

# TRASH CITY



22



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# WELCOME TO THE VIDEODROME

**"High culture will survive, but it's for the elite. Trash culture has to be created."**

**Prof. Peter Gyorgy, Communications professor, Budapest University**

Another year, another TC – which, as a rate of production goes, is actually a marked improvement on the past couple of issues. But it seems that no matter how long it takes to produce an issue of TC, I always find myself in a race against time at the last minute. Normally, it's because I'm going away on holiday, or there's a major sales event looming, that kind of thing, but this time, it's largely a desire to remain on the cutting edge of creating trash culture, as the Professor says above.

One of the inevitable risks of an irregular schedule such as ours is that someone else will steal your thunder and leave you with the publishing equivalent of an out-of-date pork pie. Discovering such things does tend to concentrate the mind, and I've just learned that the next issue of 'Bizarre' magazine will be a wrestling special, which is distressing close to our theme for this issue, though the odds *probably* favour theirs being more fat blokes, and less cute babes. If not, then they must have a spy in TC Towers... While it is another indicator that the 'sport' is on the verge of breaking through into mainstream culture, it does rather put a damper on my plans to sell them an article on Japanese women's wrestling.

It also means I'm currently running round in a panic, trying to complete the remaining 25 pages and get this out first – typically, our computer has chosen this occasion to die: anyone know what 'Windows Protection Error' means? So if this doesn't come out by August 10th, probably because of Lino (some things *never* change! Though I now know the effectiveness of pizza as a tool of bribery against him...the words "I'm buying" rapidly equate to a finished article), I want to say it's clearly just a case of great minds thinking alike. On the other hand, if we do get there first, obviously they are nothing but a bunch of plagiaristic bastards. © Still, they didn't include 'Jail Babes' in this month's selection of the ten weirdest porn mags, so we're one up on them there at least.

We've kinda gone retro. Back in the prehistoric era of TC, before we had any technology of our own, it was written, produced and published using the technology at work. Though the office photocopier isn't quite up to the equivalent of 25,000 A4 sheets, it has largely been laid-out and the masters printed there. This is purely because Word 97 sucks. And this suckiness extends right the way down to the annoying animated paper-clip which is the help system: someone, deep in the bowels of Microsoft, no doubt thought that was "cute". They probably like Furbys too. While you can turn this particular facet off, the whole interface has been redesigned, for no readily apparent reason, and things that worked perfectly well before have mutated in some arcane way. Rather than re-learn a whole new system, I've opted to remain Luddite, at least until TC gets out. Besides, the laser-printers at work are a lot spiffier.

You'll notice one or two other slight changes to this issue, largely in response to...well, popular demand might be claiming a bit much, let's just say I got fed up with fabricating reasons for the lack of page numbers, and for why we only ever published double issues. The former was not without its problems, especially in a publication with all the solidity of slam-dancing mercury, and the latter necessitated fiddling with subscription lists, to halve the number of future editions subscribers will get. [This will have no effect on the TC in your pocket, however.]

So I hope you're happy. I know I am.

Yes, actually, life at the moment isn't too bad. The production of this issue has been untroubled by personal traumas of any significant sort, and life is sailing serenely on. No psychotic girlfriend, imbecile boss, or even any trouble with HM Customs & Excise to report – I think they got fed up opening parcels of microwave popcorn. About the most traumatic thing to report is losing my window seat at work after we moved offices, and even I can't wring a TC article out of that. Either I've finally sussed this lifestyle thing, or perhaps more likely, this is fate lulling me towards a sense of complacency, in preparation for a fall.

The TC website continues to grow apace: we seem to be getting about 500 visitors a week, though I'm not sure how many of these are just me, checking on to see how many visitors we've had. Stop on by for a huge selection of exclusive film reviews, weird news, editorial chat and strip-club reports: <http://www.trshcity.demon.co.uk>. And while we're shamelessly plugging our own products, this issue's cover has followed the previous three into the realms of T-shirt-dom. Available in a wide range of colours and sizes (XL and black, to be specific), the breast pocket has the words "Trash City" while the back has an enormous depiction of the cover. Eight pounds for that, including postage, or get in touch with me or Chris for full details of the range of TC apparel.

We're pleased to announce that another TC-writer has followed Todd Grimson into the ranks of professional novelists: Peter J. Evans, former correspondent on the phonetics of luxury cars, has had "Mnemosyne's Kiss" published, a typically dark slab of cyberpunk – any book that starts off with the heroine's death certainly satisfies me. And cover artist Rik Rawling has produced another issue of the twisted and demented offering which is 'Hog': obtainable for £2 in only the most disreputable newagents or, more likely, from him at 94 Emet Grove, Emersons Green, Bristol BS16 7EG. Guaranteed to be absolutely free from morals whatsoever.

Speaking of names in the TC hall of fame, bumped into Alex Chandon at the weekend, director of low-budget classic 'Bad Karma' – he's still slugging away there, having just finished a promo/documentary for Cradle of Filth. Keep an eye out for it on MTV. And further down the line, I almost fell off my comfy armchair watching C5's bizarre SF show, 'Lexx', when I spotted Jorg Buttgerit working as a creative consultant. Mind you, given one of its major themes is a woman's lust for a dead guy, perhaps it wasn't really so surprising to find the man behind 'Nekromantik' involved somewhere...

As I write this, we're three days away from the cinematic event of the year, the opening of 'The Phantom Menace'. Or rather, the box-office event of the year, since most neutral observers (and not a few fans) have been severely disappointed by the film. Not that this will make a difference, since it's less a film with an associated range of toys, as a merchandising juggernaut with a tie-in movie. I may go see it, I may not – I've been taking advantage of Virgin Cinema's monthly passes, and it's been a revelation, in that I happily take filmic risks unprecedented since the days of Scala triple bills. It's amazing what you'll go see, when it's not actually costing you anything.

However, I may reject 'The Phantom Menace' purely on principle, since there are times when I yearn for the days of *intelligent* SF cinema, and by that I don't mean over-rated action flicks like 'The Matrix' which, while possessing absolutely stunning visuals, think that lobbing in a couple of references to 'Alice In Wonderland' will do for depth instead of characters. Mind you, when was the last time Keanu Reeves played a character that wasn't so shallow, they'd need a set of water wings to cross a puddle?

Thanks: Chris Fata for...well, pretty much everything. If it wasn't for her, you *certainly* wouldn't be reading this, least of all in six months less than the last one! And the following people, in no order, have also bought me drinks, talked to me, and supplied information, films or just a good laugh: Rob, Andy, Lino, Ian + Kini, Steve, Rudy, Andrew, Brian, Vanessa, John, Jim, Jonathan, Nick, Martin, Pam, Simon, Nicolas, Mitch + Karim, Richard at the Associates and Miles.



## TC Travel #1: Fire and Laughing in Las...er, Florida

I'm gradually ticking off the corners of America, like a bingo-player. Having done top-right and bottom-left, this year saw another one crossed out: the bottom-right, with the destination for the first part of the '98 TC tour being Florida, land of oranges, Disney, and really big crocodiles. Flew Virgin out to Orlando, and I heartily recommend them; seatback TVs, goodie bags, and a safety film featuring the voices of Leslie Phillips and Ewan MacGregor. Cool.

Downtown Orlando is one long strip of tourist traps, shopping malls, T-shirt shops and billboards. Didn't spend much time there, even for nutritional purposes, preferring to graze on snacks and carry-out food while on the move. I was, however, introduced to the delights of laser-tag, and promptly had my butt kicked by Robert and Emily, two children temporarily acquired for the trip – thereby allowing me to act the kid as well i.e. run around with a light gun like a total lunatic. Refreshingly cathartic.

A car is near-essential to reach the major attractions, though shuttle buses run to them if you are staying in a major hotel. Ours was a convertible, but we spent more time with the top up, preferring the comfort of air-conditioning to the pose value of cruising around with the wind in our hair. This was because the heat in Florida is so intense, even the breeze fails to mitigate things, merely making it feel like driving around inside a giant hair-dryer. As a result of this, the most commonly seen item at the theme parks was not the camera, but a spray bottle with a fan attached – although the fan itself was superfluous, since any water squirted onto your skin evaporated in seconds. Convenient to have Emily, for whom being asked to spray water at an adult was an eternal source of delight.



A straightforward comparison of Universal and Disney World would show the former well ahead for anyone older than about 14. "Terminator 3 in 3-D" is about the best show I've seen, combining live-action, film, and special effects to very impressive result, while 'Back to the Future' is also hugely memorable. Just don't sit in the back, as it's violent enough to leave the most sanguine of people with a migraine, after their head bounces off the backboard for the Nth time.

The 'Jaws' ride also rates high, in an amusing-rubber-fish-and-pyrotechnics way, and of course, there was the 'Xena & Hercules' show, which takes you through the making of an episode, turns audience members into centaurs, and so on. Even Emily, who had been making "If-this-is-not-a-ride-why-are-we-going-on-it-then" noises in the queue, was won over. The major disappointment was their new 'Twister' attraction; a stiff breeze and a plastic flying cow do not set my imagination alight.

Comparatively speaking, Disney World was less interesting, being more aimed at children. The ending of 'Splash Mountain' is okay, but you've got to sit through an eternal 'Brer Rabbit' diorama, having queued for a minor geological epoch. It's the thrill-ride equivalent of unsatisfactory sex. 'E.T.' is even worse, whiny eco-nonsense about helping to save his planet. Hey, it's your planet, bud; you broke it, you fix it. This is the Disney problem; it looks terribly cute, but has no substance or, worse still, the substance leaves any sane adult with a terrible desire to leap on Mickey Mouse and rip his head off. I'd even worked out a technique (firm grasp of the ears followed by a rapid twisting motion). But luckily for them, the ferocious heat seemed to be keeping most of the characters off the streets.

According to Robert, Space Mountain was majorly kick-ass, and his good taste in such matters was reflected in the massive queues. Too massive for us, in fact. However, there was one other memorable moment, which required less standing around in long lines. 'Alien Encounters' is surprisingly un-Disney; a teleportation demonstration goes somewhat wrong, leaving a pissed-off BEM to roam the audience, with a healthy volume of body fluids being sprayed around. Maybe not quite Peter Jackson territory, but after the rest of the park (the moral equivalent of eight hours eating candy floss) it felt like an Italian cannibal movie.

One other tip is to wait till the end of the day, as by this stage, most parents have been run ragged by the amazing energy levels of their children (I'm sure Emily & Robert must have been powered by Duracell), then you can escape to "It's a Small World". This is an incredibly surreal experience, a boat ride which swirls you past scenes supposed to represent countries of the world, peopled by animatronic puppets with eyes like Chucky from "Child's Play". And all the while, this song is playing, on and on, in thirteen different languages. After three minutes, it's annoying beyond belief. At six, you pray for it to end. By the time ten have passed, you're contemplating leaping out of the boat and wading to safety. But then you enter a serene state of catatonia, which with luck will persist for the rest of the evening. Everything seems incredibly hilarious, even the crappiest attraction – and the now-closed (despite a major campaign!) "Mr. Toad's Wild Ride" certainly falls into that category, but it's amazing what kids will suddenly find incredible, when the alternative is leaving the park. I found myself giggling uncontrollably, and quite forgot my inclination to commit GBH on Mickey.

From Orlando, the next plan was to head to the Atlantic coast, maybe go to Cape Canaveral. We'd heard there were fires over that way, but of course, they wouldn't be anywhere near the tourist areas. Ha. Ha. Ha. It's slightly disturbing to see the odd flame licking up beside the highway. It's moderately disturbing to find all of Daytona Beach smelling like a wet bonfire. It's quite disturbing to find your car covered in ash, as if a volcano was nearby. And it's really **very** disturbing to go to a restaurant and be told that, sorry, they can't serve you because all their staff are being evacuated – not that they're bothering with the *tourists*.

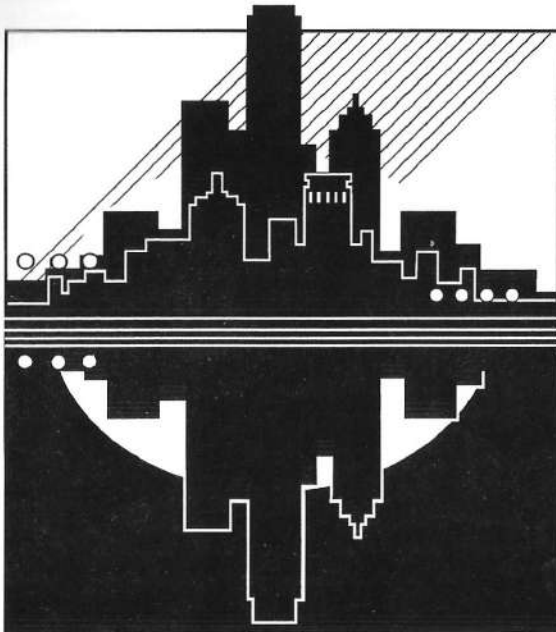
This was, naturally, meat and drink to the local TV stations, who delighted in running hysterical special news bulletins with titles like 'Florida in Flames', giving over made-up reporters the chance to ask local residents who'd just seen their houses burn down, that immortal question, "How do you feel?". Of course, this being America, where nothing is real unless it happens on TV, the responses were surprisingly restrained, rather than choosing to punch the idiot's lights out.

We decided to leave Daytona before our lungs completely clogged up with soot, and headed back to Orlando for an bonus day meandering around places like "Hooters", a restaurant which specialises in...no, not roast owl, but helpings of cheesecake, in the shape of attractively underclad waitresses. The premise is apparently to trim the uniforms as far as the law will permit, though the chain has inevitably been slapped with suits by ugly women claiming discrimination, and has toned things down as a result. Still, if fresh-faced cheerleader types in crop tops and tight shorts are your thing - and why not? - then it's certainly worth a visit. The food is...I can't remember anything about it, but I think there is some. I wonder if the London franchise is available, though a bunch of mascara'd-up Sharons has less appeal.

Florida is fun, but somehow the parts of it which I visited this time seem lacking in character, even the sleazy, neon-clad character of Vegas. Its spirit is as flat as its geography: perhaps it takes more time and effort than I had spare, to peel away the smiling tourist facade and find the real place – jai-alai (see later) was probably the closest I came to seeing "real" Floridans, rather than those in service industries with fixed smiles and Mouse-ears(TM). However, if you're looking for an uncomplicated, shallow and *warm* good time, Florida comes recommended.



**I was going to use my 'Splash Mountain' pic, in which I merely raise a sardonic eye-brow, but figured this would appeal to TC readers more...**



## Against Work

*"Nothing is fun when you **have to do it** – over & over, again & again – or else you'll be evicted... I've always considered writing the most hateful kind of work. I suspect it's a bit like fucking, which is only fun for amateurs."*

Hunter S. Thomson, "Sleeve Notes for 'Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas'"

Work has been a facet of human life since the earliest times; it's just that there's a lot more of it now. In caveman days, a few hours grubbing round for roots and berries was probably sufficient to keep you in the style to which you had become accustomed. However, this ignores time spent running from sabre-tooth tigers and other predators, keen to clock off early themselves, and said "style" largely involved huddling round fires, with a spot of cave-painting for entertainment.

Nowadays, the average citizen will probably spend the equivalent of 15 years of their life at work – roughly what they'd get for murder, except there, you might get time off for good behaviour. And unless you are happy with a diet of nuts 'n' shoots rather than kebabs, the odds of getting away with murder are better than getting away with not working, accidents of birth and lottery jackpots notwithstanding. The best way to relate to work is treat it as a chronic illness; it's something you'd rather not have, but you've just got to handle, and hopefully, it won't have too much impact on your life. The question shouldn't be "how do I not work?", more "how do I deal with work?"

For there is a major difference between working and *working*. It's largely one of attitude: cynicism with a capital C is required, in massive quantities. Screw all those people who try to install a "work ethic" or get you to "take pride in your job"; they don't really care whether you do or not, they just want to increase productivity and keep you malleable. A 'happy' employee is a controlled employee, and better still, one that will make no demands on his/her employer.

Fear is the key, on both sides, and the whip-hand rests with whoever shows it the least. Economic recession is great for bosses, as the worries of redundancy and unemployment mean they can turn the screws on their wage slaves and pare benefits to the bone. Conversely, in boom times, whether for an entire country or just a specific industry, employees can call the shots. No-one in the computing business, for example, need fear unemployment this side of the Millennium. You can happily slack off, safe in the knowledge that any replacement for you will a) be hard to find, and b) probably be even worse at the minimal amount of work you did. In most non-manual jobs, active incompetence is required to get fired, mere non-productivity is rarely deemed sufficient grounds for dismissal.

As Thomson points out in the quote above, it's near-impossible to enjoy work; those who think they do are simply deluding themselves. You may like the people, or the money, but don't confuse these. Even if you enjoy the task initially, the drudgery of **having** to do it will soon grind away the pleasure. Back at school, I happily gave up my free time to tinker with The School Computer, an Apple II. Nowadays, programming would come pretty low down my list of preferred pastimes – somewhere between ironing and self-mutilation.



## Mastering e-mail.

Although the "paperless office" is a myth, the art of electronic communication is a crucial one in today's workplace, being both a boon and bane to the employee seeking to escape effort. It is a lot easier to lie to someone when you don't have voice inflection or body language to give you away – but that cuts both ways. Here are ten rules to allow you to make the most of this fearsome weapon in office politics.

1. Send your messages to as few people as possible; this reduces the risk of interference from the dangerously competent. However, include one completely irrelevant person as a recipient, just to worry them.
2. Refer frequently to previous, but completely nonexistent, communications. Most managers are so snowed under with email, they'll assume they deleted it by mistake.
3. Pitch your writing at the wrong level; technical jargon (fabricated if necessary) bewilders many people, but they'll never admit it. Similarly, mentions of departmental stationery budgets will confuse techies.
4. When you need to stall for time, ask for clarification of trivial points.
5. Pop into work on the way home from the pub, and send a few random messages to give the impression you were there till 11:30pm.
6. Mark all your unimportant emails with FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION, and ask for replies to hideously complex issues by the end of the day. Or better still, the end of yesterday.
7. Keep everything. With a hundred departmental monkeys banging away on their keyboards, eventually you'll have a collection of messages which can be used to "prove" any statement you want.
8. Attach documents which are either pointless, or in an obscure computer format not used this decade.
9. Conceal essential information in the middle of a very long, very bland message.
10. Write messages, and don't send them out – just keep a convincing-looking hard-copy of the draft.

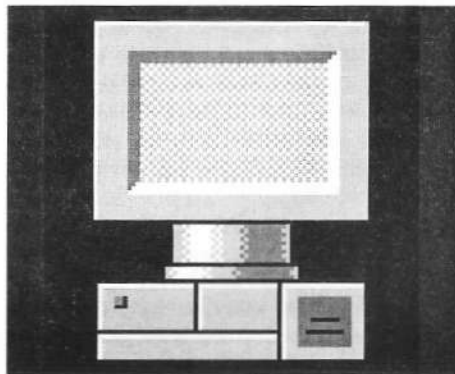
And if anyone queries you about anything,  
**look blank and blame the system...**

Incidentally, this applies just as much to any field of employment. "Wouldn't you like to be a professional film critic?", people sometimes say. "No" is the answer, because I'd then have to sit through turgid Meryl Streep chick-flicks – the cold truth is, no-one will pay sufficiently for the weird stuff. As a freelancer, I'd have to put out roughly the equivalent of TC every month to bring in my current income. Churning out that kind of volume would no longer be a pleasure.

"Work smarter, not harder" is the key; the pinnacle of this being when you can delegate your entire workload to other people. In the modern, interconnected world, there is almost always someone else around who has a legitimate interest. [If not, then the task can safely be ignored as trivial.] Ensnare them by asking their opinions, then give them info under the guise of "keeping them informed", and finally offer to help them if they get stuck. Hey, presto. Your work has become theirs.

This technique does have its drawbacks, however, in that you may be seen as a manager. This is risky: while everyone knows they never do any work, people will start inviting you to meetings or copying you in on memos – before you know it, you'll be staying late to catch up on the paperwork. Aim to keep any areas of actual responsibility minimized as far as possible.

By using these simple guidelines, you won't be able to stop actually working, but the required effort involved will become less, thereby making the whole ordeal less unpleasant. Or, perhaps to extend Hunter's simile, we are all prostitutes – the issue is finding a method to handle living with our pimps...



## Floozies with Uzis, Broads with Swords and other violent femmes

Why will I happily sit through a lame, no-brain actioner with a female star, when I give the works of Steven Seagal a wide berth? While some might choose to see signs of submissive fantasies in this interest in strong women, I would say it's less a sexual thrill than an aesthetic one. Tedium can be relieved by cuteness – air-hostesses serve much the same purpose. An action film with a beautiful heroine may not be intrinsically 'better', but it certainly rates a point or two on the TC watchability chart. And if I can get my fix of cathartic violence in a package which is attractive to look at, why not?

Hollywood has had something of a love-hate relationship with female action stars: they love them, but unfortunately, the audience seems to hate them, and as a result, the last few years have been littered with the stiff, cold corpses of movies like 'Tank Girl', 'Barb Wire' and 'The Long Kiss Goodnight'. This is doubly odd, since television has shown that there is undeniably a market for the likes of Buffy, Xena and Nikita. The reasons for the cinematic failures are complex and varied: perhaps they reflect a deep psychological and possibly Oedipal fear among the core 16-25 male audience. Or maybe it's just that the films are crap.

Quite conceivably, both could be the case – Pamela Anderson's fans may have preferred something more soft and pliable (such as her sucking Tommy's dick?) rather than a near-psychotic and amoral Humphrey Bogart ripoff. I happily admit, her attempts at "acting" were laughable, but, hey, when has that ever stopped Oliver Grunier? For the truth is that action heroes of both sexes are almost invariably chosen for things other than their acting ability. That really hurts, because while you can give the illusion of anyone getting kicked, shot or flying through the air (see Kylie Minogue in 'Street Fighter II' for an example), getting them to deliver lines in a convincing manner is harder to fake.

For men, the favoured element is having won a sizable number of maximum brutality martial arts titles, but for women it's apparently more important to be a soft-porn model, beauty queen or MTV video-jockeyette. This is perhaps inevitable, given the makers' obsessive welding of sex with violence, regardless of relevance. It's apparently not enough to have a woman wielding a semi-automatic weapon, she's got to do it in high heels and lingerie, which will inevitably cramp her style. Guys rarely have to put up with the same kind of thing, though Van Damme's buttocks do seem to appear in his films with monotonous regularity.

In the best examples, sexuality flows naturally from the heroine, rather than where she's trying to look like Madonna circa 1989. However, as with any kind of film, there are no guarantees of success or failure, and fetishism can work supremely well in small doses - 'Queen's High', where Cynthia Khan goes berserk with an Uzi, clad in a blood-spattered wedding dress, comes to mind here. Equally, getting a "proper" actress is no guarantee of success, as is proven by Oscar winner Geena Davis's twin bombs, 'Cut-throat Island' and 'The Long Kiss Goodnight'. One has to wonder what Paul Verhoeven's unmade take on the former, 'Mistress of the Seas' would have been like.

So here are 26 entries, one for each letter of the alphabet. This list is by no means comprehensive, nor is quality any part of the criteria for selection – like women themselves, the following cover the good, the bad and the ugly... However, our little tour through the alphabet of kick-ass women begins with probably the greatest of 'em all:





**The single most recognisable image in female action cinema.**

Breath taker, whose presence does at least explain the otherwise entirely superfluous prologue. Joan Severance looks great in the title role, like Xena: Warrior Princess right down to her armoured ponytail + lovely blue eyes, though put it this way, she must also have gone through a few Lady Gillettes in that costume. With so much effort spent making her look spiffy, the plot and characters suffer badly – for some reason, the credits include a 'Donkey Wrangler', which presumably refers to the actors, since I don't recall any long-eared equines. And I've seen racist, sexist, homophobic movies before, but this is the first one where the villains are asthma sufferers. Roll on Part 2! [Not to mention the proposed TV series, albeit without the depilated delights of Ms. Severance.] C+

### **C is for CIA: Code-name Alexa - and the rest of the Nikita clones**

While the original remains a classic - no more need really be said - there have been plenty of imitations, official and otherwise, since the success of Besson's movie. Of course, few come anywhere close. 'Black Cat', the Hong Kong copy, did at least have a sparky central actress in Jade Leung, and was popular enough to spawn a sequel, though 'Black Cat 2' is closer to 'Peter Pan', thanks to excessive fly-by-wire work. 'The Assassin' was about as good as most Hollywood remakes - not very - and is best considered a dodgy dubbing job, while TV series 'La Femme Nikita' ran out of steam rapidly. 'Alexa' has a somewhat flimsy grasp with respect to the jurisdiction of US governmental organizations, and has the CIA openly operating inside America, turning captured terrorist Alexa (Kathleen Kinmont) into a government tool overseen by Lorenzo Lamar, while cop O.J. Simpson picks up the debris. It does at least throw a couple of new ideas into the mix but, as with all the clones, the problem is that 'Nikita' is simply superior in every way. Better to check out Kinmont in barbarian bimbo pic, 'Phoenix the Warrior'. D

**A is for Aliens - "Get away from her, you bitch!"**  
Back when work began on this film, James Cameron was best known for 'Piranha 2', though he had just finished a little SF pic starring an Austrian body-builder. So who'd have guessed he'd turn in a contender for best action film of all time? Big guns, big characters and big one-liners mesh perfectly around Sigourney Weaver's Ripley, a reluctant goddess of war. She alone would guarantee this its blue plaque of honour, but then there's also Vasquez, admirably played by Jeanette Goldstein – alongside these two, the men are spineless wimps. The finale has a nicely equilateral feel to it, the two queens fighting over Newt, like some bizarre lesbian custody battle. Cameron enhanced his reputation as a "feminist" with 'Terminator 2', in which Linda Cameron turned para-military (albeit with shaven armpits), then blew it all in 'True Lies', Jamie Lee Curtis flapping her way around the screen like a startled, if well-muscled, butterfly. And while I think we should draw a polite veil over 'Titanic', Cameron's place in the pantheon is already assured. A+

### **B is for Black Scorpion - a close shave...**

This is dreadful. However, it is dreadful in a heart-warming and largely enjoyable way, even if it's admiring how the bondage-clad-vigilante-ex-cop-with-a-murdered-father-heroine's high heels change from six-inch stilettos to flat boots, depending on whether she's standing around being stern or kicking arse. Equally endearing is a low-rent Darth Vader known as (giggle) the

## **D** is for *The Demolitionist* - Blondes Have More Guns

The special effects firm of KNB (Kurtzmann, Nicotero and Berger) have been involved in many genre classics, for example, 'Evil Dead 2' and 'From Dusk Till Dawn'. But have they learned anything about film-making? This film is a femme-fatale version of 'Robocop', with Nicole Eggert as the resurrected crime-fighter, taking on Richard Grieco and Tom Savini. It's very cheap, the total budget was a mere one million dollars, and you can tell from the lame climax that the money ran out – plans for a massive Savini/Eggert sword fight went by the board. For the most part though, it doesn't show too badly, with at least the FX being up to scratch, as you'd expect. While we ain't talking Dostoevsky, you get lots of cool firepower, blood squibs that explode in clouds of pink dust, and Eggert in an incredibly tight costume. Could have been much worse, really – at least in the American version, as the BBFC were impressed enough to cut out four minutes. **B-**

## **E** is for *Eve of Destruction* - Uzi does it [or is it an Ingram?]

The "renegade robot" subgenre of violent totty is surprisingly common and, as perhaps the first, this was a remarkably influential B-movie, with 'Long Kiss Goodnight' in particular borrowing the 'accidental' triggering of dual personas (one motherly, the other aggressively slutty) and the wise-cracking black sidekick, but 'Species' and 'Barb Wire' also appropriate elements.

Renee Soutendijk is both single-mom scientist, and her nuclear-laden, gun-totin', android creation. Government agent Gregory Hines has to track the artificial one down, despite it possessing far better dress sense than its dowdy mentor – and it'd be much more fun on a night out. When bullets are flying, the film really motors; between times, Hines shoulders the burden of interest with a nicely dry performance which helps divert attention from the obvious plot holes. Trivia note: director/writer Duncan Gibbins died trying to rescue his cat in the '93 Hollywood fires. **B-**



Renee Soutendijk goes out in a blaze of glory

## **F** is for *Fatal Termination* - the Moon is eclipsed

While any Moon Lee film is a viable candidate for inclusion, here she is upstaged, by one of the youngest action actresses ever, who is only about four years old. It's a shining example of how a single scene can lift an otherwise commonplace movie: in this case, Moon clinging to the bonnet of the bad guys' car, while it careers at high velocity through the street. The clincher, however, is that an evil scoundrel is dangling her character's wee daughter out of the window by the hair, like an unusual pennant, and the tiny terror is entirely convincing. Though surely they wouldn't really hang a toddler out of a speeding car...would they? Regardless of such brief moral qualms, this is a perfect example of the "only in a Hong Kong movie" moment. Without wishing to give everything away, suffice it to say that Moon need not worry too much about future school expenses – and for that reason, and not just because it contains corrupt, slimy Customs officers, this one holds a special place in our heart. **C+**



**G** is for *Ghost in the Shell*, plus other large-eyed anime women

Japanese animation is not a homogeneous genre. It runs the gamut in style and content from the sublime to the ridiculous. But in general, its hit-rate with female action heroines is significantly better than Hollywood: while the West dips its toes in the water, Japan does lengths up and down the pool. Aika,

Bubblegum Crisis, Dirty Pair: you could do an A-Z without leaving Tokyo. And, indeed, virtually without leaving the works of Masamune Shirow: Applesseed, Black Magic, Dominion. 'Ghost in the Shell' has all the elements he loves – androids, babes and really cool weapons. These factors are great, and the look combines computer graphics and traditional animation to good effect. A shame, therefore, that the plot leaves a lot to be desired: it starts off as the hunt for a rogue AI, then gets lost in pseudo-philosophical ruminations about the nature of humanity. 'Battle Angel Alita' did this sort of thing better, and far less obviously; 'Ghost' grinds to a halt for exposition before shooting off at 100 m.p.h. once more. The resulting ride is as you'd expect: very bumpy, albeit never boring. **C**

**H** is for *Heroic Trio* - Now That's What I Call a Six-pack

If one uberbabe is good, two is better, and three the stuff of which dreams are made. Besides Michelle Yeoh, you have the fabulous Maggie Cheung, and the just-as-wonderful Anita Mui, in an epic comic-book tale which cranks all emotions up to eleven. This is a chick-flick, in the strict sense of the word, with heavy doses of tearful romance, terminal illness, and even babies (yeuch!). But the irony is laid on thick, with all of the above subverted in delicious ways, leaving it teetering beautifully on the edge of self-parody. Larger-than-life characters, excellent action, and perhaps the greatest theme song in HK cinema, make it one of the best. The sequel, 'Executioners' is radically different, a grim thriller set in a totalitarian future, by the end of which, there is a vacancy in the titular group... Given the pointed, political satire, it's appropriate that it was pretty much the last great female action film to come out of Hong Kong. **A** and **B-** respectively.

**I** is for *In the Line of Duty* - "Do you know you freed a scoundrel? Are you feeling pleasant?"

This series, of films produced by Hong Kong's D&B Films, initially starred Michelle Yeoh, then known as Michelle Khan; after the first two, she married D&B's owner, and was replaced by Cynthia Khan. The series illustrates the nightmare of multiple titles: there is no part 1 or 2 in Hong Kong, it was only at the third film that the monicker was formally used there, following the success of the first two under that name in continental Europe. And as for Britain, well, pay attention...

HK title	British title
ROYAL WARRIORS	POLICE ASSASSINS
YES, MADAM	POLICE ASSASSINS 2
IN THE LINE OF DUTY 3	FORCE OF THE DRAGON
IN THE LINE OF DUTY 4	IN THE LINE OF DUTY

There, I hope that's cleared everything up. The series was reviewed in TC12 (out of print now, but they're up on the web site) – suffice to say here that Michelle Yeoh went on to

greater things, the series petered out, D&B went bankrupt, and Cynthia Khan was last heard of making poverty-row cheapies in the Phillipines. However, all of the above are worth checking out, and are shining examples of the girls-with-guns genre.

## **J** is for James Bond and his girls – The Magnificent 007

As discussed elsewhere, about the only good thing in 'Tomorrow Never Dies' was the presence of former beauty-queen and action actress Michelle Yeoh, though she was woefully underused, and her character hideously underwritten. But she was scarcely novel; Bond girls (especially the nasty ones) have often been feistier than average: Grace Jones and Famke Janssen are undeniable evidence that being bad can be very good. Pussy Galore in 'Goldfinger' is another prototype, with Honor Blackman more or less reprising her Avengers role: She flies planes! She smokes! She knows karate! And proving that Michelle Yeoh was a *long* way from being the first 007 starlet possessing a lethal kick, back in 1963, 'From Russia With Love' gave us Rosa Klebb and her spiked shoes; her job interview for a prospective assassin is a knuckle-dustered punch in the guts. This woman is hard: actress Lotte Lenya was a former child prostitute, and also married - twice - to Kurt Weill. But see elsewhere for a fuller discussion of 007 and his women...

## **K** is for *Knights*: cue Python jokes

If you've got wooden actors, it's a tried and tested routine to have 'em play robots: see Arnie for details. So when all but one of your stars are mechanical men, what does it say about their acting ability? For that's what we have here, behind a title whose relevance escapes me. 'Vampires' would be closer, as the cyborgs rely on human blood for fuel, can only be killed with a knife through the brain, etc. Against them is nice 'borg Kris Kristofferson, a surprising but effective action hero, who trains human fighter and five-time kickboxing champion Kathy Long to take on cyborg leader Job – Lance Henriksen adds to his collection of memorable villains. Though chunks of this are frankly laughable, it does catch fire when Long starts to kick arse with a no-nonsense style, and as ever in films with cyborgs, you get a thoughtful debate about the qualities of humanity. The ending points blatantly to a series – though it never materialised, this didn't stop director Albert Pyun returning to the genre (see R). C+



**Kathy Long looks menacing;  
Kris Kristofferson lurks.**

## **L** is for *The Long Kiss Goodnight* – “Chefs do that.”

After 'Thelma and Louise' (a film which proves a cliched, polemic script can be salvaged by kick-ass direction and performances), Geena Davis seemed to get a taste for action. Sadly, the audience begged to differ, first for 'Cut-throat Island', then in this, again under then-hubby Renny Harlin, which can't decide whether it wants to be a warm, fuzzy family film or amoral, seditious, slaughter. Davis certainly cuts a peroxide blonde dash, but it's jarringly at odds with the love shown to her annoying, whiny brat daughter – “are we going to die?” she bleats, and you really hope the answer is yes. Samuel L. Jackson supports bravely, but the plot surpassed my (highly flexible) disbelief and the good lines get mis-directed. This idea has potential, which makes the final affirmation of all-American family values sadly wasteful. I feel I should also point out that Geena Davis is the only woman in the world who can be dunked repeatedly in ice-cold water without her nipples getting even *slightly* perky. Now, that's what I call tough... C-

**M** is for *Mulan* – and also for *Mononoke Hime* **M**

Since the pseudo-feminist dreck of 'Beauty and the Beast', Disney have been trying to dump a reputation for wimpy, wall-flower heroines who do little except get rescued. Here, they've nailed it spot-on, with a heroine who goes her own way without needing to behave like Andrea Dworkin with a hangover. And they know it – put out in '98, it's already being re-released. Sure, it's still Disney, U-rated and with songs, but they're easy enough to ignore. The usual problem is a bland central character, with great villains and sidekicks: while Eddie Murphy, the guardian "lizard" ("*dragon...I don't do that tongue thing!*"), still steals the show, *Mulan* herself is memorable and endearing as she joins the Chinese army as a man, to save her father; it's the villainous Hun, Shan-Yu, who is probably the least convincing character. Animation ranges from excellent up to sublime – the sequence where *Mulan* prepares to



Disney's merchandising monster moves on – *Mulan* Xmas tree ornaments...

depart is a masterpiece of wordless cinema – and the script delicately balances between appealing to kids and adults. See 'Wing Chun' for Michelle Yeoh engaging in similarly necessary transvestism – of course, that it'll also shift shedloads of merchandising to both boys and girls is a trifling aside... This will do very nicely indeed. A



*Mulan* isn't the only sword wielding Asian heroine on Disney's ...but I can assure you that there'll be absolutely no *Mononoke Happy Meals* (TM)!

books – at some point (the release date has been pushed back more often than Johnny Depp's fringe), they'll give a theatrical release to the latest film from anime god Hayao Miyazaki, '*Mononoke Hime*': in the West, it'll be called '*Princess Mononoke*'. Despite being the biggest-grossing film in Japan before '*Titanic*', I sense nervousness from Disney, since they're contractually obliged to release intact a film containing some spectacular limb-lopping. The eponymous heroine guards a forest under threat from a technocratic warrior queen, with the help of the various spirits which live there. So far, so good – except it's perilously close to Miyazaki's earlier '*Nausicaa*' [a.k.a. '*Warriors of the Wind*', in a mutilated version]. If you've seen that, people, incidents and scenes may have you going, "Isn't that...?", and the overall ethos borders on a rehash.

