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SEX

#254

THE WORLD'S
#1
SCI-FI MAG

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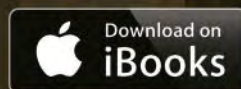
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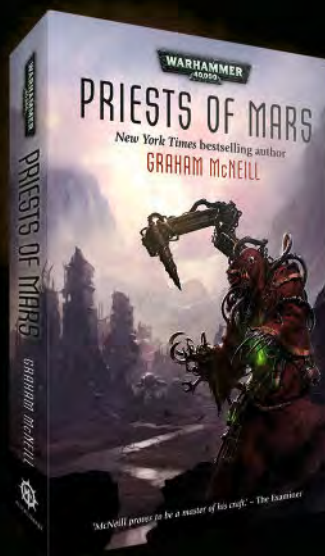
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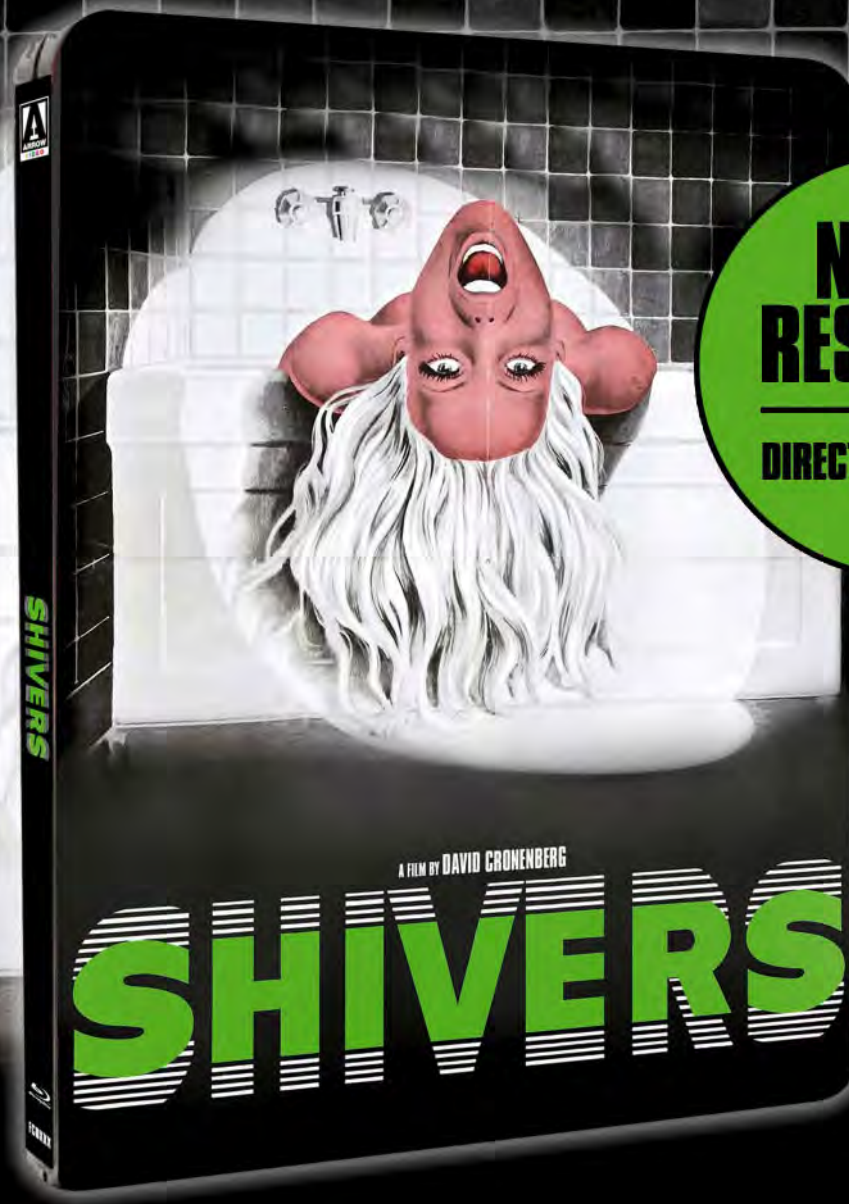




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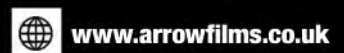
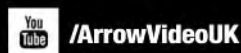
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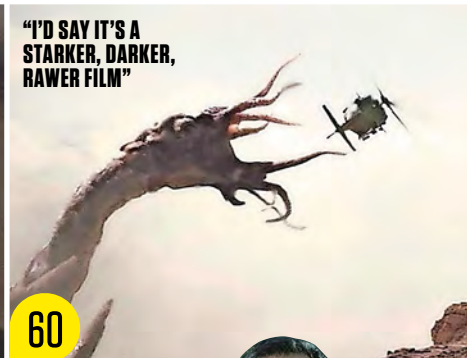
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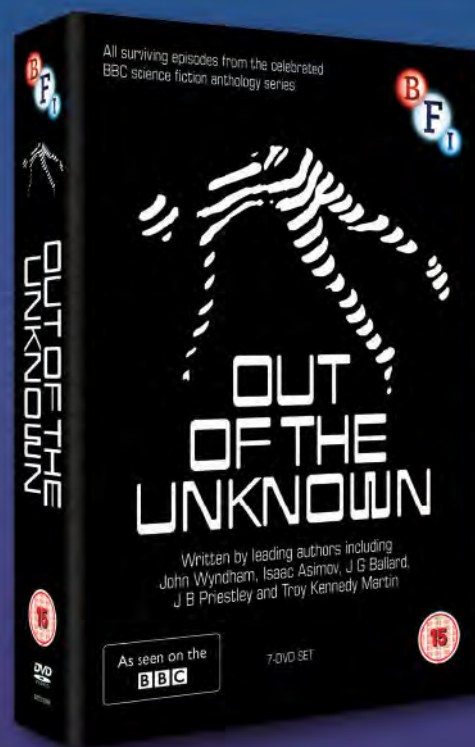


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THE INSIDE SKINNY

What your *SFX* chums are thinking about...

RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR

RAVES

- One Sherwood Forest-shaped misstep aside, I'm really enjoying the new series. Great to have *Who* being unpredictable again.
- Is *Bojack Horseman* *SFX* territory? A world where humanoid animals walk among us is certainly fantastical, so I'm going to say yes – and I loved it. Weird, very funny and surprisingly well crafted characters.



NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR

RAVES

- Check out Steven Soderbergh's wonderful monochromification of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. It's given me a whole new appreciation of my all time favourite film: <http://bit.ly/RLRBnW>
- Matthew Parker's evocative Ian Fleming bio *Goldeneye* makes me want to decamp to Jamaica with a rakish cigarette holder and a gold typewriter. Viable career choice?



ALEX COX OPERATIONS EDITOR

HELLO

- I'm new – why not look at me as the delicious time-placenta left after The Editor's troubling regeneration process? I'll be the guy that makes the words fit proper and read dead good, and the one that waves a squidgy fist at the team to ensure that *SFX* goes to the printers on time. I like long walks on the beach, wrestling, and *Magic: The Gathering*. But not at the same time.



IAN BERRIMAN HOME ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

RAVES

- It's taken a while, as you'll know if you read last month's View Screen, but I'm gradually warming to Capaldi's Doctor.
- Current reading: new book *The Making Of George A Romero's Day Of The Dead*.
- The BFI's nationwide sci-fi season Days Of Fear And Wonder has some really good events: www.bfi.org.uk/sci-fi-days-fear-wonder



JORDAN FARLEY COMMUNITY EDITOR

RAVES

- JJ's Falcon video made me stupidly excited.
- The new US TV season is upon us! How did I make it through the summer without a weekly Winchester fix?
- RANTS**
- Happy that the *Deadpool* movie finally has a greenlight. But if the rumours are true and it's a PG-13, what's the point?



DAVE BRADLEY GROUP ED-IN-CHIEF

RAVES

- I'm firmly in the "Peter Capaldi is great" camp. I've thoroughly enjoyed this series so far.
- Got a chance to meet the cast of *The Hobbit* last month and am now dead excited for *The Battle Of The Five Armies*.
- Had a fantastic time at Fighting Fantasy Fest – brought back great memories of my youth reading gamebooks. Still my favourite? Steve Jackson's *House Of Hell*.



JON COATES ART EDITOR

RAVES

- Still thoroughly enjoying the current series of *Who*. Don't get why Peter C has polarised fan opinion, I think he's great!
- Also, *The Teller* – what a cool looking monster!
- RANTS**
- Thought *Guardians* was a bit meh. Wanted to love it but it was so overhyped it didn't have a hope of living up to my expectations.



ADRIAN HILL AD MANAGER

RAVES

- I've been a *Doctor Who* fan all my life. When he regenerates it always creates a few ripples in the community. It soon dies down, and we all grow to love the new timelord every, er, time. This regeneration feels different. I hate to admit it, but as good as Peter Capaldi is as an actor, his take on the Doctor just isn't falling into place for me. I hope he proves me wrong. I really do.



JOSEPH MCCABE US WEST EDITOR

RAVES

- Flash*'s Grant Gustin as Barry Allen is the best superhero casting since RDJ as Iron Man.
- The show also has Ronnie "Firestorm" Raymond, while *Arrow* offers Ray "The Atom" Palmer. That's a big chunk of the Justice League on TV!
- RANTS**
- If Warner really has demanded no jokes in DC movies, it has a lot to learn from Marvel/Disney.



STEPHEN KELLY FREELANCE WRITER

RAVES

- Capaldi has been a weekly thrill. Like a furious Blackadder, he's taken *Doctor Who* in exactly the direction I wanted it to go.
- RANTS**
- Still no news of *In The Flesh*'s fate after the axing of BBC Three. If it turns out that the BBC have saved Russell Howard's *Good News* and not this, there will be hoards at their door.



RHIAN DRINKWATER FREELANCE WRITER

RAVES

- My son's birthday is a great excuse to fill the house with even more Lego and Star Wars toys. Now, can we really justify the three-foot high Darth Vader...?
- RANTS**
- Still can't get over the BBC moving *Who* to such a late time slot. It's supposed to be a family show!



ANDREA BALL FREELANCE PRODUCER

RAVES

- I know I'm late to the (Halloween) party, but *American Horror Story: Murder House* is giving me nightmares – and that's just the credits.
- Talking of scary, how good was "Listen"? A now less mumbly Capaldi reminds a new generation of the horrors that might or might not be lurking under the bed. I'd only just recovered from *Luther*...



New teeth. That's weird. Regeneration successfully negotiated, I'm all set to take the helm of *Starship SFX*. Since my careers teacher told me that Corellian smuggler wasn't a realistic option (no fun, right?), I'm quite happy to settle for editor of the world's number one science fiction and fantasy magazine – it's a privilege to be here.

While the one and only Dave Bradley has moved upstairs (there he is on my left – hello Dave!), this is still the same *SFX* it's always been. I'm delighted that my first issue in the big chair is led off by Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*. After the *Dark Knight* trilogy, *Inception* and *The Prestige*, everything Nolan touches is essential viewing, so it'll be intriguing to see where the notoriously secretive director's trip through wormholes in outer space will take us – find out more about the movie on page 48.

Back on planet Earth, we put your questions to fantasy genius Neil Gaiman, celebrate many incarnations of Batman (including Adam West!), and catch up with new seasons of *Arrow* and *Atlantis*. Over in news (now under the management of Jordan Farley), *Flight Of The Conchords* Jemaine Clement takes vampires to New Zealand, while top comic Tim Minchin tells us about his fave sci-fi and fantasy. We also say hello to our new Ops Ed Alex Cox (no, he didn't make *Repo Man*) as he's added to the *SFX* hive mind.

So where was I? Oh, that's right – Barcelona!

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor
@RichDEdwards

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RED ALERT

THE FUTURE FIRST

edited by Jordan Farley



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Murder on the Orion express in Syfy's new deep space show.



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The Ancillary Justice author talks awards domination.



22 PAGE TURNER

Storybook monster comes to life in ace Australian horror *The Babadook*.

WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS

Monster House

The lowdown on a vampire flatshare mock-doc with a *Flight Of The Conchords* edge

WHAT HAPPENS when four centuries-old vampires share a flat in present-day New Zealand? That's the premise of *What We Do In The Shadows*, the latest project by frequent collaborators Taika Waititi (*Eagle Vs Shark*) and Jemaine Clement (one half of *Flight Of The Conchords*). Expanded from a 2006 short, the film sees Waititi and Clement both sharing directing duties and playing a vampire each. So where did the idea come from? "It's a mixture of things," Clement

EXCLUSIVE
CREATOR
INTERVIEWS

tells Red Alert. I pitched to Taika that we do a vampire film and I'd just seen one called *Nadia*. I was actually thinking of something like that: black and white, arty, but with funny characters – it would have made a weird film. And then Taika said, 'Well, what if we make it like a documentary, so we can show all the things they can do, but as if it's real?' So it was just those two things."

Needless to say, both Clement and Waititi are self-confessed vampire fans. "We both loved vampire films, or grew up with them, as they were big during the '70s and '80s," →



SCI-FACT!
Taika Waititi played Hal
Jordan's best mate
Tom in the *Green
Lantern* movie.

FANG SERVICE

Shining a light on the shadows

SOCKS AND PUMPKINS

Researching the movie threw up some unexpected gems of vampire lore, says Waititi. "We read a few sites that talked about ways to kill vampires. And there's lots of old folklore, like, to get rid of a vampire, you steal one of its socks, fill it with garlic and then throw it in the river!" Clement adds: "In Eastern European folklore they turn into pumpkins, but I don't think people would get the reference - except maybe some old Russian peasant."

BUT WHERE'S BRET?

With Jemaine and Rhys both present, there's an obvious question for *Conchords* fans: where's Bret? "We wanted him to be in it," Clement reveals, "but he was busy doing *Muppets* music. We actually put him in the original short, but we cut him because he was laughing too much. And his vampire name was Bret too. So we'd introduce him to another vampire and go, 'Oh, this is Bret.' And they were like, 'Oh, you're not even taking it seriously!'"

ANTON SPEAKS

When it comes to the werewolves vs vampires thing, co-star Rhys Darby admits he's much more likely to be found on Team Jacob than Team Edward. "I find vampires - the whole very pale thing, the sort of daintiness of it - a bit off-putting. I like the rougher, gruff kind of beast element to the werewolf. You know what you're getting there." And as for his favourite werewolf movie, there's only one possible answer: "It would probably be the Michael J Fox *Teen Wolf*."

DELETED SCENES

With the filming involving a lot of improvisation, there's clearly a lot of potential DVD bonus material. "We'll definitely include some deleted scenes," Waititi confirms. "We did interviews with each character, which we hardly even included in the film." Clement adds: "My favourite scene that was cut was a funeral scene. We lost it for a reason, because we had a death and then mourning and then a funeral - it was too many downers in a row. But maybe we'll put it back in."



Two fangs bad. Six fangs devastating.



The afternoon finger painting session had got a little out of hand.



If *Friends* did gothic, gore and stuffed animals...

says Clement. "In the '80s, all the movies from the '70s were on TV and then we had the new vampire movies coming out as well. Particular favourites were the original *Fright Night*, *Salem's Lot*, *The Lost Boys*. And there were so many variations of the Hammer Horror *Dracula* kind of thing. There were a lot of '70s sexy vampire girls, with all the collars, but nothing else. It wasn't quite period, was it?"

Though the film follows the standard mock-doc format, the pair's approach to making it was unusual, in that the actors weren't allowed to see the script at any point and were only given scene outlines. Waititi expands on the co-directing process, "We kind of focused on different aspects of it, because the cast didn't know what they were doing, so Jemaine would tell them what was happening in the scene and what they were supposed to be doing and then I would try and explain to the crew what we were trying to do."

"I found I had no interest in cameras and technical things like that," Clement continues. "I do like some effects stuff, but we'd usually have talked about it a lot. We've been talking about this idea for years, so we had a very similar idea of what it would be like, or what we wanted it to be like, anyway. It might not have come out like that exactly, but it'd be rare that we'd clash, that far down."

Though Waititi has appeared in front of the camera in both his previous films (*Eagle Vs Shark* and 2010's *Boy*, the latter criminally unreleased in the UK), this is the first time he's been centre-stage, with his dandy-ish vampire Viago (age 379) serving as a guide throughout. The character also speaks with a deliciously

camp German accent, befitting his role, defined by Waititi as "the more responsible mum of the flat". So where did the accent come from? "Well, I lived in Germany for a while so I could do that accent quite well," Waititi explains. "I just copied this guy that I met when I was backpacking once and made it a little more high-pitched. And the other reference we always talked about was C-3PO – the way he sort of inhabits the body."

Jemaine, meanwhile, opts for a more classical vampire accent for his role as Vladislav the Poker (age 862). "I think mine's a mixture of Romanian and Greek. I don't know if it's a specific accent, it's just like classic vampire movie. I also spent lots of time in Greece with my in-laws, so I add bits of that in sometimes. And maybe a landlord."

With actors Jonathan Brugh and Ben Fransham making up the vampire quartet (as flamboyant Deacon and terrifying Nosferatu-like Petyr, respectively), the film gets plenty of comic mileage out of their flatshare bickering and nocturnal activities (such as their entry to nightclubs depending on being invited in by hulking bouncers). However, there is a plot, of sorts, involving Petyr inadvertently siring loudmouth university student Nick, who then irritates everyone by going around telling people he's a vampire.

Happily for *Conchords* fans, the film also finds room for Rhys Darby (aka Bret and Jemaine's beleaguered manager Murray), who has a very funny cameo as Anton, the uptight leader of a gang of werewolves. "We thought we were going to get a dramatic actor in and have him be quite a threat," says Clement. "And then we started watching a lot of Christopher Guest movies and seeing how they use Eugene Levy – they just get the funniest people in their films, not necessarily the perfect casting. So we thought we should probably get the people we find funniest." **SFX**

What We Do In The Shadows is released on 21 November.

"We both loved vampire films. We grew up with them in the '70s and '80s"



The Ascension crew get that sinking feeling.

