into what is almost an art form. Pick up a copy of Cheri or High Society, turn to the back pages and marvel at the artistry and ingenuity on display. A dazzling rainbow of colours and truly inventive use of graphics. I'm lost in admiration for the guys who do these - I want their jobs. How could you go wrong working on subjects like:

HEY JERKY! DUMP A LOAD IN ME! KENTUCKY GIRL! FINGER-LICKIN' GOOD! MAYBE I'LL FUCK YOU OR MAYBE I'LL GIVE YOU BLUE BALLS - NO GUTS, NO GLORY! I'M A LESBIAN! I LIVE FOR PUSSY! TRY TO CHANGE MY MIND! 16 WAS SWEET.. BUT 18 IS LEGAL! GIRLS WHO THINK CUM IS A DECONGESTANT! SNAKE MY PIPES! I CAN FIT ANY COCK IN MY ASS WITHOUT KY. THINK ABOUT IT THEN FUCK IT! I-800-CUNT HUNT. HER PUSSY IS YOURS BUT THE ASS IS MINE and perhaps most perverse of all...

*BE MY CAPTAIN KIRK!?!*

Now when I look at the phone sex industry today I can't see it developing any further and it may eventually be knocked out of action by developments on the Internet. If you can get it cheaper than Intl. Call Rates with some 'visual accompaniment' then who's going to pay £1.04 per minute for something less? We'll have to see how things develop. At present there's a burgeoning UK market in 'Chat-line' services where you can talk to 'real live girls'. These have been



growing steadily since the death of 0898 and are nothing but pure trace rip off. Unless of course you do want to swap inane chit-chat with an overly bubbly girl. Ads for these lines appear in 'Loaded' and other men's publications - cashing in on the guys who haven't got the neck to buy a proper skin mag where you get the real deal. There's also lines that pretend to take a 'medical' slant where real girls give 'frank interviews' about sex. 'Jill, 24, talks about masturbation' etc. In a way you've got to admire the way they try to get round the restrictions but you really are pissing about with these and doing nothing but frustrating yourself further.

Most women are appalled and disgusted by the very existence of phone sex lines. The men who use them are considered sad pathetic bastards. I personally feel that if there wasn't a 'need' for them they wouldn't exist. Nature demands that men empty their bollocks on a fairly regular basis. If they don't they tend to get a bit ratty. So why not phone sex? It's certainly safe sex, as opposed to the risks prostitutes and their johns expose themselves to. A hundred years ago the North American loggers, out in the woods for months on end with nothing but other guys around, would grease up knotholes in trees and mount up. A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

In closing I'd just like to say that I've listened in on all sorts of lines and I'd be a liar and possibly not a heterosexual if I said they never stirred the blood. And as I've always approached it from an analytical and 'clinical' state of mind I've never felt like some 'sad old pervert'. The only time that rush of guilt and shame ever washed over me was listening to a UK service. The line title was fairly innocuous - 'Bitch wants it deep' perhaps? But it was immediately apparent that I was listening to what sounded like two girls of about 14 years of age in a phone booth talking about cock sucking. They were putting on fake 'sexy' voices and breaking into giggles while the sound of traffic could clearly be heard behind them. The longer they went on the more surreal the whole experience became - particularly as one girl talked like the dream dwarf from the last episode of Twin Peaks. I slammed down the receiver and vowed 'never again' but it didn't take long for me to get curious as to what's going on 'out there'.

Because I know in my heart that just when you think you've heard it all...

Rik Rawling

**BIZARRE SEX**  
I'M BEING P\*\*\*\*D OVER, MMMM  
00 592 591 560

I'VE JUST TAKEN OUT A FAT  
COCK THAT HAS SPUNKED UP  
MY A\*\*E NOW IT'S YOUR TURN  
00 592 591 564  
I'LL DILDO MY A\*\*E THEN  
GIVE IT TO YOU (GINA)  
00 592 591 568

**GIRLS AVAILABLE**  
24 HOURS  
UP TO 60 PEOPLE ON LINE  
**0891 101 656**  
INTERACTIVE MESSAGE EXCHANGE  
P.O. BOX SENATE 1299, LONDON N18  
Calls cost 25p per min. Cheap rate, 40p per min. all other times

**LIVE SEX RECORDINGS**  
SENT IN BY READERS

CLAIR BEING SHAGGED BY HER  
NEIGHBOUR AND HER HUSBAND.  
00 592 591 561  
LAURA BEING SHAFED IN BOTH HOLES,  
HER BOYFRIEND DOESN'T KNOW HE'S  
BEING RECORDED.  
00 592 591 565  
LINDSY DILDING HERSELF TO A  
FRENZIED CLIMAX WHILE HER DOG  
WATCHES.  
00 592 591 569  
MANDY TAKING IT SLIGHTLY  
RELUCTANTLY FROM THE REAR FOR  
THE 1ST TIME.  
00 592 591 572

**QUICKIE RELIEF**  
- 20" SECOND WANK -  
00 592 591 566

**LISTEN TO ME SUCKING MY MASTERS' FAT COCK**  
00 592 591 562

**ADULT CONTACTS**  
Just Dial 0891 321 + No. Below  
AVAILABLE LADIES 940  
AVAILABLE LESBIANS 941  
AVAILABLE TV'S & TS'S 942  
AVAILABLE GUYS 943  
GAYS & BI-SEXUALS 944  
P.O. BOX SENATE 1299, LONDON N18  
Calls cost 25p per min. Cheap rate, 40p per min. all other times

**GUARANTEED I'LL MAKE YOU SPUNK IN 40 SECS.**  
00 592 591 567

**CONSTIPATED HOUSEWIFE**  
00 592 591 570

**LICK MY RING PIECE**  
00 592 591 563

**WATERSPOUTS**  
YOUR EAR TO THE PHONE & FEEL IT ALL OVER YOUR FACE  
00 592 591 571  
DRINK ME UP  
00 592 591 574

Jane Finds Sex VERY PAINFUL. Her Boyfriend Recorded It Anyway!  
00 592 591 577

St. Tringians Academy for Disobedient Ladies  
Remove Your Knickers & Head Over Barab  
00 592 591 576  
6 Red Lines On Jules Bottom  
00 592 591 578

I'LL TURN YOUR PRICK INTO A VOLCANO IN ONLY 60 SECONDS  
00 592 591 575

# Is it life, or is it...

Now that a column dedicated to the Internet has become essential for every magazine under the sun, I see no reason why TC should be any different. And since it seems hard for hack journos to write about the Net without also mentioning the words "porn", "children" and "disgusting", why should we buck the trend there either? Though, of course, this being TC, we will also need to use the words "Phoebe" and "Cates". Don't worry, all will become clear -- eventually...



**"Christina Applegate" gets worked up thinking about the potential of the Internet**

However, let's start by wreaking havoc on a few primitive misconceptions. You might think that the Net resembles Soho in its heyday, with sleaze oozing from every electronic orifice. Sadly, this is not so. While not exactly hard to find mildly raunchy material, you'll also wade through huge volumes of tiresome crap. The absolute independence of the Net, while its biggest strength, means that any geek can become 'popular' simply by giving his site a name implying nekkid babes ahoj. Rule #1: little on the Internet ever lives up to what it promises.