Generally, Miyazaki's strength is characters to whom you can truly relate, with even the villains given depth beyond the dreams of Disney. Here, however, he goes too far: I found myself empathising more with the nominal villaininess. He also overcomplicates the heroes, with so many different species of forest guardians that you need a scorecard to keep track, and overall, watching the film becomes more of a tedious chore than a pleasure. The animation is still of the highest quality, and the first twenty minutes in particular are superbly bleak and cynical; beyond that there's a steadily declining return. It's

**M** a film that makes its point swiftly and effectively – then proceeds to hammer away at it repeatedly for over two hours. If you want to watch a beautifully crafted, 134-minute party political broadcast for the Green Party, this is it. C- **M**

## **N** is for *No Contest - No Imagination either, but (Scottish accent, please) No Too Bad*

This is a surprisingly good 'Die Hard' clone, with Shannon Tweed as the action movie star ('Tae Kwon Doll') trapped in a building when the bad guys take over a beauty pageant. Tweed is pleasantly fallible, her film roles not really preparing her character for real violence, while the supporting cast is solid B-movie stars like Roberto Davi (who was in the original 'Die Hard'), Roddy Piper and Andrew 'Dice' Clay, largely playing against type: Piper is a villain, while Davi is the closest thing the film has to a romantic lead. The villains are all given more personality than you'd expect; indeed, in this department, they come off rather better than the beauty queen hostages, who are almost interchangeable, doing little more than flounce in high-heels and squeal in terror. Director Peter Lynch usually has something interesting going on, though the second half does contain rather too much creeping along corridors. Still, better than expected: what it lacks in originality is more than made up for in memorable characters. C+

## **O** is for *Outlaw Brothers - and not forgetting Oshima*

For a while, it looked like Yukari Oshima would be the first Eastern artiste to cross over into Hollywood. Already with a cult following after films like 'Angel' [a.k.a. 'Iron Angels'], she acquired herself an American agent and looked poised to break through, thanks to her devastating combination of looks, charisma and talent. But then...nothing. Somehow, it

fell apart, into a slew of cheap Phillipino phlicks (where old action babes go to die: see also Cynthia Khan) leaving us to cling onto her memory through films like this rollicking, good-natured romp directed by and starring Frankie Chan. He's a car thief, she's a cop out to get him, they team up to fight coke-snorting gangster Michiko Nishiwaki in another of her trademark chocolate-coated mini-roles. While you



can tick off the cliches - car park fight, warehouse battle, humorous interlude in a restaurant - they fly past with such enthusiasm you can't really complain, even if the hoped-for Oshima/Nishiwaki catfight never materialises. It's also a rather good training video for anyone planning life as a car thief...B



## **P** is for *Powerpuff Girls - bridging the gap between Aeon Flux and Hello Kitty*

As Japanese animation was originally inspired by the likes of Disney, in turn American animation is now taking heed, and producing things like the undeniably anime-styled (check out those eyes!) 'Powerpuff Girls'. The youngest superheroine team around - they're still in kindergarten - were created by Craig McCracken, who worked on the equally odd 'Dexter's Lab'. Here, over-achieving pre-schoolers Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup take on a raft of bizarre adversaries, such as the Boogie Man, a 70's-styled monster-under-the-bed who aims to create eternal night by eclipsing the sun with a Death Star sized disco ball - cue an entire Star Wars sequence. That gives you a flavour of the fantastic invention crammed into each episode; mercifully, they're only ten minutes long, as that's really about all anyone could handle without their head exploding. It's all highly manic. The style is simple (note the lack of fingers), yet effective, and it's not every kid's cartoon where you get to see nunchakus being waved around. The main weakness is a great degree of unevenness; some episodes just don't work, but the good ones are so good that they more than make up for it.

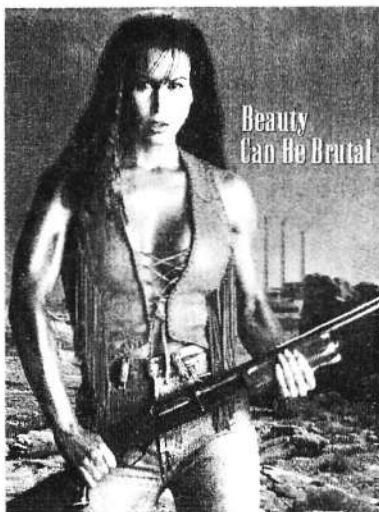


### The top ten, medium no object.

1. **Sigourney Weaver:** Ellen Ripley – *Aliens*
2. **Maggie Cheung, Michelle Yeoh, Anita Mui:** *The Heroic Trio*
3. **Aeon Flux** – Peter Chung
4. **Lucy Lawless:** *Xena: Warrior Princess* [with a nod to Hudson Leick as Callisto!]
5. **Lara Croft** – *Tomb Raider*
6. **Mima Shimoda:** ex-tag team title-holder, WWWA
7. **Anne Parillaud:** *Nikita*
8. **Yukari Oshima:** Madame Su – *Angel*
9. **Elektra** – Frank Miller
10. **Kei & Yuri** – *Dirty Pair*

Hackman's quickdraw contest to get revenge on her father's murderer, and is largely a chance for Raimi to demonstrate interesting ways to shoot people. Never less than totally predictable, it still remains hugely entertaining: Gene Hackman is great, Lance Henriksen and Russell Crowe are very good. Di Caprio is less annoying than you'd expect and Stone gets to wear some great boots. **B**

**R** is for *Ravenhawk* - muscling your way in Rachel McLish appears to be attempting the Schwarzenegger route to fame: this former body-builder was in 'Pumping Iron 2', and is now appearing in action movies. This is more 'Conan' than 'Terminator' though, under the guidance, once more, of prolific exploitor-rector Albert Pyun. She is a "Native American", wrongly convicted (naturally) of killing her parents. When freed by a 'Fugitive'-style accident, she naturally goes off to track down those responsible. The sleeve proudly states that she does all her own stunts, but in reality there's not much on view beyond horse-riding and a spot of rock-climbing. However, the cinematography is excellent, aided by some great locations, and you also get Skinner from 'The X Files' as one of the bad guys. While this hardly breaks new ground, and the ethnic angle grates badly, it's no worse than some of Arnie's early attempts. Give her a decade and she'll probably be marrying a Kennedy. **D+**



**S** is for *Super Lady Cop* – "Wake up – time to fly!" A gang of artificial humans jump ship and go on a search for their creator in a quest for perfection, having realised their lifespan is limited. One of their brethren is ordered to track them down. Ring any bells? Yes, just as 'Barb Wire' can be enjoyed in a whole new way, once you know it's a girls-with-guns remake of 'Casablanca', so this movie shifts to a different level when you suddenly comprehend this is 'Blade Runner', done as a heavily wire-assisted martial-arts B-movie. Cynthia Khan plays Harrison Ford playing Deckard in this rare example of Hong Kong SF, though the subtlety and depth of Ridley Scott's film is replaced by silly comic mugging – not by Khan, who is admirably straight. While her career has been downhill since her debut (after the wonderful 'In the Line of Duty 3', could it be otherwise?), there are nicely imaginative touches such as an "amnesia gun" several years before 'Men in Black', and the action is well-staged. Quirkily off-the-wall, it's never dull, especially once you recognize its source: frequently stupid and unamusing, possibly, but certainly not dull! **C+**

**Q** is for *The Quick and the Dead:* "You need a bath."

Something of a vanity production for lead and executive producer Sharon Stone, not just hand-picking director Sam Raimi, but also paying the salary of Leonardo di Caprio out of her own pocket. Like most such things, it is somewhat self-indulgent (Shazza gets Armani sunglasses and perfect hair), but most of the people involved have enough talent to keep it on the rails. This is no serious film, however, being a 100-minute homage to Sergio Leone: the plot has Stone using

## **T** is for *Tank Girl* – how to make a crisis out of a drama

I expected to hate this, but I didn't. Well, not as much as expected. It remains, however, a textbook example of prime, sliced, comic-book turkey: alienate the fans by holding fake auditions for the already cast title role, remove the subversion which was the original's main appeal, then confuse everyone else by hurling animation, strip montages and full-scale musical numbers into a post-apocalyptic action movie. The result is a mess; the main surprise, given original source material that's a hodgepodge of new-lad feminism and pulp SF, is that it holds up to almost half-way, though boorish behaviour isn't amusing or endearing simply 'cos it's done by a chick having a bad hair day. Then the Rippers show up, mutant kangaroos with foam ears who are the dumbest monsters I've seen for a long time – Stan Winston should be ashamed, and at least Ice T looks suitably embarrassed. From this point on, the film rapidly self-destructs and ceases to be of interest. **D-**

## **U** is for *Undeatable* – or should that be “Unwatchable”? [Ducks in a barrel...]

Cynthia Rothrock deserves applause as about the only Western woman to star in Hong Kong action films, and even now remains the most active American action actress. More remarkably still, she's done it unencumbered by significant acting talent. This isn't necessarily a problem: Hong Kong films like 'The Magic Crystal' or 'Yes, Madam' play to her strengths and work well, but even the best of her American ones fall woefully short. Once referred to in an Eastern Heroes press release as 'Under the Table', this is American, though directed by HK ultra-hack, Godfrey Ho (or 'Hall' in the credits) and his tactic is to make Rothrock look like Meryl Streep by filling out the cast with even worse actors. The plot revolves around a psycho fighter whose wife walks out on him, causing him to kidnap and torture women who look similar – which explains the strange preponderance of henna'd heroines. But then he kills Cynthia's sister...you know the rest. Don Naim is certainly creepily nasty as the villain, and that's it – the cop whom Rothrock assists, John Miller, is especially bad. Ho knows two camera positions and the whole thing is utterly dreary, shot on a budget of fourpence and with an apparent ignorance of even basic technique. Two creepy moments and some eye violence are nowhere near enough. **E+**

## **V** is for *V.I.P.* - if at first you don't succeed, try television instead

What do you do if your first foray into action-babe territory is critically slammed, and a box-office disaster? Why, make a TV series! So Pammie and her (now all-natural) mummies take a leaf from the 'Buffy' book, but unlike Joss Whedon, tries a new concept: 'Barb Wire – the TV show' might not have floated. Anderson is Vallery Irons, a hot-dog seller turned celebrity bodyguard, which provides a fine excuse for cameos from other celebs. "The premise is a little bit like Pretty Woman," says creator and executive producer J.F. Lawton, with an admirably straight face, though I guess he should know, since he produced that too. What he omits is that this may well be the final trash TV classic of the 1990's, swinging wildly from gratuitously tight costumes to...er, gratuitously loose costumes. It knows it, however, and is refreshingly free of a) content, and b) David Hasselhoff. Groin-candy of the highest order.

## **W** is for *Warrior Queen* - N.B. do not confuse with any *Warrior Princesses*

Back before Sigourney Weaver and Linda Hamilton came on the scene, films like 'L.A. Bounty' had Sybil Danning raising "monosyllabic" to an art-form. Together with her amazing cleavage, she delivered a slew of memorable B-movie performances - Battle Beyond the Stars, Chained Heat, The Howling II - and almost snared Jeanette Goldstein's role in 'Aliens'. However, her career was tragically derailed by a blown wrestling stunt, leaving us to ponder what might have been. Though in the case of 'Warrior Queen', it's closer to "what the hell is going on?". This is a low-rent version of Tinto Brass's 'Caligula': porn with classy actors, directed by the late Chuck Vincent and sees X-rated stars like Samantha Fox alongside Danning and, even more bizarrely, Donald Pleasance. The alternate title, 'Pompeii', gives a glimpse of the contents, which end in a glorious explosion of stock footage. Until then, Sybil occasionally swings her sword, and Donald looks...confused, but you'll see more sex than you do of either star, and it's enough to ensure the UK release is 9 minutes shorter. Perhaps significantly, the edits have no detectable impact on coherence. **D**

## **X** is for *Xena: Warrior Princess* - N.B. do not confuse with any *Warrior Queens*

Okay, we did Xena last time, but choices for X are limited, so let's talk about 'TC 2000' instead – not a complete copout, for reasons that will eventually be apparent. Director T.J.Scott must be a Verhoeven fan: this mixes 'Robocop' and 'Total Recall' in a post-apocalyptic industrial estate where the rich live underground. Cute, blonde, future-cop (Bobbie Phillips) is blown away to provide fodder for an experiment in cyborg enforcers, returning as the titular TC 2000, a nifty black-leather clad vixen, much to the concern of former partner (and now tae-bo guru) Billy Blanks. There's also something about the environment being deliberately screwed up, but best ignore a dodgy plot (why are there next to no guns?) and severely limited acting in favour of the *extremely* copious martial arts sequences involving Blanks, Phillips, Bolo Yeung and Matthias Hues. Certainly never lethargic, there's the odd bit of visual flair to liven things up, and we'd like to see more of Phillips. In both senses. [She did turn up in the recent Wes Craven-produced remake of 'Carnival of Souls'] As for the X:WP link, Scott went on to become a production consultant on the show, and directed a slate of eps, including perhaps the best ever, 'Callisto' – which also features a blonde, black-leather clad vixen... Coincidence? I think not. C

## **Y** is for *YellowHair and the City of Gold* – “You're one of my two favourite smells...”

This 1984 spaghetti western stars Laurene Landon as the titular blonde (rather than red) Indian, whose murdered mother holds the key to a great treasure coveted by American adventurers and Mexican generals, and guarded by a particularly unwelcoming tribe who specialise in impromptu body piercing and eyelid-removal. Predictably, this wants to be 'Raiders of the Lost Ark', and just as inevitably, comes second in every important department. The major problem isn't the imagination or action, both of which are fine – the latter showcased in an accomplished stagecoach chase which has the main leads doing a surprising amount of their own stunts. It's just that director Matt Cimber (who also gave us the Pia Zadora trash classic, 'Butterfly') hasn't a clue what to do between times, with scenes that start suddenly, tail off into nothing, take far too long, and appear to have been edited with a butter knife. While aiming to be a pastiche of silent cinema serials, that idea is discarded between the first ten minutes (in which no-one says a word) and the end credits. Such casual sloppiness is symbolic of the film as a whole, and that's a shame, for the concept of “a female Indiana Jones”, as the sleeve puts it, is one with potential. C-



## **Z** is for *Zeiram* – and indeed, *Zero Woman*

Two possible entries for Z, both Japanese. However, that's about where the similarities end. The former is from the director of the cheerily cheap 'Cyber Ninja', and is an SF romp which sees bounty hunter Yuko Moriyama taking on the titular alien, owing more than a little to 'Predator'. Should this ring bells, it's perhaps because an anime series, 'Iria', was made from the same source, though over six episodes, it has a bit more room to manoeuvre. The live-action one goes little beyond a monster-hunt, and while Moriyama is great, all feisty and intense, the obviously cheapo effects puncture the illusions. The sequel, sadly unreleased here, fares a lot better in this regard, and the setting matches Moriyama's performance. Much the same problem bedevils 'Zero Woman', a thriller about an amoral female cop (Natsuki Ozawa) tracking down stolen share certificates: Ozawa looks the part, and it makes a great trailer, but the performances don't deliver. You find yourself waiting impatiently for the next bout of gratuitous violence (copious) or nudity (slightly less plentiful than I wanted). Still, in Japanese cinema, both make a pleasant change from samurais... C and C-

## Versa Vice

I know what I am before what I am has a name. If I reveal too much up front, then you will know what that name is before you are ready to assimilate the repercussions of meeting somebody owning such a name. And, then, you may not stay to meet me.

Where did we meet? Don't you remember? I suppose, remembering is not really relevant, because we haven't yet met. Well, to make things easy, think of a coastline not outside a radius of seven miles from here, then, oh yes, a rundown hotel situated at the rough end of the promenade, as far from the pier as it is possible to be without leaving town. People who stay there listen to the sea at night, begging its soporific ways to lull them into a false sense of security: whilst knowing it's false somehow makes it seem more real, because, at the bottom of your heart, you know that there are only false things in life, including, even, the self itself.

Despite the hotel's distance from the main tourist enclaves, there is an electric advertisement hoarding which pulses a glow to and from your bedroom. In shades of red and blue. But mostly red. This strictly alternate illumination partially irritates you with the shape of the room's ill-decor: the dull brown-greens of the blistered wallpaper, the devil-shaped knotwood of the wardrobe door, the islands of linoleum and the snaggly bed-quilt. They thus blend in with half the night, if not continuously. Hence, only a partial irritation as you stare waking in the pulsing eye.

Now, you're here, it's time to reveal my self if not, quite yet, my name. It's too late for you to leave the hotel, because it's safer in here with me than walking out along the rough side of the dark sea-end where things roam that do not even have names at all.

I can see that your gossamer nightgear, whence the bedquilt slips down like waves of cotton pores, is teasingly more beautiful than bareness. Do you mind if I touch you all over? Touch is far more sensitive than sight, especially during half the night. Let me lower the bedquilt further. Ah, the dunes of your lower limbs cascade with half-seethrough silky satiny lace.





Let's now ease off the teasing lace. There's no point in screaming, since I am deaf. Didn't I tell you? Somebodies like me cannot hear. Cannot speak. Cannot smell. My sole harmonic is with reflection – that very same reflection which my body traditionally cannot make. And such harmonic means, of course, that I can see and touch – but only like glass.

Is that why you shivered when I first set my eyes upon your eyes first setting upon me? And as I fondle your upper parts, is that why your shiver becomes a shudder? But not exactly a shudder. Too violent for that name. More a body-jack.

That accounts for half the night. The rest, which rests in the utter impenetrability of the pulse's other side, we switch roles, and it's you fondling me with your icy glass fingers. Reversed. Me your upper parts. You my lower. Then we change tack. You my upper. Me your lower. Time to feel. Then time to be felt. As if each pulse is its own mirror image. Naturally, foreplay wears thin after a while. During my share of the night, my own breasts feel like balloons of blood, ready to burst rather than backfire embolisms into the circuit. I need them milked.

And you take a soft suck from the left, then right. It's tantamount to the Platonic Form of sensuality made incarnate. Your mouth is soft and warm because its teeth have taken on its glass touch.

Then, at the split second of the pulse's turn, I take suck from you, from right, then left, sending the undiluted curds of crude blood to the refinery of my soul.

At the end of this process of delight, we kiss properly, icy tongue to warm tongue, and versa vice, where communication is passion not words. The only way to talk.

So, you see, my dear, if I'd come out earlier with my name, you would have missed my visit. I can now reveal it, before I leave you to some shop-soiled holiday romance by the sea. Remember me. Remember me forever. Remember your sweet Ona, Vampire of half the night.

DF Lewis

# Fighting fit...



**TAKAKO INOUE**

**Born: 7/11/69**

**Height: 5'4"**

**Weight: 139 lbs.**

A viable contender for #1 babe in professional wrestling, and a leading light in the AJW federation. Possibly also the best combination of beauty and skill currently working.

However, let's distinguish between "staged" and "fake". Once you see Dynamite Kanzai wrestle, her blood streaming out in a way Peter Jackson would reject as excessively gory, or watched Yumiko Hotta kick her opponent repeatedly in the head, then you'll know the difference. If you still have doubts, in April, rookie Emiko Kado died as a result of brain injuries incurred in the ring - and is not the first to die for her art. As "fakes" go, this would seem to be pretty convincing, if you ask me.

Sure, they know beforehand who's going to win, but that's true for every Jackie Chan fight, and nobody whinges about that. It's missing the point, like calling 'Macbeth' a whodunnit. To fans, the result is less important than the route by which they reach the end, though the best wrestlers will tend to 'win', simply because they are who the crowd wants to see. 'Exhibition wrestling' is probably the most accurate term, and certainly, you can't deny the skill necessary to pull off moves when the margin for error, without seriously hurting your opponent or yourself, is so small. It's as much spontaneous ballet as martial arts, though Jackie has the major advantage that he gets second takes, instead of having to ad-lib a continuation.

There's something about two women beating the living daylight out of each other that is curiously appealing. Back in TC 5, we wrote about the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling, and many words since have been devoted to the works of Cynthia Khan, Moon Lee and Yukari Oshima. However, perhaps nowhere is this particular art-form taken to greater heights than in the fabulous world of Japanese ladies' wrestling. Here, the traditional myth of Oriental women - petite, demure and submissive - is beaten to a bloody pulp, in front of audiences which can be in excess of 50,000.

Let's clear up one preconception right away: this brand of female sport has absolutely nothing to do with mud, jelly, custard or any other semi-liquid substance. It's even light-years removed from the things you may remember seeing on World of Sport, and GLOW is but the finger-paintings of small children in comparison. This is the nearest thing you'll get to gladiatorial combat in the 1990's.

But you might say, isn't it all staged? And the obvious reply is, don't be stupid. Of course it is.



**CUTY SUZUKI**

**Born: 22/10/69**

**Height: 5'1"**

**Weight: 121 lbs.**

Cuty was the first Japanese lady wrestler I ever saw, part of the series '263 Useful Ideas From Japan'. Recently retired, she also starred in 'Cuty Suzuki's Ringside Angels' for the Sega Game Gear

Queen of the Pain Barrier Megumi Kudo, now retired, looked like an archetypal Japanese lady, but gave more blood than most transfusion services. Regular wrestling wasn't tough enough: she upped the ante by, for example, replacing the ropes with barbed wire. Her retirement match combined a load of these enhancements into the wrestling equivalent of a pizza with everything on. It was billed, in typically understated style, as a "No rope, 200 Volt, double hell, double barbed-wire barricade, double landmine, glass crush, electrical barbed-wire death match". She ended up in hospital with concussion and 3rd-degree burns; more memorable than being given a gold watch, I suppose.

Kudo was a superstar, and the top women often make as much money, if not more, outside the ring through products ranging from CDs to "Lifestyle videos" which, for example, portray the wrestlers on holiday. However, following the collapse in the Japanese economy, most leisure pursuits have suffered, and wrestling is certainly no exception: TV coverage has become limited, and shows that previously played to five-figure crowds now struggle to reach a fraction of that. As a result, the federations which run promotions have been springing up, going bankrupt and reforming at a whirlwind pace. AJW, for many years the #1, have recently endured financial trouble; they are still perhaps the strongest around,



**MANAMI TOYOTA**

**Born: 2/3/71**

**Height: 5'6"**

**Weight: 150 lbs.**

Her trademark move is the moonsault, a backflip off the top corner turnbuckle, landing across her opponent. Toyota's tenacity is the stuff of legend, even against far larger opponents.



**YUMI FUKAWA**

**Born: 22/5/76**

**Height: 5'0"**

**Weight: 123 lbs.**

One of the best of the new generation, it's on people like her that the future depends; there's no doubting her beauty, skill and, above all, her infectious enthusiasm for the sport

but there are also plenty of up-and-coming groups including Neo Ladies and Arsson, both of which are headed by veterans, Kyoko Inoue and Aja Kong respectively.

Kong's name is self-descriptive: when she hits opponents off the top rope, they tend to stay hit. She represents the "blunt instrument" school of wrestlers, who concentrate on strength. This works, however, because unlike men's wrestling, there is a huge variety of styles and forms on show - far more appealing than endless contests between steroid-bloated pretty-boys - plus the better participants have an amazing spectrum of skills, with timing and agility still required. The contrast of speed and power usually makes for a good contest; even though there are weight divisions, they are so broad as to be ineffective. But I personally feel this poses interesting questions: how do you deal with someone a hundredweight heavier than you?

There is no strict correlation between beauty and morality; at her peak, in the early 90's, Akira Hokuto sometimes resembled a cheerleader, but it was a distinctly psychotic one, with a nasty grudge. She gave the disturbing impression that she genuinely enjoyed inflicting pain on her opponent, even when it involved a blatant disregard for her own personal safety - she had her neck broken in one bout, thanks



**YUMIKO HOTTA**

**Born 1/10/67**

**Height: 5'6"**

**Weight: 165 lbs.**

Possesses a lethal right foot, used to vicious effect on opponents. A late bloomer, and also a 1998 candidate for the Japanese parliament - gives one new respect for politics.

globe are slowly discovering that the popular image of subservient Japanese cute is a shallow myth - any lingering doubts will last about five minutes into your first barbed-wire death match. I think it's safe to say that Japanese women's wrestling certainly has the potential to join anime and Hong Kong films as Asian imports into Western popular culture, and indeed, after a spell in the doldrums, American federations are picking up on the distaff side. Characters like Sable and Chyna are increasingly popular, albeit with any actual wrestling usually well in the background, while 'Celebrity Deathmatch' proved that women - or claymation versions of Monica Lewinsky and Hillary Clinton at least - and violence do mix. The Japanese model would be ideal for Granada Men & Motors, alongside their LPWA shows, or any other enterprising cable channel [Bravo have apparently screened some]. If they need a presenter, the address is at the front, and my rates are very reasonable...

Until then, it will no doubt continue at a cult level, where the informal trading of tapes and information is a throwback to the heady days of 1980's genre fandom. Except that when Customs drool wildly over a tape labelled 'Japanese Hardcore', this time the laugh's on them...

to a miscued pile-driver. There are plenty of others whose looks belie their attitudes, though in the fluid world of Japanese wrestling, good becomes bad with baffling frequency, probably linked to the continual flux of groups, federations and organizations mentioned above. Alliances form and dissolve with the phases of the moon, before, after or even during fights. A laid-back approach to viewing is essential, together with a touching optimism that whatever happens **would** make sense, if only you knew Japanese.

Despite what some think - in London, all women's wrestling was banned by the GLC - sex has little to do with it. The costumes are utilitarian and, unlike 'Foxy Boxing', do **not** "fall off". While undeniably nice, beauty is **no** prerequisite for employment; physical ability and the willingness to go several extra yards in the name of entertainment clearly are far more important. Some no doubt will claim exploitation, or that it's demeaning to women; I defy anyone to watch without acquiring deep respect for the wrestlers. It's notable that a significant percentage of the audience is schoolgirls, and there's a case for them being better role-models than, oh, say certain Spice-shaped persons. But regardless, it's irrelevant, since anyone seeking role-models in the entertainment industry is very badly misguided.

People round the



**KAORU**

**Born: 9/2/69**

**Height: 5'5"**

**Weight: 132 lbs.**

A native of Sasebo City, Kaoru made her debut in 1986 vs. Megumi Kudo. The 'Excalibur' is her signature move, and it's rare to see her in a match of below-average quality.



# HIGH KICK



From a British perspective, it's almost impossible to grasp the

**'Ayane's High Kick',  
Central Park Media,  
NTSC import, approx £15.**

penetration of wrestling into Japanese popular culture: there are two weekly magazines devoted to the topic, the leading stars are treated with a reverence that would shock those who sneer at the "sport", and there are nods to it in all manner of fields. In anime, for example, it's a matter of record that the Dirty Pair had both their names and their costumes based on those of wrestling tag-team the Beauty Pair, while their organization, the WWWA, is also the name of a federation. Once you start looking, you begin to see this kind of stuff cropping up all over the place.

'Ayane's High Kick' is, however, more obvious than most. Though its central theme is cliché #4 - "schoolgirl heroine overcomes obstacles to achieve her dream" - the dream in question is to become a pro wrestler, and fight Manami Toyota. The obstacles too are a little unusual, since they include a manager who insists she's only good enough for kick-boxing. While there is nothing really new in the execution, it's notable for the in-jokes, which will delight any fan, and completely baffle everyone else.

For example, in one fight Ayane's opponent antagonises her by disparagingly referring to her idol Toyota as a circus acrobat, which if you're unfamiliar with Toyota's high-flying style, will simply not be funny. This kind of thing runs through the two episodes here: there are quickfire nods to the likes of Yumiko Hotta, Aja Kong, and the various federations, as well as a cameo appearance by Toyota herself. And there are probably a bunch more that even I missed.

These help to diffuse the tedium, caused by the fact that... well, there's not much else here of note. Neither the characters nor the plotline are especially memorable, though you do get a certain feeling for the tough training that the fighters go through. It's giving little away to say that Ayane ends up with a 2-0 record, as you never feel she's in serious danger of losing - the animators could have done with some lessons from the WWWA in the art of making fights look realistic. Still, I'd be inclined to watch future episodes, largely for the pleasure to be had in spotting the references to wrestling. Hence, it deserves a rating of C+ for wrestling fans, D- for anyone else.

*[Here seems a good place to thank some people for their help with this section: Brian Bower, for introducing me to the delights of such things and sparking my enthusiasm with his, Hideyuki Shimura and Jeff Lynch for tapes, the residents of the women's wrestling mailing list, Miko for pics, Kim Lyon at Quantum Leap, Andrew Walmsley for beers and chat, and housemates Steve+Abigail for enduring barbed-wire deathmatches above and beyond the call of duty.]*



**Manami Toyota vs. manga Manami  
-- from a comic-book autobiography**

# True Brit

I have fond childhood memories of happy Saturday afternoons spent in a best of three falls contest versus our draught excluder (no mean opponent – it's tricky to apply arm holds on a long cloth sausage stuffed with kapok). These enthusiastic, albeit somewhat one-sided, battles were inspired by a ferocious devotion to ITV's coverage of wrestling, and even now, names like Big Daddy, Giant Haystacks and Kent Walton will provoke misty-eyed nostalgia in a large percentage of my age group. Wrestling vanished from our screens in the eighties, a victim of Greg Dyke's attempt to move ITV upmarket - yeah, I know it sounds implausible in the light of 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' - yet still survives in suburban halls, between Xmas pantomimes and T'Pau concerts. And I've become something of a devotee over the past year, even if there's little chance of seeing anyone even faintly resembling Takako Inoue.

I initially ventured out with trepidation. Some landmarks on the map of childhood memories have stood the test of time (*The New Avengers* and Kate Bush); others are best consigned to redevelopment (*Blake's 7*). Into which camp would wrestling fall? I had little to lose – even the most expensive seat was just £6.50, not bad going for an evening's live entertainment. And on balance, I was pleasantly surprised. Though not as exciting, excessive, or indeed, cute as the works of JWP and Arson, I had a fine time, purely from a trashy entertainment perspective.

Crowd numbers are increasing, but a couple of hundred would be typical; almost entirely white working-class, but from kids and teenagers (supporting the villains, with a firm grasp of post-modernism) right up to OAPs. The real hardcore fans sit ringside, and it's worth joining them. Their exuberant enthusiasm is infectious, occasionally a little too much so – I've seen one incensed spectator strip his shirt off and suggest, shall we say, a little amateur bout. However, the eagle-eyed bouncers are always ready to dissuade such individuals, gently but firmly.

In the foyer beforehand, you can buy a selection of ephemera: I just stick to the program, though

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its worth is questionable – the bouts listed often fail to materialise for one reason or another. However, inside are various bits of news which tend to confirm the current status of wrestling in Britain. Learning that one wrestler suffered a serious knee injury working on a building site proves there are no fortunes being made here.

The most striking thing is how small the ring seems. Maybe it's a mini-version, or memory and the angles of TV were playing tricks on me, but it hardly looks big enough for two people to sit in, never mind pull the sort of stunts performed by Akira Hokuto. For the opening bouts this is perhaps not a problem, as the wrestlers concerned are often of the sort you might politely describe as "highly experienced". Or put another way, geriatric. I remember the likes of Skull Murphy and Alan Kirby from my childhood (Kirby was the deaf-mute), and so nowadays their combined ages must be near 100. The result is perhaps like watching two uncles struggle drunkenly at a wedding, or an OAP getting mugged, and unsurprisingly relies more on psychology than stunning action. But equally, these veterans know how to work an audience, and this kind of bout is a nice blast of nostalgia to ease you gently back into things.

On the other hand, people like Jody Flash and James Mason (insert obvious cinematic joke) are notably faster and more athletic, with obvious skills which are only a little short of what I've seen on tape. Some of the impacts made the ring shudder, and when sound, vision and position work together, the result is impressive and highly convincing.

However, singles bouts seem a little one-dimensional; what generally works the best, in terms of atmosphere and audience reaction, are tag bouts: the two in the ring wrestle, while the other two act as impromptu cheerleaders, whipping up the audience with practiced ease. In this classic, Manichean struggle, the referee stoically argues with one or other face, while his partner is illegally creamed by the bad guys, to the loud disapproval of the crowd. It's what I remembered it being all about; pantomime, neo-slapstick and larger-than-life characters, a million miles away from Megumi Kudo crashing face-first into barbed wire, but none the less entertaining for it.

With regard to the female variety, it's less common than I'd like: as mentioned elsewhere, the GLC had a long-standing ban on such bouts, and the women wrestlers largely avoided this area. They do appear occasionally and the refreshing thing is, unlike the tawdry sideshow of the WWF where contests have been decided by the first to lose their evening gown, these bouts are taken just as seriously as the men's, by promoters and fans. They also provide no less in the way of skill and entertainment – Miss Syria is a personal favourite, in looks and attitude resembling a dark-haired version of Callisto, albeit with a strong Northern accent. I fondly remember one bout, where her opponent was being carried off 'injured', and Syria grabbed the mike and said, "I'm really sorry...for kicking your arse!" You just gotta love a good bad girl.

In the middle of the show, there's a fifteen-minute interval, which seems largely a chance to buy more souvenirs and tickets for the raffle in the second half – some of the prizes in which appear to whatever has been unsold (no opportunity for promotion left unused!), or alternatively, tickets to the following month's show... Then it's back to the action once again, culminating in the headline event – perhaps a title fight, grudge match, or gimmick bout, such as an 'Over the Top Rumble Match'. This starts with two wrestlers in the ring, and another turns up every couple of minutes; the only means of elimination is being put over the top rope. Now, I said the ring seemed small even when there were only two combatants present: with ten wrestlers in there, it is more like a Central Line train at rush-hour; you could almost hear the "Ouch! Mind my foot!", "Sorry, is that your elbow", and "Excuse me...**EXCUSE ME!**". The MC acts as a commentator, trying to whip the crowd up, with variable results, depending on whether there are any truly convincing heroes in the ring.

Inevitably, victory in the final bout is never unanimous; the loser will claim a rematch because of alleged cheating, interference or whatever. This is done largely as a cliffhanger, to set things up down the line, and build anticipation. It does feel somewhat optimistic to think that the crowd will manage to sustain their interest for a couple of months until the fight gets arranged, but it does at least show an appreciation of the elements required to make a good contest. It's just that, as in most other areas, the execution is a little shabbier than the Japanese or even the American version. Yet there's still something quintessentially attractive about the ordinariness of it all.

The appeal is perhaps truly explicable only if you stand on a rainswept Division 3 terrace, laugh at Carry On films, own a Jaguar console, or drive a Skoda, and do so out of choice. You know a more polished commodity is available; you just don't care. So it is with British pro-wrestling. There's a huge gulf compared to its overseas cousins, or even the glory days, yet die-hard fans go to Croydon every month. And long may we continue to do so. Now, where did I put that draught excluder?

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## One Night In Sapporo

or

### Twenty-Six Minutes and Forty-Five Seconds of Hell

Watching Japanese women's wrestling bouts is certainly enjoyable enough in itself, but to appreciate the true beauty of them, you need also to take on board the bigger picture. For this is not just impromptu brawling: no match stands in isolation, they link with others across time and space in a network of feuds, revenge and drama which would shame many soap operas and in some ways, resembles one directed by Akira Kurosawa. A greater understanding of this hyperviolent jigsaw puzzle can be gained by taking a single bout and trying to unravel some of the threads connected to it. In this case, we'll take the battle for the WWWA Tag Team Title, in Sapporo on June 18th, 1997.

The fight was a rematch: three weeks previously, in Chiba, Tomoko Watanabe and Kumiko Maekawa had retained the title by beating Las Cachorras Orientals, the duo of Mima Shimoda and Etsuko Mita, after Shimoda was disqualified for bringing a foreign object into the ring. Now, this was a contentious decision, in that previously, such restrictions had been largely ignored. Indeed, extraneous objects are often part of wrestlers' personas: Aja Kong has her can, Bull Nakano her nunchakus, etc. Admittedly, Shimoda brought in one of the steel guard rails which encircle the ring – not so much a foreign object as a totally alien one.