ASCENSION

Death Star

The space show is back! Showrunner talks interstellar murder mystery

IF YOU'RE FEELING A BIT OF post-apocalyptic malaise with sci-fi dramas of late, Syfy might have your alternative with *Ascension*, a retro six-episode event series that feels a bit like *Mad Men* meets *BSG*. Created by Philip Levens (*Smallville*), *Ascension* uses Project Orion, President John F Kennedy's real-life, classified population survival programme that planned to send humans into space in case the Cold War went nuclear, as its premise. The series poses that in 1963 the programme actually launched 600 men, women and children into space on a self-sustaining spaceship for 100 years.

"I've always loved 'what if' narratives," explains Levens, when asked what inspired the series. "It's an interesting thing because there's always talk of golden ages, in particular Kennedy's Camelot. It felt like a high point in the 20th century for America, so what if we'd continued down that path? Would it all be sweetness and light, or would there be darker things beneath the surface, which is what I suspected because that's

human nature and we always manage to fuck things up royally!"

Recreating their own quasi John and Jackie Kennedy of the ship are power couple Captain William Denniger (Brian Van Holt) and his wife, Viondra (*BSG*'s Tricia Helfer). When the first murder to ever happen onboard occurs 50 years into the mission, the pair discover that the foundations of their time-capsule community are not as strong as they thought.

"In my mind they represent a Darwinian king and queen of the prom," Levens says of the couple at the centre of the story. "They're beautiful, smart, powerful and ambitious. They rose to the top but now they find being there isn't as easy as they thought. People always want to knock them off their perch and, over time, they begin to wonder if they made the right choices because it brought some compromises."

First Officer Oren Gault (Brandon P Bell) is tasked with solving the murder which allows the audience to get to know the eclectic citizens. "They are all very interesting in their own ways," Levens teases. "Tricia's character

"We start peeling back the onion... the question is, will it all unravel?"

Viondra is always right there and has an interesting perspective on things. Devil's advocate Councilman Rose (Al Sapienza) was a surprise in how fun to write he was. Gault is our eyes and ears into this world – our perspective. As he's learning things, we as an audience are learning things. There's lots of questions and doubts that will be more deeply explored in the future."

Part murder-mystery, sci-fi period piece, sociology experiment and character drama, Levens says the mix makes *Ascension* unlike anything you would expect. "The murder is solved fairly soon, to a degree, but the murder is more about the unravelling. There's that saying, 'Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold,' and that's what's happened here. We

AERIAL ASSAULT

SF TV ROUND UP



Captain Denniger
(Brian Van Holt).



BSG's Tricia Helfer is
queen bee Viandra.

start peeling back the onion, as Gault does with the murder, and other things happen, and the question is will it all unravel? Is the project going to go ahead? Will they be able to live? So in a way it's very much a postmodern narrative where it blends different genres. By episode three things have evolved in a way you will not expect from the teaser. It very much finds its own way and sets itself up for a future pick-up for a season two – but we don't know anything about that yet." **SFX**

Ascension airs on Syfy US from 24 November. A UK broadcaster has yet to be announced.



NEWBIES

▶ JJ Abrams adapting Stephen King's Kennedy assassination thriller **11/22/63** for Hulu. It will air online as nine hour-long episodes.

▶ In other Stephen King news, Seth Grahame-Smith and Greg Berlanti are writing a pilot for CBS based on King's 9/11 short **THE THINGS THEY LEFT BEHIND**.

▶ Greg Berlanti is also teaming up with Ali Adler on writing duties for **SUPergirl**, which already has a series commitment. Every major US network now has a comic book show on air or in development.

▶ Sci-fi comedy **NORAD** heading to an Amazon-flavoured streaming service near you.

▶ Fox and *Californication* creator Tom Kapinos developing **LUCIFER**, a show based on the Bowie-inspired *Sandman* character.

▶ **TITANS** TV show in the works at TNT. The DC adaptation's been written by Akiva Goldsman and Marc Haimes.

▶ AMC nabs **HUMANS** from Xbox Entertainment Studios after the nascent production company shuts up shop.

Continued on p17.

© REX FEATURES (1)

"I remember saying to Mark Hamill with the crew in the car going to the desert on Tatooine, 'How can you say your lines with a straight face?' He said, 'How can you say yours?'"

Let's hope Anthony Daniels can keep it together for *Episode VII*.

DON'T QUOTE ME

SCI-FACT!

Ascension is produced by Jason Blum, he of cheap horror movie fame.

MY SCI-FI

Tim Minchin

The Australian comedy songwriter and creator of the *Matilda* musical turns graphic novelist with *Storm*



FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY MOVIE

▶ I'm going to preface this by saying I'm not the geek my fans think I am. I've never watched *Star Trek* and I barely know what *Star Wars* is. But I like the original *Total Recall*. And *Looper*'s an amazing film. I like concepts. I'm writing a musical of *Groundhog Day* at the moment, and I love *Groundhog Day* because of the thought experiment nature of it.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY TV SHOW

▶ It's all *Buffy* for me. Do you know Joss Whedon tweeted about my musical *Matilda* yesterday? Fucking best day of my life! At the end of the song "When I Grow Up" Miss Honey comes and sings her verse, repeating one kids have sung, which goes, "When I grow up I'll be brave enough to fight the creatures that you have to fight beneath the bed." And Joss tweeted, "Daddy, why does the teacher sing that at the end?" Daddy will explain it when Daddy stops crying." I was so thrilled. Until *Game Of Thrones* – I just watched the entire four seasons of that in six weeks – *Buffy* was the only TV series that I'd watched from beginning to end.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY NOVEL

▶ My favourite author – certainly in the top three – is Kurt Vonnegut. Vonnegut's tone just changed my life. The way he speaks with such a gentle irony – quirky, funny, profound and beautiful. *Slaughterhouse-Five* was my choice of book when I did *Desert Island Discs*.



Storm is available in paperback and deluxe hardback now. *Matilda The Musical* is currently being performed in London and New York.



SCI-FACT!
Gaiman got the idea for
Neverwhere after reading *Free
Live Free* by Gene Wolfe.

GOOD OMENS

Apocalypse Wow

The Gaiman/Pratchett novel heads to Radio 4

LAST YEAR RADIO 4 managed to do justice to Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*: the urban fantasy that began as a low-budget TV show, flourished as a novel, languished in film development hell and then was rescued as a star-studded radio epic. Now, it's *Good Omens*' turn: Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's apocalyptic black comedy that was once going to be a film directed by Terry Gilliam and, years later, a TV series by Terry Jones. So, what happened?

"The story Neil told me is that there had been attempts at doing it before, but the writers had given up," explains director Dirk Maggs, who specialises in adapting stories such as 2013's *Neverwhere* into big radio

productions. "He said, 'You're the first writer to get to the end of it!' It wasn't easy. I re-read the book and my heart sank. I always say there's nothing you can do in film that you can't do better on radio, but having an angel occupy the body of a medium and then have them both speak through the same mouth... I'm still thinking how I'm going to do this!"

Originally released in 1991, the novel tells the story of angel Aziraphale and demon Crowley, representatives of good and evil on Earth, who have decided that the upcoming apocalypse is a bad idea. To stop it, they need to find the Antichrist – who they



From left, Neil Gaiman, Dirk Maggs and Terry Pratchett.

appear to have misplaced. Like *Neverwhere* (which featured James McAvoy and Benedict Cumberbatch), the radio adaptation is driven by a well-known cast. Mark Heap and Peter Serafinowicz will play the respective leads, supported by Colin Morgan, Louise Brealey, Clive Russell and Phil Davis.

"We were thrilled with the cast," says Maggs, "but the best bit for me was during the first read-through, when Neil saw Mark and Peter, turned to me and said, 'those are the voices I wrote for!'" **SFX**

Good Omens will air on Radio 4 in December.

THE ORIGINALS

Family Matters

The power struggle continues in season two

● TV'S FIRST FAMILY OF VAMPIRES is returning for a second year of betrayals and blood feuds. But co-executive producer Michael Narducci explains that this season of *The Originals* is all about the children.

"The baby is obviously in a great deal of danger," says Narducci of vampire Klaus and hybrid Hayley's child, last seen with Klaus's sister Rebekah. "Esther is back among the living, and they don't know what that means. Rebekah has taken the baby and she is off wherever she is – but we will see them both again."

As for the effect the baby's loss has on Hayley... "Hayley's a mess. She had to give up her baby and she doesn't know what that means for her relationships with Klaus and Elijah, or what it means for her relationship with the werewolves. She decides that to keep her baby safe she has to make peace in New Orleans and eliminate the threat of Esther, but she doesn't know how to do that because she's a vampire." **SFX**

The Originals airs Tuesdays on Syfy starting on 14 October.



All that blood sucking clearly works wonders for the complexion.

© SMALL+RASKIND/WARNER BROS./GETTY (1)

STAR TURN

Emily Rose

Haven's Audrey, er, Sarah er, Lexie, er... Who is she this season?

LEXIE IS SOOOO LAST SEASON

► "I'm always complaining about coming back as different characters, but secretly I'm happy about it. To be able to play somebody really evil has been great fun. I picture Mara as a cobra. It's all about where she focuses her eyes. She's very sneaky. She plays mental mind games."

DOUBLING UP

► "Season five is two sets of 13 episodes. The first arc deals with Mara and her massive personality. The second is kind of the fallout from that, connected with Duke – the basis of everything in the town gets shifted. We're also doing things like a series of two-episode stories this time."

MANY HAPPY RETURNS?

► "The first half of this season is called 'The Search For Audrey Parker', and it really has been a search. We haven't seen the original blonde Audrey since she went into the barn at the end of season three. I think the fans' desire and excitement to see her return really feeds into this season."

UNCHARTED AMBITIONS

► "I can't say whether I'll be returning to play Elena Fisher in the *Uncharted* games. I can say that I *hope* so. What I'm really hoping is that I get a shot at auditioning for the actual movie that's coming out: 'I'd like to audition for my own part in the movie, please.'"

EXORCISING THE PAST

► "I've not seen *The Exorcism Of Emily Rose*. I'm a little freaked out by scary movies, so I would have to watch it during the day. The nice thing about it is that when I Google my name images of the film come up first, so I'm kinda protected!"

Haven season five is currently airing on Syfy, Tuesdays at 9pm.



A woman rapidly running out of space on her gong-laden mantelpiece.

"I feel like lots of people are expecting something special and spectacular"

Then you get a bit older and you're like, 'No, no, that's not realistic, settle down to what's actually possible and then do that.'

So what is it about the book that's so connected with science fiction fans? Leckie says she's not certain, but guesses it's at least in part something to do with readers wanting a "big space opera thing".

Ancillary Justice is this and much more as it tells the story of Breg, an "ancillary" or part of the consciousness of a starship, Justice of Toren, destroyed in a covert war. It's been favourably compared both to the work of Iain M Banks (a comparison that makes Leckie "a little tetchy" because *Consider Phlebas* remains the only Banks novel she's read) and an author who's a far more direct influence, CJ Cherryh.

Readers and reviews inevitably also pick up on the book's gender politics and its use of the female pronoun. "I'd been trying to write a society that was gender neutral," says Leckie. "I don't think my choice really conveys that, I don't think I *could* really convey that, but I ended up deciding to use 'she' for everyone, no matter what. Once I'd done it, I really loved the effect of undercutting the default, which is almost always masculine."

Whatever it is about the novel that's entranced readers, there's no doubting that the awards and accolades have irrevocably changed Leckie's life. With the second novel in what will be a trilogy, *Ancillary Sword*, out now, there's a real sense of anticipation about the book this time around.

"I feel like lots of people are expecting something really special and spectacular," says Leckie. "I'm like, 'How could it possibly measure up?' In some ways, that's very scary. I'm writing the third [volume], and it's really very weird when I can see on the internet people talking about things that they're expecting or that they hope to see. I have to step back from it to get some equilibrium."

Somehow, you suspect she'll survive the process. In person, there's a hint of goofiness about Leckie, but she also conveys a keen intelligence and a quiet steeliness. Before *Ancillary Justice* was published, she was told it was good, but it probably wouldn't sell. She carried on regardless. "My conclusion is you should write what you want to write." **SFX**

Ancillary Justice and *Ancillary Sword* are available now from Orbit.

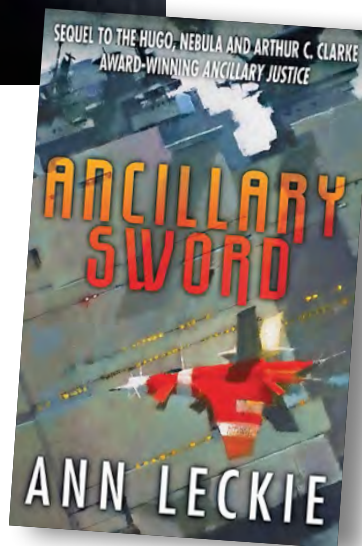
ANCILLARY SWORD

Clean Sweep

Ann Leckie tells us what it's like to win four major awards • PORTRAIT BY WILL IRELAND

THE SF LITERARY WORLD has never known anything quite like it. At this August's Loncon 3, American author Ann Leckie took home the Hugo for Best Novel for her debut, *Ancillary Justice*. This was her fourth major award after winning the Nebula, Clarke and – as co-winner with Gareth L Powell's *Ack-Ack Macaque* – BSFA gongs.

"Since the awards season started, it's bizarre," she tells Red Alert at Loncon. "I mean it's fabulous, but it's really weird. You know when you're 12, you have these really grandiose fantasies about being a writer or whatever, and of course they always include winning all the awards and everybody loving your work."



AFTERLIFE #96

Gareth David-Lloyd

Ianto Jones in *Torchwood*



BORN IN NEWPORT, WALES, Gareth David-Lloyd began acting on stages in his hometown and around Cardiff. He appeared (as a character named Ianto Jones) in Russell T Davies's 2004 series, *Mine All Mine*. When Davies began casting *Torchwood*, David-Lloyd slipped back into Ianto's shoes for the show. Hugely popular with fans, his character was killed off in *Torchwood: Children Of Earth* to a huge outcry. Since then, Gareth has appeared as Dr John Watson in the direct-to-DVD film *Sherlock Holmes* (2010), as well as guest starring on *Warehouse 13* and BBC One's *Holby City*. His band, Blue Gillespie, has released two albums.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY IANTO AGAIN?

► Absolutely, yeah! I miss him.

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST REQUEST YOU'VE HAD FROM A FAN?

► Someone asked me to sign a My Little Pony doll that was dressed as Ianto.

WOULD ANY OF IANTO'S SKILLS OR ATTRIBUTES HAVE BEEN USEFUL IN REAL LIFE?

► His sense of loyalty. And his organisational skills!

WHAT WOULD HE BE DOING NOW IF HE WERE ALIVE?

► He'd be saving the world! That's his gig.

IS THERE ANYTHING UNFINISHED ABOUT IANTO'S STORY?

► No, not really. I was happy with the way the story went. There were certain aspects of his life that I wanted to explore – like his home life and where he was from – and we got to do that in *Children Of Earth*, so yeah... I left happy.

DID YOU GET ANY SOUVENIRS FROM THE SET?

► The stopwatch, and I've got a couple of ties from his costume. That was about it.

IS THERE ANYTHING FROM *TORCHWOOD* YOU WISH WAS REAL?

► I loved the device that Toshiko had in an episode that could load a whole book into your brain in a couple of minutes. That was very good. Knowledge is power at the end of the day.

WHAT WOULD IT SAY ON IANTO'S GRAVESTONE?

► That's a tough one. I don't even know if he's got a gravestone. His type of people are usually put in the basement and forgotten about. If he has one: "Always in our hearts, forever in our thoughts."

AERIAL ASSAULT

SF TV ROUND UP



NEWBIES (CONT)

► Keanu Reeves and Roland Emmerich developing futuristic virtual reality drama **NEW ANGELES**.

► Legendary TV purchases the rights to John Scalzi's **LOCK IN**.

► Fox commits to female-led **MINORITY REPORT**.

► Syfy orders **ALIEN HUNTER** book adaptation, from *Walking Dead* producer Gale Anne Hurd, straight to series.

► **THE WALKING DEAD** companion series ordered to pilot by AMC. The spin-off will focus on the zombie apocalypse in other parts of the world.

► *The Lego Movie*'s Phil Lord and Chris Miller remaking cult US comedy **THE GREATEST AMERICAN HERO**.

► *The Good Wife* creators developing high-concept political horror show **BRAIN DEAD** for CBS.

SHOWRUNNING

► **HEMLOCK GROVE** renewed for a third and final season.

► **DEFIANCE** and **DOMINION** are both returning in 2015. *Continued on p20.*

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DON'T QUOTE ME

"I had the power to do whatever I wanted and I chose to do a book that I thought was worthy of making into a movie. It's a beautiful film. It's a good movie"

John Travolta clearly saw a different *Battlefield Earth* to the rest of us.

SCI-FACT!
A *Kingkiller Chronicles* TV script is being mullied over by US networks.

RED ALERT

Patrick Rothfuss is regarding you. Slowly.



THE SLOW REGARD OF SILENT THINGS

Quiet Looks

Patrick Rothfuss on his strange new novella

THE AGONISING WAIT FOR THE third book in Patrick Rothfuss's acclaimed *Kingkiller* trilogy just got a little easier. Hot on the heels of Bast-centric short story "The Lightning Tree", which featured in George RR Martin's *Rogues Anthology*, comes *The Slow Regard Of Silent Things* – a novella about mysterious Underthing dweller Auri. But where Auri is involved, nothing is ever quite that simple. "Typically stories have certain things," Rothfuss tells Red Alert. "They have action, they have dialogue, they have tension, they have pacing, just very standard things. As I continued to write this story I was like, 'This does not have any of those things!'" *Slow Regard* started life destined for *Rogues* before Rothfuss realised the tale wasn't right for an audience new to Temerant. "I was anticipating it being a light, fun, trickster story, and it very quickly became clear that's not what it was," he admits. "An anthology should offer a new reader the opportunity to enter my world easily. I live in terror of people picking up this who have not read my other books."

As well as giving *Kingkiller* fans something to savour during the wait for *The Doors Of Stone*, non-trilogy work has helped Rothfuss better understand his world.

"I learned a lot about Auri. I learned so much more about the Underthing. It also helps me lay down the third book for a little while, because it's essential with a project this big and vast and complicated and... heavy. I feel this crushing responsibility to get it right and working on some of these other projects lets me relax – and then I can go back to it fresh and excited." **SFX**



The Slow Regard Of Silent Things is out on 28 October from Gollancz.