The two main ways to obtain pictures on the Internet are via the World Wide Web (WWW) and Usenet newsgroups. The former is effectively an infinite 'zine - anyone can set pages up. Newsgroups are slightly more structured, in that you subscribe to them, and hope the computer through which you connect also subscribes, but once that's done, if you post a message, it automatically gets sent to all readers worldwide.

The WWW has become the most publicly visible face of the Internet; hardly a movie comes out now without an address tucked away at the bottom of the poster i.e. "<http://www.hollywood.com/debbie/does/dallas.htm>", and these can also be seen on every kind of adverts from beer to banks. Most of the pics accompanying newspaper scare-pieces come from the WWW, and are tame less for reasons of taste, than because that's all that is openly available. Sure, Playboy and Penthouse have their sites, but just about everything else is locked out away on "pay-per-view" machines. Given a credit card, these aren't exactly hard to access, but are scarcely the threat to youth they're touted as.

The other major problem with the WWW is speed. Even given a relatively fast connection, at best it's like reading an interesting magazine, *v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y*. Text is usually fine, but when you come across pictures of any size and quality, it runs like an anaesthetised slug. While this conceivably could be seen as adding a teasing quality to any smut you stumble across, as it slowly reveals itself on your screen, the novelty rapidly wears off. For anything more than trivial stuff, it's a trial of endurance, and just can't compare to more conventional media. What's okay for editors, desperately seeking material to illustrate their animé reviews, is not so acceptable when it comes to good ol' fashioned undressed totty. A single, good quality, A4 pic could take *thirty minutes* to turn up on your machine - by which time, you could have strolled to the newsagents, bought the relevant copy of *Mayfair*, and read all the articles.

This applies doubly to any computers which do have hard-core material on them. Inevitably, as soon as word leaks out, they are besieged by hordes of ravening British nerds, who swoop like locusts from the electronic sky. Attempt to access any such place you hear about will result in, first, messages telling you the computer is terribly busy, then eventually, the powers that be get fed up with the techno-gridlock and close the place down. It's just not worth the effort.

The other major problem with the WWW is you can't do things anonymously. Every home page has to exist somewhere, and while there are people who offer confidential accounts, there are also law enforcement agencies who do the same thing...

Far better from the point of view of the budding pornographer are the Usenet newsgroups. There are somewhere around about 15,000 of these, catering for every conceivable interest, social group, and sexual variation - as mentioned, anyone can post to them, and their message is sent to all the other subscribers to that group. An entire subsection is dedicated exclusively to pictures, and while some members are totally innocent, with pictures of trains and the like, others (see below) would give your local constabulary a fit.

**The following Usenet newsgroups are a selection of those likely to contain dodgy pictures. I've removed the "alt.binaries.pictures.erotica." prefix to keep the list manageable. Should give you some idea of the variety of material on offer!**

amateur.female	blondes	female	lesbians	schoolgirls
amateur.male	bondage	female.anal	lolita	spanking
animals	breasts	fetish	male	teen
anime	butts	fetish.feet	mardi-gras	teen.female
autos	cartoons	fetish.hair	midgets	teen.fuck
babies	cheerleaders	fetish.latex	oral	teen.male
balls	child	furry	orientals	thigh-highs
bears	child.female	garters-&-heels	panties	uncut
bestiality	child.male	gaymen	plushies	uniform
big-folks	children	gymnast-girls	pornstars	urine
black.females	disney	high-heels	pregnant	voyeurism
black.male	facials	latina	redheads	young

When compared to the WWW, newsgroups have both problems and advantages. It's not possible to post pictures directly, they must be converted into text beforehand, most frequently using a program called 'uuencode'. To view them, you reverse the process; it's all a bit tedious, especially when you've no way of knowing beforehand whether or not it's worth the effort.

On the other hand, almost total anonymity is possible, thanks to devices called remailers, which remove the identifying marks from messages. Though not 100% secure - Scientologists forced the operator of a Finnish remailer to divulge one user's details - they'll do for most purposes. And, of course, Britain is one of the few countries in Europe where straightforward heterosexual pornography is illegal: if you're in Holland, who gives a toss about people knowing your identity? This is the problem with trying to censor the Internet.

It's a global system, so whose rules apply? And how do you apply them? As previously stated, it's impossible to tell the contents from an encoded file, making policing near-impossible when the volume is taken into account: there may be several hundred new pictures every day, in a single group and any of the 16,000 groups could conceivably contain illegal material. Policing this globally is thankfully impossible.

If you're in Britain, you might want to be slightly more circumspect, given that somewhere on a computer, there's evidence to tie you to alt.binaries.pictures.dobermans or whatever. So you might consider doing it all from your local CyberCafe, since you can use their computers with much less chance of being traced, Though you'll probably get disapproving looks from the CyberDyke at the next terminal as she munches on her organic CyberSalad sandwich.

Do be warned that while possession of pornography is generally not illegal, if there are kids involved, then under British law you are looking at jail, even if no-one else ever sees them. There have already been prosecutions based on material downloaded from the Internet. Worse, this applies regardless of whether the pictures are real or not. There's a rising trend in artificially created pictures, which mix and match heads + bodies, and are increasingly indistinguishable from the real thing. Thus, you can now go to prison for something that never happened outside of a computer. "Innocent until proven guilty" no longer seems to apply.



**"Tori Spelling" contemplates the benefits of newsgroups over the World Wide Web**

The power of modern computers is also used for a (fractionally) more salubrious purpose, or at least one less likely to turn you into a guest of Her Majesty. This is the faking of celebrity pornography. Fancy Gillian Anderson sucking a rather large dick? Or Meg Ryan with semen running down her face? All this, and more, can now be yours. It's just a modern, technological version of "lookalikes" which have been used in men's magazines for many years. I have teenage memories of "Debbie Harry" in Men Only, which was passed round at school, and also recall the almighty fuss when some French magazine had a Princess Di lookalike – though nowadays, I doubt if anyone bar Will Carling would be bothered.

At first, black-and-white was favoured, it being easier to match skin tones. But now anything is possible, and the quality of the finished 'frankie', as they're called, is often hard to tell from a real picture. Indeed, the line has been blurred so much that little or no obvious difference exists between a good fake and a good look-alike; for most purposes, they can all be treated in the same way. Of the pictures which illustrate this article, there is one definite fake, one lookalike, and two which I'm unsure about. I leave it as an exercise to work out which ones are which!



See - told you we'd get "Phoebe Cates" in here somehow!

Some spend hours fabricating pictures, or trawling the net seeking appropriate material for their iconoclastic fun. To quote one fan, **"After a while, it became a fun game to try to recognize the "celebrity look-alikes" either nude or having sex in the pictures I saw on the net. At first, I thought I was the only one who could see the resemblances of celebrities in the pics. It was the ridiculous idea of somebody famous posing in these pictures that struck me as so funny!"**

On the other hand, some much prefer reality, even if it comes in the form of blurred screenshots or mere nipples peeking over the top of evening dresses: **"I also received email from people who were mad I posted pictures that weren't real! I didn't realize how many people take their naked celebrities so seriously..."** The major problem is that some frankies are not clearly labelled as such, which does confuse the issue.