The second major angle on this fight was Las Cachorras Orientals conversion to heeldom. Their first outing as bad girls had been the previous night in the same arena, when they took on, and destroyed, Manami Toyota and Toshiyo Yamada. Despite being perhaps the federation's biggest star, Toyota juiced heavily, thanks to Shimoda wielding a pair of scissors on her scalp, and Las Cachorras also became enthusiastic users of chairs – and not from a relaxing, seat-based point of view. [a demonstration by Las Cachorras of the seat's potential as an offensive weapon might change the minds of anyone who still thinks wrestling is "fake". Football hooligans have a lot to learn.] Such extreme behaviour was, no doubt, necessary to get them over as heels, but woe betide their poor opponents – and Las Cachorras didn't even have any particular reason to hate Toyota and Yamada. With Watanabe and Maekawa, because of what had already happened in Chiba, it would be deeply *personal*.

#### Glossary

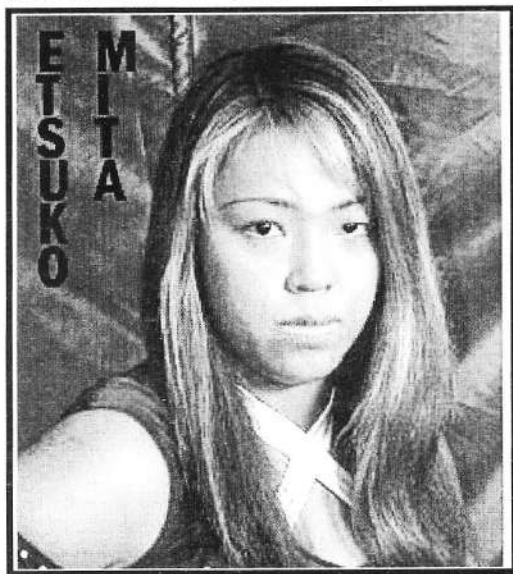
Wrestling has a language all its own – here are a few commonly heard terms:

- Blade** v. to cut, with the intention of provoking *juice*. Usually done surreptitiously, by a ringside attendant, under the guise of 'assistance'.
- Face** n. hero, someone regarded as a good person
- Heel** n. villain, a wrestler for whom rules are an unnecessary inconvenience
- Juice** 1. n. blood. 2. v. to bleed. May be either *legit* or produced by *blading*.
- Legit** adj. real, true, honest, natural.
- Pop** v. to make noise, usually by the crowd.
- Psych** n. the backdrop to a fight: the intensity of the combatants and their interaction. Bruce Lee's fights always had good *psych*.
- Sell** v. to react to moves, in order to show their effect

The scene was thus set for a spectacularly memorable (from the audience's view) and painfully messy (from the participants') event, at the Sapporo Nakajima Sports Centre, before an audience estimated at 3,700 – notably more than the previous night. There were several bouts as warm-up, including a horrible mismatch: Kyoko Inoue and Aja Kong, combined weight: 432 pounds, against Rie Tamada and Yumi Fukawa, combined weight: 255. It didn't last long. The crowd also saw a severely taped- and gauzed-up Toyota return to the ring, only to juice some more. Then, it was time for the gladiators to enter.

At thirteen stone, Tomoko Watanabe is the Samo Hung of women's wrestling; solidly built, yet her speed and agility belies her size. In contrast, Kumiko Maekawa is a lean, mean, fighting machine with a crew cut, and the lightest of the four fighters. Compared to these two, Las Cachorras are über-babes: Etsuko Mita is one of the tallest in the business, 5'8" being well above average height; Mima Shimoda is the prettiest of the lot, but her smile conceals a streak of vindictiveness, now bursting into full bloom.

The bell rings, and Maekawa faces off against Shimoda, kicking away at each other: this is perhaps Maekawa's area of greatest strength, so Shimoda brings in Mita. She pile-drives Maekawa instead, and has the better of the earlier exchanges, until Watanabe in turn comes in to help her partner. Mita takes badly to this, and hits Watanabe with the first chair of the bout. Time for everyone to meander through the auditorium - plenty seat-shaped ammo there - and by the time they return, Watanabe is juicing, and miffed. She tries to bring a chair of her own into the ring; when the referee blocks this, Shimoda kindly gives Watanabe hers – yes, predictably, across the head. Maekawa's peroxide hair is already looking closer to strawberry blonde as the blood seeps through. Mita attempts to deliver seat-flavoured justice to Watanabe; she ducks, and Mita biffs her partner instead. A second attempt is more successful, Mita hitting the target as Watanabe prepares to leap off the top rope. However, Watanabe has the last laugh, pinning Shimoda in just over nine minutes.



Phase II sees Maekawa largely on the receiving end. First, Shimoda holds her, allowing Mita free access to her head – open that scalp wound! The bottom rope is slowly loosening, and eventually lies on the ground. Shimoda unties the turnbuckle padding in one corner and tries that as a weapon: brief tests conclusively prove it's less effective than, oh, kicking Maekawa repeatedly in the head. Maekawa, in the de-padded corner, slumps to the canvas. Given the lack of a bottom rope, this is a bad move: she topples gracefully back, out of the ring, head first onto the floor.

The mats, usually placed round the ring to cushion impacts, are missing for some reason. Maekawa's skull thus meets solid, bare floor, and she is not happy. Shimoda somersaults off the top rope, down ten feet onto both her opponents - *neither* look happy - then joins her partner, who is piling chairs up in the middle of the ring, perhaps hoping to save time by dismantling the arena while the fight is still going on. Naturally, this also provides a large pile of scrap to which Maekawa's back is introduced, and for good measure, a guard rail is thrown on top of her. A **hugely** pissed-off Maekawa gets on top of Shimoda, and starts raining blows down on her head - referee Bob Yazawa can't get her to stop, so has to disqualify her and award the fall to Shimoda, who becomes the third member of the match to become an involuntary blood donor, while Maekawa attacks the ref in a frenzy. It took nine minutes, fourteen seconds for the equaliser, setting things up perfectly for the final session.

Maekawa is still furious, and Shimoda is selling her 'concussion' big-time, looking as stunned as a Norwegian Blue. Mita saves her with chair-fu, then introduces Maekawa to the guard rails again, before taking her off into the darkness. A rapidly recovering Shimoda piledrives Watanabe into a table, and Mita and Maekawa reappear, brawling on the front row of the balcony while Shimoda gouges Watanabe with scissors - as if there wasn't enough blood already. Mita dumps Maekawa off the balcony, and she drops to the concrete below, where Mita then tries to hang her, using the now completely detached bottom rope. Watanabe pins Shimoda but the ref is dealing with the Maekawa/Mita war, and by the time he returns, Shimoda is free - a chair announces Mita's return, and prevents any immediate re-occurrence. By now, the crowd are popping like mad for each near-fall, regardless of who's on top: in the end, it's Mita who hits a Death Valley Bomb on Maekawa for the decider, to give Las Cachorras the title, though Watanabe still wanted to fight on.

In the post-match interviews, Shimoda looked like a poster child for the local women's refuge - "Just Say No to Domestic Violence" - even if, beneath the caked blood and the bruises, you could still sense a wolfish delight in the carnage and the adrenaline buzz. Mita, on the other hand, was almost unscathed, like the accident victim who miraculously walks free when all around her are maimed. Her day for bloodshed would come. Notably, there were no post-match interviews with Maekawa and Watanabe. Just shots of the ambulance taking them away.

This was one fight on one night; a title bout, sure, yet rated by Mike Loreface, an authority on such matters, as only worth four stars out of five. Nor was it even *especially* raw or bloody: in particular, three months later, Las Cachorras would appear in a cage match - a bout where the ring is surrounded by a twelve-foot high steel fence, and victory goes to whichever team escapes first - which would make tonight's encounter look like a garden party.

However, it isn't just thrilling and engrossing on a visceral level. Although the agility and skill on view can certainly not be denied, the sheer complexity, not just of the mayhem, but the set-up which surrounds it, also deserves much respect. This background effort is not generally apparent to a casual viewer: the more I watch, the more I am able to delight in the hidden labour which goes into planning, scheduling and promoting the best bouts.

But if watching the fight proves one thing, it's probably this: anyone who denies that violence can possess a terrible beauty, has clearly not met Mima Shimoda and Etsuko Mita...



## Bambi vs. Godzilla

Generally, I consider the Equal Opportunities Commission a bunch of busybodies who've made careers out of political correctness. However, a tenet of TC philosophy is that consenting women should be free to beat the crap out of each other, so even I cheered when Jane Couch took British boxing authorities to the EOC, and thence to the cleaners, for their refusal to grant her a licence.



When I heard her first fight was in Streatham, five minutes up the line from TCHQ, it created a fine "research opportunity": watch the inaugural sanctioned women's pro-boxing bout in Britain, and get material for this issue too. I bought a ticket (at £30, rather more than the wrestling) and went to see Couch take on a German boxer, Simone Lukic. Couch, a.k.a. the 'Fleetwood Assassin' - not the best handle in boxing history - is an ex-confectionery packer with a colourful history involving juvenile delinquency, and looking at her reminded me of the quote often attributed to Wellington: "I don't know about the enemy, but they certainly put the fear of God in me". I'd certainly want a lot of money to tangle with her. This was Beauty and the Beast: Couch resembled Jennifer Saunders with dreadlocks, while Lukic, just 18, was tall and willowy, giving the impression a stiff breeze might cause her trouble. Credit to Couch, though, for entering the ring to Sid Vicious's version of *My Way* - even if *Smack My Bitch Up* might have been more appropriate.

Because from the start, it was clear even to me that the sole question was when Couch would win, not if. Her punches had far more vigour, and she just kept advancing, crouched in a toad-like fashion. Lukic, not to be found anywhere in the world rankings, gamely tried to use her height, and jab to keep Couch off, but it was like watching a pink, fluffy thing being stalked by a dark, spiky thing. At 1:04 in round two, Couch finally landed a proper punch. The referee stopped the fight immediately - possibly *too* rapidly, though Lukic did receive attention in her corner for some time.

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Execution witnessed, the press duly departed - and so did Couch, having earned £1,400 at a much better rate than in her rock-packing days. Longer, albeit less interesting, all-male fights followed. Going by this rout, perhaps Couch's nickname is appropriate after all. But it was *such* a mismatch, who can tell for sure? Maybe next time, she'll fight an opponent who can match her undeniable skills, and then we'll be better able to tell.

# American Excess

[Well, it's a good title: why not use it more than once?] when you're talking about Quantum Leap and their nine volumes of LPWA women's wrestling...no sooner said, than a large cardboard box was sitting on the floor here at TC Towers. Not to be confused with the LPGA (which has more lesbians), the Ladies Professional Wrestling Association dates back to 1989, but is undergoing something of a renaissance recently, as these nine tapes - and hopes for an upcoming program of promotions - show. Since you can buy them in HMV, you can't plead obscurity as an excuse, and nor is incomprehensibility a viable defence, since they're all in English. Er, well, American, anyway...

**Super Ladies' Showdown** contains the only United States pay-per-view women's wrestling event, a 1992 Rochester, Minnesota show, featuring a contest to determine the "Japanese ladies champion". The J-stars featured, Eagle Sawai and Harley Saito, aren't the creme de la creme; decent enough journeymen, mind, but in footballing terms, the equivalent of Wimbledon and Middlesborough. Despite this, at 120 mins, it's good value for money, and the contrast in styles is interesting. The Americans, relying on strength, are clearly fazed by the Japanese aerial assaults and high kicks; they have problems adapting, and look sluggish in comparison. The audience, however, are impressed: after initial boos, Saito becomes the fan favourite, even over local girl Denise Storm. Outside the tournament, the other bouts are less memorable. The Terri Power/Lady X title bout, however, has spark and life, with Power perhaps close to the level of the Japanese. Aside from the usual grey sources i.e. other fans and the Internet, this tape is probably your best chance of seeing some of the Japanese women in action.



**Super Ladies Showdown 2** is actually not really connected to the first one at all, save one bout, Desiree Petersen vs Shinobu Kandori, which looks like an unused portion of the PPV. It's probably the best bout too - I'd say Kandori is one of the top five in Japan, and it shows in her skill and aggression. Indeed, a recurring theme through the tapes is that the best wrestlers have a Japanese connection. Now, whether this is because the good ones go to Japan, or because they get good over there, I don't know. The LPWA is certainly international, with Petersen apparently being Danish - not that this stops the audience chanting "USA! USA!" - and Australia, Mexico and Italy are also represented. Add some decent tag action with Team America (Heidi Lee Morgan and Misty Blue Simms) taking on the Nasty Girls, and overall it's not too far short of its predecessor, despite lacking any structure.

**Power Slam** is another compilation; the problem with these is a tendency for the commentators to refer to previous bouts which, through the glory of editing, turn up later on, or indeed, on an entirely different tape! However, the enthusiastically opinionated Jim Cornette is great fun to listen to, always going off with loud-mouthed wit. Inside the ring, the highlight sees Reggie Bennett team up with Terri Power: in April 93, the latter was part of Dreamslam, a cross-promotion event widely regarded as the best ever in Japanese women's wrestling. They're a formidable pairing, and an Italian girl, Madusa Miceli, is another good find on this tape. It climaxes in a chaotic and confused Battle Royale, with no less than twenty-four women in the ring simultaneously.



**The Main Event** provides a good showcase for Reggie Bennett, one of the veterans of women's pro wrestling. She was part of the abomination (admittedly an amusing one) that was Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling and, despite being 37 years old, spent the early part of this year out East, in Aja Kong's ARSION group, and did very well from what I saw. Bennett started off as a body-builder and has also had a minor movie career – you can see her in Stallone's arm-wrestling film, 'Over the Top', and 'Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone'. Elsewhere, Madusa Miceli demolishes her opponent with disturbing efficiency (yet again, I suspect a result of Japan-based seasoning), and the Lady X/Bambi title fight is also a pretty good contest. The work-rate on view there is impressive, with both women clearly giving their all, and the result is in doubt right up until the end.



**Wacky World** is different in that the matches have a vague theme i.e. they're more or less off-the-wall. For "less", read a wrestler casually smashing a cream pie into a commentator's face on the way to the ring; for "more", try a tag-match, the Glamor Girls versus 'The Beast' and Reggie Bennett, over possession of a large toy rabbit called Harvey. That one is as stupid as it sounds - it's the sort of thing GLOW would do - but actually works because it's pitched perfectly, balanced between deadly serious and very tongue-in-cheek. However, I should point out that the 'Glamor Girls' are neither glamorous nor girls – I suppose calling themselves the Bloated Post-Menopausal wouldn't prove as catchy. Most of the other battles are merely slightly quirky, though the Desire Petersen/Lady X fight is robust almost to troublesome levels, with Petersen flying into the audience and off the top rope. The tape also lets you see commentator Jim Cornette – and he looks disturbingly like Jeffrey Combs...

**Super Challenge** starts brightly, with Malia Hosaka + Bambi brawling against the Nasty Girls – like all the tapes, it's an 'E' certificate, though I'm not quite sure this is what the rating was intended for! Malia Hosaka is also in the other top bout, against Madusa Miceli: a nice contrast, Japanese-born against Japanese-experienced. After, oh, some nine hours or so, I'm beginning to get the hang of calling these, and in most of the bouts you can kinda tell who's likely to win: extraneous interference aside, good tends to triumph over evil more often than not. And it's not until the title bout between long-time LPWA champion, Australian Susan Sexton, and The Beast - 60 matches in all - that we get the first submission.

Once you see the likes of Toyota and Kansai in action, it may be hard to go back, and for the hardened fan, American women's wrestling could seem more a curio than anything else. However, such comparisons are probably unfair, while the Japanese brand remains such an underground cult. For the novice, these tapes are an entertaining appetiser, especially for those unwilling to handle incomprehensible Japanese footage. **Super Ladies' Showdown** is the best, and makes a good starting point for anyone interested in the spectacle.

Others available include:

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**Grudge Matches!**

**Revenge**

**Wild Women**

**Super Ladies Showdown 3**

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## "The rules are...there are no rules"

**Cage Fighting Women:** £13.99, Quantum Diamond

**Extreme Catfighting:** £12.99, Visual Entertainment

Fighting women may be classified by two criteria: useless/vicious and cute/ugly. Thus, Mima Shimoda is vicious-cute, while Jane Couch is vicious-ugly. The "ladies" [quotes advisedly used] on *Extreme Catfighting* tend to the cute end of the spectrum, but despite their efforts, remain inept – they wouldn't last two minutes with Couch or Shimoda. Indeed, few last that long with each other: all five fights combined total barely quarter of an hour. Most of the 80+ minute tape is interviews, slow-motion replays and analysis, interpretation and sexual innuendo from two severely annoying commentators.

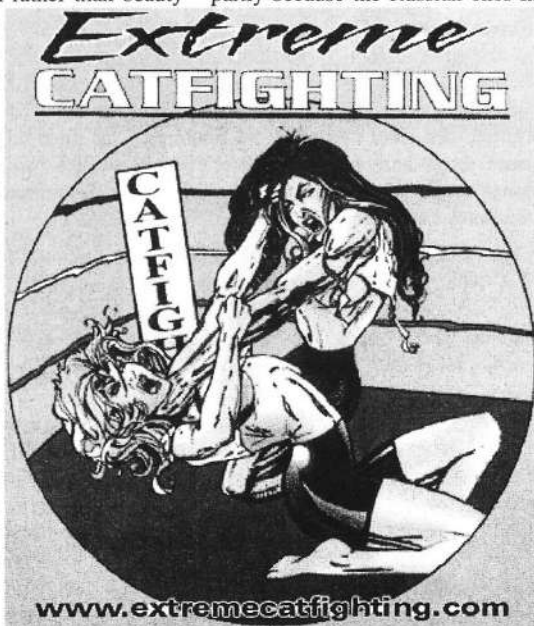
The basic concept, ring-based combat for women with few rules, is sound. However, fighting skill is irrelevant, and indeed discouraged, in favour of large breasts and skimpy costumes. Not that there's anything wrong with that, of course, except the result is, it falls uncomfortable between sexual titillation and gratuitous violence. Thus we get repeated replays, both of escaping mammary glands and a very nasty looking injury, when one of the girls is taken down and her knee bends *forward*. This combination makes for queasy viewing.

Part of the problem seems to be matching fighters: all too often, an obvious imbalance in size or skill means the outcome is never in doubt. Only once do they get it right, and that bout not only goes the distance, it's easily the best on the tape, combining boxing with ground-based grappling. A contrast in styles is one thing, and indeed part of the ethos of Ultimate Fighting is to compare different disciplines, but what we get here are far too many 'squashes'. There's nothing to suggest the fights are anything but legit – the brief duration points in this direction. However, one wonders whether there's much point in watching a display of what largely amounts to martial incompetence, rather than arts.

*Cage Fighting Women* is the opposite, with no concession to aesthetics in its mix of kick-boxing and Ultimate-style octagon bouts. There is also no colour commentary, a mixed blessing, as I'd like *some* background info. Holland and Russia provide most of the participants (it's a Dutch video) and there's no doubting the women are chosen for skill rather than beauty – partly because the Russian ones in particular are scary. However, perversely, this tends to mean more tedious action, chary and cautious manoeuvring being the order of the day.

Also in contrast to *Extreme Catfighting*: only one fight is stopped, the others all go the 6- or 10-minute distance, perhaps reflecting superior training and stamina in these competitors. This is particularly apparent on defense; they know how to block and hold an opponent at bay even when they go down on the ground. This is largely only interesting from a technical point of view, for a layman like me, interested merely in an adrenalin buzz, it's not really captivating to watch.

And this may be the most important conclusion, if any inference can be drawn here: theatrical, staged violence is far superior to the real thing. Oh, and that cute women are better fun to watch than ugly ones – but, hell, we knew that already...





# “Banned From Television”

*In February, the BBFC announced, with much trumpeting, that ‘The Exorcist’ had finally been passed on video – a decision undeniably linked to the recent departure of chief censor James Ferman, who gave the film considerably more credit than it was worth. But the BBFC giveth, and the BBFC taketh away. At virtually the same time, and with a great deal less publicity, they refused two titles video certificates: Lucio Fulci’s ‘Cat in the Brain’ and the mondo documentary ‘Banned From Television’. The former was really no surprise - Fulci’s reputation alone meant that it was likely to get scrutiny, even though it’s nearer to the Peter Jackson school of excessive gore than anything which would threaten the fabric of society. [A bigger shock was that anyone actually wanted to release this tedious piece of dreck] The latter, however, perhaps deserves more investigation. First, here’s the press release sent out by the Board, explaining their decision:*

“As the authority designated by Parliament with the responsibility for classifying videos under the Video Recordings Act 1984, the Board must determine whether or not a video is suitable for a classification certificate to be issued to it, with special regard to the likelihood of video works being viewed in the home. In making this decision, the Board must also have special regard, amongst other relevant factors, to any harm that may be caused to potential viewers or, through their behaviour, to society because of the manner in which the work deals with criminal behaviour, illegal drugs, violence, horror or sex.

The Board carefully considered this video in the light of these tests. The main consideration for the Board was the question of harm referred to above. In short, does the work have the potential for anti-social influence?

In the Board’s view it does. It is a compilation of scenes of extremely violent death, injury and mutilation, many of which are repeated in slow-motion. The commentary draws attention to the grislier aspects and in effect invites enjoyment at human suffering. The inclusion also of sex scenes reinforces the impression that the purpose of the video is to provide entertainment. There is no attempt to justify the images by placing the incidents in any other journalistic or educational context. Whatever current relevance the images might have had when they were originally photographed has been lost in the general compilation of horrors. The Board is conscious that a particular genre that has always been identified as entirely unacceptable is that of so-called ‘snuff movies’. Their main identifying feature is that at least one of the participants is actually killed. *Banned From Television* is only different in that, instead of a death being created for the work, actual death and injury is collated from a wide range of pre-existing sources to create the work.

The Board has concluded that the video is potentially harmful because of the influence it may have on the attitudes and behaviour of a significant proportion of likely viewers. The instinct of concern and compassion for the suffering of others is a basic social necessity. So is respect for the dignity of real human life. By presenting actual human death and mutilation as entertainment, the work, in the Board’s view, has the potential to erode these instincts. There is a danger of it falling into the hands of young and impressionable persons (whatever its classification) and of some significant brutalising effect on their attitude to human life and pain.

The Board has considered the possibility of cuts as a remedy for these difficulties. It has concluded, however, that they would be unlikely to modify the tone and effect of the work acceptably.”



# = Banned From Video

Naturally, having read the above, it became my moral duty to see this film, and it proved no problem to pick up a copy on a recent trip to the States – alternatively, why not order over the Internet, at [www.bannedfromtv.com](http://www.bannedfromtv.com)? Three volumes available, all major credit cards accepted. [The irrelevance of the BBFC grows on a daily basis...]

My dislike of Mondo movies (and indeed, Mondo TV like “Police! Camera! Action!”) has previously been documented; partly because you need no real skill to put one together, and partly due to the pseudo-moralising that inevitably accompanies them. While *Banned from Television* is refreshingly free from such cant, it remains little more than a selection of “Bloody hell! Rewind that!” moments: a smorgasbord of crashes, police brutality, executions, animals on the rampage, criminal activity, etc. Interestingly, in some cases, sound effects have been added, so otherwise silent security video footage suddenly records gunshots. Mind you, far worse is the natural sound made when someone gets hit by a train [a clip which is on the TC website, and represents perhaps the epitome of the BH!RT! moment]. And the tape is censored, even if it says much about American attitudes that the only thing obscured, amid all the death and destruction, is a policeman’s dick.

But should it be banned? Of course not. This isn’t death video per se: while some clips are patently terminal, in others damage is slight - a source of wonder in itself - and a third group are left annoyingly unresolved. The main factor for inclusion isn’t the pain or injury, which are irrelevant – far more important is the BH!RT! quotient, though the supposedly “sexy” stuff - footage of lap dancers and the audience at a 2 Live Crew concert getting carried away - is largely tedious and tame.



I’ve watched enough fake mayhem to fuel a minor Balkan war, yet the real thing still appalls. The most horrific thing I ever saw was BBC News footage of Israeli soldiers deliberately and cold-bloodedly breaking Palestinians’ legs with boulders, and most of the clips here are similarly disturbing; man’s inhumanity to man is terrible to behold. Brazil is now crossed off my list of potential holiday destinations, having seen their police’s fondness for casual brutality and summary execution. Rodney King got off *very* lightly.



I doubt a normal citizen would feel any “brutalising effect”; if you aren’t shocked by parts of this tape, you’re clearly there already. It’s almost a relief to be upset by things like an El Salvador cop shooting a demonstrator in the chest at point-blank range – it just shows that cinematic violence only desensitises you to...cinematic violence. Mind you, my feelings for the victims did vary: I’ve little sympathy for anyone who takes part in bull-running, and the public execution of rapists is merely justice being seen to be done.



The video is valid, because this stuff *happens*, and people should be free to see it happening. I’d heard about the brutality of Brazilian police, but the reports of death squads no longer seem hyperbole – and nothing drives home road-safety better than seeing a car get absolutely totaled by a juggernaut. Rather than losing “respect for the dignity of real human life”, you come away with a new-found awareness of just how fragile and delicate it is; this ain’t the movies, where cars fly through the air and people crawl out slightly grazed. Here, you get shot, you fall down, you die. The BBFC’s claim that it’s “presenting actual human death and mutilation as entertainment” is wrong: it is eye-popping and jaw-dropping, but it’s also gut-wrenching and brutal, which is exactly how violence should be. The BBFC’s decision leaves the public with no perception of it beyond that of Hollywood, and in the long run, this may be potentially more damaging.



## TC Travel #2: Que-bec to Basics

Montreal is a city suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. It desperately wants to be French, yet its position near the cultural behemoth of America inevitably means a lot more popular contamination than the powers-that-be want, and there's also the legacy of Canada's days as a British colony. Yet this is not necessarily a bad thing; Montreal possesses many of the benefits of France and America, but largely without the occasional arrogance which can sometimes be a facet of both. Even the simplest thing reflects this internal tension, such as the humble hot-dog, omnipresent, as on American streets – except, half the time it's called a "chien chaud". For this is a province which actually employs Gestapo-like inspectors to go round and check the language used on signs, ensuring that the French version is bigger than the English one. Such pedantry defies belief - you can't legislate language like this - and hearing such things certainly tends to put me off the idea of living there.



### DANGER

These men organise the FantAsia film festival.  
If you see them, do not approach them.  
They will rot your brain, and corrupt your morals  
to be just like theirs. You can tell, can't you?

Which is a shame, as the city is otherwise very appealing, with a lot to praise. Culturally, it's quite amazing; given its size (barely a million in Montreal itself) there is a hell of a lot going on. In July alone, there's a big Jazz festival, and the Just For Laughs comedy festival, as well as the reason we were there, Fant-Asia, a wonderful month-long showcase for (vaguely) genre movies, which beats into a cocked hat anything London has to offer in the field. Besides, how can you dislike a city where the majority of the population sound like Antoine des Caunes?

It helped a great deal that the Canadian dollar was at a record low, so most things tended towards 'ridiculously cheap'. Cinema-going, for example, worked out about half the price it is here, whether you went to big, new movies or rep theatres – one of the latter charged C\$2.50, all day every day, which is barely one pound. This does bring home just how expensive it is in London these days; the refurbished Odeon Leicester Square now has £10 seats. Never mind leopard-skin fabric, at that price, I want real leopard. Needless to say, full advantage was taken of this value, and we averaged more than one cinema trip per day during our stay, both at Fant-Asia and regular cinemas – once we'd worked out which were showing films in English, which dubbed into French, and which in English but with French sub-titles.

This was a good way of avoiding the weather, best described as chAnGEaBIE, even by British standards. Any given day almost inevitably brought sun, clouds, and thunderstorms, with hail an optional extra. It was all quite enough to freak out Chris, who lives in Arizona, where they have just two seasons – summer, and "waiting for summer". God knows what Montreal is like in the winter, but you can get some idea from the fact that their parking meters are not placed by the road, but in the shelter of the buildings, in order to stop them getting buried...

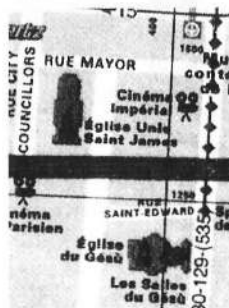
Shopping in general was also reasonable, albeit confused by the application of "goods and services tax", "harmonised sales tax", "taxe sur les produits et services" and "provincial sales tax" (the first three are actually one and the same), which were never included in the price shown, seemed to vary on a semi-random basis, and were in any event reclaimable on the way out of the country if you spent enough. To balance this horrendously Americanised idea, the currency was solidly British, with dollar coins, notes whose colours varied with their value, and even a bi-metal \$2 coin – good practice for the £2 one introduced shortly after I came back...

One great idea which London could do well to copy, is the massive network of shopping malls which is buried under the city, linked together by the Metro. There must be a couple of thousand shops down there, not including the restaurants, cinemas, and just about any other service you care to name. It would be quite easy to wander around for days without ever seeing daylight, and it's a great way of bypassing the savagely wintry weather. It does, however, imply a certain geological stability, so I don't think it's a concept which will catch on in California or Tokyo.

The central street, St.Catherine, has a distinct wealth gradient - walking along from one end to another, it gradually evolves from seedy and run-down, through commercially brisk, to disturbingly up-market, like a core section of Montreal's economic life. Along its length, however, it remains cosmopolitan, strip-clubs rubbing shoulders with boutiques in a way that would probably be impossible in many cities. It's all quite compact, with virtually everything within walking distance, save perhaps the Olympic Stadium, and that's easily reached on the impressive Metro trains.

There is an old part to Montreal, down by the St.Lawrence River, but it's not something you'd really notice, and is largely indistinguishable from the rest of the city. However, the Notre Dame Basilica is a cracking structure, capable of holding 6,000 worshippers, whose interior contradicts a somewhat drab outside, and there are plenty of other nice pieces of architecture, in a variety of styles - some of the almost Art Deco stuff is especially outstanding. In this aspect, it probably has more in common with European cities than most North American ones.

On the other hand, it doesn't appear to have much distinctive local cuisine - though you could say the same about Britain, which has similarly glued together a ragbag of cultures. You're not stuck for choice: the food court in the bottom of the Eaton Centre mall alone offers everything from massive smoked meat sandwiches to Japanese noodles. As is by now traditional, we tried the local kebabs, and found them to be smaller than the British variety, and completely wrapped in the pitta - a snack rather than a meal. The beer front was much the same as America, with Molson dominating the market (whatever you do, avoid Molson Hi-Dry, a beer possessing the temperament, taste and effect of bottled rattlesnake), but with a slate of real ales to track down and try out: Sleeman's was eminently drinkable.



We had a great apartment, in a complex run by a brother and sister, five minutes from St. Catherine. It was self-catering, but I think we only cooked one meal there - hell, who bothers with things like washing-up when you're on holiday? - surviving on a combination of eating out and junk food. Plenty of supermarkets and stores around, though I was fairly freaked by the tank of live lobsters, largely because I never realised what **BIG** buggers they are. Respect to their claws.

I was there for the World Cup Final, and even found a station which took the BBC commentary feed, so enjoyed the dulcet tones of John Motson, not some American going about "being double-teamed in the red area" - though generally, the North American coverage of the World Cup was better than expected. ABC got round the advertisement problem by having, say, a Nike logo in the top left of the screen; every ten minutes they'd quickly say "this portion of the game is brought to you commercial-free by Nike", then get right back to the match. A neat solution to a thorny problem. Given the result, Montreal was probably almost as good as being in France itself. Every goal was greeted with cheers, and people rushed out onto their balconies and waved flags, while the final result led to a procession of cars in the street, with much, typically French horn-blowing.

This kinda sums up Montreal; American openness with Gallic flair, and the result is pleasing, albeit radically different to New Orleans, where French and American cultures also mix. Must be the British influence, plus perhaps the chilling impact of the climate. Regardless, it is a city which works, managing to welcome visitors without sacrificing itself to them, and there's every chance that I'll be back in future - perhaps for 1999's Fant-Asia festival...

## In Bed With Nastassja

10 pm on a Saturday night, and here I am, tucked up with a large supply of junk food, a packet of ProPlus, and the world's most beautiful woman. And you wonder why TC is infrequent. But sadly for my ego, Nastassja's presence is limited solely to two videotapes: 'Bella Mafia', recorded when it was shown on C5 during the World Cup, and 'The Ring', purchased from the Virgin Megastore.

These are part of her second assault on Fortress Hollywood. Despite movies like 'Cat People', and a slew of generally favourable reviews for Kinski, her first attack on the hearts and minds of the American audience was repelled at some cost. Specifically, two movie studios: Zoetrope, who did 'One From the Heart', and Goldcrest, sunk by 'Revolution'. With a reputation as box-office poison, she retreated to Europe, for a decade of art movies, marriage and motherhood. Following her divorce, she returned for another try, and after perking up the low-budget action pic 'Crackerjack', had a decent hit alongside Charlie Sheen in 'Terminal Velocity'. Since then, it's been back to her usual pattern of critical success ('One Night Stand') and commercial failure ('Father's Day').





There is, however, one addition to her bow, in the form of TV miniseries, with the two titles mentioned above prime examples. Running almost three hours each, excluding commercials, it seemed sensible to schedule a double-bill for purposes of comparison, so having cleared the decks of housemates, and loaded up at the supermarket, I took a deep breath and plunged into an all-night session of high-quality American television...

**Bella Mafia.** Nice start: two minutes in, and Nasti's character, Sophia, is already getting her knee sucked by her boyfriend. Despite showing admirable taste in calling her "the most beautiful creature in the world", he's about to leave Sicily for Harvard. Unfortunately, he ends up taking Kidnapping 1.0.1, because his father is mob boss Don Luciano (Dennis Farina), whose rival Peter Carollo wants in on the New York docks. The good news: Michael is returned. The bad news: he's slightly lacking in the pulse department. Cue Luciano swearing a blood oath to kill, dismember, and otherwise discomfit those responsible. Oh, and Carollo has a Dark Secret, in the shape of a crippled son locked away in a monastery. This will be important later, trust me.

Meanwhile, Nastassja is pregnant by her dead boyfriend – it's like a flashback to 'Tess', seeing her toiling in the fields at a home for unmarried mothers, a peasant banged up then rejected by the local nobility. Unlike Hardy's heroine, however, she does get into the family, after being almost run over by another son, Tino the stutterer (conveniently coincidental car crash #1). Sophia's son has been adopted, so in yet another 'Tess' conjunction, she marries Tino instead, without telling him of her dark secret.

Their wedding is populated by a lot of American men in suspiciously snappy suits, with their molls and daughters. However, Don Luciano is making enemies because of his continued refusal to work with Carollo, strongly suspecting him of being his son's killer. Meanwhile the rest of his offspring are also getting married, more or less respectably – "less" definitely being the case for the one who gives casino dealer Moira (Jennifer Tilly) a bottle of champagne, provoking the immortal exchange:



“That’s an awfully big bottle”

“I’m sure you can take all of it...”

At least, I think that’s what he said.

**11pm**, and the first fringes of tiredness drift across my view. Sophia’s adopted son, Luca, runs away and, in one of those random events that only happen in TV mini-series, appears in the same place as Carollo’s crippled son Giorgio, whom he befriends. [I said he’d be important. Regular viewers of this sort of thing can probably tell where the cross-family friendship is going to end up] But it’s okay, as Sophia is pregnant again herself.

Years fly by without anyone - least of all Nastassja - really looking older. So before we know it, Luca is in his late teens, and when Giorgio dies, his dying request is for Carollo to adopt Luca, who has been his only friend. When Carollo gets arrested soon afterwards, Don Luciano offers to testify against him, and Luca goes after Luciano, totally unaware it’s actually his family he’s killing. Indeed, Luca murders every male in the family, which seems a bit excessive, even to his foster father, who disowns him. Here endeth part one. I’m yawning, but bearing up.

The second part of this exercise in “Mafia girl power” was shown the same night as Scotland rolled over against Morocco, so I actually saw some of it, having given up on the football after Morocco’s third goal went in. At the start, with all the Luciano men dead, the other families are trying to pick the bones clean; the Don’s widow (Vanessa Redgrave – who now seems to have aged several decades since part one) tries to shoot Carollo in court, but misses. Luca, peeved at being disowned, does it for her, then gets knocked over by a car carrying his mother and aunts (conveniently coincidental car crash #2), giving him a brief sojourn in the family home. Oh, the irony... He then leaves, as his actions have, understandably, put him high up on the Mafia shit-list.

**Midnight**. The first ProPlus tablet goes down, as the girls move to New York. Luca is falling in love with one of his cousins, Rosa (who looks pleasantly like Brooke Shields). Hmm...this ‘Something Weird’ video catalogue has plenty of interesting titles, doesn’t it? Anyway, the Lucianos offer to hand over the family property to their rivals, in exchange for the names of whoever killed their men, but the Mafia try and take the deeds by force, only for Luca to rescue them.