SCI-FACT!
This is Joseph Delaney's *The Spook's Apprentice* put to film, not Orson Scott Card hit *Seventh Son*.

RELEASE DATE
6 FEB 2015

FREEZE FRAME

THIS MONTH:
We struggle through the trailer for Sergei Bodrov's long-delayed fantasy adaptation **Seventh Son**



● Jeff Bridges plays monster-slaying Spook John Gregory, the last of his order...



● ...at least until his apprentice Tom Ward (Ben Barnes) proves his worth. In the first book Tom is just 12 years old.



● This handsome fellow is a boggart – an enormous troll who abuses people online all day. Or not.



● Another monster – a Kali-inspired four-armed swordsman. At the very least there'll be no shortage of creatures.



● Julianne Moore stars as big bad witch Mother Malkin. She and Gregory have crossed paths before.



● *Game Of Thrones'* Kit Harington plays Gregory's first apprentice, Billy, who's captured by Mother Malkin early on.



● *Guardians Of The Galaxy's* Djimon Hounsou is on henchman duties again as shapeshifter Radu – a new character for the film.



● Mother Malkin's minions attack a city. Expect plenty of in-your-face effects to justify the expensive 3D.



● This is Alice (Alicia Vikander) a witch and sword-wielding ally of evil Mother Malkin.



● Despite a hostile first encounter Tom and Alice soon become friends. Do we smell a redemptive arc?



● Fan of the books? Brace yourself – a lot seems to have changed during the transition to the big screen.



● Mother Malkin practices her bowling. Possibly. With *The Dude* and *Maude* on board, it is a *Big Lebowski* reunion after all.

THE BUZZ

RICH



Why's the Dude fleeing monsters? Why's he doing an impression of Bane? Maybe he's had a few too many White Russians, because this looks like a *really* bad idea. The trailer is a mess.

JORDAN



Julianne Moore as an evil witch could be fun, but otherwise this looks wearisomely generic. Shame the book's Lancashire-inspired setting has been replaced with a bland fantasy-land too.

NICK



A puree of familiar fantasy tropes that plays like Harryhausen with the charm surgically removed. So relentlessly bleak and overcast I swear I contracted trenchfoot watching it.

ALEX



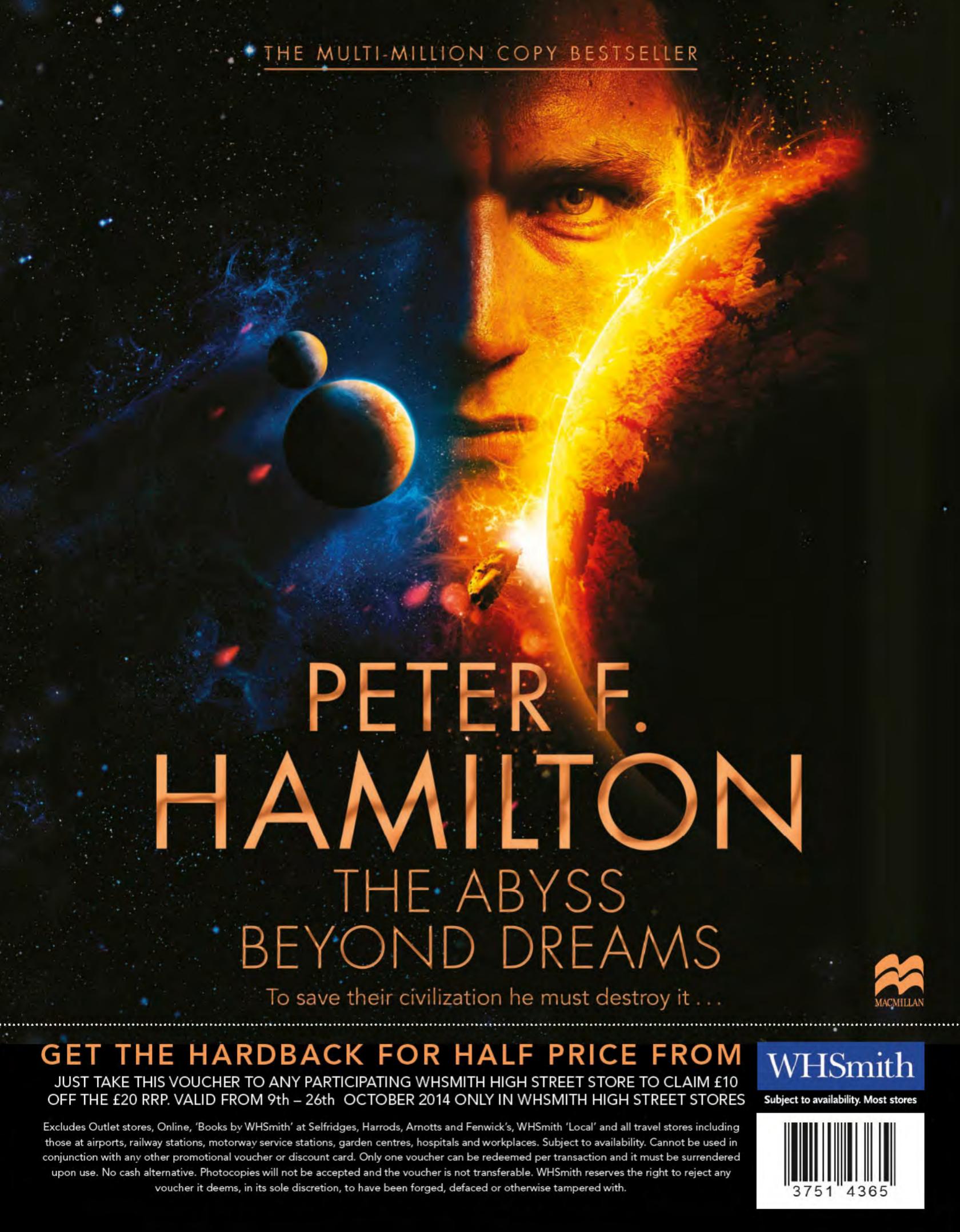
It's hard to argue with big weaponised monsters, but here I go: *Seventh Son* looks mighty cheesy. The trailer feels almost like a comedic parody of fantasy adventure movies.

IAN



There's a faint whiff of the old *Sinbad* movies about *Seventh Son*, which is appealing, but otherwise it all looks a bit pompous and overly bombastic. "Join us"? Not sure I will.

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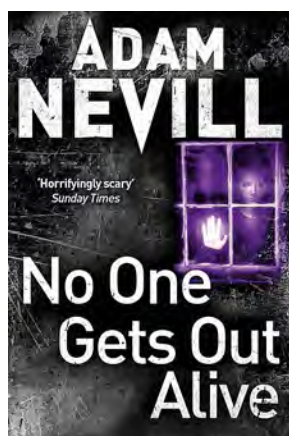
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ADAM NEVILL

Fright Write

Horror author's top tips for penning scary stories



Adam Nevill says simplicity is the key.

● 1. DON'T TRY TOO HARD. That's the most important thing to remember. Force fear and you force contrivance. Most of us spent our first ten years afraid of all kinds of things that our imaginations invested themselves into; many of these things are silly, but they weren't silly at the time. So go deep into your memory and honestly acknowledge what chills you. Strive for authenticity. Don't overcomplicate the matter either; when you describe images, people, situations and artefacts that frighten you, use simple language and put the safety catch on being verbose – nothing dispels effect more than overwriting. As MR James shows us (repeatedly in his stories), the frightening is best described by ordinary and simple words. Use the commonplace to describe the sinister and horrible and you strike chords. Be clever by not trying to be too clever. Restraint.

● 2. LEARN TO FOREBODE. You look out on the field at the back of your holiday cottage and notice a blackened tree with thin branches. The next morning, after a disturbed night filled with a curious dream, you open the curtains and two of the tree's branches suggest they are flung toward the sky, like arms. Odd you never noticed that yesterday. No matter, but you'd rather not look at it at all. Only it catches your eye three days later and you are sure the tree is in a different part of the field. Perhaps it is the angle you are now surveying it from, but it almost looks as if the skeletal branches are now leaning toward the house. You cannot be certain but it may be a bit closer than it was three days before too...

No One Gets Out Alive is in shops from 23 October.

AERIAL
ASSAULT
SF TV ROUND UP



CASTING
COUCH

▶ Nick Frost, Michael Troughton (Patrick's son) and *Misfits*' Nathan McMullan to guest star in the **DOCTOR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL**.

▶ James D'Arcy cast as the original, very much human, Edwin Jarvis (Howard Stark's butler) in **AGENT CARTER**.

▶ Logan Browning, Andrew Sensenig and Justice Leak all sign up for PlayStation's **POWERS** adaptation.

▶ Alexander Armstrong to voice **DANGER MOUSE** in new CBBC series.

▶ **ARROW** has found its Ra's al Ghul. *Riddick*'s Matt Nable will play the immortal mastermind, while Austin Butler will also star as Thea's new love interest.

▶ *Spartacus* alumnus Nick Tarabay to play the key villain in this year's **ARROW/FLASH** crossover event.

▶ *Silence Of The Lambs*' Scott Glenn to star as Matt Murdock's mentor Stick in Netflix's **DAREDEVIL** TV series.

▶ Original *Flash* TV show actress Amanda Pays recruited for the live action **FLASH** adaptation.

DON'T QUOTE ME

"Who's handing off the shield?
Don't take my job from me
prematurely, dude"

Don't write off Chris Evans's
Captain America just yet

SCI-FACT!

Tarkin is set ten years before
Star Wars Rebels and will set
up several plot strands.



James Luceno's latest charts
the rise of Governor Tarkin.

TARKIN

Moff-Man Prophecies

Darth Plagueis author takes
Tarkin to the dark side

FEW CHARACTERS IN THE *Star Wars* universe have dared to boss Darth Vader around and lived to tell the tale. One such figure is Governor Tarkin – the man who oversaw the creation of the Death Star, obliterated Alderaan and eventually perished because of an unfortunate exhaust port oversight. The latest novel from veteran Expanded Universe writer James Luceno aims to explore the enigmatic villain's rise to power.

"This story is set five years after Palpatine proclaims himself Emperor," Luceno explains. "At this point in his career he's still in the Imperial Navy but he is not at the level we'll find him at in *A New Hope*. It's something of an origin story in the sense that it explains how Tarkin reached the heights he did."

Darth Vader looms large in Tarkin's history but according to Luceno, the focus is firmly on the future Grand Moff. "It is, in some sense, a biographical novel. It's a little less action-oriented; most *Star Wars* novels are not like this one. It's also very much a war story, a story about the challenges the Empire faces in those first few years following the Clone Wars."

Tarkin is the second novel in the new EU created in collaboration with the Story Group at Lucasfilm who now oversee all *Star Wars* canon. But as an author of several EU novels Luceno has a rosy outlook on their relegation to "Legends" status. "Too much has been made of this idea of a new canon," says Luceno. "It doesn't mean everything is out the window. Not by a long shot. In this book I wrote around a lot of the existing material rather than contradicting it. I don't think books with the Legends heading need to be cast aside, there's room for everything in this franchise." **SFX**



Star Wars: Tarkin is published on Thursday 6 November
courtesy of Random House.

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SCI-FACT!
Most of *The Babadook*'s
\$30,000 art budget
was raised through
Kickstarter.

THE BABADOOK

Sinister Stranger

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

The terrifying supernatural shocker from Down Under.



Noah Wiseman has already mastered the art of peering around corners.

IT'S AN AUSSIE FILM

1 Adapted from her sinister short film *Monster*, *The Babadook* is the directorial feature debut of Australian actress-turned-filmmaker Jennifer Kent and concerns a malicious entity that haunts a single mother and her problematic child. Featuring an entirely Aussie cast and crew, it was filmed in the sparse South Australian city of Adelaide, which grants the exteriors a certain idiosyncratic distinction not normally attributed to Australia, as the filmmaker reiterates.

"There's something peculiar about Adelaide and about its architecture," says Kent. "It's a world of its own making, which was a perfect environment for *The Babadook* as it has its own consistent rules but isn't particularly set anywhere. It's like a Brothers Grimm fairytale. I guess that was the feeling I was after but I wanted a strangeness to the world."

THE VISUALS ARE DISTINCTIVE

2 For *The Babadook*'s distinct visual style Kent was also influenced by the German pioneers of 1920s expressionist silent cinema, renowned for evoking their characters' mental states and situations through dramatic use of lighting and setting in such classics as *The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari* and *Nosferatu*.

"The early origins of cinema were really exciting. I loved how they took the mind and psychological reality and put it into the space,"

she says. "That's what we aimed to do with *The Babadook* but in a contemporary way and I feel lucky at what we arrived at.

THERE'S AN AMBIGUOUS ANTAGONIST

3 Introduced via the suspicious arrival of a deeply disturbing children's pop-up storybook entitled "Mister Babadook", the titular threat is one of the most unsettling screen boogymen of recent times. But is it purely psychological or could it stem from something more primal?

"I think the question is left up to the audience to decide," considers Kent. "I wanted to look at it in quite an abstract way. What would happen if someone suppressed something terrible to the point where it gained enough energy that it split off and became something alive?"



What's more creepy than a story book monster? A magician. That's what.

IT'S NOT A CONVENTIONAL HORROR FILM

4 Although preferring to label her film a psychological thriller, Kent has the smarts to acknowledge that horror encapsulates a far broader cinematic context.

"I'm not a genre fan, but I do love films that fit within the horror canon," admits the filmmaker. "For me a film like David Lynch's *Lost Highway* is the essence of what's horrific about the human mind. I feel *The Babadook* is a myth – a mythical story in a domestic setting – and sometimes myths are scary and usually scary to wake you up in some way."

THERE'S A POWERHOUSE CHILD PERFORMANCE

5 For a claustrophobic double-hander between actress Essie Davis (*The Matrix Reloaded/Revolutions*) and six-year-old newcomer Noah Wiseman, Kent was able to call upon her previous acting experience to elicit an extremely convincing performance from her young male lead.

"I found myself feeling the emotions with Noah so it was a safe space for him to go into," says the director. "If he had to be terribly angry in a scene I had to be prepared to go there with him to show him how, and give him permission I guess. A lot of directors are frightened of actors but I'm not, because I know how they work." **SFX**

The Babadook is released on Friday 24 October.

PRINCE LESTAT

@ARice BFF #Lestat

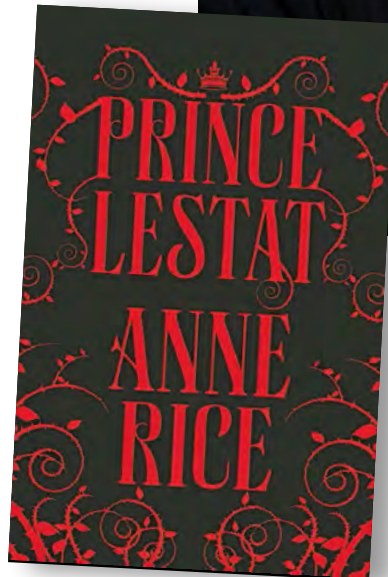
Anne Rice's iconic vamp is moving into the modern age

THE WORLD HAS CHANGED QUITE a bit since Anne Rice last wrote about Lestat de Lioncourt in *Blood Canticle* (2003), and the way he and his vampire trine is dealing with new technology forms the core of her new book, *Prince Lestat*.

"It's about vampires right now, in 2013 and 2014," she explains. "It's about how they're dealing with all of the challenges of this age, just like the rest of us – satellite photography, cable TV, iPhones, email... how is it all impacting their world?"

Rice describes the new novel as a sequel to everything that went before. "It deals with a lot of the same characters. And it deals with the question of the Ancient Ones; will they help the young members of the tribe or will they continue to live in a kind of exile?"

Rice is clearly excited about the return of her most enduring creation and explains the long break was partly due to trauma in her own life. "I was in a period of grief. I left New Orleans, my native city, and I left my home of 15 years. I had lost my husband of 41 years... that was a lot to digest. Lestat just wasn't with me during that period. But he's back now.



Anne Rice has rediscovered her most famous bloodsucker.

"I'm always thinking about what he's doing in a way. He's like a part of me. If I see a movie, I think, 'What would he think of this?' I really believe in writing by instinct, in trusting and surrendering to it, and he is one of those characters who came to life on his own, no question about it."

Rice began by re-reading the previous books in *The Vampire Chronicles*. "I went back more than anything just to hear his voice again. I wanted to see if I could relate to him again and if he could come alive for me. And he did immediately." **SFX**

Prince Lestat is published on Thursday 30 October.

LIVING LANGUAGE DOTHRAKI

Mind Your Language

David J Peterson, the man who puts words in Dothraki mouths

● DAVID J PETERSON IS WESTEROS'S very own Tower of Babel. As *Game Of Thrones* language consultant, he's responsible for creating the anything-but-common tongues often heard in the show.

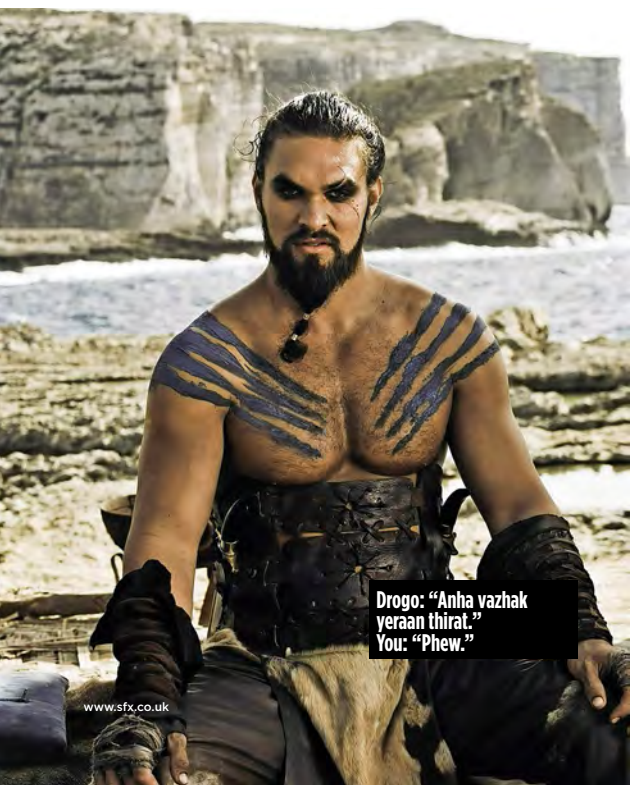
One of Peterson's more prominent *GOT* creations, Dothraki, is complete enough to be a workable language, and now we'll all get the chance to talk like horse-mounted warriors thanks to new book *Living Language Dothraki*.