The targets tend to be the usual Net-babes such as Alicia Silverstone, with a skew towards those who don't do "that sort of thing": nobody bothers producing frankies of Traci Lords, far more fun to do the Pink Power Ranger. The squeakier clean the celeb, the further imaginations are let rip: there are perpetual rumours of a legendary set of pictures depicting Julia Roberts being gang-banged by a sled-dog team. However, it is suspected that 'legendary' is all they are..



The purpose behind them is hard to judge. Some may be produced by rabid fans, keen to see what has hitherto been concealed. At the other end of the spectrum are anti-fans, doing it to expose the star in question to ridicule, or merely as provocation. A third group of technically minded individuals do it purely for the challenge. It may be merely for amusement, with no higher agenda than to spread cheer and happiness among those of us who feel no-one is innocent. But before Hollywood starts panicking, one point. With so much artificial celebri-porn around, when a **real** indiscretion turns up, who'll believe it? This has already been the case: various allegedly 'fake' pictures which appeared on the Internet, clearly labelled as such, turned out to be genuine, from early photo shoots or other factual sources. "Reality" is the only word in the English language that should always be used in quotes, as the late Tim Leary once said.

I wonder what the subjects themselves would think: it's known that many celebrities have Internet accounts, including Sandra Bullock and Winona Ryder, and it would be fascinating to see what they thought of seeing themselves caricatured in such an intimate way. Would they sue? Indeed, could they? Whatever, it's an area that's sure to grow, with the Internet providing an excellent conduit for distribution. As technology continues to escalate, this material is going to become more and more impressive: from fake still photos, the obvious, albeit much tougher, next step is fake movies... Watch this space.

*[Anyone interested in a few 'frankies' can try sending me a floppy disk and an SAE]*



**"Gabriella Sabatini" prepares for the new "beach tennis" circuit.**



"Stupid is, as stupid does":

*Sex - the great motivator.*

Melbourne - An Australian who posed as a secret agent for five years in order to have sex with a former girlfriend was jailed for nine months on Wednesday. A magistrates court here heard the 29-year-old man manipulated an innocent, patriotic young woman to have sex by inventing five fictional operatives to give her orders, which included oral sex to cure a fictional terminal illness. The man, whose name was suppressed to protect the woman's identity, destroyed five subsequent relationships by sending her bogus intelligence reports on her boyfriends' alleged affairs, the court was told. The man was granted bail pending an appeal. [Reuters, 6-3-96]



In March, police in New York City charged salesman Joel Levy, 32, with assault. According to police, Levy's live-in girlfriend arrived home unexpectedly after Levy had just put in an order for a call girl to come over. Levy improvised a plan to intercept "Brandy" in his building's lobby, have a liaison, and then to dash back upstairs before his girlfriend got suspicious. When he saw a good-looking woman in the lobby, Levy assumed it was Brandy, nudged her into an elevator, and, according to police, pawed and fondled her while waving a \$50 bill, saying, "You know you want it. You know you'll do anything for it." The woman was not Brandy but rather an assistant district attorney from Brooklyn. [N.Y. Post, 3-10-95]

North Hollywood - Barry A. Briskman, 59, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for his inexplicably successful seduction of two 13-year-old girls. According to the prosecutor, Briskman had convinced the girls that he was a space alien from the planet Cablell, sent to Earth to recruit a team of beautiful, super-intelligent girls for a female-dominated utopia headed by Queen Hiternia, who was temporarily based atop the Tropicana hotel in Las Vegas. For their trip through space, Briskman told the girls he would have to immunise them vaginally until their "IRF" counts reached 100, and following each sex session, he telephoned the "Andrak 4000" computer to report the latest infusion and to get a readout on how many more IRFs each girl needed. Briskman is presently in prison in Nevada for demonstrating similar persuasive skills on a 12-year-old girl. [Los Angeles Times, 16 9-95]

After filing a missing persons report on his wife, Leasa, Bruce Jensen, 39, learned that Leasa was really feminine-looking Felix Urioste, 34, who convinced Bruce to marry him in 1991 after a single sexual encounter during which Urioste remained clothed. Said devout Mormon Jensen, "There's no way to describe this feeling". [Salt Lake Tribune-AP, 14-7-95]

# FILM BLITZ

**Barb Wire** (who cares?) - I can see why this got dire reviews; the critics will have seen it stone-cold sober at 11 a.m, rather than, as intended, after several beers, a Big Mac and a session of manic slaughter down the video arcade. Having taken the latter route, I had a great time. The film is so shallow it's in danger of evaporating completely, Pammie's (fortunately limited) attempts at acting are laughable, and it's nothing you haven't seen in a thousand post-apocalyptic films, set in the usual disused industrial estate. Yet it works, on the most cynical, visceral level. I don't like silicone blondes, yet even I have to admit Lee is perfectly cast, wandering round in clingy costumes (or even clingy bubble-bath!) kicking and shooting her way through the film. As the cliché says, it's an empty, meaningless experience, but as empty, meaningless experiences go... B



**Pammie's mummies: Anderson Lee and a couple of close, personal friends.**

**Batman Forever** (Joel Schumacher) - Exchange your brain at the door for a bucket of popcorn, and you'll enjoy this far more. It's fast, vacuous stuff, with our mostly concealed hero treading a dodgy line between law-man and vigilante, in a dark and highly 'Blade Runner'-esque future. Feel free to ignore the amusing but pointless henchman, and the nicely decorative female, seemingly there just to prove the hero is no sword-swallower. On the other hand, the villains are far more colourful, sharp, and get to blow things up for no readily apparent reason. Beneath the sweeping orchestral score (naturally shoe-horning in a few rock toons, for the obligatory soundtrack LP), the real star is the set. Must be embarrassing to be out-acted by buildings... Cinema as spectacle, this is an empty barrel making a hell of a lot of noise. B-

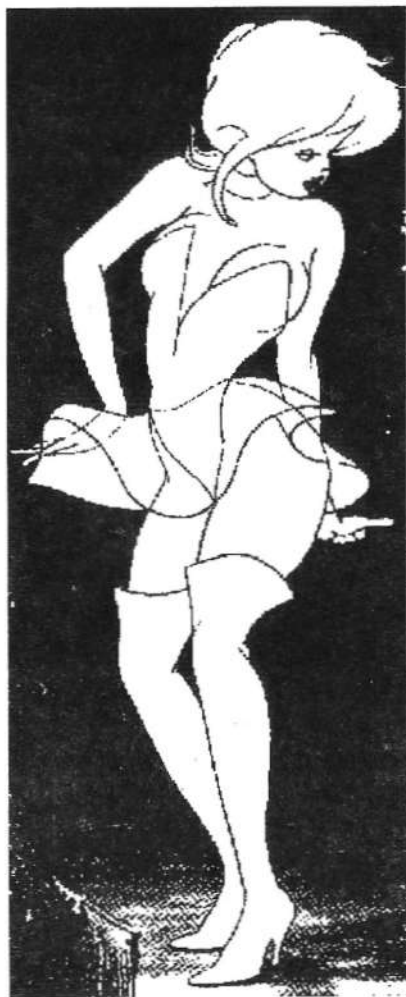
**Body Parts** (Lamberto Bava) - My contribution to National Cinema Day was to sit at home and watch this 1992 giallo, now coming out through 'A Taste of Fear'. And that's an appropriate label, since a taste is ultimately all it provides. It's a typically intricate, albeit slightly wobbly, storyline, with a serial killer reclaiming donor organs from their recipients because... because he's a serial killer, y'know? Motivation is not Bava's strong point - as anyone who's seen 'Demons 2' knows, things need no justification apart from that they look good. There is the inevitably mind-boggling twist ending, but it's helped by a decent performance from Thomas Arana as the cop leading the hunt, and bonus points for having a psychopath who resembles a young Rutger Hauer. If this film is a body part, it's closest to a pair of tonsils: nothing you'd really miss, but not completely useless. C-