Oh, dear: Luca now turns his attentions to Mummy, adding an Electra Complex to the Needlessly Complex, already present in the form of an irrelevant subplot which has the widows trying to steal casino chips. But after Sophia discovers from the police that Luca killed her child, husband and various other relatives, the vengeful women drug him, tie him up, and stab him. Only then does Sophia find a locket, which proves he was her son – though I could be mistaken, since I don’t remember the locket ever being mentioned before. Sophia ends up as head of the family and at Rosa’s wedding to another mob family, they start to poison those who ordered the killings. *The End*.

**I am**. It was only at the end that I realised the major point of the film: how Sophia changes over the course of the series. To start with, she is not so much glowing, as totally incandescent, but by the end has become absolutely cold and callous, with the “eyes of the devil”, as someone says. It’s a startling transformation, but it happens so gradually that you hardly notice; an impressive performance, by any standard. And that’s where the series’ strength really lies, in the acting. While Linda LaPlante’s story is flimsy, and probably wouldn’t make a great deal of sense looked at through critical, or even less sleepy eyes, the cast is top-notch,

with Jennifer Tilly particularly outstanding. In addition to those named above, who all perform well, you've also got the likes of Tomas Arana (from 'The Church'), and veteran Franco Nero in supporting roles, which makes this a heavyweight by miniseries standards. I wouldn't mind watching it again. C+

### Until war tarnished her dreams.

**The Ring.** Fortified with a bag full of industrial-strength buttered popcorn, we plough into 'The Ring', beginning in 1934, with a woman committing suicide after her affair with a Jew is



discovered. Ten years later, her daughter Ariana is, hey presto, Nastassja, and in her late teens. This is something of a shock given she finished 'Bella Mafia' pushing 40, it's amazing what a huge age range she can cover. But at least she's German here, something of a rarity in a career which has seen her as everything from a Dorset peasant to an American stockbroker.

In this film, she's also seeded #1 on the cast list, although the only other person in the cast list you might know is Michael York (undergoing a bit of a renaissance after 'Austin Powers') who plays her father. They've been helping Jews escape the Nazis, but when their own plans to flee to Switzerland are discovered, they have to split up. Ariana stays behind as a (somewhat feisty) decoy, and is arrested; father and brother Gerhard make it, but father is shot on his way back across the border to get her, leaving poor Nastassja all alone, the only name star, who must hold things together for the 137 minutes still to come - at £11.99, it's good value, if nothing else! While she's befriended by, and eventually marries, a Luftwaffe officer, her house is requisitioned as barracks, and the only piece of property she has left is her mother's ring. In Zurich, Gerhard is also running out of money, and has to take on menial work to make ends meet, at least until he meets an art dealer's daughter.

2 am. I can feel my eyes drooping. I have this horrible feeling that it won't be long before I decide to close my eyes and just listen to the dialogue, and then... Time for another ProPlus, and a pause at one of the myriad obvious commercial breaks for a quick game of 'Deathtrap Dungeon', while I wait for the caffeine to kick in.

2:40 am. A helping of cheerful hack 'n' slash later, and it's back to the grind – somehow, 'Bella Mafia' was easier viewing, maybe having breaks with actual commercials helps, or maybe it's the lateness of the hour. I find myself getting annoyed with the terribly twee, shot-from-the-back-only love scenes, and the frequent leaping around between characters and countries. I wonder briefly whether a frozen Sara Lee chocolate gateau would be edible.

Adding to the confusion is a third subplot involving Max, one of the Jews they helped escape, but I'm not currently sure how that's going to fit in. As the war ends, Ariana is sent to safety by her husband, and ends up having to fend for herself all the way from Berlin to Paris. Ariana's husband dies, and Gerhard gets his girlfriend pregnant and does the decent thing i.e. moves to Paris. Ariana is caught up in the stream of refugees, though this only seems to happen so we can have the predictable scene of bro' and sis' nearly but not quite meeting on the road. All the shots of tired refugees shuffling aimlessly around reminded me of 'Schindler's List', though fortunately without the tedious agenda.

3 am. Ariana changes her name to Anna Gorne, to get passage on a Jewish refugee ship – a Jew-boat, hohoho... A medic named Paul, with "love interest" tattooed on his forehead, turns up and takes the sickly looking Ariana in. Max also endures a "nearly but not quite meeting Ariana" encounter, while her brother changes *his* name, and recognises a painting, which Max had sold to his father-in-law, the art dealer. However, the most important thing to happen this hour is that I discover some Opal Fruits, and can get my blood sugar back up.



There's one quote from 'The Ring' that bears repeating: "I once swore that if I ever had a child, there was nothing that could make me give him up. And nothing can." If Nastassja says that particular line with additional feeling, it'd be no surprise, given the entanglements over the children from her marriage to Ibrahim Moussa. She even made the front of the Evening Standard, with one particularly bizarre story:

#### ***Kinski arrested 'after fight with husband'***

*"Actress Nastassja Kinski has been arrested after allegedly attacking her former husband, Egyptian film producer Ibrahim Moussa. Both were arrested and booked at Los Angeles Van Nuys police station for battery. Police reports say Kinski scratched Moussa's face with her fingernails in a brawl which is the latest development in a long-running battle between the couple for custody of their children Aljoshka, 14, and Sonia, 12. Kinski, who has had them baptised Catholics, confronted Moussa in a rage when she discovered he planned to have Aljoshka circumcised for religious reasons..."*

Gerhard's wife turns out to be faking her pregnancy, so he leaves her and heads back to Berlin to look for his family, unaware they're dead or a continent away. The time scales here, as in 'Mafia', are dead weird: after whipping through a decade before the first advert break, everything else has apparently been crammed into two months. This only becomes apparent when Ariana turns out to be pregnant by her Luftwaffe guy – last seen alive way back in paragraph two. Time for another pause, I think: VR Baseball [Minnesota 3, Seattle 2, as if you care]

5 am, and the final episode. I think it's safe to say this is not Kinski's finest hour, largely down to the material. Indeed, it's not even her finest thirty seconds: I doubt anyone could make anything out of this sow's ear, and watching this pap makes me realise just how edgy and extreme 'Bella Mafia' is in comparison. It's a nice reminder of why I don't watch mini-series. The scary thing is, at the start of a tape was an advert for an endless series of others, all based on Danielle Steele books. I don't know if the novels are as cliched, shallow and, frankly, Jew-heavy as the film (it has enough annoying characters to make anyone turn anti-Semitic), but I'm certainly not going to make the effort to find out.

Back on screen, Paul throws Ariana out when he discovers the baby is not his; fortunately, Max finally tracks her down, just after the birth, and Kinski's smile when she discovers Gerhard may still be alive is awesome – the sort men would climb mountains to see – and almost makes the preceding 140 mins worthwhile. Almost... Together, they head back to Zurich to look for him, then on to Berlin – where Gerhard is looking for them in turn, having been reconciled with his wife. And when he sees his father's grave, with fresh flowers on it...

Forward 25 years, for no readily apparent reason, and with no explanation for what happens in the intervening decades. In perhaps the most implausible of all the coincidences which pepper this film, Kinski's son is unknowingly going out with (pay attention, now) his mother's second ex-husband's daughter. But this only causes a reconciliation between Ariana and Paul; she gives her new daughter-in-law the family heirloom ring. On their honeymoon in Europe, and not far behind in the implausibility stakes, they bump into brother Gerhard in an art gallery, now sporting a dreadful goatee. He recognises the ring as his sister's, goes back to America with them, and there's not a dry eye in the house.

5:40 am. Four hundred and sixty minutes after starting, with the first faint traces of dawn peeping over the houses, I finally stagger to the end of a disaster movie, in the truest sense of the word. I should probably have expected no better from the man who gave Tom Hanks his debut in 'He Knows You're Alone'. Y'know, I love Nastassja 'n' all that, but...well, any chance of 'Cat People 2'? E+

# THE SPOOF IS

## The Roswell Incident And Other Fairy Stories

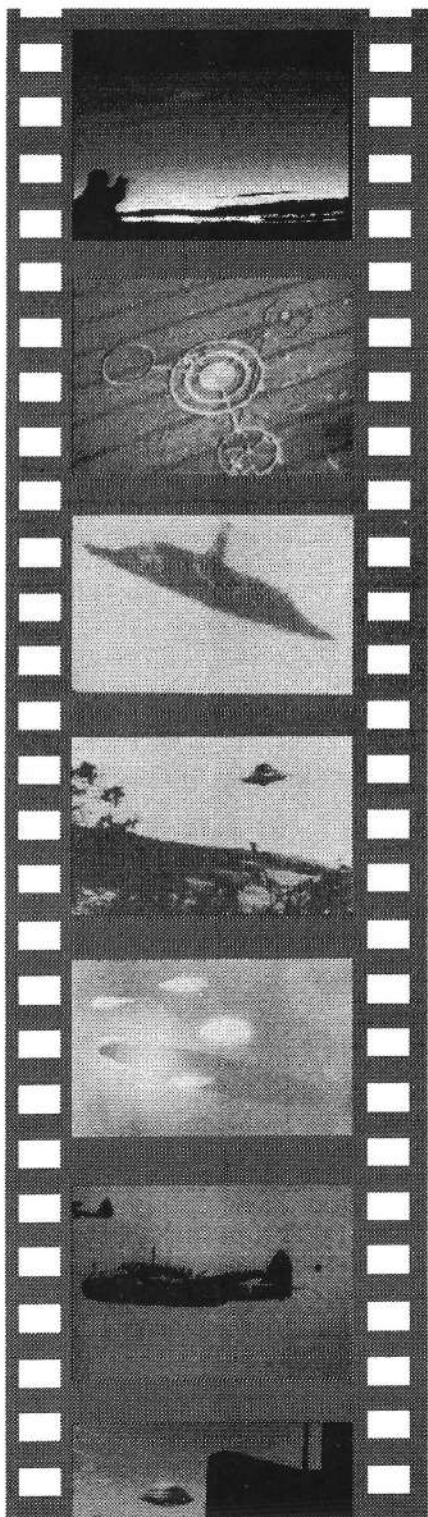
by Jim Swallow

The Truth Is Out There. Trust No One. Deny Everything. It's sinister to consider that all these X Files quotes apply so well to the so-called "Roswell Incident"... Probably the best-known and worst-documented (in terms of actual "truth") UFO event in history, say the name of this sleepy New Mexico town at an average dinner party and you'll hook a dozen folks each with their own take on what happened. Strangely, Roswell is actually better known than so-called "first ever" sighting by pilot Kenneth Arnold, in reporting which a wag journalist coined the term "flying saucer" and the rest was history (In actuality, Arnold's sighting was pre-dated by the less famous but no less intriguing Maury Island sighting, which also featured recovered UFO material, three days before). Arnold's sighting in Washington State was on 24th June 1947, and a little over a week later, something odd crashed in New Mexico.

The fog of claim, counter-claim and theory upon theory about the event has helped to muddy the waters so much that it's likely we'll never know what happened. We may even have seen some glimpse of the truth, but now we'll never be able to tell. Even the few remaining people who were there probably aren't even sure anymore. All you can say truthfully about the Roswell happening is that;

- a) Something crashed in the desert. It may even have been several somethings...
- b) The local airbase said it was a UFO, then they changed their minds and said it was a balloon
- c) The people in charge lied about some things. Quite how much is another story.

Like any legend, Roswell has grown grander and more exciting with each telling. 1995 saw the 'revelation' of alleged autopsy footage of bodies and hardware recovered from the crashed vehi-



# OUT THERE

cle, and with the public's pre-Millennial appetite for weirdness, conspiracy & paranoia stories still not sated, it's a legitimate target for the media to sink it's teeth into. Even that most popular of SF TV, *Star Trek*, has taken the myth to it's own — the fourth season of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* spilt the beans for all time by revealing that the crashed UFO was in fact a time-travelling starship crewed by some of DS9's resident aliens. Roswell was name-checked in *The X Files* first season finale "The Erlenmeyer Flask" and later in "Jose Chung's From Outer Space" (which spoofed practically every bit of UFO lore in forty-five minutes), but notably missed from the 70's series *Project UFO* (and indeed, missed from the real Project Blue Book on which the TV series was based). Perhaps the most entertaining TV outings for the story formed part of the series *Dark Skies*, which ran an interesting tap-dance act between its own story arc and dozens of "real" UFO events.

It seems that the movie and TV execs love affair with this infinitely

## TOTAL UFO SIGHTINGS, 1947 - 1969

YEAR	TOTAL SIGHTINGS	UNIDENTIFIED
1947	122	12
1948	136	7
1949	186	22
1950	210	27
1951	169	22
1952	1,501	303
1953	509	42
1954	487	46
1955	545	24
1956	670	14
1957	1,006	14
1958	827	10
1959	390	12
1960	557	14
1961	591	13
1962	474	15
1963	399	14
1964	562	19
1965	887	16
1966	1,112	32
1967	937	19
1968	375	3
1969	146	1
TOTAL	12,618	701

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per FBI

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20330

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Flying Objects

14 JAN 1970  
per FBI

UNIDENTIFIED  
Dear Mr. Malmfeldt:

This office recently received a public inquiry regarding UFOs, referred to us from the Bureau. As the enclosed fact sheet indicates, the Air Force's Project Blue Book investigation of UFOs was terminated on December 17, 1969, and all related documentation was turned over to the National Archives and Records Service.

The inquirer referred to us has been apprised of these events. Hopefully, the enclosed fact sheet will be of help in responding to any future inquiries on this subject.

Sincerely,

H. A. McCLANAHAN, Lt Col, USAF  
Chief, Civil Branch  
Community Relations Division  
Office of Information

Attachment  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Attention: Mr. Malmfeldt, Room 7825  
Washington, D. C. 20535

REC-26

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per FBI

AMERICAN REVOLUTION SOCIETY

47

malleable story has yet to wane; Here's a rough guide to some of the fall-out you can find on your video shelves...

**Incident At Roswell** - Shown on Channel 4 here in the UK and also sold on video, Incident At Roswell is a documentary on the event that covers the salient facts well and allegedly introduces a new element with a previously silent witness. The program is built largely around Ray Santilli's "lost" alien autopsy footage, and as such might make the entire endeavour as suspect as the autopsy film. I have to say that I'm not convinced by the Santilli footage... It just doesn't look right to me. But, you'll have to make your own mind up on that one. All I will say is that I recently spoke with a British video company executive who lightly offered to put me in touch with everyone involved in the faking of the film — for free. The Santilli film also aired in the USA and later here in Europe on the Sci-Fi Channel in Fox Television's doc *Alien Autopsy: Fact Or Fiction?*, which did so well that it has since spun off it's own series, *The Paranormal Borderline*, presented by *Star Trek: The Next Generation* dude Jonathan Frakes. Frakes' programme also shares airtime with other video-verité and yes-it's-true shows like *Sightings* and *The Extraordinary*.

**Roswell** - Kyle MacLachan stars as Major Jesse Marcel in this docu-drama loosely based on the book "UFO Crash At Roswell". For those of us familiar with the story of the incident, there's nothing new here to see, but for people after a quick and dirty synopsis of the event, you can do worse than watch this. The story finds an aged Marcel piecing the truth behind the cover-up together through flashback and chats with other witnesses. When he has most of the pieces, enter Martin Sheen as Townsend, a shady type who muddies the waters completely with the woolly saucer theories familiar to anyone who's read a few UFO books. Story wise, *Roswell* is (like the real thing) interesting but quite incomplete, and the effects are quite neatly done, but it fails to capture any sense of the more sinister elements of the Roswell crash. Overall, *Roswell* is more a movie about Marcel than it is about the incident; We sympathise with this family man who's made the fall guy for a military cover-up, but to be honest it could have been anything they were hiding. The UFO angle is almost incidental. There's also a few gaps that could have been filled in the movie - we see flashbacks from other witnesses as they speak to Marcel - but some of the more interesting Roswell accounts have been bypassed... There's nothing much of the actual UFO crash site aside from a few blurry pictures. Budget restrictions, maybe? But gripes aside, *Roswell* is one of the better of the bunch. B+.

[One other interesting *Roswell* item, in the category of "life's little ironies". A flap that spread over the Internet in 1995 when someone released grainy new pictures of a Grey's corpse, was eventually put down when some movie buff realised they were actually props from this film, that had been mistaken for the "real" thing...]

**Official Denial** - This at-first promising piece of 1993 UFOria stars Parker Stevenson as your typical abductee-spurned-by-those-around-him-who-do-not-believe, trying to convince his wife (played by Buck Rogers alumnus Erin Gray) that the little grey men are coming to get him. Enter the U.S. Air Force, watching his every move, waiting for the aliens to come; And come they do, in a nifty CGI UFO, beaming him up to the ship, implanting the traditional "nasal object" before dumping him back on the lawn. The USAF give chase, first in Apache helicopter gunships, then in stealth fighters, before the general in charge of the 'secret compound' orders the UFO lasered out of the sky by an SDI satellite. Pretty soon, the government forces under the control of the 'Majestic' agency cordon off the site around the downed saucer and investigate; We get scenes of the alien ship inside and out (oddly familiar in tone to anyone who's played the PC game *UFO: Enemy Unknown*), a dead Grey and subsequent autopsy thanks to trigger-happy Colonel Dirk (*Battlestar Galactica*) Benedict, and a live one too.



Stevenson is brought in as a last-ditch attempt to communicate with the alien and then it all goes pear-shaped. About twenty minutes in, Official Denial changes from a reasonable TV movie to a low-grade rip-off of *E.T.*, even pinching John Williams' musical riffs. In the end, we discover the Greys are actually genetically engineered time-travelling humans from the polluted world of the far future, and they're only abducting us for our (and their) own eco-aware good. I'm reminded of the Commander X books and William Cooper's warnings about movie conspiracies - that the media is being manipulated to portray UFOs and aliens as benevolent - after watching this one. *Official Denial* gets my official denial and scores a D, or a C+ if you turn off before the cute stuff starts.

[As an aside, the writer of *Official Denial*, Bryce Zaybel, was one of the co-writers for the aforementioned *Dark Skies*, which starts in the Kennedy-era Sixties and posits a "hidden history" of alien invasion and conspiracy. Unlike his movie, this is much more fun, a neat hybrid of *JFK*, *The X Files* and *The Invaders*. *Dark Skies* is well worth a look, a punchy romp through the sinister countryside of the UFO mythos, with all the trimmings. For saucer buffs, *Dark Skies* is the show, as its plot thread neatly dovetails with "real world" incidents like the Gary Powers U2 crash, the Kennedy assassination and the Betty & Barney Hill abduction in 1961. The last also has its own movie version, *The UFO Incident*, with James Earl Jones playing Barney like he's phoning his lines in.]

**Fire In The Sky** - This one seems to have something going for it from the outset, as we're proudly told that *Fire In The Sky* is based on the true-life abduction of logger Travis Walton (played by D.B. Sweeney) from a forest in Arizona back in 1975. Walton and a bunch of co-workers were heading home one night when they came across a saucer blocking the road — Walton got out to take a look and was zapped for his trouble. His workmates panicked and drove away, coming back later to find Walton and the UFO gone. Travis stayed gone for nearly a week and in the meantime his fellows on the logging crew were accused of his murder. On his return, dumped 12 miles away from the site, Walton recounted his tale of alien abduction. The movie is a bit uninvolved, despite capable performances by Robert Patrick as Walton's best buddy and James Garner as the investigating officer, starting off with the reaction of the townsfolk to Walton's vanishing and the tidal wave of rumour that builds up against the innocent loggers. Just as we begin to sympathise with Walton's mates, he comes back and the movie changes tracks (and even producers) as his abduction is seen in flashback. Travis Walton himself even makes an appearance, as one of the concerned townspeople. Then the film ends, with no suspense, no explanation, no nothing. Realistic? Yes. But filmic? No. *Fire In The Sky* also neglects to mention a few things, like the Walton family's reputation for practical jokes and Travis' prior interest in UFOs, only touching on the possible untruthful aspects of the case in vague, blink-and-you-miss-it asides. The scenes on the UFO are quite engaging, if almost completely unlike Walton's 'actual' experiences, and include some rather squirmy moments on an examination table. Clearly writer Tracey Torme (late of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Sliders* and the risible alien abduction miniseries *Intruders*) exercised all his artistic licence here, not in the Earthbound sequences. *Fire In The Sky* rates a hardly scorching C.

**Hangar 18** - Like Area 51, Dreamland, Gulf Breeze, Warmminster and of course Roswell, Hangar 18 is one of the notorious pieces of saucer-infested real estate around the globe. In this 1980 B-flick, a duo of shuttle astronauts are blamed for a satellite explosion caused by a crashing UFO, and while the two search for the truth, the government men (Robert Vaughn and Darren McGavin in full "Deep Throat" mode) plot to hide the ship in the secret hangar. For your money you get a bit of *Capricorn One*, some *Close Encounters*, a dash of *Flight Of The Navigator* and mishmash of all those American Seventies post-Nixon conspiracy movies. There are a couple of missed opportunities: although both the alien pilots are dead, we don't

get an autopsy, and we never really get to see much of the UFO aside from some flashy lights nicked from Glen A. Larson productions. Perhaps the most interesting thing about *Hangar 18* is the slight debt owed it by 1996's big budget alien invasion flick, *Independence Day*, which has a similar secret base, with a similar investigative team poking through a crashed ship...The only difference here is that the ID4 saucer crashed back in 1947, giving the movie a little Roswell riff as well. But as for *Hangar 18*, it's a **D**.

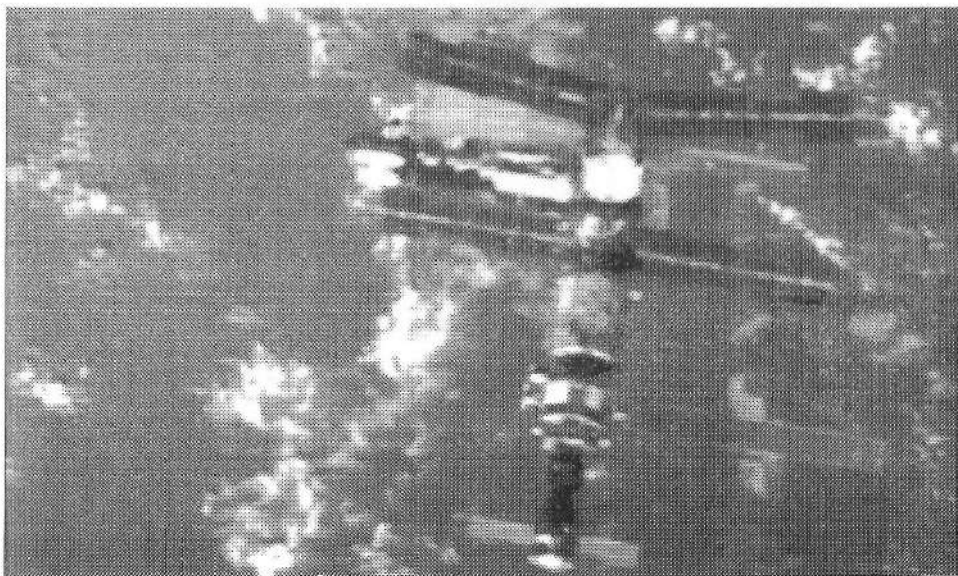
**Communion** - Oh yeah. The Whitley Strieber movie-of-the-book. Now while this one has the always-watchable Christopher Walken playing the lead role, it's a little tough for me to give *Communion* any kind of real credence. Strieber was and still is a highly selling horror fiction writer, and obviously the kind of guy with an eye for a story that will shift books; The fact that *Communion* shot up the book charts and was then followed by a couple of sequels (and let's not forget this flick) makes me wonder just how "true" a story this is. One of Strieber's post-Communion books was 'Majestic' (there's that word again), and in it he allegedly quoted from another book published by a Victorian writer, whose writings conveyed his story of alien abduction. Strieber called it proof. Actually, it was written in the 70's by noted British SF humorist/columnist Dave Langford... Anyone who can miss a boner like that has a serious credibility gap. But about the film. The direction is somewhat loopy and meanders; Walken and a reasonable cast of co-stars (including the excellent Frances Sternhagen) try to keep things on an even keel. The numerous dream sequences (or whatever) degenerate into dumb rock-video imagery towards the end, and while there are a couple of disturbing instances, any imprint these leave is washed away by the later, more slack moments. Read the book; I'm told it's better. **D**.

**Close Encounters of the Third Kind** - Spielberg's classic UFO film from his pre-E.T. days in 1977, while still a good flick, has dated a tad. The effects seem a little rough around the edges now (no Industrial Light & Magic or CGI back then, remember), but yet can still wow you - who can forget that great moment when the mothership rises over Devil's Tower in Wyoming (which is a real place, in case you were wondering), little Cary Guffey's abduction (later pinched for Fox Mulder's sister) or the subtle giant shadows and now-cliché blinding aerial spotlights that dog Richard Dreyfuss. My fave has to be that bit with the headlights in the rear-view mirror...But I digress. To Steve's credit, it's a great-looking film and it proves that he had that magic touch back then; *CE3K* is a real crowd-pleaser, with drama, suspense, chase bits and some real spectacle, but is it a "real" UFO film? Spielberg will have us believe that the Greys are our 'space brothers', not the ones responsible for evil abductions (only good ones) and cattle mutilations. Back in the Seventies, that might have been believable for the populace, but now in the wake of post-X Files paranoia it seems dreadfully naive. Maybe Spielberg is right, and they are going to be our pals — but he'd have a much harder time proving it today. Nevertheless, despite its sentimentality and a fluffy and essentially vacuous core, *CE3K* is a visual treat and worth a second look, in either its normal or "Special Edition" versions. It's also interesting to keep an eye open for all of Spielberg's cinematic riffs that have become clichés or staples of UFO stories ever since. **B+**.

and all the rest... Of course, if you can't find any of these, head down to your local video store and abduct the following works of "art" — but don't pay real money for 'em.. These are uniformly D-'s and worse.... **The Return** is a clunky CE3K remix with Cybill Shepherd, Jean-Michael Vincent and Martin Landau in something they all probably keep off their CV's. There's a mad prospector (actually a mad alien cattle and person mutilator) and lots of flashy lights and nice E.Ts — so-so UFO pabulum. **Visitors Of The Night** is a TV movie aimed at the middle-America mum market, with an angst-ridden housewife agonising over her rebellious daughter to her workaholic ex-hubby while ogling the hunky local sheriff...but it turns out

mum's an ex-abductee and her daughter is next in line, because the Greys want babies. All the aliens stuff is a metaphor for the break-up of the family (the rebellious and hateful daughter realises that mother is always right when the UFOs turn up), and there's a timely triangular UFO as opposed to the more common saucer. The movie ends with them both being abducted — which means the audience don't have to listen to them whine anymore. Don't be fooled by the semi-clad babe on the video cover and the hints that this is a skin-flick - it's not. If you want a real soft-core space porn movie, check out **Erotic Encounters** — there's no Roswell connection, but it proves that the aliens don't just probe folks anally and it invents a new kind of perversion: xenosexuality. Elsewhere, we have **Intruders** - a duff TV miniseries about alien foetal hybrids and abduction, way too long and utterly yawnable - and the more recent Nineties miniseries remake of **The Invaders**, where Quantum Leap's Scott Bakula struggles with a mind-implant and a meandering script. There's a couple of nicely moody moments, and a cool tip-of-the-hat cameo by the show's original star Roy Thinnes, but it's hard going.

Of course, this listing only manages a handful of the saucer flicks you can find, so don't be afraid to get in some beers, put on your tinfoil hat and seek out your own UFO gems; just don't forget to keep watching the skies. Heck, if you don't believe that's enough of a connection to Hollywood, did you know that actress Demi Moore was born in Roswell? Draw what conclusions you will from that...



*The spate of Roswell-alikes (many dating back to since before the arrival of Ray Santilli's alien autopsy footage) and related UFOrama continues apace, and while many of these stories are high on the hoke scale, it's still sad fun for dedicated (and demented) saucer buffs to note the classic props of the modern UFO myth as they appear in them; Watch out for, and tick off:*

***The Black Helicopter***  
***The Authority Figure In Search Of The Truth***  
***The Nasal Object***  
***The Cordoned-Off Crash-Site***  
***The 'Majestic' Group, MJ-12***  
***The Big Hidden Secret***

# F i l m B l i t z

**Angel Heart** (Alan Parker) - Blimey. Rarely has a film swung so wildly from the crassly obvious ("Louis Cyphre"...why didn't they make it "B.L.Zebub" and have done with it?) to the utterly obscurist (most of the rest of the movie). Mickey Rourke stumbles along convincingly as the P.I. trying to find a singer with whom Mr.Cyphre had a deal, only to find murder, evil and Lisa Bonet stalking his every move. So it's not *all* bad, then. Long on atmosphere and short on coherence, it's a film you need to watch twice in a row to get a grip on - except it relies so much on precise mood, that it could be years before I feel I want to see it again. Unsettling stuff, mixing Christian and voodoo mythologies to discomfoting effect, even if most of the time, you don't have a clue what's happening or what it all means. C+



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**Dark City** (Alex Proyas) - Bring yer sniperscope for this one, as Proyas delivers a viable candidate for Least Lit Film of 1998. Peering through the murk, we see a city run as an experiment by an alien race, which gets reset every midnight, though only a handful of people realise this, notably scientist Kiefer Sutherland. [If that idea sounds a bit familiar, it's because a very similar concept was used in 'The Matrix'] Though over-reliant on computer graphics, it all *looks* very nice - what you can see of it in the gloom - but hero Rufus Sewell is unconvincing, and it might have been better had there been another tragic on-set accident, such as Proyas already endured in 'The Crow'. The audience can empathise with the sets, both being largely left in the dark, even if by the end you get just about enough grip on it to wish you'd not lost interest earlier on. C-

**Deep Rising** (Stephen Sommers) - Starting off as 'Under Siege', with a group of crims preparing to assault a liner, this suddenly warps when they find a distinct lack of passengers, and something very icky now inhabiting the stricken ship. From here, you're in 'Aliens' territory, with the odd nod to the likes of 'Tremors' and 'Anaconda', though the relatively brief period since the last-named has seen computer effects go from obviously artificial to solidly convincing. There's an inevitability about who gets shredded, yet Treat Williams and Famke Janssen put enough effort in to balance the cardboard villains. It's crunchy and juicy on the gore front and, probably wisely, no effort at all is made to explain the Rob Bottin designed creatures. The result is an old-fashioned monster mash, albeit one bordering on 'Legend of the Overfiend' for sheer tentacularity, and of rather more than B-movie quality, at least on the technical side. B+

**Enemy of the State** (Tony Scott) - Taking paranoia to new heights, this pits lawyer Will Smith against, oh, the entire bulk of the National Security Agency and every closed-circuit TV camera on the continent, after he acquires proof of a Senator's murder. Gene Hackman and Lisa Bonet provide assistance, Jon Voight and Jake Busey don't. Scott delivers his usual blend of flashy smoke and mirrors, to distract from a plot which...hey, look at that hyper-kinetic zoomy camerawork! Still, Smith turns in an appealing and winning performance, while Hackman does his best to lend gravitas to things, and even the NSA bad guys are a nice mix of thugs and nerds. The overall effect may be that you find yourself looking nervously up into the sky for a few days...**B**

**From Dusk Till Dawn 2: Texas Blood Money** (Scott Spiegel) - The first film has George Clooney; this one has Robert 'T2' Patrick. And that sums up the problem here; compared to the first film and its playful maliciousness, this comes up short in most directions. Patrick is part of a bank-robbing gang down Mexico way, who finds his colleagues turning vampirical after an encounter with Danny Trejo – about the only person to return from the original. Spiegel certainly doesn't stint on the action, but it seems a steadily more desperate attempt to keep the audience interested, since the plot and characters fail to do so. Cameos by Bruce Campbell and Tiffany-Amber Thiessen engage excitement in the first five minutes; however, from the moment you realise that's just a film-within-the-film, it's downhill all the way. **D**

**Guyver: Dark Hero** (Steve Wang) - Wang deserves credit for twisting the first film, a tongue-in-cheek rubber-monster romp, into something as downbeat as the title suggests. It combines extraterrestrial archaeology (Quatermass and the Pit), an evil, weaponry-seeking corporation (Aliens), a tortured cyborg hero (David Hayter, training for his role as the voice of Solid Snake in Playstation classic 'Metal Gear Solid')...and latex monsters, which do make it hard to take as seriously as it wants – the surprising amounts of gore do help there. At least the gore is present in the uncut version reviewed here, which comes in at a terrifically ambitious two hours; unfortunately, the UK release is over 20 minutes shorter. This is a shame since, while it doesn't quite pull it off, being both too puffed and too silly, it's a brave stab at an intelligent B-movie. **C+**

**Highway to Hell** (Ate de Jong) - This quirky little horror pic proves that given enough imagination, even a ludicrous central premise can work. And, boy, do we mean ludicrous here: a Satanic cop stalks a stretch of road, kidnapping beauties for his master in Hell, until the boyfriend of one follows him below, intent on rescue. This part of Hell looks like Arizona, it would appear, and there are too many mis-steps to make this a classic; the astonishingly annoying kid guarantees that. Yet, equally, there are enough cool elements casually dropped in without fanfare to keep you watching, and Jason Patric makes a fine Devil. Nice touch that Satan wants only *virginal* beauties, reversing the usual 'have sex and die' cliché – but such is the kind of oddball movie we have here. Worth a look. **C+**

**It's Alive + It Lives Again** (Larry Cohen) - Cohen has an ability to take even the most ridiculous of concepts and turn it into a horror movie. Whether it's killer yoghurt (The Stuff), killer flying snakes (Q: The Winged Serpent) or, as in this case, killer babies, his technique is to play it all totally straight, no matter to what depths of bizarreness things sink. In the first film, we have a mother giving birth to a mutant kid, which then proceeds to rampage through LA on its way back home, yet no-one ever bothers to mention how ludicrous it is. Perhaps wisely, the baby is kept mostly out of sight, Cohen endeavouring to create a creepy atmosphere while making social comment on the evils of pollution: neither are hugely successful, but it's only in the last fifteen minutes that boredom really sets in. Given the severely limited material, this isn't a bad squeeze job at all. The follow-up heads off in a different direction, concentrating on the government plot to kill all the mutant babies, and the counter-conspirators trying to save them. This works better, and the feel is similar to 'Scanners' (albeit with fewer exploding heads). Cohen adopts Jim Cameron's approach to sequels i.e. if one baby is scary, three must be scarier – however, you rarely see more than one, presumably for budgetary reasons, leaving the effect somewhat diluted! Still, Cohen's reputation for strange little efforts is proven once more to be well-deserved. **C-** and **C+**

**Jawbreaker** (Darren Stein) - High school can be murder. Literally, in this case, as Rose McGowan (whose boyfriend is the cameoing Marilyn Manson) and her clique of cronies, try to cover up a death when a prank goes wrong. Shades of 'Heathers' here, obviously, though the film's main weakness is sympathetic characters who are so bland as to be forgettable. Bad girls have more fun, it would appear., and McGowan is great, towering above everyone else in the film like the Gucci-clad embodiment of pure evil. The script is nicely observed, yet your attention may wander during the middle section, since it's fairly obvious where it's all going to end up – at the Senior Prom. The soundtrack is also way too intrusive, with most of an eye on the inevitable spin-off compact disk. Chewy, yet lacking in bite and eventually unsatisfying. **C+**



**John Carpenter's Vampires** (three guesses) - ...though if I was JC, I'd be a little wary about putting my name to it, since this modern-day vampire film comes over as limp and anaemic, not sexy or gory enough, and seriously short in the bad attitude bureau. However, I definitely exempt one person from criticism: James Woods as the "heroic" vampire-killer, who demonstrates the difference between A-

movie actors like himself, and the B-movie rest of the cast. The man is utterly hardcore, even if this is the sort of film you expect to see at the start of a career, not after Oscar nominations. He is the film's main saving grace; a couple of nice ideas (winching the vampires into the sunlight) are buried in a definite sense of seen-it-all-before. Carpenter's career continues to sink, and may be irrevocably holed. Meanwhile, the iceberg that is James Woods sails serenely on. **D+**

**The Mangler** (Tobe Hooper) - It's hard to take any film seriously where a major protagonist is a possessed iron, even if admittedly it's a somewhat larger than average model, being fed with 16-year olds by evil laundry owner Robert Englund. You can spot the plot elements a long way in advance, and there's a curious lack of era, which could be any time from the 1930's on. The gore is infrequent, but copious and effective when it appears, even if getting sucked through a steam press miraculously leaves your skull uncrushed. Such incongruities indicate where this is coming from, and the plot is both ludicrous and slipshod. There is a certain Grand Guignol charm about the climax, however, when the industrial equipment starts stalking its victims through the laundry. Laugh? I did. **D-**