Peterson says he was given plenty of freedom to work out how Khal Drogo and his

brethren would talk. "They wanted it to sound harsh, and they wanted it to incorporate everything that George RR Martin had created, but after that it was up to me."

Luckily for the show's cast, Peterson doesn't expect any of them to become fluent in High Valyrian. "The actors who do best memorise the phrases almost as song lyrics. They get the rhythm of them. They memorise it without necessarily knowing what it means." **SFX**

Living Language Dothraki is out now.



Drogo: "Anha vazhak veraan thirat."
You: "Phew."



BORN TO BE BAD

1 "Nobody does a rogues gallery better than DC Comics," says Kevin Smith in his introduction to *DC Comics Super-Villains: The Complete Visual History*. And he's on to something. This astonishingly detailed Injustice League illustration by Joe Benitez and Victor Llamas originally appeared in *Justice League Of America Vol 2* #13, and is now part of the lavish hardback book celebrating 80 years of bad guys in DC Comics. There's stunning artwork throughout and bios for every major baddie in the DCU. It's available to buy in all good (and, of course, evil) bookshops from 6 November.

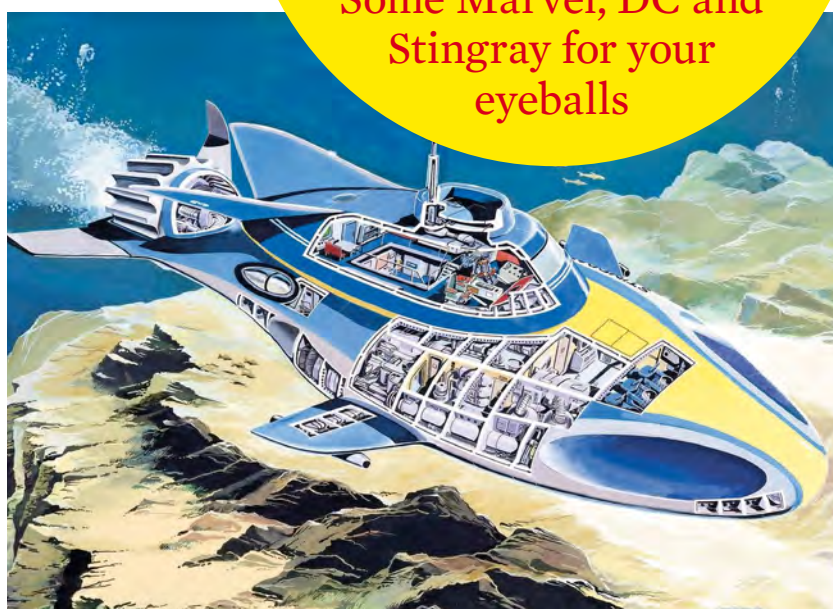
I AM GROOT

2 Having taken to calling our enemies "turd blossoms" and collectively defining ourselves as "Groot", it would be fair to say that *Guardians Of The Galaxy* has had a warm reception in SFX Towers, which is why we're very excited about what Marvel has in store for November. Rocket Raccoon and Groot are invading the variant covers of no less than 20 new and ongoing Marvel comic series, including *Superior Iron Man* #001, in which the peculiar pair riff on the classic Demon In A Bottle cover of *Invincible Iron Man* #120.



IMAGE BANK

Some Marvel, DC and Stingray for your eyeballs



ANDERSON ART

3 Behold the majesty of Graham Bleathman's jaw-droppingly gorgeous cutaway Stingray illustration, one of dozens of intricate cross-section artworks to be found on the pages of *Inside The World Of Gerry Anderson*. Iconic craft and locations from *Fireball XL5*, *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds*, *Joe 90* and *Captain Scarlet* all get the cross-section treatment, accompanied by some astoundingly detailed annotations explaining the inner workings of each Anderson creation. This FAB hardcover book is available from 6 November.

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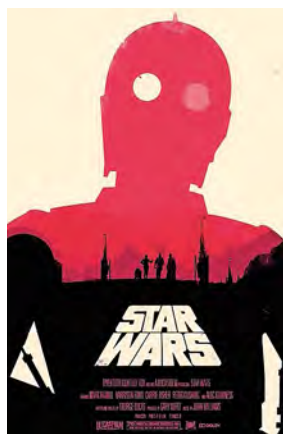
STAR WARS ART: POSTERS

Star Draws

Star Wars expert JW Rinzler talks posters



Pin on your wall and gaze in wonder.



● LIKE THE GORGEOUS POSTERS ABOVE? They're but two of the many abstract and lovely beauties on display in the fifth – and reportedly final – *Star Wars Art* book, *Posters*. From early-doors Ralph McQuarrie concept pieces to “propaganda” promos for *Rebels* itself, the volume gathers four decades' worth of intergalactic wall art. There's plenty to enjoy, including the one-sheet that started Drew Struzan's long-standing association with the saga: the fake-weathered 1978 so-called “Circus” design (produced with Charlie White III). “That's George Lucas's favourite,” reveals editor/all-round *SW* authority JW Rinzler. “The original's hanging in Skywalker Ranch, in perfect condition.”

Rinzler's favourite is Tom Jung's first iconic effort (you know the one: Luke's chest, Leia's thighs, pop-eyed Threepio). “My second day here I had a meeting in the office where the original was hanging... the whole meeting, I couldn't focus!”

And the most off-the-wall? “That Polish poster [for *Return Of The Jedi*] with Darth Vader's head exploding,” he laughs. “It's hard to beat that one.”

Vader's (unexploded) bonce, he acknowledges, helped define the classic “people in the foreground, big head in the background” *Star Wars* style – a style whose influence spread across the cinematic galaxy. “Back in the day, posters were almost all painted,” he sighs. “I find it kind of sad that you go to cinemas now and it's just photographs. Sometimes the most boring pictures imaginable.”

Star Wars Art: Posters by Drew Struzan and Roger Kastel, from Abrams Books, RRP £25, is available to SFX readers at the special rate of £20, FREE P&P in the UK (international P&P charges will apply). To order please call 01903 828503 and quote ref 50499.

AERIAL ASSAULT
SF TV ROUND-UP

CASTING COUCH (CONT)

▶ Amazon's Philip K Dick adaptation, **THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE**, casts Alexa Davalos (*The Chronicles Of Riddick*) as avenging lead Juliana.

▶ Patti LuPone has joined the cast of **PENNY DREADFUL** season two. Helen McCrory and Simon Russell Beale have both been upped to series regulars.

▶ *In The Flesh*'s Emmett Scanlan signs up for **CONSTANTINE**.

▶ Skyler Samuels joins **AMERICAN HORROR STORY: FREAKSHOW**.

▶ Donald Glover will finally get the chance to play Miles Morales, in a special crossover episode of **ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN: WEB WARRIORS**.

GRAHAM JOYCE
1954-2014

▶ Beloved fantasy author Graham Joyce has died at the age of 59. Best known for his dark fantasy novels *The Tooth Fairy*, *Some Kind Of Fairy Tale* and *The Year Of The Ladybird*, he had been battling aggressive lymphoma cancer. The world is a little less magical without him.

“The Wrath Of Khan will be as nothing to the wrath of a No Voter who has been gulled by the Westminster Leadership”

Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond has Noonien Singh blood in his veins.

SCI-FACT!
Looking for New Author?
It will return later
in the year.

Halo's Christina Chong will be in *Episode VII*.



HALO NIGHTFALL

Locke In

Halo 5's new Spartan is getting his own series

THE NEXT NEW *HALO* GAME MAY still be a year away, but the first chapter in *Halo 5: Guardians*' secretive story arrives much sooner than that in the form of digital miniseries *Halo: Nightfall*. Set between *Halos* 4 and 5, *Nightfall* has been created to introduce a key new player in the *Halo* universe: ONI agent and future Spartan IV Jameson Locke.

“*Nightfall* is a prequel where we're building the foundations for Locke's character, who you'll play as in *Halo 5*,” says Locke actor Mike Colter. “Obviously we know that he becomes a Spartan IV but *Nightfall* is all about his journey – how he becomes that, why he becomes that, what set of events inform him.”

Released weekly for people who purchase the *Master Chief* collection, *Nightfall* is the story of Acquisition Specialist Locke's ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence) unit, which is sent to investigate a bioweapon on a severed section of Installation 04 – the Halo ring destroyed by Master Chief at the end of the very first *Halo* game.

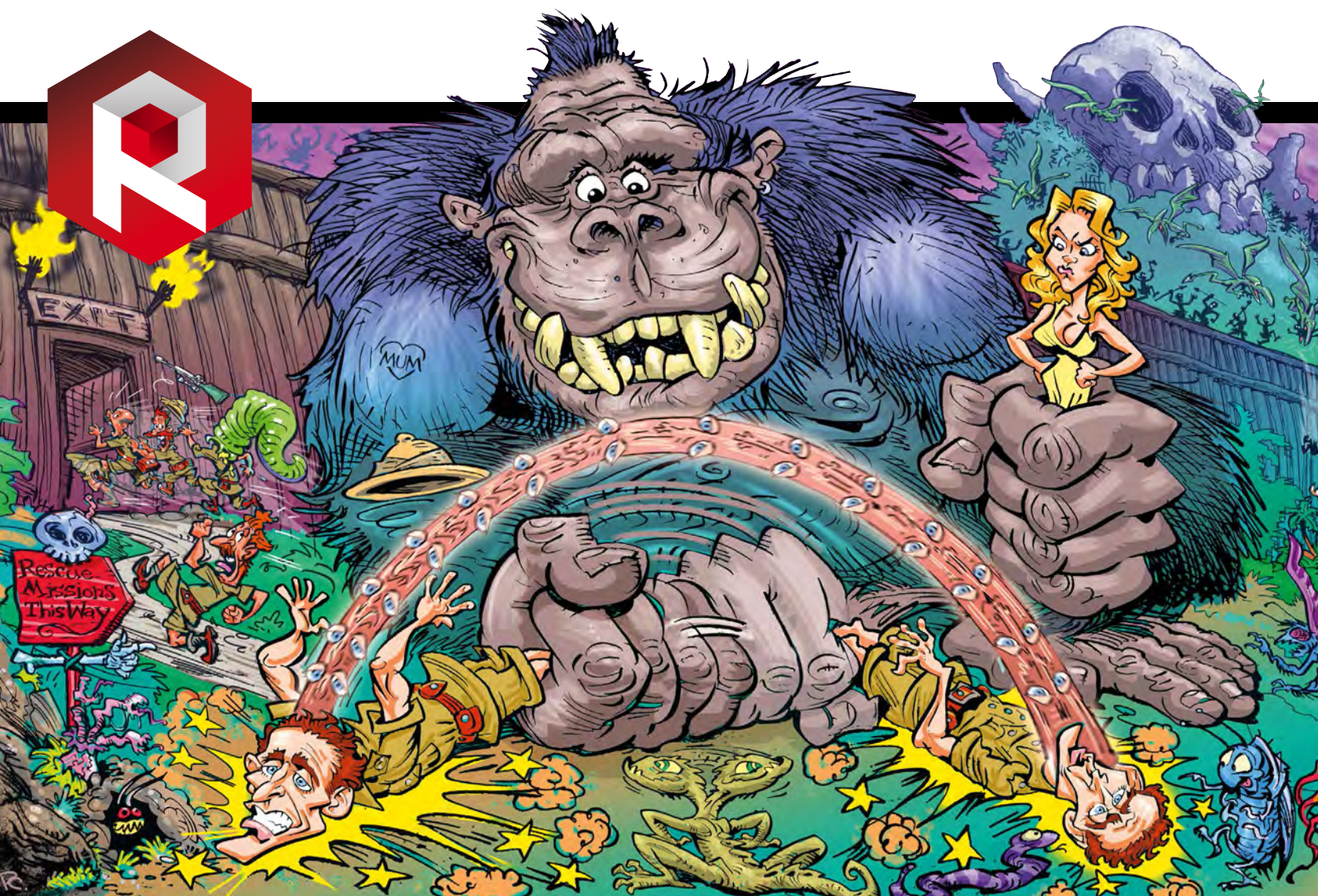
“During the day the heat on the Halo ring is so intense that no human can survive, and neither can most alien lifeforms,” Colter explains. “We have a finite amount of time – of ‘nightfall’ – while the sun is down to find evidence that a treaty has been broken. Ultimately, it's a story about survival and a lot of decisions will have to be made.”

With Ridley Scott on board as a producer and *Battlestar Galactica*'s Sergio Mimica-Gezzan on directing duties, it's a show designed to appeal to newcomers and *Halo* veterans. “We're trying to build a human story,” says Colter. “We don't want people to just look at Locke as a warrior because there are a lot of vulnerable moments. He's not the Terminator, where you know how it's going to end. This guy can die. This can end poorly for everyone.” **SFX**

Halo: Nightfall is released as part of the *Halo: Master Chief* collection on 14 November.

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DON'T QUOTE ME



NICK SETCHFIELD'S DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future

AMERICA THE BRAVE! CAPTAIN AMERICA 3

► **Chris Evans** insists he's not about to retire from the red, white and blue. "Who's handing off the shield?" he asks MTV, countering rumours that fellow cast-members **Anthony Mackie** or **Sebastian Stan** will step up to superpatriot duty in the third *Captain America* movie. "Don't take my job from me prematurely, dude. I'm sure it'll happen at some point. All good things have to come to an end. But I'm really happy playing the character." Screenwriters **Christopher Markus** and **Stephen McFeely** recently

delivered a draft to Marvel and the filmmakers say there's a momentous, franchise-quaking idea at the heart of it. "The big thing we knew we had to deal with in *Captain America 2* was the fall of Hydra," co-director **Joe Russo** tells *Crave Online*. "Similarly there is a very, very big idea at the centre of *Captain America 3*..."

BUSTING OUT! GHOSTBUSTERS 3

► It's all Marvel's fault. Sequels? History. Spin-offs? Passe. Franchises? Outdated thinking. Now every studio needs an interlocking cinematic universe

to call its own. "I'm thinking now 'What does the whole brand mean to Sony?'" founding *Ghostbuster* **Dan Aykroyd** tells the *Belfast Telegraph*. "What's Pixar and *Star Wars* mean to Disney?" Yes, Aykroyd and Co are thinking big. Megalomaniacally big. "What do we build this thing into in the next ten years? Not just another movie or another TV show, but what's the totality of it? What's the whole mythology from the beginning of their lives to the end of their lives? *Ghostbusters* at nine years old, *Ghostbusters* in high school..." **Bill Murray**, meanwhile, is down with the rumour of an all-female

Ghostbusters 3: "It sounds as good an idea as any other. There are a lot of women that could scare off any kind of vapour..."

THEY ARE LEGION! LEGION OF SUPERHEROES

► Andy Warhol told us that in the future everyone would be famous for 15 minutes. The future put an unexpected wrinkle on that prophecy: you'll actually have your very own movie, so long as you're a superhero. And there'll be an awful lot of superheroes jostling for close-ups in this DC Comics adaptation. First seen in the pages

APE FEAR! SKULL ISLAND

► "It's money and adventure and fame! It's the thrill of a lifetime and a long sea voyage that starts at six o'clock tomorrow morning!" That's how showman Carl Denham pitched the original voyage to Skull Island in 1933's *King Kong*. Now there's a new crew on their way to the remote Indonesian isle – and given it's populated exclusively by prehistoric beasts, murderous tribesmen and blonde-hungry mega-monkeys we assume it comes with one hell of a travel warning from the foreign office. While there were rumblings that Joe Cornish would direct this *Kong* prequel, it's *The Kings Of Summer* helmer **Jordan Vogt-Roberts** who's landed the gig. He'll direct from a screenplay by **Max Borenstein**, who penned this summer's resurrection of *Godzilla* for Legendary Pictures (he's also just signed to write *Godzilla 2*, the monster-crazed maniac). **Tom Hiddleston** takes a break from Lokidom to score the lead role.

of *Adventure Comics* in 1958, the Legion are a collective of superpowered 30th century teens, numbering among their lycra-clad ranks Cosmic Boy, Lightning Lad and, yes, Triplicate Girl (she defeats evil by being bloody brilliant with forms). Warner Bros are said to be hunting writers for a big screen version, doubtlessly hoping the Legion's signature mix of shiny SF and superheroics will steal a little *Guardians Of The Galaxy* action.

ALIENS ALIENATED! PROMETHEUS 2

► **Ridley Scott** is still promising a sequel to *Prometheus* – rather heroically, given the original sunk into an industrial-sized vat of "Meh". He has a clear vision for the follow-up, though – and it's one that loosens the connection to the *Alien* franchise by banning xenomorphs from the party. "The beast is done," Scott declares to Yahoo UK. "Cooked. I got lucky meeting HR Giger all those years ago. It's very hard to repeat that... after four, I think it wears out a little bit. There's only so much snarling you can do. I think you've got to come back with something more interesting. And I think we've found the next step. I thought the Engineers were quite a good start." Scott reveals the sequel is still at the word-wrangling stage – "I've had 15 drafts evolving" – and will focus on the fate of the first film's survivors, including **Michael Fassbender's** Bowie-droid. "Find out how he gets his head back on," teases Scott.

NONE MORE BLACK! SHAZAM

► Now we know exactly what the Rock was cooking with all those internet-baiting hints of his. You'll remember the state of quantum uncertainty over just who he was

playing in this one – noble Captain Marvel or perfidious Black Adam. Well, the dark side has officially claimed **Dwayne Johnson's** soul and he's signed to play the bad guy. We imagine he has the juicier lines... It's New Line Cinema who are handling this DC Comics adaptation, so don't expect it to slot into Warners' scowly, joke-shy Batman and Superman universe. "It feels to me like Shazam will have a tone unto itself," New Line president **Toby Emmerich** tells *Entertainment Weekly*. "It's a DC comic but it's not a Justice League character... The tone and the feeling of the movie will be different from the other range of comic book movies. [It] will have a sense of fun and a sense of humour, but the stakes have to be real."