**Bugs** (Brian Yuzna) - The title change (aka 'Silent Night, Deadly Night 4!') tries to cash-in on the success of 'Ticks', one of the more energetically entertaining horrors of recent years, which Yuzna produced. However, it falls well short of the mark; certainly has a few icky moments, especially for those who have a dislike of insects, but it's just not *interesting*, and has all the production values of a TVM. Maud Adams is the novice reporter investigating a 'suicide' which leads her into a dangerous cult of mad feminists who do yucky things with maggots. That's about as far as I got before boredom finally overcame me and - this'll give you some idea of how exciting the film is - I started watching Jimmy Tarbuck. Now, that's what I call scary. E+

**Casino** (Martin Scorsese) - I'm not sure my bum can take another three-hour plus movie; at least they're good value for money. Admittedly (though no help to my posterior), 'Casino' is justifiably long, covering a lot of turf, though sometimes it feels like a documentary on hotel management. Based on a true story - the stuff happened, just not in the order given here - it's a "Rise + Fall" tale, detailing De Niro's handling of a Mob casino, his involvement with Sharon Stone (never a good idea; hasn't he seen 'Basic Instinct'?) and friendship with psycho dwarf Joe Pesci. It all ends brutally: in fact, it starts brutally as well, and "brutally" is its middle name, with bats, hammers and fountain pens meeting flesh. De Niro is inevitably good, Pesci is inevitably Pesci, Stone deserved the Oscar nom, and the soundtrack provides a continual, sarcastic commentary on the action. Undeniably well crafted, it'll put you off swindling casinos for life. A-

**Casper** (Brad Silverling) - What an interesting career Sherri Stoner has had: getting her bottom branded in 'Reform School Girls', the live-action model for Disney's Little Mermaid, executive producer on 'Tiny Toon Adventures', voice actor in 'Animaniacs'...and now co-writer of this effects-heavy movie. The last couple are influences that seep though on occasion, most notably a brilliant 'Apocalypse Now' homage, and the film is at its best when it updates the traditionally soppy Harvey Comics characters: Christina Ricci, as the daughter of a "ghost psychiatrist", comes off best in this regard. The villains are scarcely threatening - Eric Idle's one of them - - and after it's established they can't hurt Casper, that side goes a bit flat. The main focus is Casper's desire to become a real boy again, though you just know that's going to end up being horribly slushy. Totally non-threatening, Sunday afternoon viewing. D

**Castle Freak** (Stuart Gordon) - The much anticipated return of Babs Crampton to the horror genre doesn't quite deliver, spending too long setting up 'atmosphere'. The opening sequence sets the standard, with the duchess wandering - very slowly - through her castle to feed and torture her hideously deformed son. It'd have been okay had they run the credits over it, but it simply goes on, and on and on. Then she drops dead, and heir Jeffrey Combs turns up with wife (Crampton) and blind daughter. Before you can say "Quasimodo", out comes the freak; except, you've probably got time to *re:d* 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' before anything much happens. Some gross moments finally compensate the viewer, and only in the final 30 minutes does the body count mount acceptably, though up until this point, Crampton and Combs ensure this remains a cut above the usual Full Moon product. I was left feeling this was definitely a 30-minute idea stretched to a full-length feature. D-



Kim Basinger as Holly Wood -- not bad, just born that way

**Cool World** (Ralph Bakshi) - A major flop on its initial release, looking back at it now, it's harder to see why this adult version of 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit' failed so miserably. While barely coherent, I don't want coherence from a film about a parallel cartoon universe, peopled by the warped imaginings of Gabriel Byrne's comic artist (I think it's safe to equate Byrne with Bakshi). Kim Basinger is a fine 'toon, for sure (see left), and the animated sections are well up to scratch, even if the interaction between human and cartoon is less effective than in 'Roger Rabbit'. When Holly achieves her desire, bursting into the real world after bonking Byrne, the underlying weirdness that's been peeping round the edges, spews up in a geyser of the bizarre. Reality just can't compete; an entirely viable alternative to drugs. B

**Delta Heat** (Michael Fischa) - Another buddy cop movie. And no, there isn't an "I" missing from that last sentence, this manages to rise above the crowd of competitors thanks to excellent central performances from Lance Henriksen and Anthony Edwards. In the other major twist, both are fish out of water, Edwards an LAPD cop down in New Orleans after his partner is messily killed, Henriksen (presumably around 'Hard Target' time) the former detective he drags out of the Louisiana swamp to help. Neither are welcomed by the local boys. The deftly handled interplay between them is the film's best feature; it's almost aggravating when the plot gets in the way, as there's nothing inventive there. Inspired casting, to be sure, pity there's no movie to hang it off. C+

**Doctor Mordrid** (Charles and Albert Band) - Full Moon have become synonymous with "crap", because of awful movies like 'Subspecies'; this is a better effort, thanks again mostly to the presence of Jeffrey Combs. As in 'Re-Animator', he makes the fatuous plausible, not an easy task when you consider we're talking about two wizards fighting each other for the fate of the Earth. Yvette Nipar is the Barbara Crampton substitute here, and Brian Thompson plays the bad sorceror, both are competent enough, though sadly, Nipar is never ravished by a severed head. It smells faintly of 'Cast a Deadly Spell', but the finale lacks punch, with the fate of the planet decided by a duel between two stop motion dinosaurs skeletons. 'Jurassic Park' it ain't, thankfully. C+

**The Doom Generation** (Greg Araki) - Self proclaimed queer film-maker Araki tries his hand at a hetero movie, another entry in the rapidly overpopulated "psychopath lovers on a cross country rampage" genre. *Clueless* meets *Natural Born Killers* here, two teenage lovers fall in with a bisexual Trent Reznor lookalike and kill people. Disappointingly ho-hum for about 80 minutes, only the final five deliver on the "welcome to hell" promise from the first scene. The finale is vicious, graphic, and may suffer at the BBFC but by that point, you just don't care. E+



The Film Blitz theme appears to be "stars with notable chests": first, Pamela Lee; then Kim Basinger; now, er, Gary Daniels...