**Mixed Blood** (Paul Morrissey) - This has the low-budget feel of something Abel Ferrara would do; grubby, down-beat New York locations populated by scummy characters dealing in copious quantities of drugs. It's giving nothing away to say it all ends in tears. Alphabet City is the name of the area in question, where a range war is going on between two groups seeking to control the coke + heroin trade. The film centres on the La Punta family, ruled by a matriarch so desensitised to death that she happily plans funeral and christenings simultaneously. This performance, by Marilia Pera, drags the film up by its bootstraps; the rest of the actors largely fail to deliver identifiable characters, and often, intelligible dialogue. The other major thing you'll take away is a firm resolve to drive speedily past Alphabet City, should you be in the neighbourhood. **C+**

**Raw Justice** (David S.Prior) - Pamela Anderson in reasonable performance shock! Okay, she's playing a hooker here, so unkind elements might suggest it's not much of a stretch. Bounty hunter David Keith (doing a Patrick Swayze impression) is "looking after" a murder suspect, and links up with Pammie for no apparent reason - although let's face it, who wouldn't, given the opportunity. His task apparently involves chasing through swamps in hoverboats and copious amounts of property destruction. Oh, and having sex with Pammie up against the wall of a warehouse, though she also bonks the murder suspect in a motel room. Friendly girl. This is, of course, total nonsense, and the New Orleans location is sadly wasted. However, it lacks all pretensions to higher things and hits the target - albeit the one labelled "lowest common denominator" - with practiced ease. **C**

**The Rock** (Michael Bay) - As a Brit, there's something very satisfying about watching Sean Connery, pensionable and locked up for 30 years, kicking the arses of the best American special forces. Indeed, this is on the whole fairly gratifying, particularly a first half which has two sequences that lesser films would happily claim as a finale. As is standard in this kind of thing, the professionals are toast early on, and it's up to amateurs Connery and Nicolas Cage to save the day, in this case by evicting evil terrorists from Alcatraz. One at a time. In interesting ways. Usually involving explosions or gunfire, for this is a Jerry Bruckheimer movie. The major problem here may be biochemical: the human body can't contain enough adrenalin for 135 minutes of uninterrupted climax, and by the end, I found myself punch-drunk and wobbling. Though that might just have been too much microwave popcorn. **B-**

**Strange Days** (Kathryn Bigelow) - With James Cameron lurking as writer and producer, it's hard to tell to whom this film belongs, not least because there are two different stories crammed into it. Both take place in the same dystopian future, on the eve of the year 2000, and involve a device which records life experiences, but one is a serial-killer thriller and the other a political polemic about a murdered rapper. The two fail to meld, despite obvious efforts, and the overall effect is of flicking TV channels; an appropriate



metaphor for a movie which wears its media-consciousness like a medal, burying any interesting ideas, about the street finding uses for technology, in a tidal wave of chases and pop-promo style. Ranulph Fiennes is barely okay as the dodgy dealer still in love with wannabe rock star Juliette Lewis, who seems keen to show her breasts off. Like the film itself, these are something of a disappointment, but at least they're a good deal less confusing and noisy. **D+**

**Vampire Journals** (Ted Nicolaou) - This Full Moon production clearly wants to be 'Interview with the Vampire'; luckily, it isn't, despite a similar fondness for candlelit angst and heaving bosoms. The hero, a "vampire with a mortal's heart", is hunting Ash, the most powerful of his breed in Romania. It's largely traditional stuff, dark and brooding vamps, and Nicolaou does overplay his limited hand - if you see one shadow flitting across a building, you see twenty! Despite a heavy reliance on drapes 'n' chandeliers, the Eastern European setting (more for pecuniary reasons than out of any desire for authenticity, I suspect) gives this a lush and decadent feel, while the internequine vampiric bitching is a nice touch. In the end, though, you can't help wondering where Buffy is when you need her...**D+**

### Hong Kong Special

**Beyond Hypothermia** (Patrick Leung) - A classy little film, mixing 'Leon' and 'Nikita' to good effect, in a beautifully shot tale of a female assassin (Ng Sin Lin), totally numbed by her work, who finds humble noodle vendor Lau Ching Wan defrosting her heart. On the action side, she incurs the wrath of a Korean gangster, who single-mindedly starts to track her down. Told largely in subtle flashback, it benefits from good performances on both sides of the camera. As the heroine thaws, so we grow to like her, increasing the impact of the final, bloody confrontation in which she faces her destiny. The feel is very Western, with little suspension of disbelief required by the viewer, and it's a minor gem. **B+**

**The Big Score** (Wong Jing) - A rollicking start here, as an undercover cop has revenge taken on him by the gangster he betrayed: specifically (deep breath), he is kneecapped, blinded and has nitric acid poured down his throat, while his daughter is killed and his wife raped then killed. These are not nice people. Enter his friends, one an ex-cop, the other a gambler, who join forces for revenge on the perpetrator. Typically, of course, the cop ends up doing the gambling, while the card shark wields the weapons. Not just directed by, but starring Wong Jing (as a lecherous swindler - hmmm...), this is easy on the brain, yet if it goes pretty much as you'd expect, the initial violence gives it an edge beyond the brain candy. And only Wong would pull a refreshingly incorrect "blind girl as comic relief" stunt. A working knowledge of mah-jong would probably help a good bit. **C+**

**The Ebola Syndrome** (Herman Yau) - Perhaps the most notorious Cat.III flick, I think this does live down to its reputation. Murderer, pervert and generally non-nice guy Anthony Wong becomes a carrier for Ebola after having sex with a dying African woman. When he heads back to Hong Kong, it's virus-on-the-loose time, as the police try and track him down. A graphic autopsy scene, killings, rapes and a sequence which will put you off steamed pork for *ever* are the 'highlights'; the stuff between gross-outs is scarcely memorable in comparison, though Wong is clearly making fun of his own role in the same director's 'Untold Story'. Calling this a black comedy might be going a little far, but it's certainly not a film to take seriously. Ethnic stereotypes, gore, sexploitation: hard to see how they could top this one, which is certainly memorable, though you will need to be in a very liberal mood! **B-**

**High Risk** (Wong Jing)  
- The Cantonese title may be approximately translated as "Mouse Courage Dragon Might", which makes a good bit more sense when you know that, in Hong Kong, 'Die Hard' was called "Tiger Courage Dragon Might" for this is somewhere between a parody of, and a homage to, that film. Jacky Cheung plays Frankie Lane, an actor who relies on stand-in Jet Li to do the work. The pair, together



with a nosy TV reporter (Chingmy Yau), are taken hostage in a skyscraper by a gang of jewel thieves – led by the guy who killed Li's wife and child two years before. The first half is broad parody: Lane is famed for doing his own stunts, but is actually a fake, drunkard and lecher. Do you think Wong Jing was pissed at Jackie Chan or something? Eventually, however, even Lane becomes a hero when the second half kicks into full-on "Willis in vest" mode. Jet Li never gets to do much, surprisingly, leaving the final battle to Cheung, yet the end result is fast and fun – as long as you're not a hardcore Chan fan... **B**

**In the Lap of God** (Lo Kin) - Almost an HK version of 'Jewel on the Nile', with Roy Cheung and Irene Wan as Douglas + Turner, travelling through Burma, the former to reclaim diamonds, which the latter hopes to exchange for her kidnapped fiancé. The sparky fencing between these two keeps the first half alive, with Cheung particularly personable as they try to outwit each other en route from Hong Kong. Probably inevitably, they then have to team up in the face of corrupt soldiers, guerillas, crocodiles, etc – the usual stuff. It does become a little ho-hum and predictable eventually, while the ending is blatantly visible from a long way off. Still, an amiable time-passer. **C**

**Once Upon a Time in Triad Society** (Cha Chuen-Yee) - The structure of this one is great; a gang boss is shot and, lying on the operating table in hospital, looks back on his life. But is it real, or is it what he wants to be true? Half-way through, this flips, forcing you to re-evaluate what you have seen, and there are a host of other cool touches which have to be experienced to be appreciated. Francis Ng delivers two more or less independently good performances as the boss, though it's really scriptwriter Chung Kai-Cheung who deserves most of the credit. If you think you've seen all the twists on Hong Kong gangster films, this one will probably make you sit up and take notice. Going by this film, Depeche Mode were right – God has indeed got a sick sense of humour. **B+**



**Sex and Zen II** (Cheuk Man Yu) - Only loosely connected to the original, this is not as sexy nor as, er, Zenny, preferring to head into supernatural territory. A female spirit roams the countryside, draining life energy from her victims (three guesses how) and with the ability to change sex thanks to a guidebook of advanced carnal knowledge. It's closer to things like 'Ghostly Vixen', even if at the start it has some elements you'd expect – specifically, a penis transplant. In Part 1, it was from a horse, this time it's a mechanical device with more functions than a Swiss Army knife, although this fine idea is sadly underused. The odd scene works well, yet it falls uncomfortably between sex and horror, and ultimately fails to satisfy as either. Best line: "I must make her come, to avenge my father". **D+**

**She Shoots Straight** (Corey Yuen) - This blast of largely revenge-driven cinema stars Joyce Gaudenzi (who is Mrs. Samo Hung – he has a minor role here) as Mina, a cop who marries into a whole family of police, but finds trouble being accepted by her sisters-in-law, who resent her getting promotion over their brother. Things go from bad to worse, after she kills a Vietnamese criminal and becomes the target for retaliation, and from worse to utterly dreadful when it's her husband who ends up getting murdered. Time for her own revenge, methinks. The action is good, yet sits awkwardly with the dramatic elements, and the scene which will stay in my mind has Mina at her mother-in-law's birthday party, trying desperately not to let on about her husband's death. It's all rather too relentless, and this one catches fire only occasionally when compared to Gaudenzi's superior, albeit much lighter, 'Licence to Steal'. **C**

**A Taste of Killing and Romance** (Veronica Chan) - Perhaps oddly, given its female director, the killing works better than the romance in this film about two assassins, Andy Lau and Anita Yuen, who meet and fall in love, until one of them is ordered to take out the other. Meanwhile the cops are closing in, and there's also a Very Bad assassin – in the film's most memorable scene, he suffocates a pensioner in clingfilm, pours Dettol down her granddaughter's throat, and chucks her dog in the washing machine. This cheerful exuberance enlivens most of the action, even if 'The Killer' is an obvious inspiration – in some ways, this is a remake with extra added lurve. However, that angle falls some way short of being convincing, and too often you find yourself waiting for the next piece of imaginative mayhem. **C+**

**To Be Number One** (Poon Man-Kit) - Downbeat, realistic, but not actually all that entertaining saga of life among the triads. Ray Lui plays a junior thug at the bottom of the heap, who has a chance encounter with the head of his triad and embarks on a spree of violence to impress and win promotion. Except, of course, it doesn't quite go as planned, and his boss eventually has to deal with his loose cannon. The violence is well-staged and possesses the required impact, but the characters are ill-defined and there are simply too many subsidiary ones rattling around – a concentration on the central character would have helped. As it is, you simply don't care what happens to him, leaving the result distant and unengaging. **D+**

**Treasure Hunt** (Jeff Lau) - Chow Yun-Fat playing a CIA agent sent into China scarcely seems like a stretch, but this is less wall-to-wall action than poignant romance. Chow ends up stuck in a Shaolin temple, where he meets and falls in love with Wu Chien Lien, a girl possessing psychic powers – and introduces the monks to the delights of baseball and Nintendo! It's all rather sweet, with one particularly beautiful moonlit flight through the snow, and not much violence or blood until the bad guys kidnap his girl when...well, I'm sure you can guess what happens. While the gunplay seems somewhat perfunctory and half-hearted, the other elements work nicely, right up to an ending straight out of 'The Railway Children'. Heroic teashed, shall we say. **B-**



## ***Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go to...the photographer's?***

J.B.S.Haldane once said, "I suspect that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of, or can be dreamed of, in any philosophy." I don't think he was talking specifically about pornography, but on occasion, I come across (as it were) a publication which defies belief. 'Jail Babes' is from the delightfully twisted mind of Larry Flynt's Hustler Publications, a man whose stable of smut documents the warped and perverse state of the American nation as it careers towards the third millennium. Even by his standards, though, this is strange stuff, playing like a combination of 'True Crime Illustrated', 'Bizarre' and 'Razzle', bringing together jail-house confessions, factual pieces on misdeeds and their perpetrators (with some gruesome crime-scene and autopsy photos), and pictorials of women who are allegedly either ex-cons, or even more implausibly, have been let out on work furlough for the day in order to take part in the photo-shoot.

Of course, the important word here is "allegedly" and, as with anything to do with the porn industry, you're well advised to take the whole shebang with a pinch of salt, not least the lurid and florid text which accompanies the pictures. However, it's readily apparent that most of the models are not going to be getting calls from Hugh Hefner in the near future, the quality ranging from not-too-bad, down to the skanky ho level. It's probably the latter who are the more interesting, from a veracity point of view, as well as the photographic: you're a million miles from soft-focus, air-brushed cheerleaders here and the words, with their tales of abuse and felonies, become disturbingly plausible.

Flynt is, however, a hard-nosed businessman and wouldn't have published the mag if there wasn't an audience for it. "Bad Girls" exert a particular fascination on most men, though most would stop short a little way before convicted criminals. Not all though: the appeal of convicted killers is well known, and there exist Internet sites, such as [www.prisonbabes.com](http://www.prisonbabes.com) (and its male equivalent, [www.prisonpals.org](http://www.prisonpals.org)) devoted to putting those on the outside in touch with those inside. The appeal of that does escape me - I've had my share of psychos already - though I suppose you will always know where your woman is... But the disturbing thing is that while the Prison Babes site goes into great detail about the dames, it notably omits to mention *why* they are behind bars, a somewhat pertinent fact, I'd have said.

That is probably going a bit further down the road than 'Jail Babes', which allows you the chance to examine them up-close and personal, without the risk of a fork in the eyeball. And if you're going to leave pornography lying casually on the coffee-table in your lounge, then better get in a few copies, 'cos you'll probably find this magazine will mysteriously evaporate whenever friends call round...

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# Ηγη Ωειρδνεσσ Βψ Μαιλ

*Peter J. Evans, Croydon* – “Many thanks for the copy of TC20/21. I'm amazed that my subscription has expired, but then again the days have started blurring alarmingly into one another recently. Do you have any plans for 1997?”

Anyway, here's ten quid which, even accounting for postage and packing, should see me sticking with *Trash City* for the next six years or so (now there's a scary thought). I'm sending you a note rather than a cheque because right now my bank account is the physical embodiment of quantum theory - I can never be exactly sure of what's going on there, and actually observing it can send the whole thing into a kind of fractal Hell.

To simulate this, roll 1D6 on the 'Pete opens a bank statement' table:

- 1 Sink back into chair and sigh with relief
- 2-3 Swallow loudly and start snivelling
- 4-6 Laugh hollowly *a la* Eddie Hitler in that episode of **Bottom** when they were stuck on a ferris wheel ('Things are looking bleak').”

**Disturbingly, I rolled a 7 – quite remarkable on a six-sided dice...**

*Geoff Barker, Sheffield* – “About Diana - I can't understand why anyone, given a choice of *who would you rather give a damn good tw\*\*\*ing?* would choose old horseface Camilla rather than young, pretty desirable Diana. Most blokes think with their dicks. I know I do...”

Can anyone tell me why is it that on TV “lesbians” are all attractive women/girls (for example, Beth & Margaret from *Brookside*, and Zoe Tate from *Emmerdale*) yet in real life they're all butch types, more reminiscent of the *Viz* character Millie Tant? Signing the letter as my sister-in-law (a card-carrying dyke), I did send off for a copy of *Blaster on Her Hip* an SF/Fantasy 'zine for “women who like women”, but was well disappointed. Where was all the totty?”

**A subject that I feel deserves further study. Where did I put that copy of 'Wild Things'?**

*Claire Blamey, Great Yarmouth* – “I am now the proud owner of a computer. It was a freebie - I have been involved in a 'mentoring' thing with a chap from BT (don't ask). I called him Polyester Ken (not to his face of course) because his name was Kenneth and he looked exactly like Ken of Ken-and-Barbie. He is the perfect example of all that is wrong with capitalism. Don't get me wrong, he is a nice bloke, but for someone in a very high position in the company, with the attendant salary and 50 weeks holiday a year, he was thick as two short planks. He could just about write (block capitals in a sort of studied 10 year old way) and had absolutely no interest in anything apart from his boat (yes, a yacht, no less). No qualifications, left school at 15, and is now in charge of the hiring and firing of telephone field engineers in an area that extends from Northampton to Hampshire. Scary.

Anyway, BT in the usual foresighted and we-don't-waste-any-of-our-shareholders'-money way had discovered that all the computers they had bought in the last three years for their call centres (thousands of them) were not Y2K compatible (see - I even know the lingo now). So the whole lot of them were basically chucked out - except this one which Polyester went and fetched from Bristol for me in his car and brought it up here (which was very nice of him). It's only basic, but it's got a colour monitor, etc., and I got our computer chappie at work to load Windows 95 on it, so it'll do for me. It hasn't got any Internet connections which I don't want, as if I had it I know I would be stuck on it all day and turn into some sort of biotech interface thingy with no life (or at least less than at present - which come to think of it would be no life anyway). So now the letters I used to scribble in 5 minutes take me five times as long to do - isn't technology wonderful?

{The Jill Dando murder} ...when they had the reconstructions of the bloke who ran through Bishops Park, and went over the railings by the river, that was just about the spot where Gregory Peck has his meeting with Patrick Troughton in *The Omen*”

**An appropriately millennial note on which to finish this last letter column before we hit 2000...**



**We took lots of pictures while at Shooter's World, but on the whole, these ones are probably more aesthetically pleasing...**

I'd also have been a bundle of nerves; again, a British upbringing tends to teach you that guns of any sort are a Very Bad Thing, to be feared and avoided.

I met my teacher for the session, Bill, and gingerly carried the weapons through to the range: a pair of 9mm handguns, a Beretta and a Glock. [I did toy briefly with the idea of asking if they had a Walther PPK, but decided that would simply be sad] Having learned of my complete innocence with regard to practical weaponry, Bill opted to start from absolutely first principles i.e. the pointy bit is the muzzle. This was perhaps a little excessive, given my solid theoretical background, admittedly derived largely from John Woo films, but was probably for the best to prevent Stan Bowles-style accidents [This reference will make sense to readers who remember the TV show 'Superstars', and an unfortunate incident where Stan managed to blow a hole in a table during the shooting competition].

We started with a single bullet (unleashing a full clip from each hand while diving in slow-motion through the air must be on the Advanced course), and the target was set at a distance which an unbiased observer might well have described as somewhere between "pathetic" and "laughable" – you could probably have spat with a good chance of hitting the bulls-eye. It was, however, quite enough for me to deal with, as I tried to take in everything Bill told me: stance, grip, concentration, breathing, oh, and pulling the trigger. Or rather, take up the slack, feel the resistance, continue to tighten until...

## *My Bloody Valentine*

So, what did you do on St. Valentine's Day? Candle-lit dinner? Romantic movie? Moonlit stroll? Me, I lost my virginity.

I should perhaps mention that we're not talking sexual virginity here, but something which I've guarded far more preciously, for nigh on twice as long – my firearm virginity. In my 33rd year, I'd not as much as *touch*ed a gun, let alone shot one; in a curiously contrary and peculiarly British way, this was a perverse badge of honour: we don't need guns in **this** country, thank you.

My abstemiousness came to an end at Shooter's World in Phoenix, Arizona, a gun shop and shooting range to which I was taken on February 14th. The trip was a surprise – this was no bad thing, as if I'd known about it, I'd have probably have turned up in a long, black trench-coat, sunglasses and chewing on a match-stick, rather than jeans and a TC-shirt.





Fuck!

Firstly, the protective gear proved its worth: even through the ear-plugs, it was fabulously loud, no doubt partly due to the enclosed space; if 'The Killer' was anywhere near accurate, Chow Yun Fat would be saying "Pardon?" rather a lot. On the other hand, the flames from the end of the barrel explained how Sally Yeh got blinded, and the purpose of the goggles became clear as the ejected casing ricocheted around the stall from which I'd fired. Happily, the target had a neat little circle, fractionally right of centre. Bill made encouragingly approving noises, which was very kind of him, given I could have leant forward with a pencil and done something similar.

Further rounds followed, and bigger clips. Loading was the trickiest thing about the whole event; fearful the cartridges would go off in my fingers I handled them like egg-shells. And with two round surfaces to push against each other, I never got the clip more than about half full. Meanwhile, we'd also graduated from bulls-eyes to a target looking...well, let's be honest, human-shaped. Bill gradually moved it back until I was finally reduced to squinting somewhere down the range towards a distant blur. To my surprise, I still hit it. Well, most of the time. ["That's not a larch..." © Monty Python Inc.]

My TC-shirt depicted (surprise, surprise) a woman holding a gun, specifically a Hechler and Koch MP5K – Bill asked if I fancied a few rounds with the very same model. If you'd asked me before, I'd have been only vaguely interested; now I was up for flame-throwers, rocket-launchers and low-yield battlefield nukes. I have to say the H&K was perhaps not quite what America's founding fathers had in mind when they wrote about "the right to bear arms", or else they'd have put "the right to bear really cool, scary-looking arms". For if one bullet is loud, flashy and impressive, the ability to rip off an entire magazine with a single pull of the trigger is god-like. I did

have trouble literally coming to grips with the gun, however; while using a handgun was fairly intuitive, the correct stance and grasp for the full automatic seemed forced and unnatural, like a golf swing. You have to hold the weapon almost in the centre of your chest to balance the recoil, with your head tucked down in an odd position. Even so, my bursts had a distinct tendency to drift quickly left and up, each successive bullet throwing my aim further off. Still, it was a fitting climax to a memorable hour, and I left clutching a handful of spent shells and some severely bullet-riddled targets, now proudly attached to a door here in TCHQ.

My opinion on guns has perhaps softened now I've experienced how much fun they are. I do remain unsure about gun ownership: not for responsible people like you or me (well, you anyway) but no-one has yet worked out how to keep them out of the hands of idiots. And there are an awful lot of those out there – never forget that half the population are below average intelligence. Unfortunately, in a democracy, "being an idiot" is not deemed sufficient legal authority for prohibition. How you work round this has baffled greater minds than mine.

"Did you get a hard-on?" asked Chris as we left. No, I didn't – but now I certainly understand better why some people do.

*Thanks go to Chris for setting it all up, and to Bill Garcia for his immovable patience in the face of my irresistible ignorance, even when I tried to jam the magazine into his beloved H&K the wrong way round: "bullets first" was his helpful tip...*

***Shooter's World is at 3828 N.28th Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85017. Tel (602) 266-0170***

# What the heck was THAT?!?

## Fantasy Clubs in America

"Where your ultimate fantasies come true" - Advertising slogan

"Hardly..."

I am sitting here at my terminal, still wondering what in the world happened to me for the last three hours. I feel almost as if I was abducted by aliens, and have only just returned with vague memories that are slowly coming to the surface. Anyway, I must reflect on this with only a few of my closest friends, and you, my dear readers, are my most intimate. All I wanted was something very special for my sweetheart on Valentine's Day. Something really memorable that would happen maybe once in his life (unless he wants a slow, horrible death) and with my blessing. Here is the scenario I envisaged.

*We walk in and are escorted to a large room, beautifully furnished with great big, cushiony couches and a very comfortable recliner. There is incredible music playing. Two gorgeous women walk in, arm in arm, looking uncannily like...well, in TC terms, say Denise Richards and Nastassja Kinski. They walk towards me and take me by the hand, leaving him sitting back on the recliner. Slowly they begin to disrobe each other and start teasing me to join them. I am coy and just watch. Then they come over and start to disrobe me, very slowly, deliberately trying to entice me to join in their fun as he watches, grinning from ear to ear. I can see the bulge in his crotch as he watches them undress me down to my own skimpy lingerie. Then they escort me back to the recliner, and I sit, preferably behind him, and can touch him as he continues to watch the girls seduce each other, etc.*

Is that so difficult? Naturally it sounds really good. So I started making phone calls: I made an appointment, but tried to wrangle as much information as I could by telephone. From what I gathered (each place had basically the same policies), you can have whatever fantasy you desire, with as many girls as you want – and they can't discuss this any further on the phone. But the manager will be happy to discuss it with you in person as well as giving you the opportunity to pick out the girls you want.

Most of the girls I spoke to were very nice, yet for some reason had the same look, like deer caught in headlights. Though my first thought on entering was simply that I had gone blind: I walked into a tiny, tiny little reception area, painted black from floor to ceiling, and when the outside door closed, it was utterly dark. On the other side another door opened and a woman peeked out ("deer caught in headlights") asking if she could help me. I explained I wanted to set something up and was escorted to a waiting room, half the size of the reception area; when I sat down, I noticed that the opening door would hit my knees... Ok. No problem. I was told I had to speak to the senior girl in charge. A "manager" was introduced to me. She was wearing a lovely black glitter evening gown, showing off her petite body – but I couldn't help notice her white sport socks and surgical boot on her left foot. My, how erotic.

I looked past that, and went into the details of my fantasy. She stared at me and asked if I wanted an application ("deer caught in headlights"). I told her I didn't want a job, I wanted a Valentine's fantasy for my sweetheart. She gave me a gift certificate. I gave it back. I asked if there was someone else I could talk to and she escorted me to a large living area with four other girls who also, for whatever reasons unknown to me, all had that look on their faces. I tried again to explain what I wanted and was immediately told I had to pay for the room, and dances were \$40 each. I tried to explain the details of the fantasy I wanted and was gazed at blankly by all of them. I say again, "deer caught in headlights".

They told me if I wanted to discuss these details, I had to pay the manager \$20, I suppose to make sure I wasn't trying to entrap her for prostitution. I paid Ms. Surgical Boot and went to one of the rooms where these ultimate fantasies come true. The room was actually very spacious, and furnished with a large, cushiony couch and a long recliner. Subdued lighting enhanced the effect. So we sat down to discuss the details of my fantasy. "Now", I thought, "down to business".

She told me there were levels she needed to discuss with me. **Level I** is a dance for 15 minutes that was seductive. If there were two girls dancing, there would be absolutely no touching, girls to client or client to girls, and absolutely no touching by the girls of each other's erogenous zones. This cost between \$40-60 per girl. **Level II** involved the girls dancing and using a vibrator. This lasts 30 minutes. The only difference between Levels II and I was the vibrator. And the toy will be used on themselves, not each other or the client, etc. This costs between \$75-100 per girl. **Level III** is called "The Works" and lasts 45 minutes. Everything is used: whipped cream, ice, honey, syrup, vibrators, fruit. Proximity of dancer(s) to client is very, very, very close but there is still absolutely no touching between client, dancers or anyone. NO ONE TOUCHES ANYONE. Understand? \$300 per girl.

Let me get this straight. I sit here. You dance with each other kind of seductively. You will not touch me. I will not touch you. You will not touch each other. I pay you six hundred American dollars, while you watch me. From what I understand, we can get totally naked and do the dirty deed or anything else we fancy to each other. We can masturbate all over the furniture if we want to, the whole time. [And to think I actually sat on that furniture. I still get shivers thinking about it. I took my clothes off the moment I got in the house and burned them] For this privilege we pay each girl \$300 each. Excuse me, do I have the words "Dumb Fuck" written across my forehead? Or is the Marriott up the street only \$99 for the whole night: we can get naked, do whatever we want to each other, for as long as we want, with touching galore, get a pizza afterwards, and still save ourselves five hundred bucks?

Of course, they wouldn't let me leave without looking at the Wall of Photos and choosing the two girls I wanted for my fantasy. None even came close, but I started to make choices trying to find Denise Richards and Nastassja Kinski. When I pointed at some of the photos, they either didn't work there anymore, didn't look like that anymore, don't wear that kind of make-up anymore, don't wear make-up at all anymore, or don't have their hair that colour anymore.

Well, sweetheart of mine, my love, my life, he that I would do most anything for. This is not going to happen. There is a thin line between fantasy and sleaze and this town has not been able to separate it just yet. I don't know what I thought I was going to encounter. Perhaps a very classy establishment that caters to the whims of its clients. Gosh...what a thought. I would pay \$600 if there was a remote resemblance to elegance at all, if the women showed some spark of intelligence (or even just real beauty), if the places didn't look like Pepe's House of Horrors, located in the middle of a demilitarized zone. And for the money they are commanding, it doesn't seem unreasonable to have high expectations. After all, I'm not asking for sex from them, only to have a little bit of my ultimate fantasy come true, in a stylish, erotic manner that my partner and I can enjoy in a relaxing atmosphere.

So, Jasmine, Michelle, Nikki, Sunni, Carmen, Jenny, and all the other dancers, you were all very friendly and I appreciate the thought. But no thanks. I think I'll just try harder to make his fantasies come true using my own talents.



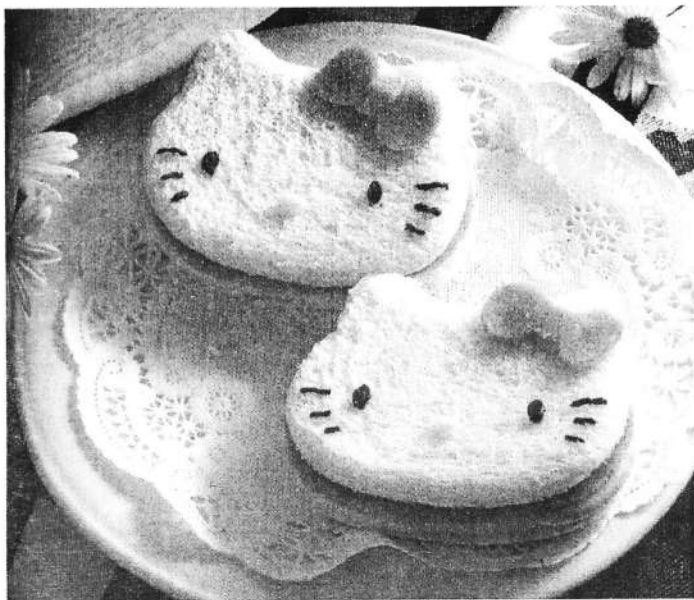
## *Kitty Kitty Bang Bang* \*

The Sanrio empire is built around the creation of characters and their subsequent licencing. This represents merchandising in its purest and most distilled form: tie-ins without anything to tie to, spin-offs that revolve around nothing. You don't buy Sanrio because of a movie or a TV show. You buy it, just because it is. And the jewel in their crown is the god-empress of cute known, for reasons lost in the mists of the 70's, as Hello Kitty.

Kitty herself is trapped in the same kind of ageless, immortal timewarp as Barbie, locked forever in her early school years, along with twin sister Mimi and an assortment of marketable friends. But all this has been built up slowly over the years; her first appearance, on a purse, was anonymous. The name and background came later; nowadays, any true fan will reel off vital statistics such as her weight ("the same as three apples"), birthday (November 1st) and home – suburban London, albeit clearly a version of suburbia created by someone from third-hand accounts, and shaky on the basic concepts.

Kitty's popularity is hard to explain; from a design point of view, she has an elegant simplicity of form, consisting of a few lines which even the artistically untalented like me can appreciate. Her character represents a purity and goodness of spirit whose appeal is reverberating around the world with increasing volume. Initially concentrated in the Far East, Sanrio has since spread to America, and there are even London pockets, in Hamley's, Harrods and Selfridge's.

Sure, there's a certain sarcasm in the way Hello Kitty has been co-opted by people like rockslut (and some say husband-killer) Courtney Love. But the beauty of Hello Kitty is that it makes no difference; she rises above it all, completely unbothered, regardless of any riot grrrrl (and whatever happened to them?) following. You can dress your Hello Kitty soft toy in pink PVC, and pierce its most intimate regions, yet Kitty remains immune; you might as well try to appropriate the Moon for ironic purposes.



napalm kitty – a haiku by patrick phipps  
napalm burns brightly  
as hello kitty calls in  
another air strike

The breadth of what's on offer is frightening, both in regular style and "special editions", such as Angel Kitty, exclusively available in the West. Though Hello Kitty with wings and a halo does not really bear close examination – kinda implies that she is <sniff> dead...

The bible of all such things are the multiple volumes of the 'Kitty Goods' catalogue, an essential, largely incomprehensible (being in Japanese) guide to the Kittyverse. But what matters is not the text, it's the pictures. It is hardly any exaggeration to say that you could outfit your entire life with Kittymabilia, from the slippers you put on in the morning, to the toothpaste you use last thing at night.



Perhaps the supreme icon of this Kitty-culture is the toaster – and not just a toaster, badged with a Sanrio logo. The machine's Kittiness is inherent in its very essence – in what can only be termed a stroke of genius, it sings a picture of the mouthless deity herself onto the side of each slice. This is what six thousand years of civilization since the Sumerian era have been building towards.

And now, those Japanese who grew up with Hello Kitty are having children of their own; hence the appearance of Hello Kitty Babies, to ensnare a future generation of Sanrioites. This seems to be working: Sanrio have stood up to the Asian economic crash robustly (sales actually went up 5% last year, to a disturbing 150 billion yen – that's 750 million pounds, which is an awful lot of moist towelettes), possibly because Hello Kitty and her pals represent a safe haven from all that nasty unpleasantness.

For a few, however, it's less a haven than a way of life. When the Japanese decide to do something, it's usually with maximum dedication & effort, regardless of whether that something is pro-wrestling, war-crimes, economic expansion or, as in this case, acquiring industrial volumes of kawaii – the Japanese term for cute. Some Sanrio fans therefore go for it bigtime, and the catalogue reveals rooms which contain so much HK that they would seem to be in danger of collapsing in on themselves into some sort of cheerful, pinkish singularity. Now, that's really scary...

\*Thanks to Jonathan C for (unwittingly!) supplying the title of this article...



### *The Top 10 of Kittymabilia*

1. Toaster
2. Daihatsu Mira (from 794,000 yen)
3. Inflatable armchair
4. Mobile phone
5. Bodyboard
6. Rubber gloves
7. Coffee grinder
8. Mermaid
9. Moped
10. Game Boy

**One of the above may be found in TC Towers, but I'm not saying which! Reports of a Hello Kitty vibrator are so far unconfirmed...**



# Jai Velocity

Imagine a ball travelling at over 300 km/h, and capable of shattering bullet-proof glass. Imagine facing it, with no real protection apart from a helmet. Imagine, in fact, trying to catch this ball in a wicker basket, and throw it back where it came from. Welcome to the world of jai-alai, the world's fastest ball game.

And not just the fastest – it may be one of the oldest too, as jai-alai's origins certainly date back to Greek times (where it was called 'pilos') and possibly even earlier. However, it was the Basques, inhabitants of the border region between France and Spain, who took the basics of a game played against church walls, and developed it into something best described as 'squash with attitude'. The game has since been taken around the world to wherever Basques live, particularly Central America and South East Asia.



Initially played with bare hands, the original has evolved into many different versions, of which jai-alai is the most merciless. The defining moment in jai-alai's history was in 1857, when a 14-year old French Basque boy, rejoicing in the name of Gantchiki Dithurbide, couldn't afford the glove with which the game was played at the time. Instead, he borrowed a basket from his mother's kitchen and, just like William Webb Ellis, discovered a whole new ballgame. Nowadays, the basket is custom-made, and strapped to the player's wrist, but the general principle remains the same: capture and return the ball (called a 'pelota') off the front wall, ideally in such a way that your opponent can't reach it before it bounces twice or goes out of play.

## It's that vocabulary thing again...

**cancha** The court on which jai-alai takes place.

**cesta** Spanish for "basket", the curved throwing and catching instrument in jai-alai. Each is individually made for a player, depending on their specific needs and preferences. It is made from chestnut wood and reeds, both imported from Spain.

**contracancha** The wooden, foul area of the court down the right-hand side. Out-of-bounds if the pelota lands on it, but a player can catch and throw a ball from this area without penalty.

**frontis** The front playing wall; the punishment it takes can be seen from the fact that it's made of granite blocks set in concrete...

**fronton** The building in which the sport is played.

**jai-alai** The game itself: in the Basque language, it means "merry festival" ("Jai" is festival; "Alai" means joyous). Pronounced 'HI-a-LYE'.

**juéz** Each of the three judges, who wear striped shirts, present during the games to make close calls.

**lateral** The side wall of the playing court on the left, opposite the contracancha.

**pelota** Spanish for "ball". Handmade: virgin rubber wrapped in nylon thread and sewn into two goatskin covers.

**pelotari** A jai-alai player.

The pelota behaves like one of those super-balls you get in toy shops, so delivering and reading the ricochets and spin are crucial tests of your abilities. You must be able to come up with shots from all angles, and it's common to see players hurling themselves to the floor, in order to take advantage of the ball's speed as it passes over them, whipping it forward with additional momentum. There's not a lot of room for error when you're catching a 6 cm. pelota, travelling at lightning speed, in a basket maybe 8 cm. wide. And as if this wasn't hard enough, to make things even trickier, the ball has to be returned immediately.