BEAMING UP BILL? STAR TREK 3

► Ah, the noble James T Kirk. The captain who wrestled with alligator men, induced existential trauma in computers and powered starships with pure libido. We all know he didn't deserve to die twatted by scaffolding on Planet Underwhelming. Now comes word that **William Shatner** may revive his career-defining role alongside fellow Starfleet veteran **Leonard Nimoy** in the 50th anniversary *Trek* movie. Is it a cameo? A crucial part of the plot? Or a rumour that's simply so much sub-space static? Director **Roberto Orci** pleads the Fifth: "Not in my interest to confirm or deny anything because it limits my options while maintaining my integrity as a truth teller." Fair enough, Bob. The mighty Shat, meanwhile, bullishly reveals **JJ Abrams** has already called him, sounding him out on a potential resurrection. "I said 'Oh, yeah. If it is meaningful... I would be delighted.'"

ALSO BURNING



KATE MARA orbiting **RIDLEY SCOTT's** *The Martian*... **BRYAN SINGER** directing *X-Men: Apocalypse*... **GARY WHITTA** writing adap of **MARK MILLAR's** *Starlight* ... 20th Century Fox bringing Marvel's *Deadpool* to the big screen on 12 February 2016... **ASTRID BERGÉS-FRISBEY** is Guinevere in **GUY RITCHIE's** *Knights Of The Roundtable: King Arthur*... **Fargo's** **NOAH HAWLEY** writing a Universal monster movie... **DENNIS HAYSBERT** joining videogame adap *Dead Rising*... **MATT SMITH** starring in *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies*... *Interstellar's* **HOYTE VAN HOYTEMA** joining Bond 24 as Director of Photography... **MATT DAMON** in talks for **ZHANG YIMOU's** supernatural epic *The Great Wall*... **ALEC BALDWIN** and **DANNY GLOVER** starring in *Andron - The Black Labyrinth*... **ORLANDO BLOOM** open to returning for a fifth *Pirates Of The Caribbean* movie... **MORTEN TYLDUM** directing **WILLIAM GIBSON** adap *Pattern Recognition*... **HUGO WEAVER** orbiting curse tale *Bird Eclipse*... Paramount locking in two *Terminator: Genisys* sequels for 19 May 2017 and 29 June 2018... *Mama's* **ANDRÉS MUSCHIETTI** directing *Shadow Of The Colossus* for Sony... Lakeshore Entertainment rebooting the *Underworld* saga... *Shrek's* **ANDREW ADAMSON** adapting Dark Horse Comics golem tale *Breath Of Bones*... *Annabelle's* **GARY DAUBERMAN** writing time travel caper *Crime Of The Century*... and many, many more...

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NEXT MONTH #255

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● All contents subject to change. This will be especially meaningful for anyone expecting a trip to Panem this issue. Go to www.sfx.co.uk for details.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Never miss an issue – see page 32

Loncon Overload

David Langford on a memorable sci-fi meet-up



► SF writer David Langford has had a column in *SFX* since issue one.
 ► David has received 29 Hugo Awards throughout his career.
 ► His celebrated SF newsletter can be found at <http://news.ansible.co.uk>.
 ► He is a principal editor of the SF Encyclopedia at <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com>.

So that was Loncon 3, the third World SF Convention in London. Gosh, it was big, and hard on the feet – the London ExCeL venue is close on a kilometre long. This was the first Worldcon to sell over ten thousand memberships; nearly eight thousand people turned up. Were there really 5,324 programme events? The numbers ran from 1,003 to 5,324, but that's secret code for Day 1 Item 1 to Day 5 Item 108. Still, there was a *lot* happening.

Robert Silverberg offered me a vital statistic: "I've calculated that George RR Martin's annual income exceeds my total net worth. And I am *not* a poor man."

My one panel appearance was "Evolution of the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction", where we editors shamelessly bragged about reaching 4.5 million words that month. The room was gratifyingly crowded despite 18 rival attractions in the same time slot. No one hurled rotten tomatoes. That counts as a win.

Finding Charlie Stross's birthday bash and other invitation-only events was a challenge. The Long March to private party rooms went via a huge bare unused ExCeL hall and past four more such vast empty spaces, like parking bays in Iain M Banks's General Systems Vehicles. Weaklings turned back, but Langford is made of sterner stuff when major issues (free booze) are at stake.

I remember breakfast with Christopher Priest; afternoon tea with Jo Walton; George RR Martin plotting horrid butchery of edibles in the fast-food arcade; being accosted by Pat Cadigan with "Langford, you dog"; spending too much; event clashes that made me miss the *SFX* party, though later I found our editor downing freebies at the Gollancz do. Sights in the tent-filled Fan Village hospitality area included two TARDISEs, the Iron Throne and a Hawaiian Tiki Dalek which made it into *Private Eye*'s friendly cartoon coverage.



The *other* SF Encyclopedia panel was a "Reunion" of survivors from the 1979 first edition, before I got involved: mighty critic John Clute, Malcolm Edwards of Orion/Gollancz – both Loncon guests of honour – and Peter Nicholls, who created the original *SFE*. At panel's end he received a long standing ovation as First Founder... an emotional highlight of the weekend.

Having once enjoyed a free trip to a US Worldcon courtesy of the TransAtlantic Fan Fund (TAFF), I try to support the fundraising auctions and had donated three small stained-glass panels made by the late great Bob Shaw, acquired for peanuts in the 1980s. Would anyone buy them? Halfway through the auction a panic-stricken auctioneer whispered: "We can't find them!"

No one hurled rotten tomatoes at us. That counts as a win

This was my cue to run all the way from the auction room (ExCeL Level 3) to the official repository where I'd handed in the stained glass for pickup (Level 0). Then back again with the bag. Puff, gasp, is this what heart attacks feel like? Bob Shaw's creations sparked furious bidding and fetched nearly £800. I'm still boggled.

Despite fears of trouble from block voting in the Hugo Awards (see my *SFX* 251 column), the "conspiracy" was a flop. At the ceremony, Ann Leckie's popular *Ancillary Justice* added the best novel

Hugo to its Clarke, Nebula and other awards; our own Charlie Stross's deeply perverse Lovecraftian unicorn story "Equoid" won as best novella, his third Hugo. The most repellently controversial nominee placed below No Award, and Hugo administrators sighed with relief.

Loncon ended on 18 August with a flying visit from Brian Aldiss, who was at the first Loncon in 1957 and who turned 89 that day. At the closing ceremony, unforgettably, the entire audience serenaded him with "Happy Birthday To You".

There's more, much more, but I have only this one page. **SFX**

David Langford thinks the Loncon committee did a bloody good job.



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Fictional Felines

Bonnie Burton knows the dark truth about cats

Cats have been worshipped as far back as the Second Dynasty by the Egyptians and as recently as this year by most of the internet. So it makes perfect sense that cats are such a big part of sci-fi, horror and fantasy fiction.

Personally, I'm more of a dog person. My idea of the perfect companion is K-9 from *Doctor Who*, Muffit the robot dog in the original *Battlestar Galactica*, or even a direwolf from *Game Of Thrones*. To be honest, I'd take a lupine roommate over a cat any day. There's just something about cats; they seem like they allow us to live with them while secretly plotting our demise.

Perhaps I'm judgmental about cats because of the usual company they keep? I've lost count of how many villains like to keep them as pets. There's Ernst Stavro Blofeld's white cat from the Bond movies; Dr Evil's hairless cat Mr Bigglesworth in *Austin Powers* and even Dr Claw's sinister pet MAD Cat in the animated series *Inspector Gadget*, which handled the evil screen time while Claw lingered in the shadows. And let's not forget Mrs Norris – Filch the groundskeeper's cat in the *Harry Potter* series – who made sure to always spy on the young wizard and attempted to wrangle escaped owls.

Then there's Azrael, the mangy cat that belonged to bitter wizard Gargamel in *The Smurfs*. Don't get me wrong. I realize that cats are hard-wired to stalk and kill their prey, but I'm not sure I'd put Smurfs in the same category as mice and birds. Though, in Azrael's defence, those little blue dudes do look delicious. Is that raspberry?

So let's scale up. What happens when humans are the prey? The harsh rules of the 3.5 edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* mean regular cats can successfully kill off level-one peasants. In *Doctor Who* we come across the nurturing, kind Catkind nurses, whose pleasant behaviour should probably



have been a clue that all was not as it seemed. Go back to classic *Who*, and the Cheetah People give us a much better clue of how a man-sized cat might behave: they gallop on horseback hunting down humans, much like the apes in *Planet Of The Apes*. The Werecats in Stephen King's movie *Sleepwalkers* attack humans almost like energy vampires. They terrorise a rural Indiana town, feed off energy from female virgins, have sex with their family members and have telekinetic abilities. Thankfully, regular cats can kill them with their tiny claws, so I suppose regular cats are good for something.

But before every cat lover who reads this column decides to send me hate mail on their Hello Kitty stationery, I will admit that there are

and swagger that would make any hip-swinging alley cat jealous. And true salvation for the cat, for me, came from the animated realm. I spent most of my childhood yelling, "Thundercats, ho!" and pretending that our neighbourhood alley cats were actually Tygra, Panthro, Lion-O and crew. *Thundercats* showed that cats can possess enough moxie to battle even evil wizards like Mumm-Ra The Ever Living, and made me believe that all cats had special powers that made them powerful on any planet. Which, actually, isn't far from the truth. It's all about how they channel it... **SFX**

Bonnie didn't have nearly enough space to cover every fictional cat. If your favourite isn't here, please write angry letters to SFX.



► Our columnist Bonnie Burton, a San Francisco-based author, has written a number of books including her latest – *The Star Wars Craft Book*.
► Bonnie appears on the massive "Geek & Sundry" and "Stan Lee's World Of Heroes" YouTube channels.
► More of her writing can be found at www.grrl.com.

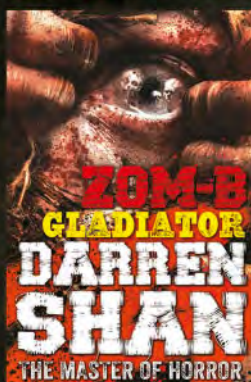
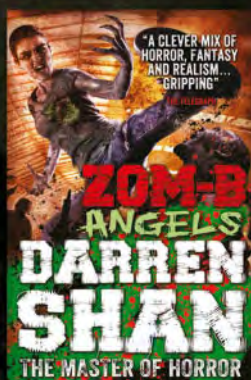
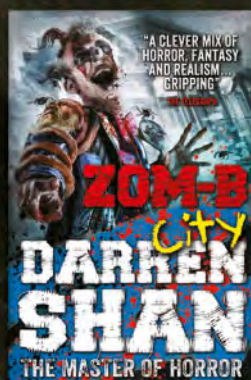
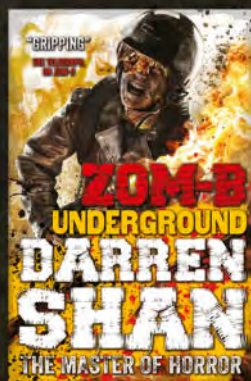
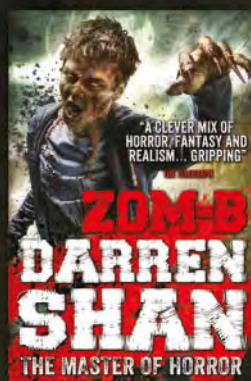
Maybe I judge cats because of the company they keep?

at least a few well-known sci-fi felines that love us and have no intention of stealing our breath or souls in the night.

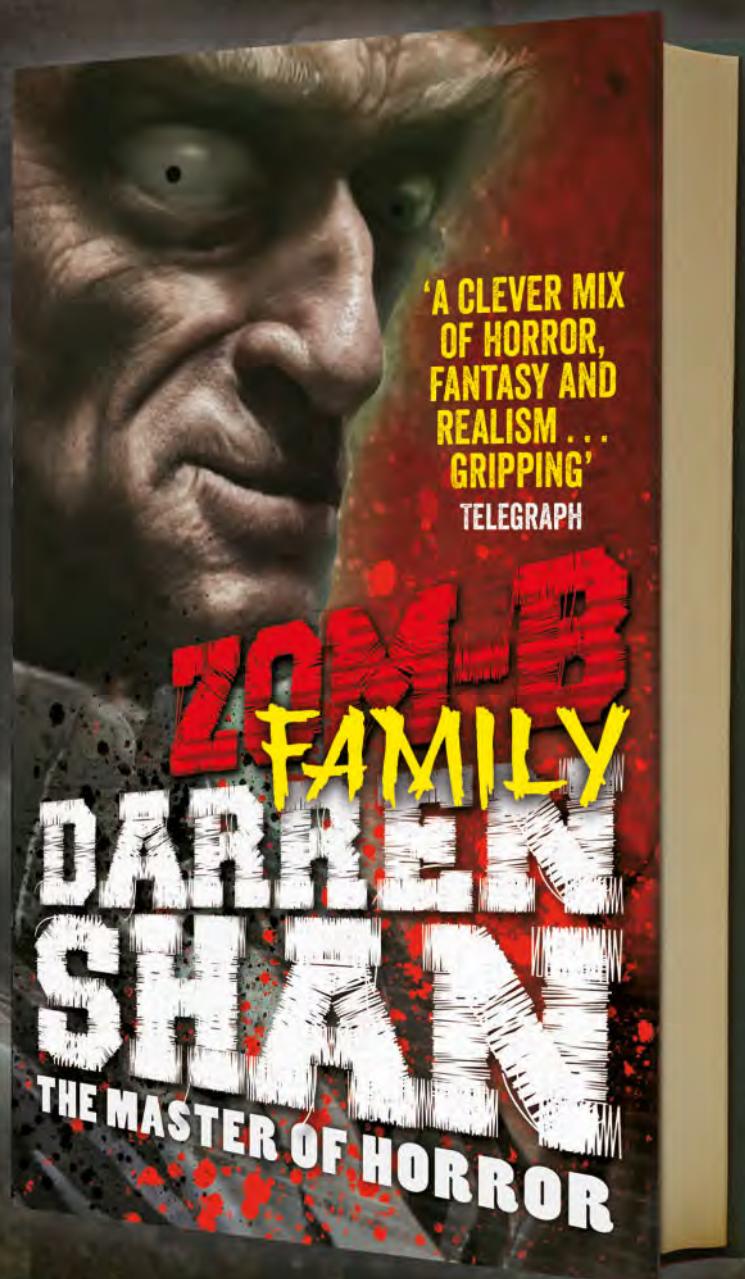
Aslan – the Christ-like lion from *The Chronicles of Narnia* – loved humans, and also saved them by sacrificing himself to the White Witch. Jones the cat kept *Alien's* Ellen Ripley distracted from the pending doom she and her crew faced. Spot the cat made the android Data seem more human on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

There are even humanoid cat heroes out there. *Red Dwarf's* Cat had a certain fashion style

FROM THE MASTER
OF HORROR
**DARREN
SHAN**



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Rich

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YOUR SFX



THIS MONTH'S LETTERS COMPILED BY
Alex Cox,
Operations
Editor

► Good day. I'm the new face on the SFX team. They've let me loose on your letters presumably so that I may smother them with the sardonic wit and squirted bile that results from a punishing decade of technology journalism. Seems I'm in the perfect mood for talking Peter Capaldi, then...

WRITE IN AND WIN!

Look, we're not trying to bribe you. We know you don't need an incentive to write in with your opinions on the hottest sci-fi topics.

But here's one anyway: an excellent star letter prize from our friends at Black Library, available every month to the writer of the letter that tickled us the most. This month's star letter writer, Helena Nash, gets a copy of Warhammer epic *Priests Of Mars* – the first

novel in Graham McNeill's Mechanicum series – and *Salamanders: The Omnibus*, which collects together all three novels in Nick Kyme's Tomb Of Fire trilogy. Enjoy!



HOT TOPIC HOW IS CAPALDI'S DOCTOR SINKING IN?

Peter Capaldi is a good actor. The Doctor is one of the all-time great fictional characters. But I'm not seeing him as *the* Doctor. Yes, he is broody and not a "safe", cuddly floppy-haired boy. But something just isn't quite clicking. The following is a short list of things that is stopping me from seeing Peter Capaldi as THE Doctor:

1. Mumbling. Peter C's enunciation of the lines can sometimes fall short. I am not sure whether this is an acting choice, his natural way, or down to direction or editing.
2. Scottishness. The full accent doesn't suit the Doctor. He is an alien; he shouldn't sound like he is from any particular place, and definitely shouldn't be defined in the show as such.
3. Peter Capaldi. On his casting I was delighted, but now all I see is the familiar actor Peter Capaldi. He is too well known to be this alien character. Eccleston was not an unknown, but he wasn't exactly mainstream. I'd seen David & Matt in a couple of things prior, but had no difficulty in seeing the Doctor, and not seeing them...

Of Mars, SFX forum

I was lucky enough to attend the NYC screening of "Deep Breath" and it was there that all my apprehensions about the Twelfth Doctor vanished. Capaldi's "angry old man" behaviour, mixed with the strange young quality of the character, makes him so enjoyable to watch.

I loved Matt Smith, but Peter Capaldi has truly stolen the spotlight and reignited my desire to work on *Doctor Who* someday. Who knows, the Doctor does have a daughter, doesn't he? It's just too bad that Malcolm

Post Apocalypse

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SPECTRES FROM THE PAST

My thanks to Nick Setchfield for the nostalgic Total Recall article on the back page of SFX 252.

As an eight-year-old member of my junior school's Puffin Club, I was sent my 45p copy of *Monsters Of The Movies*, alongside *Milliganimals* and *You're A Good Sport Charlie Brown*, and was terrified by the dot-eyed leering zombie at the end of the book. So much so that I used that self-same grisly black-and-white shot as the opening image of the *Zombies In Games* seminar I chaired at Loncon3 in August. It still gives me shivers all these years on.

Much as I enjoyed reading about Dr Moreau, Barnabas Collins and The Manster, I eventually threw the book out because I was scared of it falling open on the zombie page. And then spent years telling everyone about this terrifying long-lost tome.

Pity I didn't hang onto it – there's a copy on Amazon going for £3,878.06. Thanks again for exorcising my childhood trauma!