**Fist of the North Star** (Tony Randel) - As with both manga and anime, what stays in the mind with this American live-action adaptation is the hyper-violence, notably hero Kenshiro's tap-tap attack which makes heads explode. The writer, realising this, opts for a script that manages to be incoherent, yet exactly what you expect, up to the obvious climax between Kenshiro (Brit Gary Daniels, looking great but struggling - as anyone would - with the dialogue) and his nemesis. Evil sidekick Chris Penn comes out best, rising above the...well, you know I don't say this lightly, but "macho bullshit" does come to mind. A distressing amount of leather and well-oiled torsos on view; all that's missing is Steve Reeves. D-

**Judge Dredd** (Danny Cannon) - Exchange your brain at the door for a bucket of popcorn, and you'll enjoy this far more. It's fast, vacuous stuff, with our mostly concealed hero treading a dodgy line between law-man and vigilante, in a dark and highly 'Blade Runner'-esque future. Feel free to ignore the amusing but pointless henchman, and the nicely decorative female, seemingly there just to prove the hero is no sword-swallower. On the other hand, the villains are far more colourful, amusing, and get to blow things up for no readily apparent reason. Beneath the sweeping orchestral score (naturally shoe-horning in a few rock toons, for the obligatory soundtrack LP), the real star is the set. Must be embarrassing to be out-acted by buildings... Cinema as spectacle, this is an empty barrel making a hell of a lot of noise. C

**Judgement Night** (Matthew Hopkins) - Ah, urban nightmares. 'After Hours', 'Bonfire of the Vanities', and now this: Emilio Estevez, Stephen Dorff and friends wander into drug-lord Dennis Leary's territory, where they see him murder an accomplice. Not good to witness, so the hunt is on. Despite obvious flaws - what mob boss could only muster four henchmen? - Hopkins screws maximum tension from every situation, though it's immediately obvious who'll survive and who won't; surprises would definitely help. The major question was "Is Estevez related to Michael Douglas or has he just watched 'Falling Down' a lot?" An easy way to pass 110 generally entertaining minutes, even if no-one is exactly overtaxed. Least of all the viewer. C+

**Lord of Illusions** (Clive Barker) - 'Nightbreed' seems a very long time ago now, doesn't it? And 'Hellraiser', positively prehistoric. Ah, yes, I remember the days when Clive Barker actually seemed to have talent. Not that *LoI* is actually bad, it looks very nice, there are some great effects, and an effective Simon Boswell soundtrack. However, it all treads familiar ground; it is too obviously not just a Clive Barker film, it's the Clive Barker film. While Scott Bakula is a decent Harry D'Amour, perhaps he exacerbates the problem that the movie plays too much like an 18-rated episode of 'The X Files', without the benefit of any 18-rated Gillian Anderson scenes. It all ends up on a loop, with the climax looking a lot like the start, as evil incarnate is fought. D

**M. Butterfly** (David Cronenberg) - This adaptation of the play was all but buried on its release here, but to me, doesn't seem such an aberration for the man. [Warning: plot revelations imminent!] Telling the story of a French diplomat who falls in love with a Peking Opera star, only to discover she is a) a spy and b) a he, it remains true to the ideal of "body horror" and is nigh impossible for any heterosexual male to watch without squirming. Suddenly discovering the woman you love is a man must rank pretty highly among male nightmares, so a tender love scene between a man and a man-pretending-to-be-a-woman make for uncomfortable viewing, and a nice reversal of the female fears seen in 'Dead Ringers'. Also note the echoes of 'Videodrome', most notably at the end where the hero commits suicide, seeing it as the only way out of an otherwise impossible situation. [End of plot revelations!] With disturbingly great performances from Jeremy Irons and John Lone, this has all the makings of a misunderstood classic, even if you may want to wash your hands afterwards. A-

**Naked Killer** (Clarence Ford) - One of the most infamous of the Hong Kong category III films, something seems to have gone missing between reputation and reality; while this film has its moments, certainly, it's not the no-holds barred sleazefest one might expect from the cover. What you get, is an interesting mix of 'Nikita' and 'Basic Instinct'; a hit-woman takes on a new apprentice, only for a previous trainee to come steaming back with her lesbian lover and a severe g.udge to settle. The action sequences are first-class, and the characterisations are way over-the-top, like some nightmarish wet dream (probably producer Wong Jing's). Sadly, the bits between the action are laughable, largely thanks to some truly dreadful dubbing - there is a subtitled version available, at a mere £20, but the video company sent the dub... It makes one mean mother of a trailer, but even at 78 minutes, outstays its welcome. D+

**Nightwatch** (Ole Bornedal) - News of the death of the horror movie seems not to have reached Denmark, going by this stylish and intelligent tale. A law student gets a part-time job at the morgue, only to find creepy things are happening; is his mind going? To add to his troubles, there's a serial killer in town, who seems to be out to frame him. This does a slow but careful job on the set-up with the first half being so totally restrained I wondered where the "horror" tag came from. The second half delivers the groceries there, and good performances from a young cast help give this more believability than most teenagers-in-peril films. Even if it never breaks any genre boundaries, you shouldn't feel short-changed. B+



**Princess Caraboo** (Michael Austin) - Based on a true story which took place just after Waterloo, this film manages to break the usual rule of thumb which says that PG-rated movies are inevitably dire. It stars Phoebe Cates – okay, significant plus point there – as a mysterious girl who turns up in a West Country village, and who may be the exotic Princess of the title, or may be an impostor out to con people. Her passage upwards through society towards the Prince Regent is charted, though the story itself is very slight, the acting is the film's major strong point, and should be compulsory viewing for anyone who reckons Phoebe can't act. She acquits herself superbly, even against one of those casts full of British character actors which will have you going "Isn't that...?" for half the movie - as in "Isn't that Servalan?" (and yes, it is, still with a nifty line in costumes, albeit rather less S/M than in her 'Blake's 7' days). Managing to be sweet without sinking to saccharine, as "family entertainment" (shudder) goes, it's surprisingly watchable fluff. B+



**Phoebe -- no fake. this time!**

**The Puppet Masters** (Stuart Orme) - Hell, if 'Lord of Illusions' looked like an adult X File, this one starts even closer to the mark, with a government agency investigating a crashed UFO near a country town. The first ten minutes or so are cracking, a great monster and Donald Sutherland whipping up a storm as the agency head. Sadly, this doesn't last and it degenerates into a routine action movie, in which the aliens are hardly seen. Though Sutherland continues to try his best, he just doesn't get enough screen time; no-one else in the cast has the stature to provide the necessary memorable moments. 'The Hidden' did far more with just two aliens. D-

**Rob Roy** (Michael Caton-Jones) - "History made him a hero"...and Hollywood made him Irish. Maybe it's revenge for 'Revolution' (made by Brits, with a German leading lady); directed by an Englishman and also starring an American actress. Nationalism apart, it's stirring stuff, with few dodgy accents – Tim Roth's plummy English is the worst on offer – and Liam Neeson is a fine kilted Celt, struggling against the machinations of Roth and Brian Cox. Despite wobbly moments (too many sheepshagging jokes), overall it confirms what we know as true: Scotsmen are all heroes, Englishmen are all scum – even when the Scots are actually American! B-