The game was first introduced to the United States in 1904, at the St. Louis World Fair; nowadays, Florida is the main area, with frontons in several cities, though the heart of jai-alai remains in France and Spain, and the sport was played at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. At the professional level in America, it exists largely as a focus for betting. Games are played between eight players, or teams in the case of doubles play; however, partners in the latter are perpetually switched around, for variety and to keep things balanced. A range of bets are on offer, allowing you to lose money in a number of interesting ways when your selections don't perform. It's "winner stays on", with the loser of each rally going to the back of the queue, to await their next turn; the first to reach seven or nine points wins, with the scores of the others at that stage determining their positions. This makes for exciting games; the format means that a player can be on the verge of victory, only to have it snatched away by a single unlucky bounce. He is then forced to sit on the bench and watch while his rivals' scores creep up...

Buy More War Bonds  
**Jai-alai programs: then  
 (1940's)...**

Inevitably it is "his"; no woman has ever played the game at the highest standard. This is an unfailingly macho pastime, as can be seen by the limited protection worn by the players. Helmets were

only introduced in the late 60's and before then, fatalities due to head injuries were not uncommon. This is unsurprising when you consider that the pelota weighs only a little less than a cricket ball, yet can travel twice as fast as the most venomous bouncer. Nor is it a sport for left-handers; even they must use their right hands, because of the lop-sided design of the court. It is a young man's game, with players in their mid-thirties being regarded as veterans – at the other end of the scale the youngest professional player was a mere nine years old when he made his debut in 1922. This makes Tiger Woods look positively geriatric.

Rallies are generally relatively short, especially in singles play, partly because of the speed of the ball - the record, set in 1979, stands at 301 km/h - partly because the playing area is big. There are no fixed sizes, and the dimensions of the cancha vary depending on the skill of the players, but at the top level, they can be sixty metres long, and usually around ten metres high and wide. Only one side wall is in play; the right hand side is out-of-bounds, and is replaced with glass or chain-mesh in order to give spectators a good view.

And it's an ideal game to watch, because its basics are simple. Even after a few games, you begin to grasp the tactics, which are somewhat similar to those of squash: keep the ball as close to the side and the back as you can. In doubles play, one player takes the front and the other the rear of the court – just as in tennis, where you can dictate play if you're at the net, so in jai-alai the players try to keep the ball out of the opposing front man's reach.

Yet it is also infinitely subtle in its intricacies. For example, each pelota has individual characteristics, and they vary with time; one which has been played with recently will bounce more than a 'cold' ball. The player serving has the choice, but must offer it to the receiver, who can reject a torn or damaged pelota. This inspection gives them an idea of how lively it is, and in doubles play, a system of hand signals are used to communicate this vital information between the receiver and his partner.

**LIVE ACTION**

Wednesday through Saturday:  
 7:30 PM  
 Thursday and Saturday: Noon  
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**...and now (1998)**

Ernest Hemingway was entirely right to describe jai-alai as "constant excitement and manly effort taken to the utmost limits...fast, attractive and joyful". He's not the only celebrity fan; baseball legend Babe Ruth used to be an enthusiastic player, as was Paul Newman, while people from Art Garfunkel through Gene Hackman to Riddick Bowe have been seen enjoying games. It certainly is a change from theme-park queues: the princely sum of \$1 buys general admission at the Orlando fronton, a remarkably cheap way to spend an afternoon in air-conditioned comfort, with beer and snacks available as well. Unlike some gambling pursuits, it's not even necessary to bet to enjoy yourself: it's fun simply to watch the games, and marvel at the skill and athletic ability of the players in one of the most memorable of sports.

**Orlando Jai Alai, 6405 S.Highway 17-92 at S.R.436, Fern Park, FL 32730. (407) 339-6221**  
WWW: <http://gentech.net/orlando-jaialai/index.htm>

### **An interview with Tracy Moore, professional jai-alai player**

*Tracy Moore was born and raised in Miami, Florida. Now aged 36, he has been playing Jai-alai since he was 12, and professionally since he was 18.*

#### **What attracted you to Jai-alai?**

My father used to own an amateur Jai-alai fronton. When he was in school, he was introduced to Jai-alai by a schoolmate and fell in love with the game. They made their own equipment and used to go behind a movie theatre to play every day. They were thrown out of there several times and eventually built their own court. My father allowed others to use it and the North Miami Amateur Jai-alai fronton was born. It was very successful and I was exposed to Jai-alai there. I played everyday as a child and eventually decided to make this my career. I have been playing professionally for 18 years now.

#### **How are Jai-alai players picked?**

By scouts. The scouts are sent to Spain, Mexico and France. I happened to be playing at the time in Tijuana, Mexico in the minors and was discovered by Santi, the player manager for the team in Orlando. He asked me to play with Orlando and I have been playing there ever since.

#### **Is playing outside the country different than playing here?**

Basically not. In Mexico, the game is the same and the betting is the same style. The only difference is in Spain and France. At their Jai-alai, the games are played with 35 point, two team plays instead of single 7 point games. These last much longer and the servers are sometimes asked to wait so that more betting can take place. The rules, the equipment and the uniform are exactly the same. Tradition states that a red sash must be worn - it's the same one as worn during the running of the bulls in Spain - and that players must "march out" and salute the crowd to show respect.

#### **What's the most important event for Jai-alai players?**

The Jai-alai World Championship, which is hosted every year in either Spain or France - it is very much like Wimbledon. The ten best players play in a round-robin until eventually the #1 plays the #2. Generally all the players in these games are from Spain and/or France. There are also Amateur World Championship games where players come from all over the world including the Phillipines, Cuba, China, etc.

#### **Who is, in your opinion, the best player?**

Well, as far as people in my generation are concerned, I feel that a player named Bolivar from Spain is the greatest. But he is now retired. The best player now is a Miami player from France named Michelaina.

#### **The sport looks very hard on the arm muscles. Are injuries common?**

The most common serious injury is in the shoulder where the bicep muscle drops. There are also lots of back injuries. We keep a full time trainer who is always helping us maintain ourselves and aids us with icing down after each game, massages, etc. I am lucky that in 18 years I have not had an injury serious enough to end my career. Some guys aren't so lucky.



**The 1998 Orlando players**

**Since you are an American, are you treated differently? Do you ever feel like an outsider?**

No. Language is not a problem since my wife is Mexican and I speak Spanish, though not fluently. I have never had any problems with other players, since they come over here very enthusiastic and eager to learn English, in order to meet girls!

### **How is the game organised in Florida?**

Players are contracted for one year. Other frontons will make offers if they want you, or you are free to contact them yourself. The best part about working here in Orlando is that this particular fronton is year round. The only other year round fronton in the US is in Miami. The rest are seasonal so the players are limited. Although Jai-alai is an excellent sport, I am not thrilled that is basically a betting sport – I would like to see it as a normal sport, but since it is a betting sport, it derives most of its income from the gambling. Jai-alai business is a little slow now, ever since the institution of legalized gambling on Indian reservations in Florida, and the re-instatement of the State Lottery, as well as casino boats that sail out into the Atlantic. Because gambling was limited in Florida at one time to the horsetracks, dog tracks and Jai-alai, the frontons used to be constantly sold out. Now it is much easier to get in to see the games and they even allow families to bring their children to watch.

### **How do you feel about people betting on you?**

I really don't think about it. I think the only thing that affects me about the betting is that it is a motivating factor in my play.

### **Does it bother you when spectators heckle or scream?**

Not really. The spectators do it all the time. We are professional and realize that if we show them it bothers us, they will do it more. So we basically ignore it.

### **How do players get paid?**

We receive a base salary plus bonuses. If we come in first, second or third we will get extra bonuses, coming in first, of course being the highest, and we receive a bonus for actually playing a game. It motivates us to play better. Also, because of the fact that there are so many players out there who want to play professionally, we know that for each one of us, there are at least five out there who want our job. It's another motivational factor!

### **Why do you play under the name 'Bob'?**

Bob is actually my middle name. My first name is Tracy and my middle name is Robert. The manager at the fronton knew my father and they always called him Bob. It is a tradition that if you come from a line of Jai-alai players, you would use your father's name. So they used my father's name on the roster for me.

### **Do you have plans for the future after Jai-alai?**

I would like to play until I am at least forty. Then after that? Well, I'll cross that bridge when I come to it...

## Vorsprung durch Technik, Babes und Violence (as they say in MI6)

If one series sums up the TC ethos better than any other, it is James Bond: the opening chords send a tremor of anticipation down the spine, and no man can put on a white tuxedo without uttering those immortal lines, "The name's Bond...James Bond." 007 is the epitome of cool, the archetypal Brit - despite being played by an Australian and an Irishman, as well as a Scot and an Englishman - and is the only action hero we can offer against McClane, Ripley, Riggs and the other American franchises. It's impressive that a series which started before I was born is still going from strength to strength, probably because they have a chameleon-like ability to change with the times, discarding the novels and taking on board the contemporary climate with regard to villains. The Russians were the obvious candidates, but refreshingly, it's usually rogue elements rather than officially sanctioned evil. We've also had mad scientists, drug-dealers, renegade agents and media moguls, depending on current mores.

One friend of mine uses "Who was better, Connery or Moore?" as a pick-up line, with excellent results, because everyone knows Bond, and has an opinion. Speaking of opinions, I ploughed through 'em all over the past couple of months, and what follows are mine. It was an interesting exercise - you could do the same with ITV's recent series of them, though the views here are not based on the hacked versions they show. It gives a good feel for the way the series has evolved, but they still blur into one another: which ones was Jaws in, and what film had 007 driving on two wheels down a narrow alley? I won't promise to answer these burning questions but, pausing only to pull an aqualung from the pocket of my immaculately tailored suit, let's plunge in...

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**JOSEPH WISEMAN**  
as "DR. NO"

**Dr.No** (Terence Young) - A hundred million years ago, mankind's nearest relative was only vaguely a mammal. And so it is with 'Dr.No', a Bond movie with legs, arms, and a head, but not much else. No gadgets beyond a Geiger counter, and the action is limited to Bond turning a valve and running away. Even the classic opening titles are little more than some rotoscoped dancers. On the plus side, Ursula Andress rising from the ocean sets a standard that few have matched, and Connery has a casual approach to killing which was slowly diluted in subsequent efforts. It's surprisingly undated: even after 35 years, it's tense and effective. A good movie, thus - just Bond in name only... **B-**

**From Russia With Love** (Terence Young) - The second film is perhaps the best illustration of how closely early Bond movies followed the books: it's chock-full of incidents, characters and scenes taken directly from Fleming's novel. This may be the most politically incorrect of the Bond films, with Connery screwing his way to a Soviet cypher machine, together with Lotte Lenya as lesbo-villainess Rosa Klebb, and a completely gratuitous cat-fight. This is a very prosaic movie, with a plot which is highly plausible, at least by Bond standards, capturing the cloak-and-dagger spirit of the Cold War well. It never quite gels, however, despite an abundance of marvellous set-pieces and characters, while the pacing of the climax is all wrong, with a tacked-on coda that doesn't fit. **C-**

**Goldfinger** (Guy Hamilton) - Finally, the whole formula came together: action, baddies, babes, and a really cool car, as well as a contender for the best theme ever [although producer Saltzman called it "that fucking song"]. Even the Bondisms, previously only played with, come into full flower, and Shirley Eaton's death, covered in gold paint, is one of the canonical images of 60's cinema. Olympic medallist Sakata is a great evil henchmen, as the bowler-hatted Oddjob, while Q, the longest surviving character, turns up with Bond's Aston-Martin, the dream car of every male of a certain age. Exemplifying the style running through the movie: check out the number Goldfinger's bomb is showing when it gets defused. That, my friends, is the stuff of legend. **A-**

**Thunderball** (Terence Young) - Things regressed somewhat for Bond #4, in what now seems like a bloated exercise in excess. Remade as unofficial Bond film 'Never Say Never Again', by then Connery had a better hand on the character; if you've seen that, much of the original will seem lame. The whole "stolen nuclear weapons" scenario has been done to death since (see 'Broken Arrow' and 'The Peacemaker' for recent examples), and the lengthy underwater sequences may have been innovative at the time, but will now have you reaching for the fast-forward button. At 140 minutes, it was the longest Bond movie to that date, and it certainly seems so. **D**

**You Only Live Twice** (Lewis Gilbert) - As any fan of 'Trainspotting' will know, this was written by Roald Dahl. Not that it's obvious, for the star here is really the monumental volcano set which is Blofeld's lair. The Japanese locations are nice, but the attempts to evoke anything beyond the shallowest culture misfire, and Connery's attempts to pass as Japanese are ludicrous. However, we get to see another classic Bond item: autogyro Little Nellie, and Donald Pleasence makes a fine Blofeld, though the other supporting characters are pretty forgettable. It's the first Bond film to really go for a large-scale climax, with extras scurrying round like ants on a particularly incendiary ant-hill, and begins the trend towards an ever-increasing spiral of spectacle. **C**

**On Her Majesty's Secret Service** (Peter Hunt) - Despite being a relative box-office failure, OHMSS has since acquired a good rep among Bond fans. In some ways, you can see why, not least for the ending which is astonishingly downbeat and helps explain both failure and rep. The major problem remains Lazenby, who sounds the part but looks more like Roy Castle and is given an appalling dress sense, largely consisting of hideous polo-necks. You can sense the script-writers were coming up with scenes for Connery and I can't help wondering what he'd have made of it. Against this, it's probably the best line-up of Bond girls ever (Diana Rigg, Joanna Lumley, Anoushka Hempel), the ski stunts are great, and it's perhaps the last to be an accurate translation of the book. **C**

*The witty one-liner has long been a staple of Bond films - but it's not just 007 who gets to deliver them. Here are ten of the best non-Bonds:*

"I think he's attempting re-entry..."

- Q, Moonraker

"Do, Mr. Bond? I don't expect you to do anything - I expect you to die!"

- Auric Goldfinger. Goldfinger

"Jealous husbands. Outraged chefs. Humiliated tailors - the list is endless!"

- M enumerates Bond's enemies, The Man With the Golden Gun

"Look after Mr. Bond. See that some harm comes to him"

- Hugo Drax, Moonraker

"What's the matter, sailor: never see a major taking a shower before?"

- Sub commander, The Spy Who Loved Me. The major is Barbara Bach.

"Once again, the pleasure was all yours"

- A somewhat peeved Xenia Onatopp, Goldeneye

"He disagreed with something that ate him"

- Note on shark-chewed body of Felix Leiter, Licence to Kill

"Ooh! The bubbles tickle my...Tchaikovsky!"

- Pola Ivanova discovers the joys of jacuzzis, View to a Kill

"Forgive me, father, for have I sinned..."

"That's putting it mildly, 007!"

- Q, For Your Eyes Only

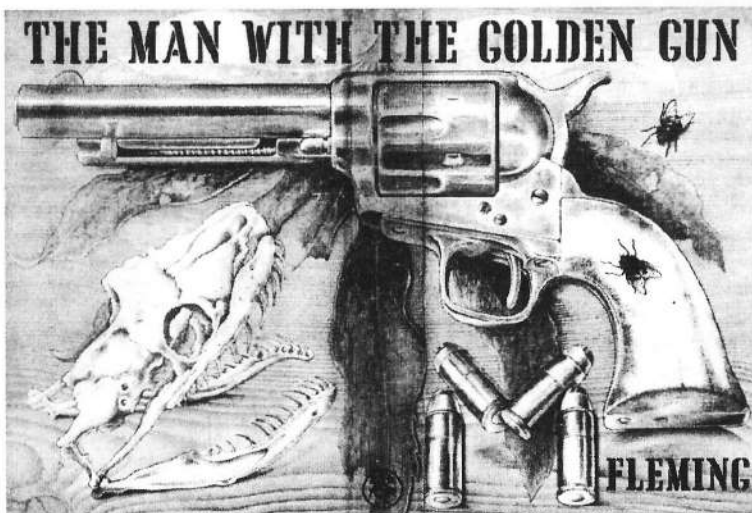
"You always were a cunning linguist, James"

- Miss Money Penny, Tomorrow Never Dies

**Diamonds Are Forever** (Guy Hamilton) - Poor George: not only dumped as Bond, they bring back the guy he replaced. What a sickener. His loss is our gain, as the makers respond with an upbeat cracker, packed with classic Bond-isms, thrills and excess – save, oddly, on the babe front, where 007 sticks to Jill St. John as Tiffany Case. Charles Gray gets promoted to Stroker of the White Persian, while Connery rampages around in pursuit, trashing everything from lifts to oil-rigs like a tuxedoed Godzilla. One plus is entertaining, but completely superfluous, scenes such as Tiffany's languorous pick-up of Bond's diamonds – add the vicious double acts of femmes fatales Bambi & Thumper, and homosexual hitmen Mr. Wint & Mr. Kidd, and you've got a very solid product. Look out for Cassandra Peterson, pre-Elvira and fame, as a showgirl. **B**

**Live and Let Die** (Guy Hamilton) - For the first time, a rock band and not a lounge singer did the theme, with Paul McCartney delivering a classic. Shame, then, that the film falls short; not because of Moore, who does the one-liners very well, it's just that the villains are so inept as to be totally non-threatening. This is summed up by Rosie Carver, of the 'Dr. Who assistant' school (honours in "screaming" & "running away"); with allies like her and the San Monique police, who can't drive in a straight line, what hope for Yaphet Kotto? The Tarot/voodoo backdrop is nice, and there are moments for the Bond Hall of Fame, the speedboat chase and the New Orleans "funerals" in particular. Yet these don't gel into anything to equal the theme song. **C-**

**The Man with the Golden Gun** (Guy Hamilton) - This is really amazingly lacklustre: it takes Bond 70 minutes to get a shag, and in terms of action, virtually all you get is the odd fist-fight and two soporific chases. It seems very cheap (Christopher Lee, good as assassin Scaramanga, can muster precisely *two* henchmen – actually closer to one-and-a-half) and stretched; everything takes



**A TC heirloom: the first-edition Fleming hardback. Any bids?**

three times as long as it should. Britt Ekland is another uber-bimbo, perpetually screwing up and needing rescue, while Moore shambles from one scene to another. Despite obvious theft from the previous year's 'Enter the Dragon' - the Far East setting, an evil millionaire and a hall-of-mirrors climax - two kung-fu schoolgirls and a solitary decent car stunt fall well short of what's required for even minimal entertainment. **D-**

**The Spy Who Loved Me** (Lewis Gilbert) - Opens with one of the best pre-credit sequences (the Union Jack parachute ski-jump), albeit spoiled by truly dreadful back projection. This sets the tone for the whole film, which is grand, providing you don't look at it too closely – the plot bears a strong resemblance to lace; lightweight and full of holes. Still, there's good use of locations, and Jaws is one of the all-time evil sidekicks, to go alongside one of the all-time cars, the Lotus Esprit. Barbara Bach, as Soviet agent Triple X, makes a better assistant to Bond than an adversary, and things perk up notably after the first act, which largely consists of pottering round in pursuit of a microfilm. **C**



**Never Say Never Again** (Irvin Kershner) – let’s look at some facts:

- Written by the same guys who wrote Thunderball
- Starring the original James Bond
- Standard characters from all the James Bond films
- Same evil villain, determined to take over the world (or destroy it)
- Cool gadgetry and chase scenes
- Gorgeous Evil Psycho Nympho women
- Gorgeous Good Nympho women

This is a James Bond film. Why is it so hard to understand? Nobody argues over the ‘Alien’, ‘Terminator’ or ‘Hellraiser’ series, do they? No one cares who marketed, produced, directed, or wrote them. Nobody disagrees that they are what they are. The same applies here, if not more so, since the writing team is the same.

On it’s own, I enjoyed this Bond film without comparison to Thunderball, on which it is based. Sean Connery is always cool as 007. Barbara Carrera was an excellent Psycho Nympho. I have always enjoyed Klaus Maria Brandauer and his penchant for needing facial close-ups in all his films (see ‘Out of Africa’ for the best ones). And was I the only one who noticed a very young Timothy Dalton in the casino? Kim Basinger, with her classic beauty and those lips (I’m not a lesbian, much to my one true love’s chagrin, but I appreciate quality and am filthy jealous of Kim’s mouth), was a bit downplayed as the Bond girl. My favorite scene is the game of Domination - a holographic, electrifying game of Risk, played for tons of money and a dance with Kim. I thought that was terribly romantic. Simply put, very James Bond-ish. Watching this and every other James Bond film, I know one thing; I enjoy them, I am entertained by them and in my mind, they are all one thing – **James Bond** films. [she ducks!]

*Chris Fata*

**Moonraker** (Lewis Gilbert) -

The brassy Bassey theme falls well short of ‘Goldfinger’, and this is a very disappointing entry in general. The plot is no more than an excuse for product placement and exotic travel: Bond sees a packing case with a place-name on it, and hey, goes there. Good job he didn’t find a box of Mars bars. Drax may be the dumbest villain ever, revealing his plans to all and sundry at the drop of a megalomaniacal hat. There are numbing elements of slapstick, notably a chase through Venice, which don’t work, and border on parody, though there is one decent in-joke involving ‘Close Encounters’ and a pleasant amount of glass-smashing. The space sequences at the climax are pretty good, but long before you get there, you’ll have ceased to care very much. Even the return of Jaws is largely botched. **D-**

**For Your Eyes Only** (John Glen) - A new director, former editor Glen, breathes much needed new life into the series, with Moore clearly enjoying himself in the role, more restraint on the comedy, and the best collection of car-chases in any Bond movie. The task is to recover a device from a sunken spy-ship before the Russian get it, which brings Bond alongside Greek smuggler Topol. The subplot involving a war against another bunch of gangsters may be safely ignored and, while the underwater stuff does slow down the movie notably, Michael Gothard (the Inquisitor from ‘The Devils’) is a worthy villain and the finale relies on a refreshing amount of stealth and guile, rather than the traditional stand-by, the enormous gun-battle. Add in Janet Brown and John Wells as Maggie T and Dennis, and you’ve got a good return to form. **B**

**Octopussy** (John Glen) - Chewing scenery as he goes, Steven Berkoff is the archetypal madman, plotting intricate schemes involving fake Faberge eggs, a travelling circus and a nuclear bomb; fortunately, he’s largely in the background. The morally ambivalent Maud Adams is the only woman to appear in the series as two different characters (see also Joe Don Baker), and India is used nicely, Vijay Amritraj turning in a winning performance as 007’s assistant – contrast Moneypenny replacement, Penelope Smallbone, so dreadful she vanished hereafter. The whole film is defiantly light-hearted (check out Bond’s flip-top croc), and never quite topples into the ridiculous, despite Berkoff’s ham-handed efforts to make it. There’s a particularly enthralling sequence on top of a train careering through the German countryside, and Bond raises saving the world to a closer edge than ever before. Makes you feel somewhat nostalgic for a bygone era when digital watches were cutting-edge and cool... **B-**

Title	Year	Cost (\$m)	Gross (\$m) U.S.	World
<b>Dr. No</b>	1962	0.95	16.1	59.6
<b>From Russia With Love</b>	1963	2.0	24.8	78.9
<b>Goldfinger</b>	1964	2.5	51.1	124.9
<b>Thunderball</b>	1965	9	63.6	141.2
<b>You Only Live Twice</b>	1967	9.5	43.1	111.6
<b>On Her Majesty's Secret Service</b>	1969	6	22.8	64.6
<b>Diamonds are Forever</b>	1971	7.2	43.8	116.0
<b>Live and Let Die</b>	1973	7	35.4	126.4
<b>The Man with the Golden Gun</b>	1974	7	21.0	97.6
<b>Spy Who Loved Me</b>	1977	13	46.8	185.4
<b>Moonraker</b>	1979	34	62.7	202.7
<b>For Your Eyes Only</b>	1981	28	62.3	194.9
<b>Octopussy</b>	1983	27.5	67.9	183.7
<i>Never Say Never Again</i>	1983	36	N/A	N/A
<b>A View to a Kill</b>	1985	30	50.1	152.4
<b>The Living Daylights</b>	1987	30	51.2	191.2
<b>Licence to Kill</b>	1989	40	34.7	156.2
<b>GoldenEye</b>	1995	60	106.4	350.7
<b>Tomorrow Never Dies</b>	1997	110	123.3	328.0

**A View to a Kill** (John Glen) - Compared to Berkoff, Christopher Walken shows how the psychotic villain should be done, with a short fuse and a manner like a coiled spring which is a joy to watch. Pairing him with Grace Jones is bizarre yet highly effective, at least while Jones keeps her mouth shut (her strength is looking mean, not dialogue). Patrick MacNee fills out the cast as Bond moves from a computer chip riddle to a plot which threatens to create Silicon Pond. Surprisingly gadget-quiet, the final chunk is an escalating series of stunts and explosions, in which the Golden Gate bridge plays a significant part. Oh, and the credits, with a women unzipping her top to reveal the 007 logo on her chest in fluorescent paint, are perhaps Maurice Binder's finest. C+

**The Living Daylights** (John Glen) - By Bond standards, the plot here is terribly complex, with double- and triple-crosses galore, as a Soviet defector turns out to be not quite what he seems. Nor is anyone else, really. If you can keep up with this, you'll get to see some superb stunts, good vehicular mayhem, and an impressive evil henchman, whose raid on the safe house where the defector is being held is very impressive. The new Miss Moneypenny sucks, however, and after a bright start Bond babe Maryam D'Abo become bland. It still builds to another wonderful finale with some eye-popping airplane stuntwork, which sees 007 deep in Russian-held Afghanistan; it's a sign of the times that the "freedom fighters" who assist him, would probably now be Taleban villains... B-

**Licence to Kill** (John Glen) - The approach here is radically different to other Bond films, with a viciousness from both heroes and villains which borders on the unpleasant. 007 enters 'Death Wish' mode - a kinder, gentler Bond this is *not* - after his friend Felix Leiter undergoes a wedding day shark-putation, at the hands of the ferociously impressive Roberto Davi. Bond is drummed out of the Secret Service, but this facet is largely ignored, Q still supplies him with technology, and indeed, gets significantly more to do than his usual "Pay attention, double-oh seven" spiel. Bond's twin assistants probably should have been combined into one, though Davi's drug-smuggling method (dissolved in petrol) does make for gratifyingly impressive explosions. The style fits Dalton well, and it's a shame he never got to develop it further. C+

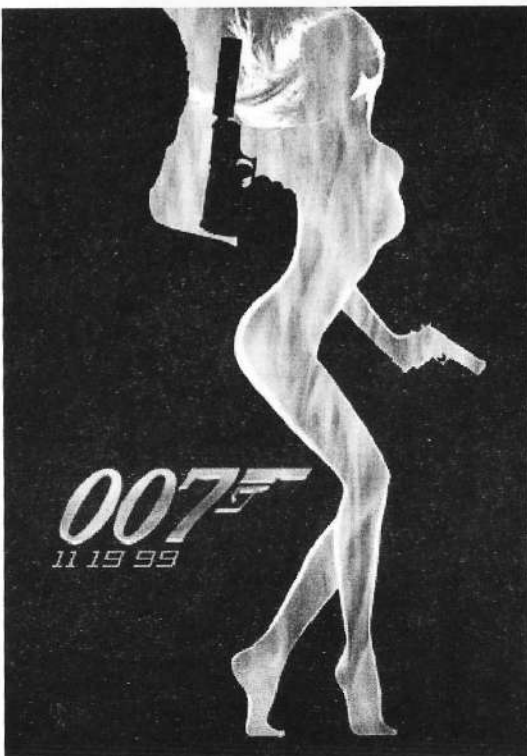




This intelligence photo depicts, on the right, the editor of a subversive publication and, on the left...surely it can't be...

**Tomorrow Never Dies** (Roger Spottiswoode) – Some people prefer this to 'Goldeneye', which surprises me because, after the credits, I can see no way in which it is superior. The plot is a throwback of twenty years, with Jonathan Pryce a cackling megalomaniac intent on turning the world into his puppet, for reasons that are never explained beyond the obvious one that he's a loony. Complete with a secret laboratory atop his headquarters, anyone who's seen 'Austin Powers' will be unable to take him seriously. And what *was* going on with Teri Hatcher? It's giving nothing away to say that she dies very early on: oddly, while her corpse lies on the bed for a lengthy scene, we never get to see its face – this gives credence to the rumour that Hatcher was fired and hurriedly written out. The (BMW! BMW!) product placement grates horribly, and director Roger Spottiswoode ('Stop - Or My Mom Will Shoot') seems to have no idea what he's doing, it feels as if it was all made up as they went along. Even Michelle Yeoh is badly misused: they wouldn't let her do her own stunts, which is like making Pavarotti mime. I was neither shaken nor stirred by this sad excuse of a half-baked Bond film. **D**

**Goldeneye** (Martin Campbell) - Given neither director nor star had 007 experience, this is spectacularly good, with more memorable characters than the previous four combined: Judi Dench, Sean Bean, Famke Janssen (gunning down colleagues with orgasmic delight), Robbie Coltrane & Alan Cumming all provide valuable support to Brosnan in his first outing. Thanks to wonderful set-pieces at start and end, plus the tank chase in the middle, the pacing is excellent, and it's never dull. The plot doesn't stand close inspection but in Bond film, it is not a major issue; it's been ages since they bothered about such things. And while Eric Serra's score is another weak point, the opening song is up with the best. All told, the best debut since Connery. **B**

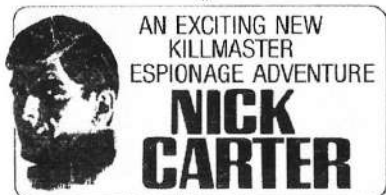


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**VATICAN VENDETTA**



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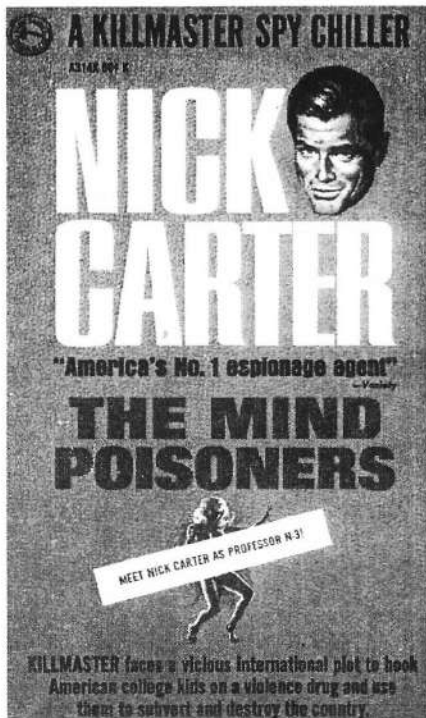


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# "The American James Bond"

In the mid-60's, Bond was big around the world, but in the States, there was still one problem: he was British. Wouldn't it be better if he were a square-jawed, red-blooded, all-American kind of guy? Step forward the Conde Nast publishing group, who decided to resurrect Nick Carter, a name which had been a mainstay of pulp fiction since before the turn of the century. Back then, it was as a master of disguise that he made his name; now, he was needed to fight harder than 007 and use cooler gadgets, as well as shag more frequently.

He became Nicholas Carter, N3: top agent, holding a Killmaster rating, of the super-secretive AXE [a surprising nod to the super-secretive NSA, formed in 1952, whose mere charter remains classified even today]. His mission, should he choose to accept it - he inevitably did - was to fight for truth, justice and the American way, in a variety of exotic locations, while enjoying the company of a broad selection of large-breasted women.

To out-007 Ian Fleming, who did a scant dozen Bond books, Conde Nast employed an entire rota of authors (including some well-known names among crime writers), in order to satisfy the public's lust for spy fiction. This roster approach means severe variation in style, ranging from first-person hard-boiled to third-person soft-focus, yet the audience didn't seem to mind: as early as the end of 1976, the publishers were trumpeting "Over 20,000,000 Nick Carter books in print", which is impressive if true. Admittedly, between 1964's 'Checkmate in Rio', and 'Tunnel For Traitors' in 1986, Conde Nast published over two hundred and fifty in all, at a rate of roughly a dozen per year. This huge volume of output helps explain the sales figures, though it's still highly respectable even on a per-novel average.

I stumbled across my first on holiday, an impressionable youth browsing a used bookshop in a North of Scotland coastal town. Since then, I've read the best part of a hundred; almost all, like the first, acquired second-hand - as with Shaun Hutson novels, it's an unexplained mystery of the universe how they rarely seem to appear anywhere else. From Malaga to Vienna to Aberdeen, I've bought 'em on sight: the vast majority unashamed pot-boilers, and just as unashamedly entertaining, literary candy-floss with no pretensions to gravitas, possessing lurid covers perhaps surpassed only by James Hadley Chase books. And while some were reprinted for years after their original appearance, others were more topical, such as N3 tracking down the man behind the bombing of the Beirut Marine compound.

Various attempts have been made to film Carter's exploits, all the way back to 'Nick Carter, le Roi des Détectives' in 1908. At various times, Italians, Czechs and Americans (most notably with Walter Pidgeon playing 'Nick Carter - Master Detective') had a shot, but never quite realised the potential, despite the growing gap in the market as James Bond softened from the hard psycho-bastard of the early films. Certainly, most of the Carter oeuvre, especially in the 60's, would have been too violent and way too sexy for a direct translation. However, as the years wore on, they ceased to be quite so extreme - or, rather, while the books remained steadfastly tough and ruthless, the mainstream caught up with and bypassed them.

In the end, this may have been their downfall: just as nudist camp films and H.G.Lewis's splatter movies lost their audience when Hollywood woke up to the appeal of exploitation, so the factors which allowed Nick to shift titles by the tens of millions in his prime were slowly metabolized into popular culture. You want sex and violence, they're now available from every bookshop, without the need to wrap them up as a spy thriller.

It may be hard to envisage a time when Variety could make the statement at the top of this page with a perfectly straight face, but Nick Carter has bounced back before from obscurity, and I wouldn't bet against a 21st century re-incarnation. Till then, he may be gone, but in TC-Land, he is not forgotten.

## **The many faces of Nick Carter.**

The novels may not have changed, but the covers have: starting at the bottom right and going clockwise, we move from 1968's *The Mind Poisoners* through to *The Executioners*, published in 1981.

## Paul Rapovski: Man of Action

Paul Rapovski is one of those rare creatures: a Western martial arts expert who has made a living in the ultra-competitive world of Hong Kong cinema. He's worked with Jackie Chan on 'Thunderbolt' and Jet Li, not only in 'My Father is a Hero', but also giving an exceptionally villainous performance in 'Hitman', where he runs Li closer than Mel Gibson managed in 'Lethal Weapon 4'. In addition to this, he was a fight coordinator on John Woo's television series 'Once a Thief', while outside the industry, he speaks 5 languages and has an honours degree from the University of Toronto.

But let's start at the beginning: Paul took up martial arts at age ten: his mentor, Stephen Law, had the same Wing Chun teacher as a certain Bruce Lee, and encouraged him to go to Hong Kong to learn more. This Paul eventually did, moving there in 1992, both to improve his martial arts skills, and to try and break through into cinema.

While he added Choy Le Fat to his repertoire, and showed a particular aptitude for stick fighting, becoming World Heavyweight Full Contact champion in 1996, it was not all plain sailing. Despite having arranged some roles before going out to Hong Kong, they fell through, as things so often do in the film business: "When I arrived, eager to start filming, the movie was constantly being postponed until they finally called it quits. It was really disappointing."



Paul Rapovski – genuinely nice bloke

However, things turned round shortly afterwards when he met Carter Wong in a gym. "He knew of my teacher in Canada and gave me fight scenes in his upcoming film, as well as two more of his projects. This really encouraged me at that time, and I began to train harder and learn more about the culture so as to better my chances for future films." Though he's now returned from Hong Kong for the moment, Paul looks back with obvious warmth on his time there: "I worked with so many great people and stars, each one gave me something that propelled me forward and instilled hope. I gained something from every project I worked on, not only fond memories, but personal achievement and growth."

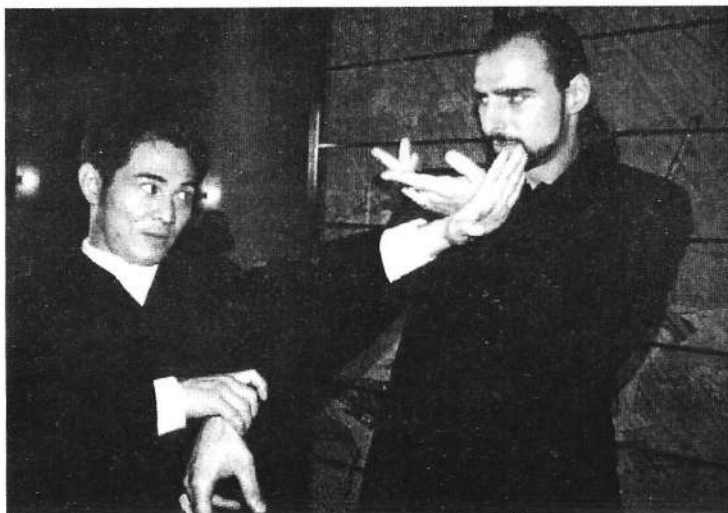
One of those people was David Wu, editor on many of John Woo's films, and a director, actor and scriptwriter ('Bride With White Hair') in his own right. "The reason I like working with Paul is that he is a fast thinker. Sometimes it's necessary to think quickly, especially with regard to script changes, or action scene changes, or set changes." This is perhaps the main difference between Hong Kong and Hollywood; as Paul puts it, "American films tend to rely on more formulas and less inspiration. Hong Kong films have a unique high energy, fast paced feel about them. Most action is made up on the day of shooting; only the most complicated shots are worked out in advance."