Helena Nash, email

► Will today's youngsters, none of whom will have to endure grainy half-printed monster literature or recurring nightmares from second-generation VHS dubs of *Videodrome*, ever be haunted by the same lasting memories? Perhaps not to the tune of nearly four grand.

Tucker can't make an appearance in the TARDIS...

Rachel Leishman, NYC

This is the shallowest and most childish season ever. It really is an embarrassment to the proud history of the show. If I had one thing to say to Moffat it would be "that's a funny way to resign".

Michael Newton, Facebook

I think he's brilliant. He's

crotchety, and a complainer, and I have no problem with him, his acting, or the writing. True there are episodes I absolutely dislike ("Love And Monsters" is a prime example), but I have loved all the Doctors and their episodes equally. My allegiance doesn't sway because my allegiance is to the Doctor, not the actors playing him. As for Moffat and his ➔

ask the SFXperts

If you can't remember it, we can! Your sci-fi problems solved...

SWEET PEA

O This has been driving me nuts, which is ironic because the show I'm looking for is actually about a bunch of peas. I remember it was a cartoon on the BBC in the late '80s/early '90s, and can almost hum the theme tune, but not much else. I think they made a boardgame of it as well where the peas were made out of Play-Doh and there was a chance they could be crushed or cut in half!

Max Thompson, Newcastle

JORDAN SAYS:

The show you're looking for is *The Poddington Peas* – a 13-episode BBC cartoon that aired in 1989. It has a cult following because of the pun-tastic names of all the peas (a baby called Nap-Pea, a hippy called, well, Hip-Pea) and a theme tune that might just be the ultimate earworm. Don't look it up on YouTube unless you want to be humming it for days. The game is actually *Grape Escape*, where the goal is to make it around the board without your "Goop" grapes being destroyed by some horrible day-glow death contraption. Yes, it was that brutal.

BRAIN TRAINING

O I remember something shown at teatime on BBC Two a couple of times years ago which I think would be from the 1980s. It was about some kind of genetically engineered superhuman. I think the symbol of the project was Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man.

Mark Gallagher, email

GUEST SFXPERT BEN YATES SAYS:

This is *Now And Again*. It was about Michael Wiseman, who died in a tragic subway accident only for his brain to be implanted into a genetically bio-engineered body by the US Government. He is then put to work as a secret agent, but all Michael wants to do is go back to his old life. As for Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, the title sequence featured it. Interestingly while Michael's new body was played by Eric Close his old body in the pilot was played by John Goodman. It's only currently available on DVD in Australia.

PEACE KEEPER

O I am looking for your help. I remember reading a book once where the main hero went to the toilet and flushed, then travelled in time. I think it had a picture of an Oscar-type statue on the cover and may have been written by Bob Shaw.

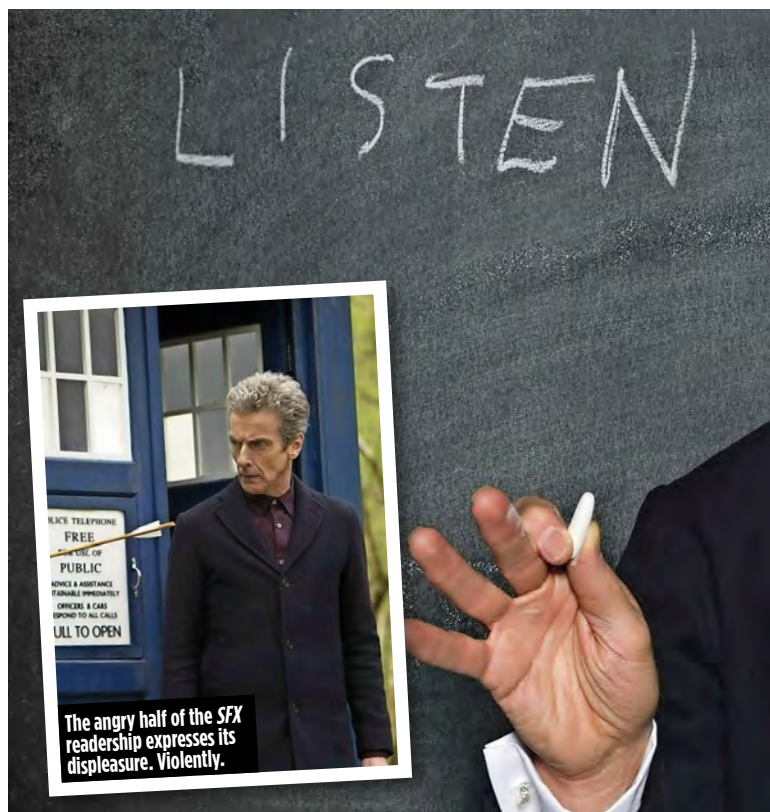
Richard Cotton, email

DAVID LANGFORD SAYS:

It was indeed by Bob Shaw, an old favourite at British SF conventions. His early novels were all serious; *Who Goes Here* was his first full-length comedy, published in 1977. Hero Warren Peace and the Oscars (superpowered cops who look like the Oscar statue) return in the 1993 sequel *Warren Peace*, reissued as *Dimensions*. This was Bob's last novel, written after a terrible illness, and the humour isn't so successful.



Send us questions at sfxperts@futurenet.com. Want to be a guest SFXpert? Head to www.sfx.co.uk/SFXperts to see a list of unanswered questions.



writing, many people blame him for perceived wrongs because it's easy to do so. They can say this and that is horrible, or that he himself is horrible, but I would love to see them do Moffat's job. If they think they could do better, let us see it!

Briar Duclos, Facebook

He is unsettling and awkward, untrustworthy and peculiar. Which is exactly how I found Tom Baker when I was a kid and started watching *Doctor Who*. So, in short, he's just perfect.

Kate Leatherbarrow, Facebook

It's fascinating that people see moments and touches that are reminiscent of earlier Doctors – a line delivery in the style of Tom Baker, a Pertwee pose, some Hartnell gravitas – because that happens every time the character is recast. It totally depends on what you've seen, and your interpretation of it. One thing that's totally clear from interviews, and now from seeing him at work on screen, is that Peter Capaldi is thoroughly invested in this role. He's one of us, we can trust him not to let us down.

Michael Lupton, Facebook

He launches the TARDIS with ONE LEVER! No pirouette, pull this, twist that. One lever. Job done. No messing about. Says it all.

John Buckett, Facebook

Peter Capaldi is one for the

"He's one of us. We can trust him not to let us down"

purist fan only, and will lose key demographics (kids and women). Mumbling old wrinkly Scottish moaner doesn't cut it. I give it one more series after this one before ratings take this Doctor off air.

Sanders29, email

Capaldi's Doctor is like *House* – gruff and uncaring, with intense vulnerability. This Doctor asks (and thankfully hasn't yet sufficiently answered) the big questions about the kind of person he is ("Am I a good man?" "Who frowned me this face?") and seems to have a slightly different moral compass than his recent predecessors. I find Capaldi's Doctor the most interesting part of the show, but the writing from Moffat has been underwhelming.

Christine M Hinton, DeBary, FL

► In-office opinion of the new series is so far inconclusive – even from episode to episode – though Capaldi probably could do with slightly better enunciation if Jordan's well-worn rewind button is anything to go by.



"The mumbling isn't a problem if you just do what I've written here."

OCULUS RIFT

I agree with Sarah Dobbs: *Oculus* invites the viewer to draw their own conclusion – that the whole thing was a result of a supernatural force or a delusion that the two siblings were suffering from. A sequel would just lessen this belief. After all, it's quite clear Kaylie was mad in the first place.

Oculus is a film with two morals: let an obsession get the better of you, and it won't be just your life you're destroying. And some promises should never be kept.

Gary Watson, Northumberland

Don't count on there not being a sequel. If I know anything about WWE (and by extension WWE Studios) it's that any small success will be exploited over and over again. Director Mike Flanagan has stated that he's up for it, too – at least with the right script.

EGGING ON

I was revisiting *Buffy*'s season 2 finale, where Willow is attempting to restore Angel's soul, when I noticed that one of her utterances appears to be "transport a soufflé



Wonder Woman's natty shade of brown isn't charming our fashionistas.

"They should reshoot it with a bit of colour"

to L'Oréal". I'm mystified as to how the conveying of a savoury dish to a major cosmetics company could possibly restore a vampire's soul.

Paul Holden, Preston

Willow always did have some curious methodology.

WONDER BLUNDER

Nick Setchfield was right in issue 253's Soapbox – superhero costumes are very dull nowadays.

I am tempted to suggest that they reshoot the scenes with Wonder Woman in with a bit of colour added to her costume, or just add it digitally after. Even Marvel has not escaped the dull- ➔

THIS MONTH IN SCI-FI HISTORY

SFX 190
January
2010



James Cameron unleashes CG epic *Avatar*, and *Twilight*-mania continues with our preview of *New Moon*.

SFX 125
Christmas
2004



Peter Jackson's *King Kong* gets an early preview, Brandon Routh is *Superman*, and *The Incredibles* hits the cinema.

SFX 59
Christmas
1999



We go big on *The World Is Not Enough*, talk to Terry Pratchett, and the big movie is, er, *Muppets From Space*.

15 YEARS
AGO

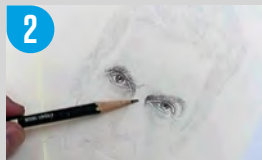
VIDEOLINK The best of YouTube and beyond



Doctor of Seduction

<http://bit.ly/DoctorDinosaur>

This deeply upsetting remix from YouTube's bunnymustard takes bits of Capaldi debut "Deep Breath" and makes it slightly more weird than it already was. The inevitable Malcolm Tucker cursing is of course included.



Curmudgeon Art

<http://bit.ly/CapaldiDrawn>

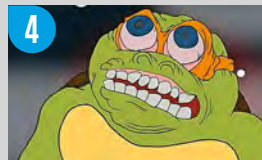
Watch a mesmerising time lapse of the Doctor being drawn – eyebrows first, no less – in pencils by The Art of Billy, with a brutally good remix of the *Doctor Who* theme playing in the background. Such lovely shading on the hair!



Haunted Realms

<http://bit.ly/HauntedRealms>

Excellent and easily-scared man Richard Cobbett submits to the suffering and ploughs through spooky 1996 FMV-horror game *Realms Of The Haunting* so you don't have to. Turns out, he quite likes it. Who'd have thought.



Mikey's Nightmare

<http://bit.ly/NaughtyMike>

Terrifying. Lousy Pandeh peers deep into the psyche of the Turtles to reveal Michelangelo's ghastly true motivation in this brilliantly animated and, we have to presume, completely unofficial short. Strictly for adults.



What's Inside?

<http://bit.ly/JPBlindBag>

Brown sofa'd thing-critic Stuart Ashen digs up a 17-year-old *Jurassic Park: The Lost World* blind bag from Germany, opens it up, shows you the contents, and even eats a bit of it. Spoiler: it's rubbish. Like you hadn't guessed.



SOAPBOX

SFX WRITERS' PERSONAL RANTS

It's time to bring space back to the small screen, says **Richard Edwards**



Guardians Of The Galaxy has just become the biggest film of the year. To put that in perspective, a movie based on a little-known comic about a tree man, a talking raccoon and a guy obsessed with an audio cassette has made more money than new Transformers, X-Men and Captain America outings. Even taking into account that Marvel could strike box office gold with pretty much anything at the moment (yes, even a cigar-smoking duck), this wouldn't have happened if cinemagoers didn't *really* like going into space.

It's been three years now since the cancellation of *Stargate Universe* marked the end of over 20 years of uninterrupted spaceship adventures on TV – these days only the entirely CG *Star Wars Rebels* (see page 127) and November's Syfy miniseries *Ascension* (page 12) are flying the flag. It's easy to see why networks fell out of love – despite the enduring popularity of *Star Trek* and love for the rebooted *Battlestar Galactica*, space was perceived as a niche sub-genre loved only by geeks. But surely *Guardians* and co have changed that, and shown that life among the stars can appeal to the masses – and given the popularity of a weekly trip

to Westeros, venturing out into strange new worlds of a more interplanetary persuasion can't be too much of a stretch.

Right now the parallels with the late '70s are obvious, when the universe-changing success of *Star Wars* prompted a brief dalliance with the original *BSG* and *Buck Rogers In The 25th Century*. The difference now, however, is that with modern visual effects and genre-literate, geek-savvy showrunners, there's a very real possibility new shows could actually be good.

Life among the stars *can* appeal to the masses

And there's no limit to what series set in space could do – they don't just have to be another iteration of *Star Trek*. Starship shows could be fun, dramatic, adventure-filled... the only limit is the imagination of the writers.

It took long enough for comic book heroes to bring their movie success to TV with the likes of *Arrow* and an abundance of new shows starting over the next year. Hopefully TV networks will be slightly quicker embracing a wholesale return to outer space.



"Some of us can handle massive talking trees"

costumeitis that seems to be spreading. Hawkeye's suit was not the purple I was hoping for, and they must have been under some contractual obligation to show the actor's face as well because he never wears his iconic mask/cowl either. I actually think this is also why *Guardians* was such a big hit, colour and action aside; they aren't afraid to show a non-human side to their characters. Some of us can handle massive talking trees or wise-cracking raccoons.

Peter Gilbert, The Midlands

Does this mean you prefer Batman in classic plum and lilac? Are Hulk's bright magenta jorts due a comeback? More purple might be a solution to drab supers, but it's probably not the right one.

SUPERNATURAL

I noticed in issue 252's TV Preview that you included *Supernatural* season 10. What has happened to season 9? There was a time when we had caught up with the States (nearly) but some of us are still waiting to find out what happens at the end of season 8.

Ann Hodnett, email

Why is *Supernatural* treated so badly here in the UK? About to start season 10 in America, yet ITV dropped it after a few seasons. Then Living picked it up, rushed through a series, and now it seems they can't be bothered with it.

Robert Graham, Lincoln

Sky Living has certainly upset fans by dropping the show, but rejoice – the region 2 DVD of season nine hits UK shelves on 20 October. Hopefully that's some small consolation. **SFX**



WAHF WE ALSO HEARD FROM

● **Keith Tudor** (happy to have *Under The Dome* back, but wondering if budgets will ever allow it to be finished – we hope so, Keith); ● **Ilona Kosmowsky** (wholeheartedly agreeing with our one-star drubbing of Howard Jacobson's otherwise-beloved *J* – “this will give me the strength to find something more interesting to read”); ● **Peter Elliot** (wholeheartedly disagreeing with our two-and-a-half star assessment of Luc Besson's *Lucy* – “Scarlett Johansson certainly was not a ‘blank slate automaton’ for the majority of the film”); ● **Jessica Fynboh** (excitedly calling Colin Baker's Doctor “sassy Sixie” and making us all feel a bit wrong in the process); ● **Matt Bellamy** (cursing us for using the term showrunner – “Are cameramen soon to become ‘actioncapturers?’” We might start using that one just for you, Matt); ● **Llama God** (returning to WAHF to suggest that Groot's touching gift of a self-grown flower was in fact him giving a little girl “a handful of his seed” – behave yourself!); ● **Mary Bicknell** (faithfully indoctrinating her little one – the awesomely named Jack Flash Gordon – into the ways of sci-fi via the pages of *SFX*; start ‘em young!); ● **Neil Hickman** (loving Rocket from *Guardians*, but not necessarily the man behind him; “If Bradley Cooper played a space raccoon in all his films, I might like him more...”); ● **John P Dunkerley** (making a convincing case for *Guardians* in fact being a *Farscape* reunion movie, which it's not, but we can all dream); ● **Clive Seymour** (suggesting that we cover more radio and audiobook content, which certainly isn't outside the realm of possibility – Mr Berriman has been suitably harangued); ● **Simon Brown** (who was sad to see Dave Bradley's sign-off last issue, but rest assured Simon, we're not actually rid of him yet. He doesn't seem to want to leave the office); and many more...



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Wishlist

Illustrating what you want to see in new SF films and television.

This Month: *Scooby-Doo* gets a live action reboot

Scooby-Doo

YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

A Traditional Story

1 If *Scooby-Doo* returns you want a tale taken straight from the cartoons. "An old school feel, no real monster just a crazy insurance/inheritance scam and a classic Fred Jones trap," says the ornately monikered **Phillip Tiberius Horatio Hodgkiss**.

No Tongue-In-Cheek Humour

2 In a similar vein, you want *Scooby* taken seriously. Well, as seriously as an adaptation of a cartoon with a talking dog in it can be. "Lose the irony of the movies aimed at the 'faults' of the TV series, just play along with the in-house clichés," says **Neil Howard**.

Adapt Mystery Inc

3 "Take a leaf, no, several leaves, hell, the whole damn book from the *Mystery Incorporated* reboot – a series that was deft, postmodern and knowing, but without the sneery self-mockery that crept into the previous films," says **Fantomas**. "MI managed to incorporate references as diverse as *Blue Falcon* and *Dynomutt to Hellraiser*, and it did it with wit and panache."

CGI Scooby

4 There were some calls for a *real* Great Dane to portray Scooby, but **Belle Tain-Summer** was among the majority who thought (good) CG was the only way to go. "Keep Scooby CG. A trained animal will never be the same as his cartoon antics. No darned Scrappy Doo though, in any form."

Casey Kasem Tribute

5 Sadly the man behind Shaggy's iconic stoner drawl died earlier this year, and you don't want it to go unmentioned in the new *Scooby-Doo* film. "Some sort of tribute to the late, great Casey Kasem, because out of them all, it was Casey's voice that brought the series to life," says **Crypticmirror**.



FRAN KRANZ
SHAGGY

ELLEN PAGE
VELMA

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL GARNER



CHANNING TATUM
FRED

VIN DIESEL
SCOOBY

KAREN GILLAN
DAPHNE

ARE YOU LISTENING?

Hollywood, our meddling readers are here to help

► Scooby Dooby Dooooont make another please. The last two were awful, the two previous ones just adequate. Although I seem to have watched them all...