**Roger and Me** (Michael Moore) - Moore's excellent 'TV Nation' show proved conclusively that at least one American understands irony. This is in similar vein, with him trying to talk to the president of General Motors, who destroyed Moore's home town of Flint, Michigan by closing the factories. A step away from normal documentary, like Nick 'Aileen Wuornos' Broomfield, the film-maker is part of the movie, it's as much a documentary about making documentaries, and is a style I like greatly. Swinging from farce to tragedy, but always under control, it leaves an acrid taste in the mouth. If I was Roger Smith, I'd find it very difficult to sleep at night. A

**Species** (Roger Donaldson) - Oh God, yet another adult X File; at this rate, by the time they get their film out, no-one will want to see it. Though this one has more in common with Tobe Hooper's excruciatingly wonderful 'Lifeforce'; psychopathic alien babe comes to Earth and starts offing people. In this case, however, she just wants to breed. Repeatedly. In a wide variety of situations designed to show off Natasha Henstridge's breasts. Admirable though these are, they're not quite enough to carry the film and, while Alfred Molina and Michael Madsen try hard, all the human characters are terribly flat (*certainly* not true about Ms. Henstridge...). Ten years ago, this would have been directed by someone like Dave DeCoteau, starred Michelle Bauer, and cost maybe 100 grand. It might have been better off staying that way. C-

**Waterworld** (Kevin Reynolds) - At last, a big action picture that isn't mindless entertainment; unfortunately, it does this by avoiding the "entertainment" part of the equation rather than the "mindless". The second film in a row to prove that big isn't necessarily better: expanded to this scale, the word is BLOATED. While Costner's character has the makings of a great antihero, you just know he's going to get all sappy and New Man-ish by the end. And that blessed relief is a very long way off, it's another 135 minute film, at least an hour of which is superfluous. Even the action scenes go on too long, which is perhaps a first, and managing to make Dennis Hopper look flat and uninteresting is also something of a feat. I fell asleep. Twice. Combined with a plot so flawed you could sail an oil tanker through the holes, this is probably the worst big-budget movie since 'Alien 3'. E+

**The Young Master** (Jackie Chan) - It's been a long time coming, but finally someone has put out a subtitled Jackie Chan film. This is amazing, given the amount of lesser dreck which has appeared, so all praise to Hong Kong Classics, especially since the widescreen subtitled version is the same price as the normal one, rather than coming out in an overpriced cardboard box. The film itself is perhaps the best JC did pre-'Police Story' and stands up very well, showcasing purer martial arts than the stunts/action for which he's become renowned. The story is to do with student Jackie tracking down a colleague who's defected from his school, though it's merely an excuse for a wide variety of "Object fu"; stools, pipes, fans and skirts are all wielded by Jackie in the lead-up to a final bruising one-on-one battle lasting the best part of 20 minutes. Excellent stuff, that will hopefully lead to more material appearing like this. B+



# (London) Film (Festival) Blitz

Thursday 7th. The London Film Festival begins with 'To Be Announced', a taut thriller based around the race to get an opening movie for the event. Ok, I'm kidding, but when their last-minute choice is 'The First Wives Club', a standard slice of Hollywood stodge that opens here next week anyway, you begin to wish they hadn't bothered. Glad I didn't sign up, sight unseen.

Friday 8th. The festival proper starts with *The Funeral* (Abel Ferrara). Christopher Walken and Chris Penn are gangsters whose brother has been killed: they want to track down the murderer and extract revenge. Very much an acting film, with a loose plot that leaps around in time like Doctor Who on amphetamines. But, for acting, Walken's your man, though Penn is also creditably psychotic. If you know Ferrara's work, it won't spoil anything to tell you the ending is not quite "happily ever after". C+

*Forgotten Silver* (Peter Jackson) is a fake-umentary which for some reason was twinned with '100 Years of Polish Cinema', a completely serious documentary. Or at least, I assume so: together with a good percentage of the audience, I bailed out after roughly Three Seconds of Polish Cinema. Jackson's spoof biopic of a New Zealand cinematic pioneer is pitched perfectly, building to the restoration of his 4-hour silent epic 'Salome'. Jackson himself hosts the film, with cameos from Sam Neill and Leonard Maltin. Utterly ludicrous in cold daylight, but played so straight, it's plausible that New Zealanders invented colour film and powered flight. B+

Of course, the festival isn't just about movies. It's also about drinking. With two hours - and a few liver cells - to kill, what better way than to hit the National Film Theatre bar, sink some beer, and quiz Alex Chandon about 'Pervirella'. Appropriate topic before *Fetishes* (Nick Broomfield), even if on balance, three pints of Stella was a bad move, as it led to an emergency exit during the film - believe me, it's not the sort of movie during which you want to be seen sloping off to the toilet. After the slightly disappointing 'Heidi Fleiss', Broomfield's back on form with an eye-popping look at an S&M establishment in New York. All human life is there, including some bits you'd probably rather not see (Jews with concentration camp fetishes?), exposed with the director's innocent eye. Whether it'll ever appear here is questionable, as the BBFC are notably anti this sort of thing. But it deserves a far better fate: entertaining and educational. A

Saturday 9th. A day off; no tickets for 'Crash', unsurprisingly! But after Friday's press showing, the tabloid press have pounced, predictably led by the Daily Mail. It's going to be very interesting to see what happens: Ferman likes Cronenberg, and has never cut his films, but will be under much pressure to ban 'Crash'. Seems that Westminster Council are also getting complaints, and may ban it even if the BBFC don't, knocking Leicester Square out. I reckon it'll get a cinema certificate (possibly delayed), but any video release will be a long way off.



Sunday 10th. Got to bed at 4am, having fallen asleep on a night bus for the first time. Up rather too early, back into town to see Abel Ferrara being interviewed. Lot of interesting tit-bits came out; it was originally Christopher Walken who was going to be the 'Bad Lieutenant', and one girl in the infamous car-masturbation sequence therein is actually Keitel's babysitter! An interesting look at an uncompromising director: rumours say a) that he lives in a New York squat and b) is not averse to the odd controlled substance. Whether true or not, I couldn't say, but the fact that they're plausible says a lot about the man.

*Small Time* (Shane Meadows) could be a British equivalent of 'El Mariachi', with a micro-budget of a mere five grand – though I can hardly believe that, maybe we're talking Mariachi-style hyperbole? For Mexico, read Nottingham, and the style here plays more like a documentary, with rapid cross-cutting between the inept crooks (dogfood heists are about their level) who're plotting *The Big One*. Half scripted, half improvised, it belies the budget as mentioned, and points up another rising talent. British cinema has more to offer than Emma Thompson. B-



I meet Phil Martin, the only man I know who got a ticket for 'Crash', and greet him warmly by the throat. Also the ubiquitous Michael Brooke, unofficial head of the Brit-pack on Internet newsgroup, alt.cult-movies. We discuss 'Crash', inevitably; word is it'll either get through uncut, or not at all. It won't go quietly, either way. Bearing in mind my 'Fetishes' experience, I lay off the beer before *Animal Love* (Ulrich Seidl). On balance, I might have been better indulging, as it singularly failed to live up to the "NB Some scenes may offend" programme note. Yes, it's about people's obsession with their pets, but delights in the banal to such an extent that it becomes banal itself and is the first disappointment of the festival. E. In theory, should stay for 'Under the Skin', but can't face 110 minutes of Peruvian cinema, so cut my losses early and head home.