As a result of his first-hand experience, he can also help nail another myth about Hong Kong action cinema, namely, that each film is built on the shattered bodies of stunt-men: "They rarely ask you to do something that they themselves wouldn't perform. They're extremely safety conscious, regardless of the stunt." He's only ever received superficial injuries, yet admits that on occasion he has looked back and questioned his own sanity. David Wu agrees, saying: "Paul has no problems crossing the line of safety to make the scenes look more realistic". Though the hardest thing Rapovski has been asked to do is not a stunt or a fight – it was a love scene: "It just wasn't in the character to be that way so I convinced them to revise the script!"

Now based back in Toronto, Rapovski continues to be busy. "We finished shooting 'Millennium Queen' about a week ago; I play rebel leader Joad, opposite Julie Strain and Jeff Wincott." Indeed, this project, which saw him both acting and coordinating all the action, has already made an impression on the producers; barely was it completed when the producers were demanding a sequel. What else does he have lined up? "There are so many things on the table, both for the short- and long-term, it's hard to say which will surface first. Some Asian action film shooting is scheduled for Toronto, but the script is being re-written, so we are still waiting." Though Rapovski prefers to keep quiet about his personal goals until he has accomplished them, at some point he'd like to get involved in the production side, as well as acting.

In one of the most cut-throat industries around, Paul seems so far to have retained both his inner peace and dignity. If hard work, honesty and genuine respect for the martial arts are worth anything then, whether it's at home or elsewhere in the world, his future success in the film business would appear to be assured.

*Interviews by Chris Fata; article by Jim McLennan*



**Paul takes on the might of Jet Li**

## YUKS AND ZEN...



A four-course dinner: 'Modern Romance'

When you mention Hong Kong cinema to most people, what they tend to think of is action films: Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and John Woo dominate the field by some margin. Art-house fans may mention the works of Wong Kar-Wai, and sex- and gore-hounds will talk about Cat.III classics like 'Dr. Lamb' or 'Sex and Zen'. However, one genre that will be almost entirely missing from such a discussion...comedy.

There are probably several reasons why it's largely notable by its absence from the titles released in this country. Firstly, it's a field already well-satisfied by Hollywood. Then, while movies like 'Hard Boiled' and 'Heroic Trio' take the action genre to a whole new level, it's much more difficult for humour to do the same. Subtitled comedies also have a poor track record generally: films like 'Les Visiteurs' have done nowhere near as well abroad as at home, because intellectual cinema-goers tend to shy away from anything as common as jokes. But perhaps the biggest stumbling block is a perception that these films are incomprehensible to Western viewers.

This is, in some ways, fair criticism. Even the best subtitling in the world - and heaven knows, HK films are frequently a long way short of that - would be hard pushed to cope with the blizzard of verbal comedy which is often their core. You feel much as an alien would watching 'Have I Got News For You' - though something is clearly meant to be funny, you have no idea why. Yet at their best, Hong Kong comedies are easily the equal of those coming out of Hollywood. And even at their worst, they are certainly still a damn sight more amusing than 'Ace Ventura, Pet Detective', even if for no other reason than a numbing feeling of disbelief at what film-makers there apparently consider fair game.

For example, take 'Boys Are Easy'. In other hands, a storyline about a father whose dying wish is to see his daughters married could have been a touching drama or a black comedy. However, despite a stellar cast (Brigitte Lin, Chingmy Yau and Maggie Cheung are the daughters), this one is pitched closer to 'Kingpin', full of utterly dumb stuff like the Triad Olympics, where the races are started with a burst of automatic gunfire, and jokes about pubic hair.

Speaking of Maggie Cheung...though her reputation in the West rests partly on her role as Jackie Chan's much put-upon girlfriend in the 'Police Story' series, and partly in high-brow fare like 'Irma Vep', she spent a lot of her early career in severely lowbrow comedy films. One such is 'Millionaire Cop', which also illustrates the aforementioned tendency for Hong Kong comedies to hurl anything they can think of at the screen in the quest for laughs, regardless of logic. The central plot is sound enough - a policeman must pretend to be an industrialist's son "with hilarious results", as the video sleeve probably says. Bolted on are things like a transplanted hand and fart jokes, as well as Cheung, whose character turns into a nymphomaniac every time she sees a round object. I use the word "bolted" advisedly, since these elements have no connection to the main plot. While the end result is not actually very *funny*, as such, you certainly can't deny its originality.



Wong Jing is undoubtedly the most prolific auteur (if that's not too strong a word) in the field; his work-rate is legendary, even if he tends to spend as much time reading the racing papers as directing. His films tend to be the cinematic equivalents of All-Star games, one of the tenets of his film philosophy seems to be "when in doubt, add another famous actor". Witness the previously mentioned 'Boys are Easy', or the similarly-themed 'Modern Romance', which may not have Maggie Cheung, but does have almost everyone else: Christy Chung, Carrie Ng, Sandra Ng and Chingmy Yau, to name just the female leads. For once he doesn't short change the audience on plots: there are four separate stories here, one for each lady (superstitious, lecherous, gay and jealous respectively), charting their progress through the icebergs which are... 'Modern Romance'. Given it's basically a chick flick - albeit a highly skewed one - it's really rather good, though it may put you off Hong Kong women for life.

Any discussion of Hong Kong humour can only lead to one man: Stephen Chow Sing-Chi. Born in 1962, he started off as a kids' TV presenter, alongside another future star, Tony Leung, before moving into dramas, and eventually feature films. At the box-office in Hong Kong, he's only just behind Jackie Chan, and well ahead of Chow Yun-Fat, with his "mo lei tau" (make no sense) films regularly cleaning up. Unlike his colleagues, the Western release of his work has been very limited, largely to minor movies, seeping out almost unheralded, such as 'Legend of the Dragon', a film most notable for a cameo by snooker ace Jimmy White. Chow's often compared to Jim Carrey, with some justification, although his best-known characters are more sympathetic and restrained. Both do well playing "the little guy", up against, and often getting the better of, authority figures, enmeshed in situations well beyond their control. It's certainly possible to see Carrey in some of Chow's roles, and indeed 'God of Cookery' has been slated for a Hollywood remake.

Unlike Carrey, often more irritating than endearing, even Chow's less successful films demonstrate his abilities. 'All's Well Ends Well', for instance, is compelling evidence that HK comedy does require skill. In this ensemble piece there's a marked contrast between bits that, while trying very hard to be funny, end up as mere frantic mugging, and sequences involving Stephen Chow and (again!) Maggie Cheung, which are several orders of magnitude better. It chronicles



the obsessions, problems and entanglements of a family, valid contenders for the title of World's Most Dysfunctional, as they progress towards the happy ending given away by the title. Large chunks border on the painful to watch, yet it's redeemed by Chow and Cheung as a lecherous DJ and his movie-obsessed girlfriend, leading to parodies ranging from 'Ghost' to 'T2'. It's typical that weaker movies like this still have scenes which are laugh-out loud, though even I must confess there are exceptions: to these Western eyes, his 'Chinese Odyssey' films were completely incomprehensible. I suspect an appreciation of Oriental myth and legend would have been helpful.

Chow's talents don't stop at comedy. Earlier films like 'Triad Story' and 'He Who Chases After the Wind' show he can turn in perfectly decent performances in dramatic roles, without stealing scenes or over-acting. But it's in comedy that Chow seems to be at his best, and it is there that his greatest successes and most memorable movies can be found, even if, for the moment, he remains one of Hong Kong cinema's best kept-secrets. Unsurprisingly, given the length of his filmography, I can't claim to have seen all of his work - of the twenty-plus which I have, here are my personal favourites.

**God of Gamblers III: Back to Shanghai** (Wong Jing) - Barely related to the Chow Yun Fat classic, Stephen Chow is the 'Saint of Gamblers', who gets sucked back in time when his paranormal powers clash with those of the villains. Though this takes a while to get going, it's a great set-up, with little quirks like his mobile phone not just working in 1937, but letting him call people in the 90's for advice as he battles gangsters and strives to win the heart of a fair lady – or failing that, her mentally retarded twin sister... [Both played by, of all people, Gong Li, better known for art-house stuff like 'Raise the Red Lantern'. Hell, this *is* a Stephen Chow film!] The sheer volume of good humour on display means this is certainly more enjoyable than Chow Yun Fat's half-baked sequel, though it may fall short of the original film. *Supreme moment: Chow hides a venomous snake by wearing it as a cool leather tie.*



**Magnificent Scoundrels** (Lee Lik-Chi) - One of those, "Oh God, where to start?" films, largely thanks to an amazingly constructed plot, virtually made up on the fly. The basic thread concerns two teams of swindlers, respectively impersonating the owners of a vacant house, and pretending to be rich visitors. Each thinks the other is legit, and is trying to rook them out of as much as possible. The mental duelling between these opposing charlatans is the heart of the

film, and is a delight to watch. In comparison, the opening and climax are somewhat lack-lustre; though the former can perhaps be excused as necessary scene-setting, the latter is a disappointment. But it's hard to complain given the enormous amount of invention on view in the rest. *Supreme moment: Amy Yip vomiting down a guy's throat.*

**Love on Delivery** (Lee Lik-Chi) - This showcases Chow's talent for the character-driven; nobody plays the luckless underdog like him. Here, he's a fast-food delivery boy, who has the misfortune to fall in love with a girl who is also being pursued by a martial-arts master. So Chow tries to learn to fight, only to fall in with a con-man; typically, he ends up learning anyway. Oh, but he can only use his skill when wearing a Garfield mask, so it's not much use for impressing his lady, especially given all the copycats (hohoho) who follow in his wake... The film is crammed full of glorious stupidity, great characters and ends with a brilliant display where Chow tries to survive a three-round deathmatch, by not fighting his opponent. A super piss-take of the usual macho heroics, this is Very Zen, but also Very Stephen Chow. *Supreme moment: Chow and his pacifist-fu.*

**From Beijing with Love** (Stephen Chow Sing-Chi) - Never mind Austin Powers, this is the Bond spoof to end them all, with Chow coming out of 'retirement' as a butcher, to safeguard China's national riches. From an inspired parody of Bond credits (not for the last time – 'Forbidden City Cop' does the same thing), it's a blizzard of gags, the best revolving around gadgets such as the shoe which cunningly conceals...a hairdryer. Chow is perfect as the deadpan ex-agent, while Anita Yuen covers both good-girl and bad-girl bases. There are many great sequences: the use of porn as an anaesthetic, an escape from a firing squad and his piano-playing all stick in my mind. Perhaps most surprising, it works almost as well viewed as an action film: like the Bond movies, it builds with a good sense of pace, towards a climax where Chow's butchery skills are invaluable. For a directorial debut, it's an amazing piece of work; truly, nobody does it better. *Supreme moment: the solar-powered torch.*

## Stephen Chow Sing-Chi Filmography

- 1987** Just Heroes  
**1988** Dragon Fight  
Faithfully Yours  
Final Justice  
He Who Chases After the Wind  
The Last Conflict  
**1989** Thunder Cops & Thunder Cops 2  
The Unmatchable Match  
**1990** All for the Winner  
Curry and Pepper  
God of Gamblers II  
Legend of the Dragon  
Look Out, Officer!  
Love is Love  
Lung Fung Restaurant  
My Hero  
Sleazy Dizzy  
Triad Story  
When Fortune Smiles  
**1991** The Banquet  
Crazy Safari  
Fight Back to School  
Fist of Fury 1991 & Fist of Fury 1991 II  
God of Gamblers III: Back to Shanghai  
Magnificent Scoundrels  
Top Bet [Cameo]  
Tricky Brains  
**1992** All's Well, End's Well  
Fight Back to School II  
Film Without Bounds:  
    the New Hong Kong Cinema  
Justice, My Foot!  
King of Beggars  
Royal Tramp & Royal Tramp II  
Thief of Time  
**1993** Fight Back to School III  
Flirting Scholar  
Mad Monk  
My Hero 2 [Cameo]  
**1994** From Beijing with Love [+ Dir & Writer]  
Hail the Judge  
Love on Delivery  
**1995** A Chinese Odyssey Part One: Pandora's Box  
A Chinese Odyssey Part Two: Cinderella  
Out of the Dark  
Sixty Million Dollar Man  
**1996** Forbidden City Cop [+ Writer]  
God of Cookery [+ Prod, Dir & Writer]  
**1997** All's Well, End's Well '97  
Lawyer Lawyer  
**1998** The Lucky Guy  
**1999** Gorgeous [Cameo]  
King of Comedy



### 7C Travel #3:

## Being the adventures of young men whose interests are beer, travel and (in a suitably "ironic" way of course) the Eurovision Song Contest

Though in my student years I covered most of Western Europe on Inter-Rail forays, I'd never really been to Germany, save a few days in Berlin – with exquisite timing mere weeks before the wall came down. But a steadily increasing appreciation of things Germanic (not least foaming things, served in half-litre glasses) meant that when Rob Dyer, editor of Dark Star magazine, suggested I join his party for a long weekend in Hamburg, little persuasion was needed. It seemed so simple: get cheap accomodation, fly over, and engage in social intercourse with our European colleagues.

Theory. Practice. They're not even spelt similarly. We forgot to take into account that the weekend we'd chosen was the Harbour Festival, probably the biggest party of the year. Plus the German Tennis Open was taking place there, and it was also the weekend that an estimated 30,000 Kaiserslautern fans descended on Hamburg to celebrate clinching the Bundesliga title. Thus, our trio eventually camped out in a leafy suburb, kind of the Hamburgian equivalent of Camberley, 35 minutes walk from the end of the S-Bahn line in the delightfully named Poppenhüttel.

However, this was by no means a bad thing, as the dead calm of this residential area provided a nice contrast to the hustle and bustle of the town centre. We were staying in an upstairs flat, with all mod cons – though the cooker didn't exactly see a lot of use. But we did get to watch late-night cable TV; it's kinda odd watching Jackie Chan's "Police Story" dubbed into German, but after about five minutes the novelty value wore off and we switched to the steady diet of undressed Frauleins available on another channel. No language barriers there.

Speaking of which, I had to blow the rust off my German: I had stopped studying it in 1981, and had hardly used a word since. It was weird: I'd be able to completely understand one sentence on a poster, and not have the slightest clue about the next. [Mind you, some didn't need translation – you may think the adverts for H&M here are raunchy, but the German versions have more in common with Penthouse photo-shoots] However, I wasn't going to need to discuss Nietzsche: asking whether I could pay by credit card was about as tricky as it got.

And the answer to that was almost invariably "Nein", worth bearing in mind for any other potential travellers. Which was a shame, as I had deliberately undercut the amount of cash, with the expectation that a highly developed country like Germany would be on the cutting edge of electronic commerce. Not so: if you can't scratch a window with it, they won't accept it. Also, while during the week, shops are often open till 8pm or so, on Saturdays they shut at 4pm – and by five, Hamburg city centre was deserted: Romero could have filmed another zombie movie there, if it wasn't for the tumbleweeds rolling down Main Street. For Germans seem to start partying late, and go on late. We went into a restaurant at 6pm, and were the only customers, though this meant we could chill out there for a couple



**This is a statue to...ah, good question. By the drunken posture and lack of clothes, it probably commemorates a visit by some Essex girls.**

of hours, after a long day trekking round the town. By the time we emerged though, approaching 9pm, things were beginning to wake up again – so where better to head than the world-renowned Reeperbahn?

It was somewhat different to what I expected: to start with, it's far broader, being a dual carriageway. It probably has more in common with Paris's Pigalle than Amsterdam, mixing bars, sex shops, fast food joints, strip clubs and all the other ephemera of modern late-night life. You did, however, have to be impressed by the sheer **scale**; some of the shops in the World of Sex chain were probably coming close to the size of Tower Records at Piccadilly Circus. You name it, they had it – although unlike Amsterdam (the obvious benchmark for all red-light districts world-wide!), a “no children, no pets” rule was in effect.

The area was heaving: Saturday night, and a good proportion of the football fans seemed to have stayed, though there was no sign of any trouble, despite their boisterous and loud celebrations. And nowhere was more heaving than the street where the prostitutes worked – easily locatable, since it's the one next to the police station. The crowds were understandable, because the Hamburg hookers were, almost without exception, drop dead gorgeous. Under normal circumstances, you'd happily gnaw off the majority of your own limbs to sleep with women like them. There were a mix of street-walkers, and Amsterdam style window-booths, the latter located in a road which was sealed off at each end, presumably to prevent passers-by being offended by the sight of lingerie-clad lovelies. One difference to Amsterdam though: few of the girls were ethnic, almost all being white – possibly East European? One slow lap round there (trying desperately to avoid eye contact, which would have been as fatal for my morals as gazing at Medusa) and we **needed** beer.

We found a bar nearby, and tucked ourselves in the back, under the TV which was showing the Eurovision Song Contest, without sound – they were playing a bizarre mix of oompah and Neil Diamond on the stereo instead. As the acts came to an end, and the voting began, the place suddenly got packed out. Not surprising, the scoring is always the best bit; I have happy memories of sitting in front of the TV with reams of paper. Of course, now I've discovered baseball... We were cheering every time Germany got a point (their entrant being the fabulous Guildo Horn, giving the contest the seriousness it deserves, with a song whose chorus went “Peep! Peep! Peep! I love you!”), cheering every time Britain got a point, and shouting “But it's a bloke!” every time the trans-sexual Israeli entry turned up. Beer was hurled at the TV set, Israel eventually won, and we staggered out into the night, to look once more at some real women. It truly has to go down as one of the most surreal experiences of my life.



**It's the harbour in Hamburg, where a festival is taking place.  
Welcome to the imaginatively named, 'Hamburg Harbour Festival'.**

I must mention the beer, which was in general good to excellent. Even though we had no real idea what we were doing, and every bar seemed to have a different selection (beyond the ubiquitous Holsten), pretty much everything was drinkable. And we did. Repeatedly. Odd to have bars which have menus, and where you don't pay for each round, but run up a tab. And distinctly pleasant, after last year's American trip, to have bar-staff who don't expect a gratuity, simply for doing their job. [Some may complain about the lack of ice in drinks here – but when it comes to tipping barmen, I am most definitely with Steve Buscemi]

Our sole source of English info was a quirky free booklet, 'Top Info', picked up at the airport. Here's are a couple of examples of it's extraordinary, understated style:



*"The Hafenmeile...is an extensive (and crowded) funfair-style area all along the river banks by Landungsbrücken which - assuming you are suitably dressed to pre-empt pickpockets and protect yourself from capricious changes in the weather, and as long as you don't go all panicky in large crowds - can be fairly pleasant"*

*"Opposite the Markthalle is the City Hof Passage. This must be the ugliest shopping mall in Hamburg, but as we know from our tedious day-to-day experiences ugliness is only skin-deep and within this monstrosity of infantile lego-stone architecture food from three nations awaits you...To top it all, a very cheap bikers shop is also in the mall; the discount helmet line is well recommended, especially if you are planning on going to the fun fair".*

Precisely *why* a biker's helmet should be needed is never explained, we braved the fair without its protection, and emerged unscathed. It was a pleasant enough diversion and a very good way to spend a sunny afternoon – nice to discover that large number of stalls, all selling T-shirts with the same tacky slogans, is not a phenomena restricted to the West End.

#### **Bauhaus...in the middle of our street. [Sorry]**

On Sunday, we did some more meandering, even though by this stage, my boots were literally falling apart. We headed for the west of the City, as that seemed to be where things like record shops were located. This gave us an insight into another side of Hamburg; Turkish shops, student hangouts, lots of graffiti, that kind of thing. It was all very relaxed and laid back, in some ways it almost felt more like New York than anywhere in Europe.

This was but a precursor to the day's main event, a concert by industro-classical group In the Nursery at the Markthalle, which was the excuse for the weekend's jaunt. The venue looked like a converted auction house, with a stepped ring around a central flat area, which would be ideal for, oh, bare-knuckle bouts or cock-fighting. The stage was only a little higher, and I ended up leaning against the speaker stacks, virtually on a level with the band, and briefly toyed with the idea of helping out on some songs... The concert itself was great - how can you dislike a band who for half their numbers have three drummers? - and I ended up with bruises on my leg from over-enthusiastic thigh-slapping. Which would be appropriately Bavarian, if only Hamburg were in Bavaria, and not at the other end of the country. The night was ended with a local kebab; very impressive, it actually tasted of pork, and the mint sauce which it came with set the flavour off nicely.

Monday. Just time for a fast sweep round the shops. The centre of Hamburg is largely pedestrianised, which makes it very pleasant to walk around. The architecture is interesting to look at, even though most of it is post-war (courtesy of RAF Bomber Command), there's a mix of styles which provide variety, rather than the "two different flavours of concrete" approach often seen in British city centres. The wonderfully sunny weather helps the scenery improve too...

By the time we attack a record shop or two, as well as 'Otaku', a bizarre establishment that sells techno music, clothes, and cult films, but also has a hairdresser's in the back, financial resources are diminishing rapidly. By pooling our assets, we scrape together enough for lunch, the last meal on German soil being the same as our first – sausage, naturally. Mine came with curry sauce, which was...different. We headed for the airport, and used the inevitably overpriced cans of Coke to staunch our raging thirsts, and get our combined financial resources down to a satisfactory 12 pfennigs, or roughly fourpence. Thank heavens for free airplane drinks.

Customs at Gatwick was a breeze; the "blue" channel, for flights from within the EU, was staffed by one thoroughly disinterested officer, provoking the inevitable annoyance at not having stocked up in a major league way on contraband (the stun-guns seen in one shop had been especially tempting). I think they should stamp your passport on the way out, telling you in advance whether you're going to get stopped or not; it would make things so much easier. Maybe they could also introduce duty free limits for pornography, alongside those for cigars and booze: "four erections or two penetrations or one ejaculation" perhaps.

Hamburg is an excellent place for a short break, though I suspect it would probably be less lively over a 'normal' weekend. Regardless, I think you could find plenty of stuff to do; we hardly needed to bother, with the cultural aspects particularly well ignored. A return visit would certainly be welcome – but there are a few other European cities worth a visit too, such as...

## Prague

Readers may recall, if their memories stretch back to the dim and distant past of, ooh, three issues ago, a thoroughly entertaining week spent in and around the capital of the then-new Czech Republic. I was recently back there, and it was interesting to see how five years of unfettered capitalism had changed things. Er, well, not that much actually. I was expecting it to be wall-to-wall tourists, given all the publicity the place has had over the past few years, but this was another pleasant surprise. I think we may have missed the tidal wave of backpackers which apparently hit the place shortly after democracy did. No longer being *the* hip and trendy destination, things seemed to have returned to normal: going in February probably did help, and we were extraordinarily lucky with the weather – T-shirts are not normal garb for that time of year.

The place remains remarkably cheap across the board. The price of beer had doubled, admittedly, but even at the dizzy heights of 40p/pint, is scarcely likely to break the bank. You just have to laugh when the bill for eleven beers and an absinthe comes to £5.60, though it makes coming back to London a real shock! Accommodation, not a concern last time, was also ludicrously cheap: less than a tenner a night each got the four of us a wonderful apartment just off the top of Wenceslas Square, with a *billiard table* in it. And we ate like kings, plates piled high with various forms of once-living creature, cooked in a variety of interesting ways and given bizarre Czechish names like "Sack of Mr. Town Councillor". [And virtually everywhere, vegetables are an optional extra] My only regret is I didn't get to sample the traditional local kebab...

From a leisure point of view, there's something for everyone, from brothels to churches, discos to puppet theatres, and even a giant metronome overlooking the town, for those who feel in need of rhythm. In four days, we barely scratched the surface, and could have spent twice as much time there without running out of things to do. The place is probably my favourite city in Europe, and the odds are heavily in favour of me being back there again before five more years have passed.

## Conspiracy Corner: The Tale of the Raven

*"Raven, Black as pitch  
Mystical as the Moon  
Speak to me of magic,  
I will fly with you soon."*

Following a disturbing vision of a futuristic, thought controlled fighter craft, Marc Lewes undertook research to explain away the imagery. Far from being deluded fantasy, he collated information from a variety of independent sources to conclude that, somewhere in the world, this awesome, horrific craft does in fact exist. He calls it the Raven.



### PART ONE - MIND CONTROL

"I was stationary - atop a ridge. It was night, and everything was still, potent. Soon, prosaic orange lights attracted my attention. In the distance, in rows, marking out what seemed to be a small runway. I went closer, to discover that they were in fact marking out some sort of compound. The soulless feeling of the place caused me to shiver - there seemed to be no spiritual radiance anywhere - even the lights seemed artificial, illusionary, as if they served no other purpose except to illuminate the extremely sinister object squat down on the ground some distance away, loathsome in its savage purity and noxious beauty. It was like the Devil as machine. I watched in a frozen mental embrace, captive to my discovery for a while."

#### **Section of *Raven* transcripts, from personal vision, circa 1994.**

Remote viewing? Astral projection? Mere pyrrhic fantasy? As I was to discover, the awful truth lay in reality rather than in my mind's eye. The object described is, in all probability, a new breed of bio-aware fighting craft, an Anglo-American hyper-secret venture. A craft possessing not only anti-gravity capability, but psychic interfacing, lethal + non-lethal weapon capacity, non-combustive power plant and a fluid filled cockpit. Using updated Tesla technology, the latest particle/wave beam offensive and defensive arsenals, drawing on some four decades of high-level, mind-shattering psychical and technological research, the resultant attack craft is nothing if not terrifying.

As astonishing and fantastic as all this may seem, perhaps a conglomeration of too many sci-fi films, fringe literature and hostile projection, unfortunately research and outrageous coincidences led me to believe in at least the stark possibility of such a machine existing, or being under construction. Consider that the SR-11 'Blackbird' technology goes as far back as the Sixties, and Stealth bomber advancements can be traced back to the Seventies, then we have at *least* twenty years of occult scientific advancement which, to my knowledge, has not been revealed in any tangible form. This is not a UFO problem. The ship I saw was of terrestrial origin, from the very fact that I sensed human involvement, and indeed a human pilot, behind the pitch black flanks and rind of the flying beast.

I do not want to reveal much ideological or political information behind this as yet, because research is ongoing. I was 'discovered', in that lonely, desperate spot by the 'watchers', or masters of the project, as the entire setup is run, typically, by deranged Government military splinter groups. But these people have strong psychic abilities - indeed this is the crux of their power. For many months I lived in a state of subliminal threat, and ceased to investigate further. Truth will Out, as they say, and, for my sins, this article was born.



Perhaps some readers may have heard of Landig's Point 109. This was supposedly a secret meeting place, where high level members of the scientific and political groups, from *all countries* were to meet, near the North Pole, in the latter years of WWII. The purpose was to reveal Nazi V3 technology, the fabled WWII UFO's (Foo Fighters). Apparently, some propulsion method beyond simple rocket science had been invented...or given. The Morris Jessup information published in the 50's, following Project Rainbow revelations? Russian secret science? This, however, ties up with hollow Earth theories, and is now almost mythological. Fascinating, but largely inconclusive. The answers lay with hard, if not occult science.

The Dark Craft, or 'Raven' as I dubbed it would not go away, and continues to persist. All the while it is in my consciousness, darting about in its inimitable way, dominating the airspace, its energy waves 'irradiating' water as it flew low level. Its propulsion unit glowing like the coals of hell, crystal/wave dynamics producing finely attuned beams of energy. Surging it forward like a thought. The whitened, albino pilot, in the womb like cockpit, literally thinking his way around, sensing threat, mindfully activating counter attack. Who was behind this? How was it conceived and constructed?



My first investigations led me to a man codenamed 'Penguin' - Col. John B. Alexander (US Army Intelligence and Security Command - read NSA). An ex-commander of Green Beret Special Forces in Vietnam, he is also the man who first came up with the concept of non-lethal weapons 19 years ago. In December of 1980 he published an article in the US Army Journal, Military Review, entitled 'The New Mental Battlefield'. This gained the attention of senior Army generals who encouraged him to pursue his nefarious work. In the article, he mentions that telepathy could interfere with the brain's electrical activity (telepathy was scientifically and irrefutably proven by secret Russian experiments using rabbits on submarines as far back as the 1960's).

Retiring from Army life in 1988, he joined Los Alamos National Laboratories, infamous for weapons research, working with Janet Morris, the Research Director for US Global Strategy Council (USGSC). She is also the co-author of 'The Warrior's Edge', initiated into the art of Bio-energetics, and graduated from the Silva course in advanced mind control. More to the point, she has been conducting remote viewing experiments for fifteen years, and researching the effects of the mind on probability in computer systems. That two highly qualified, radically thinking people collaborated on such strange and disturbing projects, under the auspices of the US Government, seemed incredible. Perhaps, after all, my vision might have some credence, some basis of reality. The connections were, as we shall see, too powerful, too direct, too circular. There seemed a common goal for all these disparate, strange people and their occult research. I had a feeling I knew what it was.

Los Alamos, mentioned earlier, prides itself on cutting edge weapons research, notably the atom bomb, and is relatively well known. What is less well known is the fact that immediately after the Second world war, it was mostly staffed by ex-Nazi scientists. Not one or two, but several hundred. Starting as Operation Lusty, when Germany was scoured for scientific blueprints, prototypes, and scientific papers the Allies soon realised that there was a wealth of superior technology and information. Colonel Donald Putt, the man in charge, decided that he wanted more than the scientific spoils of war - he wanted the brains behind them. Thus Operation Paperclip was born, and the Nazi scientists were shipped over, including the notorious Albert Speer, and Herr Kammler, architect of Auschwitz.



### THE NAZI SCIENTISTS FROM OPERATION PAPERCLIP

Thus, with blood on their hands, these men were soon contributing to and shaping the destiny of the American space programme, culminating, of course, with the Apollo moon landing. What is clear is that without Nazi technology, this would never have been possible. It was to this legacy that Colonel Alexander wedded himself, working for the USGSC, with great interest in mind-control and non-lethal weaponry, such as microwave devices. This man seemed at the hub of the problem, the vision I had experienced some four years ago.

So far, I had established, if the research was to be trusted, that certain top-level mind-control programmes were in operation, and had been for decades. This is well known, but to have a clear link with the control of computer systems, such as Janet Morris' research was fantastic. This tied in with the notion of a thought controlled craft, piloted from a bio-reactive cockpit, one filled with fluid and sensory devices. Rather than a 'brain link', there were no direct links - a mesmeric, highly attuned psychic interface through months of conditioning. Is such a thing possible? Could a person be trained to such a degree, and deal with the split second decision making of combative avionics? Of course! Using a combination of Neuro Linguistic Programming, meditation, psychotronic development (interface with machines), bio-energetics, a reactive sensory medium (such as the fluid)...does all this sound ridiculous? Perhaps it may come as a surprise that the first incident of a computer reacting to thought patterns was in 1974 when neurophysiologist and electronic engineer Lawrence Pinneo, working for Stanford Research Institute (a *military* contractor), came up with a system that was able to correlate brain waves off an ECG with specific commands. As far back as then a computer could respond by moving a dot on a TV screen. Obviously this is very basic, but we have had 25 years to develop much more sophisticated systems. Enhanced states, drug induced or low level directed electromagnetic waves combined with these new systems would enable someone to largely pilot a craft with their mind alone.

There is a wealth of information that I cannot go into here. Needless to say, the information is overwhelming in favour of this craft, the Raven, being easily realised. I split the investigation into five areas, which will be explored later briefly in part 2 of this treatise. I had established tentatively that a mind/complex machine interface might be possible, something a little more organic and holistic than *Firefox*. But what about propulsion? The weaponry? The funding? Why hadn't anyone else seen, or mentioned it? Why the strange effects I saw in further visions as it flew low level? I had my man - John Alexander, and his cohorts. But his *modus operandi* was all theory, all in the mind. How did the collusion between him, the air force and secret weapons programmes come about? And was there any defence against this seemingly invincible dark fighting machine which sullied the skies?

I was to find out that the answers, as usual, were where I least expected them to be.

MARC LEWES

To be continued...

## THE LONGEST CLIMB: Andrew Collins, July 1999

Been a while, over a year, since my words graced the pages of TC, and quite a testing period of absence it has been. Ironically, though Jim's output has been less productive than I was led to believe, indeed a gaping void of publication, he phoned me this week and gave me a deadline! After 13 months, I have a week left in which to produce this article! Slackness befalls me - I write like a drugged serpent. The phrase 'Blood out of a Stone' springs to mind. To be honest, writing has been at the distant back of my mind, as the perils of South London have taken over. Rent crisis! Attacked by gang in Peckham! Grifted by a whore in Brixton! Directionless night buses! Prevented from falling off stool in Fridge Bar, Brixton by girl after over dosing on absinthe! Surviving the hostilities and dope fumes of hard core Yardie pub off Coldharbour Lane! Gently 'admiring' a prostitute's very attractive black lace top in a seriously dodgy club in central Soho! Oxford Circus, Saturday afternoon!

Incredible as it might seem, drinking exploits have slacked off this year. Something to do with being chucked out by that mad flatmate I was living with, more to do with bastard overpriced rent and several court cases. However, this is not to say I have been reduced to a dullness, boredom and tragedy evident in such persons as, perhaps, Jim Tavare, the 'comedian'. Christ help us. Drink need not be imperative to and derivative of having auspicious moments of careless joy and reckless abandon. Er, well, it is, but the article tries to promise not to be the alcohol fuelled rhetoric of a semi-possessed man at odds with the rational Universe. So (sipping glass of highly toxic Cornish Haye Farm Cider) - what to write? Abusive? Vitriolic? Arcane? Or poignant?

People falling/jumping off buildings seems to be a recent feature in my life. Working for...the.... council at the moment, evaluating properties. This lacklustre job has brought me into contact with various denominations, ethnics, fringe lunatics, cool dudes, angels, stricken artists, post-nuclear families and bewildered loners. On the fifth floor of a savagely depressing tower block, a 50's architectural nightmare (*Lambeth Towers* for God's sake), I sat talking to an affable couple about the state of the world.

"Anything terrible ever happen here?" I asked nonchalantly.

Small talk had just shrunk, humiliated, into the far corner, to try and creep off unnoticed. Not quite sure what I meant, the husband stared at me worryingly for a while. Then he giggled. "Well", he started, "me and the wife were having breakfast one day...."

"Yeah...." I prompted. I was half expecting some awesomely amusing story about cereal and how she opened it the wrong way up to get the toy out 'to give to the grandchildren', only secretly, she wanted it for herself, having a persistent Peter Pan complex and a moulded plastic fetish, and then he had forgotten and picked it up the right way the next morning to have masses of wheaty crunchy goodness spill onto the table and his lap, prompting a curse which so offended the delicate sensibilities of his dear wife that she refused to let him watch the United match later that evening, condescending, later, to allow the last ten minutes of the Grand Prix (highlights). But it wasn't to be.

"And then this body fell past the window" he smirked.

"Oh. Er, a body?"

"Yeah. We were a bit shocked of course." Silence reigned supreme for a moment. The sublime tick of a grandfather clock marked time. My little finger twitched in anticipation. I admit I was shocked too. "Anyone you knew?"

"Oh no" his wife piped up. "A stranger. Don't know how he got in"

"Or got on the roof", finished the husband. All this seemed a little academic, considering.

"Oh. So what happened next?" (alright, I made that up, but it carries the narrative quite well I think).

"Well, he hit the ground. And it made the most amazing sound."

My stomach flipped just a little. Not knowing the plight of my intestines, he continued, a wry grin ebbing onto his features like a slow secret tide. "In the movies, it just makes a small thud. But it's not like that at all. It made a massive noise! Like a bomb going off! All over the place!" My little finger was now fairly having a life of its own. "Er, right, that's the lounge done then. Thanks for your time."

"Alright. No problem." He paused reflectively at the door, still sporting that worrying grin. "An almighty noise."

"Like a bomb going off?" I confirmed.

His face lit up like a Christmas candle. "Yes! BANG! Mess everywhere!" Behind, grinning similarly, was his wife, seemingly inhabiting another plane of existence, almost awkwardly sharing his bizarre humour. The empty, soulless corridor flanked me on both sides. The immensity of cruel concrete seemed to crush my spirit, and shadows cast by the pernicious neon lighting appeared to crawl towards me, tormented, lost. But you've got to laugh, eh?!