Mr Cairo

► A CGI Fred, Shaggy, Velma and Daphne but a real Scooby Doo.

sportyrich

► Why can't we just have a feature length cartoon? **glunark**

► Let's have Sarah Michelle Gellar back! **Mr Lavigne**

► Karl Urban as everyone. **Tim McNulty**

► Keep Matthew Lillard as Shaggy. He's the perfect live-action embodiment of the character. **John Isles**

► An animated sequence by Travis Falligant and a tribute to Casey Kasem. **Michael McCauley**

► Put Gillian Anderson in it and I'll watch it. **Rob Ryles**

► Scooby-Doo meets *Cujo* would be far better. **Joni Boba Deadpool**

► Big NO to Scrapy, ruined the cartoon series. **Graham Wright**

► A real Great Dane that can talk... I'd pay good money for that. **Paul Butler**

► No bloody Scrapy! **Andy**

► Have them run into the Winchester. Put Scrapy in a demon trap and exorcise him.

Xan Juliff

► More Nic Cage. **Niall Evans**

► Make it darker - a genesis story directed by Christopher Nolan.

Stephen Doyle

► Scooby-Doo meets *Saw*. **Ryan Weavell**

► Asian martial arts Scooby-Doo. They fight against Kaiju-style monsters and traditional Asian ghosts. **Kirsty Leanne**

► Bruce Campbell. As Ash. **Dave Jackson**

► A completely CGI animation movie of Scooby-Doo would work much better. **Kevin Hall**

► I'd like to see Scooby's inept cousin Scooby-Dum return as the villain, with an evil plot to contaminate the world's supply of Scooby Snacks with a strong hallucinogenic compound.

Medium Atomic Weight

► Get rid of Fred's neckerchief. Sacrilege, I know. **hornetxrt**

coming soon

Guardians 2 and Who Series 9

We want to know what you'd like to see when Marvel's *Guardians Of The Galaxy* and Auntie Beeb's *Doctor* return to screens.



Send in your ideas about our current Wishlist by visiting bit.ly/SFXwishlist

Event Horizon

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CON REPORT

FantasyCon 2014

5-7 September 2014, York

The British Fantasy Society descended on York for a weekend of books, live podcasting and... karaoke? Steven Ellis was there



That's fantasy magic being weaved right there.

FANTASYCON IS NOT THE biggest convention in the calendar, but it does claim to be one of the friendliest and this was indeed the case. Some of the best and brightest in the literary world descended upon the historical city of York for a weekend of fun, frivolity and a little serious discussion about the state of the sci-fi and fantasy genre.

The daytime schedule was packed with panels, readings and book launches while the night was filled with Paul Cornell's game show, karaoke and more informal gatherings. A particular highlight was the first ever live performance of Emma Newman's *Tea And Jeopardy* podcast. Emma, aided by her butler Latimer, subjected a very game Toby Whithouse to some tea, cake and mild peril with hilarious results.

The event culminated on the Sunday with the British Fantasy Society's annual awards banquet. Attendees were treated to a slap-up meal while Cornell hosted the

awards ceremony with style and grace. Winners and nominees can be found on the BFS website.

At times FantasyCon seemed a little heavy on people from the world of publishing, but that didn't mean there wasn't plenty for regular punters to do. There was hardly a moment throughout the whole weekend when there wasn't something interesting, entertaining or informative going on, and at several points it was hard to pick which event on the schedule to attend.

Everyone was in good spirits and always up for a drink and a chat, from regular attendees right up to the guests of honour, which included author Kate Elliott and artist Larry Rostant. Charlaine Harris was on especially great form, stopping to spend time with anyone who approached her and being generally wonderful. From start to finish FantasyCon 2014 was a thoroughly entertaining weekend.

www.britishfantasyociety.co.uk

CON REPORT

Fighting Fantasy Fest

7 September 2014, Ealing

David Bradley dug out his battle axe and a six-sided die to celebrate the legendary series of gamebooks

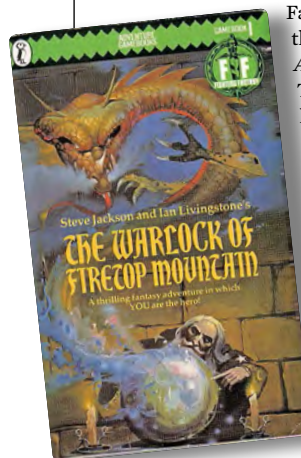
IT'S BEEN 32 YEARS SINCE

The Warlock Of Firetop Mountain turned Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson into superstar authors, and an entire generation into gamebook obsessives. That generation got together to celebrate its unfailing SKILL, LUCK and STAMINA in September for the first ever convention dedicated to Fighting Fantasy. Organised by author Jonathan Green, it gathered writers, editors and artists from across the years for panels and autograph sessions.

The crowd cheered Livingstone and Jackson in the main hall and the pair talked wittily about the founding of Games Workshop and their 1982 book deal, shared curios like an absurdly mangafied Japanese cover for *Deathtrap Dungeon*, and promised a new story starring Zagor the Warlock for the 40th anniversary in 2022. There was a surprise appearance by Geraldine Cooke, the original commissioning editor, while Tin Man, the games company turning Fighting

Fantasy into apps, presented their new digital version of *Appointment With FEAR*. The event also saw the launch of Green's lavish hardback history of the phenomenon, *You Are The Hero*.

The event proved there's still a lot of love after more than three decades for a series which introduced many to the delights of both fantasy storytelling and role-playing games. <http://bit.ly/FightNF>



CON REPORT

NICEcon 2014

13-14 September, Bedford Corn Exchange

Big name guests, small scale con. Steven Ellis reports.

NICECON 2014 WAS a great convention and the entire weekend really felt like a comic lover's playground. The whole event had a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, and considering this event is only in its third year the organisers certainly have a talent for drawing a good range of guests.

An impressive crowd of comic creators were on hand, from *The Walking Dead* artist Charlie Adlard and *Judge Dredd* creators John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerro through to writer Garth Ennis and cover artist extraordinaire Adi Granov. As well as these big names there was a good mix of smaller and independent creators, making for an excellent selection of talent and it really felt like there was something for everyone.

All the artists and writers attending were happy to chat as well as give autographs and sketches; many were also selling original art and taking paid commissions. The con schedule featured panels throughout both days which included discussions and interviews with various guests about their work.

Here's hoping that NICE goes from strength to strength and continues to grow – although we hope it doesn't grow too much, because right now the organisers have a great balance of big names with a small intimate aesthetic and that really does makes for a satisfying convention experience. <http://www.nicecon.co.uk>



CON REPORT

Gollancz Festival

13 August 2014, Waterstones Piccadilly, London

Jordan Farley ventures into cyberspace for the SF publisher's one-of-a-kind festival

LONDON-BASED BOOK lovers had their pick of literary events this August, but what of those poor folk who couldn't make it to the big smoke? SF publishers Gollancz had them covered with a multimedia festival that encompassed both digital and physical events.

Between 9am and 5:30pm the Gollancz website, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Facebook and Habbo Hotel pages (alright, we made that last one up) hosted a series of talks, Q&As, Google hangouts, panels and readings with top authors including Stephen Baxter, Alastair Reynolds and Scott Lynch. Sitting at a computer might not be the ideal con experience, but embracing the web and social media meant everyone could get involved.

From 6pm the Festival burst out of the internet pipes and spilled over into Waterstones Piccadilly. The evening programme opened to a charismatic reading from Joanne M Harris and never lost steam, with a Joe Hill Q&A (chaired by Sarah Pinborough), a panel with Gollancz's new crop of debut authors and a hugely entertaining solo Q&A with Patrick Rothfuss. A signing with all the authors on hand followed to round off a successful first Gollancz Fest. With any luck it will return next year.

<http://www.gollancz.co.uk>



28 Days Later

The highlights of your month in sci-fi

15 OCTOBER-11 NOVEMBER 2014

Staying In

- **Mondays** – Start your week with *Star Wars Rebels* on Disney XD, *Under The Dome* on Channel 5 and *The Witches Of East End* on Lifetime.
- **Tuesdays** – *The Leftovers* and *Haven* are competing for your attention at 9pm on Sky Atlantic and Syfy respectively. *The Originals*' second season continues on Syfy an hour later.

- **Wednesdays** – *Wolfblood's* third season wraps up on CBBC from 26 October, *The Strain* is on Watch at 10pm and *Sleepy Hollow* returns to the Universal Channel for its second season.



- **Thursdays** – The fight continues in *Defiance* on Syfy at 9pm, while Ioan Gruffudd's immortal investigator features in *Forever* on Sky1 at 9pm.
- **Saturdays** – The *Doctor Who* series 8 finale can be found on BBC1 on 8 November. Award yourself some bonus SFX points if you can guess what time it starts.

Going Out

- **17-19 October** – Meet comic creators galore, participate in workshops or sit in on panels at the inaugural *Lakes International Comic Art Festival*. <http://www.comicartfestival.com>

- **25 October** – Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Emma Newman (right) and Julian Quaye are the guests of honour at *Bristol-Con*. <http://www.bristolcon.org>



- **8-9 November** – Suit up Space Marines, the *Black Library Weekender III* welcomes a battalion of *Warhammer* authors to Nottingham. <http://bit.ly/BWLIII>
- **9-16 November** – Leeds comic art festival *Thought Bubble* returns with events across the city, and a full convention from 15-16 November. <http://thoughtbubblefestival.com>

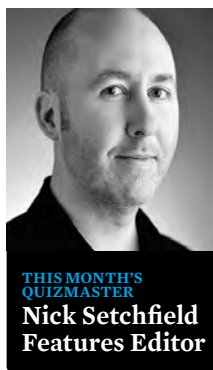
At The Pictures

- **17 October** – Michael Bay's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* reboot.
- **24 October** – A storybook bogeyman steps into the real world in top Australian horror *The Babadook*.
- **29 October** – Daniel Radcliffe sprouts *Horns* in this Joe Hill adaptation.
- **31 October** – Get spooked with re-releases of *Ghostbusters* and *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*, or Blumhouse horror *Ouija* is also released today.
- **7 November** – Take a journey beyond the limits of human space travel in Christopher Nolan's latest brain-bender *Interstellar*.



Blastermind

Take our Dan Dare quiz and prove how much you know about Britain's original space hero. Who Dares wins!



- 1 Name the man who created Dan Dare.
- 2 *The Eagle* launched in a) 1949 b) 1950 c) 1951?



- 3 How was Dan billed in *The Eagle*?
- 4 What global crisis led to Dan's mission to Venus in his first adventure?
- 5 Digby was Dan's faithful comrade – but what was his first name?
- 6 Arch foe the Mekon ruled which alien race?
- 7 Name the controller of the International Space Fleet.
- 8 Dan's radio adventures in the 1950s were broadcast on which station?



- 9 What inspired Dan's uniquely shaped eyebrows?
- 10 What was the name of Dan's ship – and who was it named after?
- 11 What connects Dan Dare with *Dr Who* And *The Daleks*?
- 12 What did Dan sometimes smoke?
- 13 What's Dan Dare's middle name?
- 14 Which of these was not a Dan Dare story: a) Operation Fireball b) The Web Of Fear c) The Secret Of Pluto?
- 15 What was *Private Eye*'s Dan Dare spoof called?



- 16 Dan Dare returned in issue one of *2000 AD* – but was the artist a) Mike McMahon b) Dave Gibbons c) Massimo Belardinelli?
- 17 How did Dan survive into the far future for his *2000 AD* adventures?
- 18 *2000 AD*'s Dan Dare commanded the Legion of the Lost Worlds. What was the name of their ship?
- 19 Which David Bowie song mentions Dan Dare?
- 20 Dan starred in the relaunched *Eagle* in 1982 – but what was different about this Dare?

ANSWERS 1 Frank Hampson 2 b) 1950 3 Pilot of the future 4 Food shortage 5 Albert 6 The Treeners 7 Sir Hubert Guest 8 Radio Luxembourg 9 A war injury sustained by Frank Hampson 10 The Anaesthetist *The Eagle* 11 Peter Cushing's Doctor 12 The Secret Of Pluto 13 MacGregor 14 c) The Secret Of Pluto 15 Dan Dare 16 c) Massimo Belardinelli 17 He was placed in suspended animation 18 The Fortress 19 "DJ" 20 "DJ" He was the great-grand-son of the original

HOW DID YOU DO?
How big's your brain?



0-5
Stripey



6-10
Digby



11-15
Flamer Spry



16-19
Jocelyn Peabody



20
The Mekon

The World Of SFX

Don't stop here: there's always more for you to read...



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TOTAL FILM

► Every month *SFX's* sister magazine *Total Film* offers fantastic coverage of all aspects of the movies. The latest issue, on sale now, is the Massive Winter Preview. Daniel Radcliffe draped in Juno Temple and a snake on the cover proves his new movie *Horns*, based on the ace Joe Hill novel, is miles away from *Harry Potter*. Meanwhile inside you'll find pages and pages of exclusives, including Brad Pitt in *Fury*, Robert Downey Jr in *The Judge* and some lovely *Hobbit* goodness. Find *Total Film* on the newsstand, or on your digital device.



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END

THE END OF THE WORLD IS COMING.



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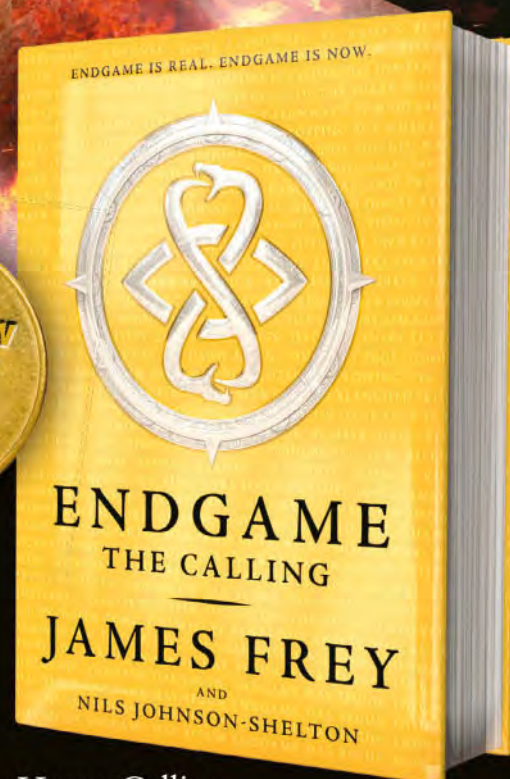
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PLAY NOW. OR WE ALL LOSE.



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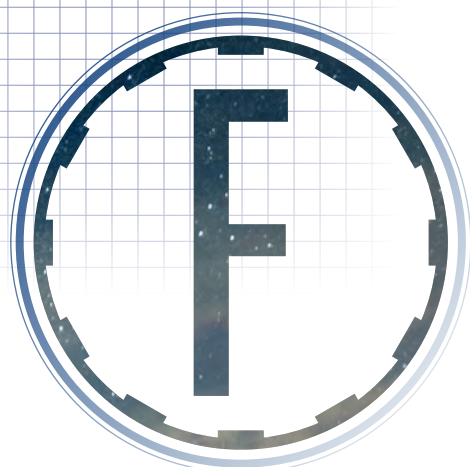


HarperCollins

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S MISSION TO THE STARS  SECRECY, PHYSICS AND FORGOTTEN DREAMS... NICK SETCHFIELD EXPLORES INTERSTELLAR

ONE STEP BEYOND





FOR ALL ITS BLOCKBUSTER

muscle and IMAX awe, there's some deeply personal rocket fuel propelling *Interstellar*, Christopher Nolan's new, starbound epic.

Born just too late for the space race, Nolan and his younger brother Jonathan (Jonah) would sit spellbound by grainy reels of NASA footage, the roaring fire trails of the mighty Saturn V already symbolising a vanishing age of exploration.

"Our uncle was an engineer and worked on some of the systems used in the Apollo program," says Jonah Nolan, the rocket-dazzled kid who grew up to write this ambitious piece of big screen science fiction. "He'd send us Super 8 films of the launches. It fed not just my interest in space but my interest in cinema. We'd sit around and watch 8mm films of these massive rockets launching and feel transfixed by the possibilities. And by the achievement.

"Look at all of the ideas that go into each and every one of those rockets," Nolan continues, speaking with the lifelong passion that clearly powered the film's screenplay. "All of the thinking, not just over ten years but millennia, all of the tools, all of the ideas and innovations that mankind has come up with in the last ten thousand years of recorded history, all distilled into one incredibly unlikely machine, powered by a continuous explosion that literally hurtles you into space. It's a terrible kind of beauty, but a beauty nonetheless."

COUNTING DOWN...

Colliding cutting-edge physics, eyeball-slamming spectacle and human drama, *Interstellar* has been readying for launch for nearly a decade now. Jonah Nolan boarded in 2007, when the project was still in brainstorm mode. At that stage a very different director was set to bring the tale to the screen.

"We were on a scout for *Dark Knight* when I got a call saying that Spielberg wanted me to do it," Nolan remembers. "Steven and [producer] Lynda Obst had partnered with Kip Thorne, who's a brilliant physicist and one of the fathers of gravitational astronomy. It was a loose mandate – they wanted to do a space adventure film as close to the real physics and a grounded take on it as possible. My own feeling about where humanity was at that



"IT'S A TERRIBLE KIND OF BEAUTY, BUT A BEAUTY NONETHELESS"

moment with regard to space exploration was that it wasn't going to happen!

"If you measure human achievement in altitude – setting aside the space probes we've sent out – and ask how far humans have gone, the answer is the Moon. And that's a hell of an achievement, but that was more than 40 years ago, and we haven't gone back in close to 40 years. So when Steven was asking for a realistic space exploration film the simplest answer was 'No film'. Because we're not exploring space anymore. To people like myself who grew up looking at the space programme and thinking that was a high-water mark for human achievement, it's been a very depressing age."

Nolan was determined to restore a little Apollo spirit to the world. "When I started writing the film I was in the middle of an era in which there was a very deep cynicism about humanity and where we were headed and what we were doing. And I felt like I wanted to watch a film that took a slightly different tack, and said there are certain aspects of humanity that are incredibly noble. We wanted to make something that celebrated some of the more noble aspects."

Spielberg chose to leave *Interstellar*, allowing Christopher Nolan – supremely bankable after his Gotham City trilogy – to bring his brother's vision to cinemas.

"It fell apart," says producer Emma Thomas of the Spielberg incarnation of *Interstellar*. "We were lucky enough to be around. Chris

actually had a separate idea for a script that he'd been working on that also took place in space. So Chris then took his script and Jonah's script and melded the two together. Chris has always wanted to make a large scale adventure movie set in space. He's spoken in the past of the films he's watched and loved as a kid, from 2001 to *Star Wars*, and that's very much the sort of thing that he wanted to address at some point in his career."