Monday 11th. *Someone is Waiting* (Martin Donovan) doesn't sound like my kind of film: "a lyrical and moving tale of redemption and familial love that suggests death can offer hope to life". But Nastassja's in it, so I've got to see it – it's like my job and stuff. Not exactly cheery: the teenage hero starts off wanted for his father's murder, and life isn't exactly a bowl of cherries from then on. In flashback, we see his mother (NK) getting killed by bank robbers, for which drunken father Gabriel Byrne holds him responsible. Only a sense of responsibility to his siblings and the memory of his mother keep him going, until a struggle with Dad turns deadly. The visual equivalent of a Joy Division LP: bleak, depressing, but somehow uplifting, thanks to strong performances and a great soundtrack. Though we are not talking enormous commercial potential, it's unquestionably a worthy effort. B

Tuesday 12th - Thursday 14th. In the eye of the hurricane, a three-day break without any films. Instead, another media panic; the Evening Standard attempt to provoke more controversy by targeting the program of American underground films playing the ICA next weekend. No-one seems concerned, not even Virginia Bottomley, who wants local councils to ban 'Crash'. Ironically, the same edition has Gong Li, talking about how the oppressive Chinese government censor her work. I feel a letter to the editor coming on... Should have been double Gilliam on Thursday, a Guardian interview and a film on the making of '12 Monkeys'. But it clashed with Laibach in concert; after much agonising, they won, even though I'd bought the LFF tickets. Still not actually seen '12 Monkeys' so I decided there was little point in hearing all about it, and sold the tickets to Alex Chandon. As for Laibach, what can one say about a group whose pre-concert tape was 'Cat Stevens' Greatest Hits'? Sheer genius.

Friday 15th. Not sure why I went to *Tokyo Fist* (Tsukamoto Shinya), since I didn't really rate either 'Tetsuo' movie. Tsukamoto himself plays a salaryman whose wife is seduced by a boxer (played by Shinya's brother!); after being beaten up, he takes up boxing himself in preparation for... well, a final 15 minutes of weirdness. Unlike its predecessors, you can watch 'Tokyo Fist' in more than pop-promo sized chunks, but despite the odd disturbing image, by the end it still feels too much like Tsukamoto is going over the same ground once again: metal & flesh, speeded-up film, decay. Yawn. Someone suggested he'd have been an alternative to Cronenberg for 'Crash', but on this showing, it'd just have become 'Tetsuo 4'. Change the script, please. D-

Saturday 16th. Oops. After Thursday's explanation of why I didn't go to see Terry Gilliam, I find myself listening to '12 Monkeys' scriptwriters, David and Janet Peoples. I'd gone on the strength of David's work on 'Blade Runner' and 'The Unforgiven'; luckily, the discussion flows along general lines, the few '12 Monkey'-specific content merely pique my interest in the film more. David especially is a heartening figure, from the "I can do better than that" school of writers. He and his wife seem to make a good team; he views films as a collection of images, while she is more story-driven. I leave, with the firm intention of writing a script of my own...

Sunday 17th. *Microcosmos* (Claude Nuridsany). Appropriately enough for a film about insects, London Transport behaves like an anaesthetised slug: at 4pm. the bus I'm on is crawling round Parliament Square. Luckily, the LFF is also its usual tardy self and I hit my seat as the film starts. Basically, a nature film writ large; no commentary, just insects eating, fighting, breeding, living

and dying. However, the big screen adds a whole new dimension - though I'm not entirely happy, twitching nervously at 30-foot high wasps in THX. Truly a cinematic experience: once this impact has worn off, there's not much else on offer, but how can one resist a film where the leading players include "ladybird with seven spots, climbing caterpillar, bee gathering pollen"? C+

<b>friday</b> <b>22</b>	13.16 <i>Neneke II Bond</i> 15.45 <i>Love Saverade</i> 16.15 <i>Neneke and Bond</i> 20.45 <i>Love Saverade</i>	12.30 <i>Jesse Loungue</i> 15.30 <i>Carla's Song</i> 18.30 <i>Jesse Loungue</i> 21.00 <i>British Girl; Carla's Song</i>	14.00 <i>A Summer Garden</i> 16.15 <i>Weird as Weirder</i> 16.15 <i>A Summer Garden</i> 21.00 <i>Quarantine Steve Bu</i>
	<b>saturday</b> <b>23</b>	13.15 <i>River Street</i> 15.45 <i>Hi, Are You Alone?</i> 18.15 <i>Walking and Talking</i> 20.45 <i>The Daytrippers</i>	13.30 <i>Bassquiat</i> 16.00 <i>Phantom Lover</i> 18.30 <i>Bassquiat</i> 21.00 <i>Shella's Final Surprise</i>
<b>sunday</b> <b>24</b>	12.30 <i>Buddha Bless America</i> 15.00 <i>Tanna F L'aira</i> 17.30 <i>Libertaria</i>	10.45 <i>Orbit</i> 14.30 <i>To the Heart</i> 17.00 <i>The Pollenator</i>	11.00 <i>The New Way-Zoo</i> 14.30 <i>Quarantine Eric Arch</i> 16.15 <i>Life Et De</i> 18.00 <i>Quarantine</i>



Tony Rayns is the Antichrist of Oriental cinema as far as I'm concerned. His fondness for tedious arthouse fodder over explosive action means our views usually diverge sharply so I worry over his glowing review of [*Focus*] (Isaka Satoshi). But for once, we agree, even if he misses the obvious similarities to 'Man Bites Dog'. Both are scathing attacks on television culture, with film crews following anti-social loners – here, a cellphone eavesdropper – who find events outstripping them; as in MBD, our sympathies flip half-way through. The cause in 'Focus' is an overheard call detailing the location of a pistol; is it a hoax? Course not. Shot in long, unflinching takes, while perhaps lacking the sheer venom of its Belgian brother, it certainly hits the target. B+

Monday 18th. *Kids Return* (Takeshi Kitano). Has boxing suddenly become incredibly popular in Japan? I ask, as it features in recent films by two major directors: in 'Tokyo Fist' as a means of revenge, and here as a way out of a dead-end life. The main characters are a bunch of loser schoolkids, and we follow their paths through to adulthood: one becomes a boxer, one joins the Yakuza, and one...well, just *fails*. I detect a strong element of autobiography here – the two main protagonists harbour dreams of fame as a comedy act – but that isn't enough to hold interest, despite a similarly languid feel as 'Sonatine', where time also had a nebulous dimension. After the first hour, my interest started to wander, and never quite came back. D