I did, in all fairness, say *bodies*. The next fallen man, not from a tower block this time, was from an altogether more wholesome estate, SE1. The couple (why is it couples that seem to witness these things?) were thankfully, rightfully grave and upset in the telling of their account. This 'jumper' landed on a roof of a warehouse which their small, tidy kitchen overlooked. Splat! I think he was a dusk rather than dawn 'jumper', so they were having dinner. Can't remember what. They, too, remarked on the noise, but it seemed circumstances were suspicious. I was beginning to feel like Columbo, even to the point of developing a worrying squint in one of my eyes, though I didn't have a wife to talk about relentlessly to confuse the 'suspects'.

I asked to sit, whereupon they detailed the police investigation, the statements, and 'the dangerous nut case upstairs' who seemed implicated. Unfortunately, this 'dangerous nut case' was a tenant who I had to visit later on. I thought perhaps I should obtain bungee cord before calling, but was told that no proof of his complicity was found - he seemed, in the unwavering eyes of the law, innocent. Strangely, they too, mentioned the noise of impact - this seemed to be a point of annoyance *vis a vis* portrayal in films. They've got it wrong! Which brings me to the third and final falling body. Luckily, this time, it wasn't real.

I was on terraced housing detail a week later - altogether more charming than urban monstrosities of upward housing, and (though it might seem pedantic to say so) the quality of tea is a lot better, more often than not PG pyramids, or Tetley draw strings. Two lovely cuppas later, and a slice of fruit cake (aptly), I was receiving more falling body information. Behind the tenants' garden was an old disused cinema complex and an empty water tower. As the couple (same age as the other two - a new social trend? Suicides are more likely to be witnessed by couples in their mid-fifties. Check it out!) sat to breakfast - Weetabix judging by the gait of the man - they saw two chaps fighting atop the tower. Concerned, they watched the drama unfold in the distance. It should be empty!

Shocked, they saw one man *pushed*! He fell outrageously to his death. Their blood ran cold. Small explosions fired off in the courtyard. Yelling, gunshots. Had the Yardies taken Kennington by storm? Luckily not. It was a scene being shot for the *excellent* film 'Death Wish II', and Charlie had just offed another bad guy. And you thought it was all being slugged out in American bad lands!

Thus I can only record a body count of two so far in my employ, the dummy having to go down as a stupid stunt double (besides being out of date). So, as I said, not one bottle of Tequila mentioned! No drunken madness! No humiliation! Am I a reformed man? Of course not, just a little more controlled and contrived. I must add, as a passing foot note, that I tried to obtain access to all the roofs mentioned above, and found it impossible. They are usually guarded by dense, piss-stained sheet metal, graffiti-ridden doors, lurking like portals through to another dimension, strangely lonely. Locked off with formidable padlocks and prison bars. Perhaps the aging couples are right - it's not the pointless, tragic waste of life, or the bomb-like noise on impact that primarily disturbs the soul following a roof jump suicide, but the prescient question of how the bloody hell *did* they get on the roof?

## High Weirdness by Lino...

I don't know about you, but I'm already sick and tired of the "Millennium™". Not the Dome, I don't plan on visiting it, but then as it's in South London, even if it was full of naked young girls writhing around in giant champagne glasses...actually, yes, I think I would go for that. (Note to self, email organisers with great new idea) The basic idea behind the millennium stretches out a "slow news summer" into a whole "slow news year". Well, it would, if not for the fact that the papers have taken it upon themselves to go undercover and blow the lid on 2<sup>nd</sup> rate celebrities and their sleaze habits. It's only a matter of time before Christopher Biggins (Safari? So goooooooodie) takes to walking about Docklands with his pants round his ankles, screaming for coke (if this appears after News of the World exclusives about "Christopher Biggins – Drug Shock", it's really got nothing to do with me).

Of course conspiracy theorists among you have probably worked out the slow, lazy news coverage is just hiding the fact that the newspapers know it's the end of the world but can't be bothered covering it as it'd effect sales. While I'm not overly paranoid (stop laughing at the back), things do seem to have been coming to a head: the non-war in Kosovo, India and Pakistan playing war and the UK losing the Eurovision Song Contest are, I think, all signs of the impending Armageddon, or are they??? If ITV's appalling "The Last Train" (WE MUST GET TO ARRRRRK!) is anything to go on, I hope I die come the great flood/asteroid attack/nuclear war because I'll end up with a dysfunctional group of badly realised cardboard cut-outs, we'll wander around the countryside for a few weeks, then at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> week something very strange will happen and it'll be the end, or will it?!!

Talking of appalling, and changing the subject, I had the misfortune to watch "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" last week, now, I'll put my hand up and say that, despite my writing, the nearest I've come to a class-A drug is watching Airport on BBC1, and I do think Gilliam is a great director, but what the hell was going on here? Yes, yes, I know, before you all start shouting "It was like someone had taken written accounts of all the best trips they'd ever had and put them on the screen." Bollocks. Ohhh look, all the people have turned into lizards, hang on they're in a bar, oh, lounge lizards, I get it, haha. Hard to believe someone actually financed this rubbish. I suppose it goes to prove two things: one, Hunter S Thompson is having a great laugh at all our expense; two, Johnny Depp really is the worst actor in the world (what do you mean I don't do film reviews? What's your point? I'm venting, leave me alone).

The same night, I also watched "The Suicide Kings", and let me tell *you*, it was about seven and a half million times better. I'd not heard anything about the film, did a little rollercoaster of emotions as the film started, "Oh shit, that opening title sequence is ripping off 'Se7en', and I hated that movie, oh, Christopher Walken is in it, I like him", and so on and so forth. Bottom line is (I've suddenly worked out I've been rambling so've decided to cut this short. That said though, me writing this has made it longer than if I'd have carried on, ohhh whatever...) it's a damned fine movie, so go get it (even if it's only for the sight of Christopher Walken wearing a long wig and 70's clothes in a flashback scene).

Right, well, back to reality, and more importantly, to work. I'd have finished a week ago if I hadn't twisted my knee (saving a pregnant lady who'd fallen in the path of an oncoming bus. Ok, getting in a cab), and yes, that is an excuse. Those with internet access who visit the Trash City site will have, no doubt, seen Jim updating the page count for the new issue (paranoia suggests this is there entirely for my benefit, after all, it saves him having to bother even talking to me). Whatever anyone might say, please rest assured that my article will not be the last one to be completed, and it won't be the reason the new issue won't be out before the year 2000. No more time wasting though, there will be a break in the reviews (thanks Jim, for not including any anime "rubbish" this time), so I can tell you lots more interesting things, including, if you're lucky, the wonderful new LinoCam address! (I was bored, ok?)

So, I lie, just a little bit more time wasting.... It's now 9:05am on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1999, the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Elliot Gould discovering something I think, and I'm going to get everything done and dusted today for three reasons.

1. I just need to get this out of the way so my adoring public can gaze in wonder on my words.
2. I got yet another phone call from Jim warning me that if I didn't have the stuff finished by the weekend he'd do it himself (which leads me to believe that he's actually enthusiastic about this issue).
3. I've been told that I've got some top secret Cosgrove Hall animation footage from the new Noddy series coming in... Doh! Ignore that last comment.

So, without further ado, we present, for your pleasure and delectation.... What you've actually come this far to read... What I can't really get around to starting (Ohhhh hush), no, really, it's time for...

### The REVIEWS!

**Bomba Movies 6** (All reviews special). From the people that brought you "Vixxen" (see below) comes issue six of Bomba Movies. You know, it's only now, that I realise having such long gaps between issues of TC makes my life very difficult. Did I enjoy this the last time? Ahhhh the wonders of computers, I've found the old batch of reviews, and thanks to a Charles Band like stroke of genius, will reprint what I said last time to pad out what I've got to say this time!! Muhahaha!!

>>Creaky old flashback effect<<

*...all that and the sordid little pictures are easier on the eye too! Excellent.... More please!*

>>Creaky old flashforward effect<<

Ohhh, I made it back.... Yep, well everything I said about Bomba still holds true. Issue 6 is reviews only, which is no bad thing, I do like reading reviews (especially mine... ha, geddit?). You've got reviews of movies ranging from the sublime "Bell of Hell" to the ridiculous "Porno Holocaust". It's nice to see a film I reviewed at *least* 9 years ago in "Creeping Unknown" get another review (that movie being "Centipede Horror"), and a little piece of trivia, in the "Pervirella" review, it mentions the very nice touch of a tribute to the late David Warbeck at the start of the movie, well... I did that! Blimey, it's a small world after all... So, in closing my friends, do try Bomba Movies... It is after all, the gift that keeps on giving.

**Sweet Smell of Sick Sex 2.** You know that Tex Avery eyes rolling around in your head type of deal you get sometimes? OK, you don't, but that's what I got when I picked this up. The first thing you'll notice is the amazing, sick, twisted, perverted, fabulous artwork and posters for films I'd wish they'd make tomorrow "The West Family" anyone? How about "Grandpa Ghoul"? You'd think they'd be able to sell it to people on the strength of the artwork only – imagine Eric Stanton if he'd *really* gone to town, mixed with some Coop for good measure. Add some cartoon strips to the mix, and a hilarious interview with Al Goldstein of "Screw" magazine fame, who spends most of the phone interview trying to get an eatout order on the female interviewer... One more highlight is coverage of a 1950's French Canadian "newspaper" called "Allo Police" (No, really, unless of course it's all bullshit, and I've been suckered in), which was the MOST amazing thing. Imagine "Faces of Death" (or Traces, or whatever sick little Mondo floats your boat), in print form, with pictures of mutilated corpses all over the front cover and you'll scratch the surface of "Allo Police", and this was all in 1953????! Throw in an interview with Lux Interior and Ivy from The Cramps and a bucketload more stuff... It's a hit man!! A HIT!!



**Danzine 13.** I think it was Margo St. James who once said, "I'd rather suck cock than kiss ass." Of course I only know 'cause it's printed on the bottom of the first page of Danzine, which is, if you don't already know, "An independent publication for exotic dancers and ladies in the sex industry" (is that me?). I've got to say before I picked up Danzine, I was confused as to dealing with the IRS regarding the tax deductions on any tips I might make while stripping. Not any more! Turn to page 3 for an answer to that! I was also totally ignorant of the fact that if you're diagnosed with herpes you should "Love yourself and eat and drink healthily" (Surely, "loving yourself" in the first place would cut any almost any chance of contracting herpes...), more handy herpes tips can be found on page 5. That's not all! You've got fiction in there, Brandi recounting her visit to be a guest on the Jerry Springer Show (apparently, she has an act that involves "Breast Milk"), a "pro's" guide to the strip joints in San Francisco and of course, a whole lot more. All in all, probably the finest strippers and "professionals" fanzine you're ever going to read. (No, there isn't even a picture of a nipple, what a gyp...)

I need a new job. So, I've decided to throw my hat into the Mayor of London campaign. Yes, I can see it now, sweeping to power on a ticket of "Free alcohol for *everyone* that votes for me". That promise alone will get me into power... How am I going to pay for it? Simple, stop funding public transport. How would people get to work? Again, simple, they wouldn't... After all would you want to schlep all the way to work every morning with no public transport available when you've got a house full of free booze? No! I thought not. "Hang on" I can hear you all yelling, "How are we going to pay our rent/mortgages?" Bah, you see, it's blinkered thinking like that which means you simple Joes will never enter the world of politics. You won't have to pay rent or mortgages, because I'll just pass a bylaw saying the property you're living in is yours, free, my pleasure. I mean, it's not as if your generic mortgage company is going to take everyone in London to court is it? And even if they did, there'd be no one there as they'd all be at home drinking that free booze.... See? One simple political act will have me sitting pretty, floating gently along the corridors of power on a giant hovering chair. So remember, 1 vote for Lino = free booze, you morons. But until then, I suppose I'd better read something else for you, so you don't have the painful choice of making your own minds up. I don't get paid for this you know! OK, admittedly, I do it at work while I should be working, but I've found that if you hide the fanzine when you've read it, then just furrow your brow while you're typing and make sure that the font is small enough, people think that you're working anyway and don't bother you...

# DARK STAR

BRITAIN'S LONGEST-RUNNING FANTASY MEDIA MAGAZINE #15.14 £2.95

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**Dark Star Double issue 14-15.** Ah, one of those clever "Get half way through then everything gets turned upside down so it looks like two issues" deals. Well, listen here, Rob Dyer! I don't pay £2.95 of my hard earned money only to have to stop reading something and go through the laborious process of turning the ruddy thing upside down, going *back* to the front cover and starting again!! OK, so I don't pay £2.95 full stop. But if I did, oh boy, would I be totally pissed. Actually no, but it has, as you can plainly see, used up some space, and that can only be a good thing (note to self: try reading some books on English sentence construction, you've not used a full stop in about 12 lines of text, surely some mistake. Another note to self: buy a copy of "Private Eye" next week, you've not read that for ages. Yet another note to self: yes, it's correct, eating an entire pack of 6 Mr Kipling Strawberry Sundaes does in fact make you go a little mental; something to do with the food colouring I'll be bound. Final note to self: weren't you reviewing "Dark Star" a minute ago? Ohhh yes, sorry). Any magazine with a picture of Xena on the cover (even if the article inside is written by Jim), can only be a good thing. Ahhhh, we like Xena, with her slightly butch looks and fabulous thighs... In fact, I now present a little snippet from a terribly interesting Xena story I found on-line the other week:

From the table he pulled two round cups. He sprayed the inside with a liquid and then moved to Xena. She tugged at her bonds but there was no give in them. Bazaal carefully cupped her sweaty bosom, each breast at a time and the cups stayed in place even as Xena tried to wobble them from side to side.

The final probe was moved down to her crotch and she grimaced as she felt it enter into her body.

"So this is just some sick fantasy of yours, Bazaal. I expected something better."

"Oh it gets better."

He pulled a lever and water began to flow into the machines on the wall.

Wheels moved, cogs turned, pumps started pumping and Xena let out a gasp of shock.

Cor, blimey, that's not bad is it! If you want to see the rest of the story, don't hesitate to mail me at lino@lino.demon.co.uk. I can recommend downloading pictures of Lucy Lawless from the net and making your own little picture book up... Not that I've done anything like that, of course!! Oh, and for those who are interested. What IS the story with Gabrielle's new dykey haircut, she looks tr3s skank-like now, and you can **bloody well print that!!!**

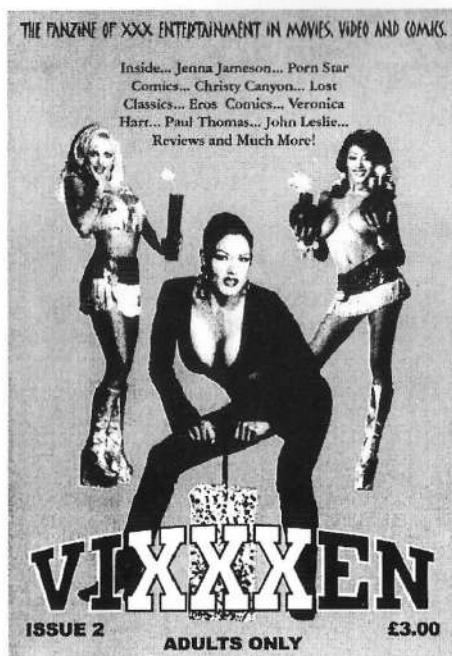
Anyway...bumper double issue filled with reviews (though Rob Dyer thinks "The Cube" was the best sci-fi film of 1998. It was diverting, but hardly the best thing in Sci-fi). Rob and his chums (does that sound condescending? Ahhh, whatever), take a look at Cat III movies (I used to make the BBFC cuts in the Eastern Heroes movies, you should have seen what they did with that baseball bat in "Whores from China"), they also, if you're interested, and I can't see you would be unless you're called Vaughn or something, review a batch of anime titles (ZZZZZZZZZZ). Best thing? Rob's in-depth look at the movie "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T". The funniest? An interview with Julian Richards under the byline "Is this man the Welsh Cronenberg?": how funny is *that!* According to the opening paragraph of the interview it tells us "The youthful Richards is being hailed as the great white hope of the UK horror genre"...is he? Anyway, look, "Dark Star" is good, ok? I mean it, I'm not just saying that because it's suddenly dawned on me that Rob Dyer can punch my head in, honest... I loved it. You will too, well you will if you slit a hole on the cover with Xena on it, then it's like she's giving you a b.....next!!

**Napartheid** – Issue something or other. Probably. Now you see, very occasionally, I love a challenge. This isn't one of those occasions. At all. Give me something printed in a foreign language and most of the time, I'll use all available clues to tell you what language it is and where the fanzine is from. "Napartheid" has me totally stumped. Added to the fact it's 8:35am on Friday, my cab has conspired to get me to work early, and there is a godawful racket from the studios over the road where some "pop" group is filming a video (They're so cool that they travel in a school bus with the S and H painted out in the word "School" on the back of it). I'm not saying I don't like it. I'm guessing it's Eastern European, and anything that has a cartoon strip depicting the last hours of Di & Dodi (remember them, anyone? Anyone?) featuring cut-out photo heads stuck on scrawled drawings and a last frame containing a picture of an ambulance with the siren wailing "DODIDODI" can't be all bad. It all looks terribly political, so I'm sticking with my East European theory. Let me take another look through, don't move... Hey! You at the back, don't turn to the pictures of cartoons just yet, I said don't move. You know, this is so political, and dates back 2 years: I imagine that everyone who contributed to it has been rounded up and shot. If you haven't, mail me. Thanks. I'll leave you with my favourite quote from "Napartheid"... "Kuxx laztana! Etor nire etxera zuretzat deputamadekoa den zerbait badut eta." Translate that and I'll send you a prize. Hilarious stuff from our hairy East European buddies. [Ed: it's actually Basque Spanish...]





**Hand Action** 23 + 24. Hey! Are you a wanker? No really, do you like a quick one off the wrist? A little hand shandy? A bit of a spit. Do you enjoy "killing time"? Bashing the Bishop one of your favourite things to do on Sunday after Eastenders has finished? Well get your "hand" on "Hand Action" a photocopied tribute to wanking... so go on you wanker, go to it... I thought it was a little scary, and that's saying something.



the works of Christy Canyon (the 80's were shit. for the most part, as demonstrated here...), an Eros comics review section (Ok, I liked that. so sue me), and last but not least some porno reviews, and the saving grace, two fantastic (hah, I'm so funny) pictures of Vanessa Del Rio from the movie "Dracula Exotica". What a woman... You see, they only put those pictures in there because they *knew* I was going to say "£3 for this is a little on the excessive side", which, to be honest, I still think, but I won't say that obviously because of dear sweet Vanessa <sigh>. I suppose technically, if you're a jizzfilm boy, you'll appreciate what's on offer. Well, when it comes to the reviews of the old stuff, but who cares what Jenna Jameson's gotta say about anything?

**Thunderbox** 1? Hmmm, you know, you get to see some worthy things that don't really interest you in the slightest and you think to yourself "The easiest thing in the world to do would be to slag it off..." but I'll try and avoid that. Maybe. OK, let's start by saying that according to the editorial, Steve Green et al wanted "Thunderbox" to be "a great format for a fanzine, mixing the serious and lighthearted, the timeless and the timebound...". And, if I avoid the fact the editorial goes on to mention "Novacon 28" (which sounds suspiciously like one of those events where people who spend 11 and a half months of the year as shut-ins go and congregate in a hotel near an airport to dissect the hidden meaning behind Babylon 5, but of course, I could be wrong), they set out and achieve everything they want. Of course I can't stand "serious" so if you want to find out about that, and there's plenty in there, go get a copy. The one thing I will mention here is the letter sent to the National Lottery organizers (no, I'm not telling you what the letter says), and the po-faced reply. You want me to tell you if it's worth buying? Well I'm not going to, find out for yourself. Ha! I love doing that right near the end of a column; it does so annoy people. Ignore the "Computers are the new Jesus" imagery on the front too, the contents are better than the cover would have you believe.

**Vixxxen** 2 Hey!!! I remember this... Tell you what, let's just jump into the old time travel machine again and see what I said about the last issue of "Vixxxen"... Or not, as it seems I can't find anything I wrote. Hmm, perhaps it's because I thought it was so bad. Nooo, that can't be right. Hang on, you know I don't think it's really fair to base reviews on past issues of the 'zine. You're probably right, but by that same token it's not fair to base reviews on comments made in that fanzine about the fanzine of someone you know. So, I won't... Honest. Let's tear this baby to pieces! I'm feelin' feisty!! Ripped off interview with Jenna Jameson (booooooooooooo)... Justin Bomba (yes, yes, I know, but "Vixxxen" is brought to you by the fine people who bring you "Bomba Movies") looks at the work of Crepax (wasted on the people who will buy "Vixxxen" for the porn articles mebbe??), a "Lost Classics" section reviewing movies most people haven't heard of in a long while. (best thing in the whole of "Vixxxen" if you ask me... Although I'd hardly call "Pretty Peaches" lost, that was the first porn movie I saw <sniff>). More comic goings on with a retrospective look at "Carnal Comics" (hrm...why?). An Eighties retrospective of

**Mansplat** 14. I've said it before (probably – I don't usually pay much attention to what I say... and neither does anyone else, before Jim says anything), and I'll say it again. "Mansplat" is consistently funny, far funnier than I could ever even hope to be, and it's free. Even if it wasn't funny, the damned thing would *still* be free and therefore worth getting your hands on. If you want a rant from a smoker (Go smoker, go smoker...I love a cigarette, me), you've got it. If you want a brief, hilarious history of swear words, you've got it. If you want a list of "Mansplat Superheroes" (Couch Surfer + Beer Breath), again you've got it. I can't even begin to describe how funny it is, I was considering reprinting some of it, but no, remember I told you it was free? Contact them yourselves and get hold of whatever back issues you can. If you're at all disappointed (or a girl), mail me and I'll set you straight, mate.

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And that's it. Whew, that was taxing. No, really! As this will undoubtedly be the last thing I write this millennium, I'll take this opportunity to wish you all the best, blah, blah. Myself, I hate New Year's Eve at the best of times but add the 4000% increase in madness and it won't be any better. I'll probably do something as exciting as last year when I was hanging speakers. I'd rather do that than go to a party where you're forced to be nice to people you neither know nor like at the stroke of midnight. Stuff that!

Right, now, as I'm polite, it's time for some thank yous before I head off, ready to receive thousands of congratulatory emails... In no particular order. Thanks to Jim for cutting out two thirds of this article before you see it (probably all the libellous elements), and for buying pizza on Saturday. Thanks to everyone at work for doing my work when I was doing this, and particularly to Nick for keeping me supplied with coffee and stories about trials for Hayes Town football club, and the scandalous "No oranges at half time" story. No thanks at all to "sickboy", I think it's about time he shit or got off the pot, I'm getting bored with it now. Thanks to Juliet for putting up with my huge mood swings (at work, natch), and sorting out all my personal paperwork when she doesn't really have to, even though she's Northern and I assumed they couldn't read, well apart from signs they might find in coal mines – "Danger: Gas" and the like. A huge thank you to Howard Stern for totally humiliating Chris Evans and his cronies (you might have seen that if you watch Bravo), it just goes to show that outside the UK, Mr Evans would die a swift death: let's buy him a ticket now. Thanks to Toby Russell for being the most mentally unstable person I know, always making me laugh even though he's keeping me late at work with movies about Bud Spencer lookalikes and piglets, oh, and keeping me supplied with pizzas!

Thanks to Wee Jimmy at work for helping me out when he didn't really have to. No thanks at all to "Wok's Cooking" restaurant for sucking me in with a hilarious name, getting me all worked up last Sunday looking forward to a Chinese meal, then not bloody well being open at 8:35pm! Thanks to Marks & Spencer for having the best fruit gums in the world...yummmmy! Thanks to Tesco for delivering food. No thanks to eggs for being breakable bastards and spilling all over my chocolate. No thanks to the summer for being crap, then all humid: remember, kids it's not the heat, it's the humidity. Thanks to Paul for lifts home from work that generally involve conversations that end in songs, driving very fast over narrow country hills and making me more mental than I already am.

And finally...a very, very, very, huge thank you to Jaime, for being generally the most lovely woman on the face of the planet, putting up with me, and making me feel nice and warm and squidgy inside (most of the time!), for that and so much more, I love you J. Oh look, stop it, I'm getting all mushy, that'll never do, and I couldn't end an article like that, could I? Yes, actually, I could. See you in 2000!

**Bomba Movies (£1.95) + Vixxxen (£3) – through Media Publications**

**Danzine – 625 SW 10th Ave #233B, Portland, OR 97205, USA**

**Dark Star (£2.95) – 64 Arthur St, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 0PR**

**Hand Action – your guess is as good as mine...**

**Mansplat (Free...ish) – PMB 591, 2318 2nd Ave, Seattle, WA 98121, USA**

**Napartheid (300 pesetas) – Uztarrotze karrrika 40, 31014 Irunem, Nafarroa, Spain**

**Sweet Smell of Sick Sex (\$?) – Sophie Cossette, PO Box 41, Place du Parc, Montreal, Quebec, H2Q 2M9, Canada**

**Thunderbox – Steve Green, 33 Scott Rd, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ**



And back on planet Earth, this is your humble editor speaking, with all the 'zines which Lino didn't, or wouldn't, review. First, there's *Mansplatt*, who're now up to #16, though there's not much more that needs to be said about it, 'cos I agree with Lino: it's great. The latest one covers lesbians, swearing, hippies, their annual Barbarella awards ('uncovers' would be more appropriate there) and beer. Almost as good as the fabulous #13, which set unsurpassed new (low) standards in humour and bad taste. Technically free, but be a sport and maybe send them *summat* typically British for their efforts. Like tea-bags...

Return to a normal font, I think, since we now move onto the "anime rubbish", as Lino so delicately put it – once more, we opted to save him from them, and indeed, them from him. The British anime industry may be sucking hard but, perversely, the British anime 'zine' industry continues to flourish, with a selection of more or less interesting product. The focus seems to be largely on manga-style comic strips, and *Boiled Spoons* is a prime example, showcasing the writing talents of Carl Desforges

and a selection-box of artists. The word "fluffy" comes to mind: if this were a foodstuff, it'd be an all-you-can-eat buffet of variously flavoured Angel Delight – limited nutritional content, but tasty nonetheless. Taking a similarly eclectic approach to contributors, but probably closer to something involving large quantities of chocolate are not one, but *two* issues of *Cyber Age*. The majority of CA is a dense, heavily-plotted maze, inspired by SF-punkish *Cyber City Oedo*: the ongoing stories might be a bit tricky to follow without backtracking, given the gap between installments, yet it's well worth the effort, and there's a good balance of humour and even (gasp!) text. Strange how the brief lifespan of *Cyber City Oedo* has spawned not one, but two, 'zines: there's also *Cop Fiction*, fan-written stories in the same universe. No previous experience really required though, they stand alone just as well. One staple in the top-left corner makes it feel agreeably like something unauthorised, even if the "Over 18's" tag is largely down to one, admittedly eye-watering, paragraph. Since the demise of the much-loved 'Cajun Sushi Bar', anime fan-fiction has been lacking, making this one especially welcome.

*Quietstorm* has one writer, one artist, and costs one pound; there is a pleasing simplicity to this which is reflected in the spartan and effective artwork. Returning to the dessert theme, it would be a lemon sorbet. On the other hand, *Spacenoïd* is a cheeseboard with a *very* sharp knife, since it's an "afters" of a different kind altogether, containing no comic strips at all: instead, it's an entertaining mix of articles, reviews and whatever else Paul Lampshire finds amusing, with a colour cover. Bastard – why can't he stick to black-and-white like the rest of us? Finally, there's *British Manga*, and here the whole metaphor breaks down, since I *like* pudding. While an improvement on previous efforts, what can you say about a 'zine with upside down pages? It's either an amazing artistic statement or...the artists included deserve better.

**Boiled Spoons** – No price or contact details. And we're *already* late. Try mental telepathy?

**British Manga** (£1) – 99 Herga Rd. Harrow Weald, Middlesex

**Cop Fiction** – another elusive bunch, c/o *Cyber Age* is your best bet!

**Cyber Age** (£2.50) – Vanessa Wells, 95 Rosemary Ave, Braintree, Essex, CM7 2TB

**Quiet Storm** (£1) – 129 Applegarth Ave, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 6LT

**Spacenoïd** (£1.50) – 63 West Ave, Ripley, Derbyshire, DE5 3JA



## YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT: ME, I'M A KEBAB...

My body is a temple. I'm not sure to which God, but he seems to like the sacrifice of large numbers of animals. And while I enjoy food, the current obsession with it seems to me misplaced, so I'd like to remind readers of the essential rules for successful eating.

1. The time between concept and consumption should be as short as possible: hunger does not allow for marination. This interval includes all shopping time. Recipes which involve scurrying round the supermarket looking for specific ingredients should be avoided: "2 oz. cheese" is fine, anything stating the specific kind of cheese is clearly aimed at restaurants.
2. The amount of effort involved in preparation and clearing up must be negligible. The perfect meal can be dumped, in its container, onto a baking tray, and slammed into the oven for the requisite period while the consumer does something enjoyable and entertaining. Ideally it can also be eaten from said container, and with the fingers, but the usage of one (1) piece of cutlery is permitted.
3. It shall be edible from a relaxed and laid-back position i.e. in front of the TV, and require minimal concentration and co-ordination. Spaghetti is quick and easy, but you'll spend more time staring at your plate than the screen. Real food comes in large lumps, into which you can stab a fork, and then attack in a manner midway between candy floss and a lion dismembering a gazelle.
4. Never under-estimate potential food. "Meal replacement" drinks such as Slim-Fast may seem laughable, but respect is due when preparation is ripping the ring-pull, clearing up is dropping the empty in the bin, and you can drink it anywhere you like – take the label off and you have something easily mistaken for Japanese designer lager. The only problem is there's little chance of "kebab" or "pepperoni" flavour in the near future.
5. Don't cook anything you can have delivered. There is no point in making curry, Chinese, or a pizza, simply because there are other people whose job it is to do these things, and they will inevitably do it better than you. They are specialists, paid for their skills – you wouldn't like it if some amateur tried to muscle in on your employment, so treating them the same is mere professional courtesy.
6. Remember the importance of well-balanced meals. If not well-balanced, lasagne has a nasty habit of slopping over you as it's transported from kitchen to living-room, and the results are akin to napalm, thanks to the sticky cheese – I have the scars to prove it. And you do *not* want to know what lasagne does to the carpet, though any sensible person chooses a suitably splodgy colour scheme anyway, so that Guinness, chilli sauce and curry will blend right in.
7. If you must lose weight, remember the devil doesn't just find work for idle hands: she also finds packets of biscuits, chocolate bars and crisps. You can't eat if your hands are otherwise engaged – computer games, building scale models of ancient monuments out of match-sticks, and frenzied masturbation are all viable alternatives, though none of them are really likely to go down too well in the average office.
8. The key to planning is sell-by dates, for tomorrow you may be down the pub. However, sometimes the fridge will hold incompatible items - say, vindaloo and gateau - both expiring today. Obviously, if one can't be frozen, eat it, but otherwise the key is defrost time. In our example, vindaloo = 45 mins at 200 degrees, gateau = two hours at room temperature. Eat the gateau now. But be aware that sell-by dates are often just legal flim-flam: why else would *mineral water* (already several millenia old!) have one? And not even anything general like "end 2001", or "February 2001", it's "February 12 2001". I'm tempted to keep a bottle for two years just to see what happens on February 13th. Otherwise, avoid anything which boasts "no preservatives": it'll go off before you get home.

9. Useful information can be gleaned by reading labels. Look out for phrases like “half the fat”, which simply allows you to eat twice as much of it, or “95% fat-free”, which is clearly a very good measurement because, on this scale, beer is even **better**, being 100% fat-free.
10. Indeed, the health-giving powers of beer are sadly under-reported, largely because traditional diet charts never include the *important* things. However, a less frequently mentioned feature of Microsoft Encarta is a program which contains data on...well, let's just say if you've ever wondered about the nutrition to be found in armadillo (4oz, boneless) or goat (baked, boiled or fried) this is the thing for you. Here are the relevant extracts for foods which form a large part of the TC diet.

	Bitter (pint)	Bacon double cheese burger	Chicken curry (1 cup)	Choc donut (with icing)	Doner kebab (and salad)	Mars bar	Pizza - deep pan (slice)	Butter popcorn (1 cup)
Cholesterol (mg)	0.0	166.7	83.8	10.9	34.5	4.5	14.4	8.7
Carbohydrates (gm)	17.0	37.2	10.3	28.6	20.5	31.4	28.5	7.0
Dietary Fibre (gm)	2.3	1.7	2.1	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.5	1.4
Energy (Cal)	189	815	293	208	169	234	244	63
Fat (gm)	0.0	50.0	16.1	9.9	3.9	11.5	10.1	3.6
Potassium (mg)	115.1	658.2	621.8	72.7	208.6	162.5	158.2	28.0
Saturated Fat (gm)	0.0	20.7	3.3	3.2	1.5	5.2	3.8	2.1
Sodium (mg)	23.0	1296.6	629.3	207.0	212.0	85.0	420.2	33.4
Unsaturated Fat (gm)	0.0	24.3	11.3	6.2	1.8	4.9	5.7	1.3
<b>Nutrient (% daily)</b>								
Calcium	3%	32%	6%	3%	5%	11%	15%	0%
Folate	6%	13%	5%	1%	8%	2%	7%	1%
Iron	1%	59%	21%	10%	22%	6%	20%	2%
Magnesium	8%	16%	15%	6%	6%	10%	5%	3%
Niacin	12%	65%	57%	4%	19%	3%	15%	1%
Phosphorus	6%	70%	31%	12%	15%	14%	17%	3%
Protein	3%	91%	49%	4%	22%	7%	17%	2%
Riboflavin	8%	37%	14%	6%	16%	10%	16%	2%
Thiamine	3%	32%	9%	6%	15%	1%	19%	1%
Vitamin A	0%	9%	24%	1%	1%	2%	4%	3%
Vitamin B12	3%	154%	10%	0%	30%	5%	7%	0%
Vitamin B6	10%	23%	23%	1%	7%	1%	4%	1%
Vitamin C	0%	12%	30%	0%	6%	1%	9%	0%
Vitamin E	0%	6%	32%	15%	3%	3%	9%	1%
Zinc	0%	61%	14%	2%	15%	4%	6%	2%

Bet you never realised bitter was a health drink, did you? But with a decent amount of fibre, no cholesterol or fat and plenty of vitamins + minerals (well, if you drink enough – eight pints should do it, and any shortfall can easily be rectified by scarfing down a bacon double-cheeseburger), there's much worse out there. The truth is that, in industrialised Western countries, it's pretty hard to *avoid* getting enough vitamins to keep you healthy.

In many cases, too much is as bad, if not worse, than too little. For example, overdosing on Vitamin A damages the liver, while too much zinc can cause your immune system to fail. [Luckily, beer is free of both.] Potassium is even more enigmatic: deficiency causes “weakness, nausea and mental confusion”, while an overdose can induce “weakness, nausea and - in extreme cases - heart failure”. In other words, the symptoms of too much and too little are pretty much the same, until your heart stops. At that point, ease back on the quarter-pounders. This should come as no surprise to anyone who remember school chemistry, and the nifty explosion produced by adding potassium to water. And given that the human body is mostly water, one senses another reason to avoid McDonald's...





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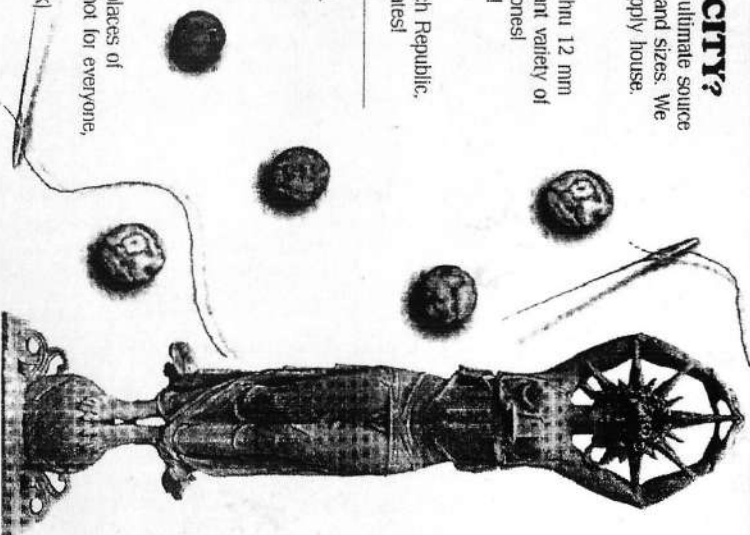
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