Tuesday 19th. Unexpected festival surprises often turn out to be better than the planned movies. So it is with *Shine* (Scott Hicks). I bought a seat purely on recommendation, and when I looked it up in the program, my heart sank boot-wards. A biopic of a musician? Based on a true story? Shudder. Luckily, this is much more, especially after we pass the inevitable, clichéd, domineering father. Central character David Helfgott (played by three actors at various ages) proves how thin the line 'twixt genius and madness is, teetering between stardom and vagrancy. Remarkably restrained (bar Sir John Gielgud going OTT as only he can) and unsentimental, yet very funny at times and guaranteed to have you humming Rachmaninov's 3rd. A most pleasant experience. A-

That's more than can be said for *Irma Vep* (Olivier Assayas). Maggie Cheung plays herself, in Paris to remake a silent movie as a result of her 'Heroic Trio' role, only to find the production falling round her ears. It smacks of "let's mock Hong Kong cinema"; the clips from HT are edited, cropped and grainy, to make it look cheap and tacky, plus the film portrays fans of such films as shallow or unstable. Yet the director delivers something infinitely less interesting, full of banalities that fail to amuse in the slightest. The film-within-the-film has some promise, and Cheung provides the few worthwhile moments, but it's either the least amusing comedy since 'Ace Ventura', or a very nasty piece of intellectual arrogance. E+

The Guardian interview with Takeshi was slightly distancing; he spoke through an interpreter, so the sizeable Japanese contingent got the jokes earlier, and found them more amusing before translation. However, refreshing to hear a director who lets an audience come to their own conclusions, rather than forcing morals down their throat. Between directing, writing, painting, and acting, he's a busy man: still not 100% after a road accident, he had to pause a couple of times to take eye drops. Glad he's recovering though, we need more characters like him around.

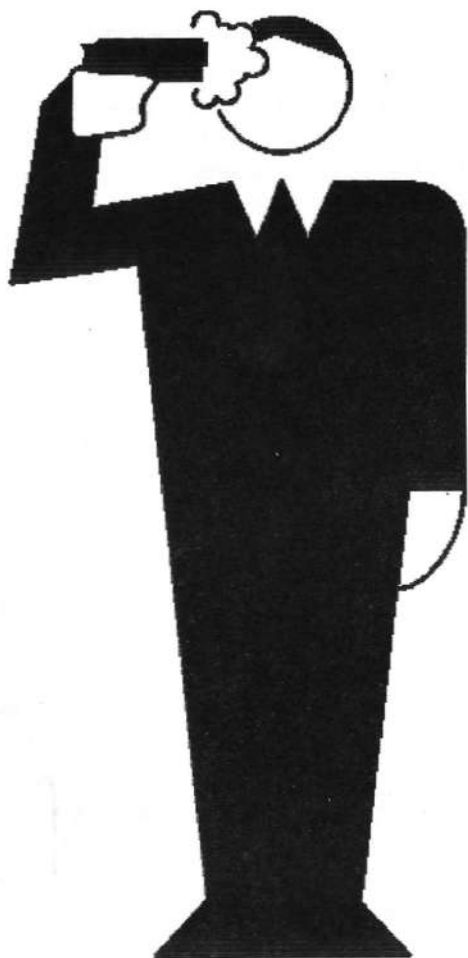


# LONDON FILM FESTIVAL 40<sup>th</sup>

Wednesday 20th. Aggravating letter in 'Time Out', from a guy bragging how three friends got tickets for 'Crash', despite not being BFI members. Now, how did they manage that, given it supposedly sold out before this BFI member got to it? So much for 'priority booking'. Humph. Maybe I'm paranoid, but I really do suspect a cabal runs the LFF, distributing tickets to their friends before we poor members get a sniff. Anyway, my membership has lapsed now – and will stay that way at least until 1997's festival!

What would the London Film Festival be, without a fix of everyone's pet abuse object, Jennifer Jason Leigh, a long-time TC fave since her enthusiastic portrayal of Stretcho, the amazing elastic girl in 'The Hitcher'. [That sentence will make no sense if you haven't seen the film. But hell, you should have. Go! Now!] This year, it's Kansas City (Robert Altman), which annoyingly opens in the West End on Friday anyway. Leigh is a gangster's moll whose husband has been captured by some nasty rivals (led by, of all people, a very creepy Harry Belafonte) and who kidnaps a politico's wife (Miranda Richardson) to try and get help. Though Leigh is her usual sterling self, there's a lot of slack here: characters whose relevance is unclear, and endless footage of jazz musicians jamming. If you knew about the period and characters involved, you'd find it a lot more enthralling; as is, while there's no denying the quality, it's all somewhat unfocused and pointless. C-

Thursday 21st. With the Daily Mail getting more and more hysterical, and Westminster Council electing to ban 'Crash', at least pending the BBFC decision, it seems an appropriate, if downbeat, moment to draw this report to a close – there's only a single movie left to see, and I do want to try and have one vaguely topical article in TC! Should 'King Girl' be the most amazing film I've ever seen, I'll drop something in the editorial. Otherwise: 'Fetishes' was the best of the fest (it's getting a cinema release – Westminster permitting, I guess), with 'Shine' the runner-up, and 'Animal Love' gets the TC Golden Raspberry for worst movie and most misleading advertising. Thank you and goodnight. Roll on next year.



"Stupid is as stupid does"  
- Excuses that are really  
not that much of an excuse

Lowell Altvater, 80, was charged with negligent assault in Sandusky, Ohio after he thought he saw a rat in his barn and fired his shotgun at it. It turned out to be his wife's hat, which she was wearing. Mrs. Altvater begged police not to file charges, but they did, in part because Lowell had shot himself in the leg in 1992 in the same barn after thinking then, too, that he had spotted a rat. *[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel-Toledo Blade, 20-12-95; Columbus Dispatch, Nov. 95]*

A bomb threat that forced a Royal Jordanian Airlines plane to land in Iceland en route to Chicago was discovered to have been made by a Chicago woman who was merely trying to prevent her mother-in-law, a passenger on the plane, from visiting her. And a former USAir flight attendant was sentenced to eight months in prison in May for making a bomb threat to force a landing so she could rest her ailing knee. *[Washington Times-Reuters, 11-11-95; Greensboro News Record, May95]*

Reading, Pennsylvania, county controller Judith Kraines complained at a commissioners' meeting in January about having to type letters and do other business on a typewriter because her computer was old and no one had been able to get it to work for two years. "If we had a computer," she said, "letters would go out faster." Three days later, she announced that the computer she was complaining about in fact had not been plugged in to any electrical outlet and that when the plug was inserted and the computer was turned on, it worked fine. *[Reading Eagle-Times, 21-1-96]*

At an April court martial at Elmendorf (Alaska) Air Force Base, a sergeant was found guilty of using cocaine. He had denied the charge, which was based on a urine test. His explanation was that his part-time job as a pizza deliverer takes him to drug-using neighbourhoods; he has a habit of licking his finger when counting out dollar bills for change; and some of his customers undoubtedly used rolled bills to snort cocaine. *[Sourdough Sentinel, 19-4-96]*





The above illustration is taken from a series of postcards by noted artist Trevor Brown. The full-colour postcards (the b&w reproduction above is a mere shadow) are available from TC at £2.50 for four, or £4.50 for eight, including postage. Guaranteed to disturb all maiden aunts.