Famously cagey, Nolan's involvement ensures that *Interstellar* is encased in the kind of maximum-encryption secrecy that would defy even Julian Assange. It's said potential cast members were only permitted to read the script in his office. Star Ellen Burstyn jokes that vows of silence were signed

Christopher Nolan directs 13-year-old Mackenzie Foy.





Less horror, more awe – *Interstellar* is inspired by the golden age of space exploration.



Anne Hathaway reunites with the director of *The Dark Knight Rises*.



Jessica Chastain tries to remember what "x" stood for again.

"in blood". This may be his most jealously guarded project to date. Is that level of secrecy vital for him creatively?

"There are two things at work here," shares Thomas. "Chris and I both feel very strongly that when people go and see the film for the first time we want them to be coming with fresh minds. We don't want them to have preconceptions of what the film is and what they're going to see because inevitably that then affects their viewing of the film. Beyond that we try and work in as quiet and as private a way as we possibly can. And what that does provide for Chris is the ability to stay true to his original concept of what the film is going to be, rather than having a bunch of noise and feedback that he's listening to from outside. I think the two things feed into each other."

We can't quite imagine Christopher Nolan on Twitter, *SFX* says. "No!" laughs Thomas. "Not at all. I don't know how he'd have the time to do Twitter, to be honest. I don't know how anyone has time to do Twitter when they have a job like directing films!"

BRIDGING THE GAP

Rumours of the film's storyline have rushed to fill the fact vacuum. Parallel dimensions? Time travel? First contact with alien species? This much we do know: the Earth is on the brink of ecological disaster and a last, desperate space-shot is our only salvation. Also crucial to the plot is Kip Thorne's pet concept of

the wormhole, also known as an Einstein-Rosen Bridge: a theoretical shortcut through space. Thorne remains onboard as executive producer (and how many executive producers can claim a scientific paper titled *Wormholes, Time Machines And The Weak Energy Condition* on their resume?).

"I definitely had trouble wrapping my head around some of these extremely outlandish concepts," laughs Thomas, "but Kip, apart from being an incredible mind, is actually a very good explainer of difficult concepts, and he was very patient with all of us lesser beings. I have left the process of making the film with a much greater understanding of astrophysics than I had going in. I now know the difference between a black hole and a wormhole. Before I had no idea."

"I wanted to see a vision of space that didn't look like anything I'd seen before," says Jonah Nolan. "If you look at the images the Hubble telescope has captured over the years they give you an insight. As they refine it and upgrade it and make it more powerful and allow it to peer ever deeper into the more distant recesses of our galaxy and our universe, you begin to realise just how dense and rich the universe is. You also begin to sense that there may well be some impediments that we haven't yet fully understood – dark matter, dark energy – that prevent us from really understanding just →



TO THE STARS

Acclaimed SF novelist Alastair Reynolds on the promise of *Interstellar*



As fine a film as Ridley Scott's *Alien* remains, it had a pernicious effect on one particular strand of SF. The spaceship film used to be a vehicle for the exploration of an almost limitless set of ideas, ranging from evolution, artificial intelligence, contact with the alien, to the question of the ultimate limits of human potential. Even the comedic *Dark Star* embedded deep thinking about the falsifiability of experienced sensations – heady stuff indeed. After *Alien*, though, horror became the dominant mode of the spaceship story. Rather than a vehicle for taking us to different places, the spaceship had become the equivalent of the haunted house. It was a trope that would resonate through the SF cinema of the next 30 years, reaching a particularly disappointing nadir in Scott's own *Prometheus*.

Dare we hope for something better from Christopher Nolan? The indications are promising. Whatever you make of Nolan's films, they are put together with intelligence and an avoidance of the crassly obvious. On the basis of the trailer, *Interstellar* looks like a serious, substantial SF movie – and for once the point of the spaceship seems to be exploration. The scientific credentials look good, as well. The "interstellar" part of the travel seems to be facilitated by an artificially generated wormhole, an idea that sounds science fictional but which has serious theoretical credentials. Indeed, the film's science has been shaped by the input of legendary astrophysicist Kip Thorne. Weirdly enough, this won't be the first Matthew McConaughey film to be underpinned by the wormhole physics of Thorne, for that was also true of *Contact*.

So – let's be optimistic, and hope that *Interstellar* is both as good as it looks, and that it ushers in a new wave of intelligent spaceship films. I can't wait to see it.

"Wanna go make some crop circles?"



These team-building days were starting to get out of hand.

"THERE'S A VERY HUMAN STORY GOING ON AT THE HEART OF IT"



how dense and rich the universe might be. In visual terms we might begin to realise that we live in a bit of a backwater, that this might be a relatively dark part of the universe, and that our journey would take us to places with visions and sights that we haven't even dreamt of."

For all its deep space splendour and brain-mashing physics, Team Nolan insist it's the characters that drive *Interstellar*. "It has all of that spectacle and all of that scope but at the same time there's a very human story going on at the heart of it," says Emma Thomas. "My hope is that people will go and see this film and be wowed by the adventure and the look of it and the worlds that they're taken to, but at the same time be emotionally engaged by the much more tangible story that they're watching, that the characters are living through."

SHOOTING STARS

The cast includes Anne Hathaway, Jessica Chastain and the talismanic Michael Caine, now on his sixth collaboration with Nolan. Leading them is Matthew McConaughey as Cooper, the widowed pilot who takes both crew and audience into the unknown.

"There are some pretty massive concepts that the audience have to deal with in the film, some pretty out there stuff that happens," says Thomas. "So it was really important that whoever your protagonist is it's somebody that you're with, because they have to carry the audience through. Matthew is entirely that guy. You're with him all the way and he carries everyone through."

And Nolan grounded the movie in other ways. This is, after all, the man who nailed Batman's cape to the real world. When it came to making *Interstellar* he prioritised practical locations and environments, building realistic starship interiors.

"It allows the actors to have something to respond to," says Jonah Nolan. "We went to visit the set at one point and we're standing inside one of the spaceships. There were the usual kind of machinations – you roll picture, the lights go down, space appears through the window... and then the whole thing begins shaking. This is the way Chris likes to make movies. It's as real as possible. The actors aren't sitting against green cloth having to make it all up. They're actually getting to react to it, so that sense of awe and wonder is genuine."

You might imagine that *Interstellar* is Christopher Nolan's first true science fiction film. You'd be wrong. Aged seven, he shot Super 8 spaceship tales, two-and-a-half-minute epics he'd rush to the Kodak labs. As he told *SFX* in 2007, he was crushed by the results. "I remember how they were supposed to look, not how they actually look," he said. "In my head they're big and technically very accomplished and now I look back and they're a little bit crude."

You wonder if *Interstellar* finally scratches that cosmic itch. "Yeah, I think so," says brother Jonah. "There's some triumphant imagery. It's amazing what you can achieve when you add a Hollywood crew to those dreams." **SFX**

Interstellar is released on Friday 7 November.

THE HOLE TRUTH

Jonah Nolan on the "dark beauty" at the heart of *Interstellar*



"The challenge with the black hole is that it's a black hole. If cinema is light, all the way back to the Lumière brothers, then portraying a black hole is a bit of a challenge. And I think our FX guys have actually nailed it in terms of capturing that dark beauty. We spent an awful lot of time thinking and learning about black holes in order to understand them and they become a big part of the landscape of the film, quite literally. I was fascinated by them, but if you work long enough you begin to understand the difference between the things that fascinate you and the things that will make for good cinema. Black holes are definitely in that space. They should be so compelling and so cinematic but they eat light! Working with Kip they came up with a wonderful way to visualise them. They built a corona into this one which is deeply beautiful. It gives you a sense for a black hole, it gives you something to hang onto."

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ALIVE
ON STAGE!

IN 3D HOLOGRAPHY

LIAM NEESON

CONDUCTED BY

JEFF WAYNE

BRIAN MCFADDEN

CARRIE HOPE FLETCHER

**JOSEPH
WHELAN**

**SHAYNE
WARD**

AND
**JASON
DONOVAN**

NOVEMBER 2014

28 LIVERPOOL ECHO ARENA
29 GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
30 MANCHESTER PHONES 4U ARENA

DECEMBER 2014

2 NOTTINGHAM CAPITAL FM ARENA
3 NEWCASTLE METRO RADIO ARENA

5 BIRMINGHAM LG ARENA
6 LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
7/8 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA *
10/11 BOURNEMOUTH BIC *
13 LONDON THE O2 (MATINEE SHOW)
13 LONDON THE O2
14/15 BRIGHTON CENTRE *

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AND CALLUM O'NEILL
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THEIR AIM IS TRUE

Arrow year three is upon us.
Joseph McCabe draws his bow...

IT'S FITTING THAT THE saga of the world's greatest marksman hit its targets last season. Breathtaking action? Bullseye. Sexual tension? Bullseye. Scope, spectacle, and heart-stopping suspense? Bullseye, bullseye... bullseye! But even after defeating his deadliest opponent ever in Slade Wilson (aka Deathstroke) and ridding Starling City of his super-powered army, can even Oliver Queen (played once more by the laser-focused Stephen Amell) triumph against Ra's al Ghul, arguably the most diabolical mastermind in the entire DC Universe? A villain who, time and again, has outwitted even the Caped Crusader himself?

ARROW THE THIRD

"It's all about identity," says showrunner Marc Guggenheim of the emerald archer's third season. "Is it Oliver or is it the Arrow? Can he be both? Normally our theme is Oliver-centric, and that's certainly true again, but this year what's cool is that theme also resonates with all the other characters. Laurel - 'Am I Laurel or am I my sister?' Thea - 'Am I Thea Queen or am I Thea Merlyn?' Dig - 'Am I a crimefighter or am I a father?' Felicity - 'Am I Oliver's crush object or do I have my own identity outside of him?' Everyone's got their own little question of identity and dilemma this year. It's cool to have a theme that we actually look at through all of our characters." Amidst that duality, however, lies a ➔



Leather. Hard wearing and hard to wear.



“When a vigilante kills, they’re doing bad things for a righteous purpose”

Big Bad (played by actor Matt Nable) with an agenda he believes is more noble than that of Starling’s champion.

“Evil people don’t think that they’re evil,” explains Guggenheim. “They think they’re doing the right thing. [Ra’s al Ghul] will have a similar self-righteous agenda. Those characters are just more interesting, and it’s more realistic. Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, all these jerks – they didn’t think they were jerks. When you have a vigilante character killing people, that’s a character who is doing bad things for a righteous purpose. You’ve got to contrast them with a bad guy also doing bad things for a righteous purpose, and force the audience to say, ‘Why is this guy a good guy, and why is this guy a bad guy?’”

PERSONAL TARGETS

Expect Oliver’s sister Thea (Willa Holland) to take her own journey between good and evil this year. When we left the former debutante, she’d abandoned both her brother Oliver and boyfriend Roy (Colton Haynes), and accepted the protection of Malcolm Merlyn (John Barrowman), whom she’d just learned was her birth father.

“One of the things we really wanted to bring into season three that was present in season one, but wasn’t really part of season two, was the element of mystery. Season one had a lot of mystery to it. There was *The Undertaking*, there was *The Well-Dressed Man*, who we revealed was John Barrowman. There was a conspiracy, and there was a sense of cloak-and-dagger that season two – because it was

more of a straight-up revenge story – didn’t have. One of the things that we decided at the beginning of season three is to re-inject that element into the show. John’s character Malcolm Merlyn allows us to do that because he’s a mysterious figure, but also [because] his agenda is mysterious. We ended season two, between him and Thea, on this note of ‘Ooh, what’s going to happen next?’ We’re actually going to show you the remainder of that scene in the limo, and what she said to him, and what he said to her after they basically looked at each other and we cut out. A big part of the fun of season three is the mystery of ‘Where is Malcolm? What is Malcolm up to?’ That will evolve and roll out slowly over the course of at least the first ten episodes.

“John Barrowman’s a series regular and he will be in at least 18 episodes this year. So he’s part of the cast now, officially. Our goal is to surprise you. He’s not the Big Bad of season three. We’re not going to end season three with a big fight between Malcolm and Oliver because we’ve done that already. So the fun of season three and Malcolm’s presence in it is

the unexpected ways that he is injected into the story.”

Merlyn’s relationship with Thea is just one example of what Guggenheim’s fellow exec Andrew Kreisberg tells *SFX* will be a staple recurring theme of season three – “new combinations of characters that haven’t previously been explored.

“There’s also opportunities for characters who hadn’t really gotten an opportunity to shine yet to really find themselves this year,” continues Kreisberg. “Especially Laurel and Thea. Katie [Cassidy] and Willa have been two of our strongest players and we haven’t always figured out a successful way to present their characters. This season it’s going to be their year. It’s always about Oliver, and Oliver’s certainly at the forefront, but there’s definitely room in this show to have some of the other characters, whether it be Dig or Felicity or Laurel or Malcolm, step forward and command an entire episode on their own.”

Indeed the backstory of Oliver’s Girl Friday Felicity will at long last be revealed in the season’s fifth episode (“The Secret Origin of Felicity Smoak”), and the pair’s relationship will be defined.

“They’ve grown in closeness through the years,” admits Guggenheim. “There’s been these intervening months that have happened between the finale and the first episode. We show that there’s almost a domestic quality to their lives and how they’ve grown together.”

Felicity’s feelings for Oliver will grow increasingly complicated with the introduction of another DC mainstay: Ray





"Look at that lining! Lovely."



Never insult a man's hat in public.



Queen Industries dress code: saucy.

Palmer. Better known as The Atom, he's played by *Superman Returns* lead Brandon Routh, and is set to put the cat amongst the pigeons at Queen Industries this season.

"Brandon Routh is great," says executive producer Greg Berlanti (who developed *Arrow* along with Guggenheim and Kreisberg). "He's so tall and strapping and charming, and he can go toe-to-toe with Oliver. We said we had John Wayne with Oliver, and we wanted Cary Grant. Brandon has that quality."

With the introduction of the Atom's alter ego, *Arrow*, explains Kreisberg, will further widen its embrace of the DC Universe's more fantastic

elements. "That was why we included the Mirakuru serum last season. We joked that it was our 'gateway superpower.' That if you could accept that much of a superpower then the Flash wouldn't be too much for you to handle. But the Arrowverse, which includes the Flash, is definitely changing, and it's a world in which people are going to accept that things that were thought to be fantastical – whether it's the Flash or whatever Ray Palmer's up to this season – they're going to realise they're living in a world where those things are possible.

"All that being said," adds Kreisberg, "the show is called *Arrow* and it's about Oliver Queen, and as much as fantastical characters pop in and out of his life, it's still about a man trying to save his city."

ALL A-QUIVER

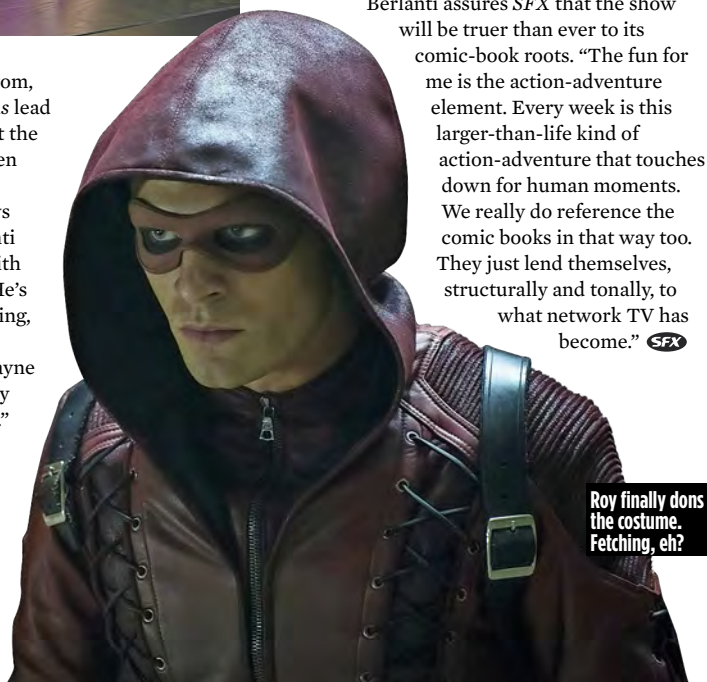
In addition to newcomers like Palmer and Ra's al Ghul, *Arrow* fans will be treated to returning faves like Roy Harper (who finally dons a red suit like that of his comic-book counterpart), the Flash (yes, a crossover with his new show is in the works), and Sara Lance (actress Caity Lotz), aka The Black Canary.

"We love Caity and she's amazing," says Guggenheim. "She really was such a big part of season two that we absolutely had to bring her back for season three. We made a recurring deal for three episodes, but we've got ideas and certainly a need beyond three. So we're gonna see her in a recurring role the way John Barrowman was recurring in season two..."

One of the things we want to do that's been on our bucket list since last year is we want to do a flashback story that basically takes Sarah from the shores of Lian Yu after the Amazo went down to Nanda Parbat and becoming a member of the League of Assassins. And explain how she meets Nyssa [al Ghul] and how that relationship developed. All that is something we are absolutely determined to do. We just don't know what episode it's gonna go in yet."

With the determination *Arrow* is showcasing on both sides of the camera,

Berlanti assures *SFX* that the show will be truer than ever to its comic-book roots. "The fun for me is the action-adventure element. Every week is this larger-than-life kind of action-adventure that touches down for human moments. We really do reference the comic books in that way too. They just lend themselves, structurally and tonally, to what network TV has become." **SFX**



Roy finally dons the costume. Fetching, eh?

Abs-olutely Amell

Arrow star Stephen Amell on Oliver's new attitude...



► What kinds of changes will we see in Oliver this year?

We find a happy Oliver in the premiere! But all of that comes at a price. And his attempt to instill some normalcy in his life doesn't go well. In our premiere episode, Oliver literally sees a vision of himself that scares the shit out of him, that colours the entire season... It will make more sense in October. I promise! [Laughs.]

► What can you say about the relationships between Oliver and the people he cares about?

Oliver and Thea's relationship is certainly gonna be different, and I'm excited for that. We find a changed dynamic with Oliver and Roy. They're in a good spot. We find Oliver and Diggle in a spot of conflict because of how much Oliver cares about Diggle. We find Oliver and Laurel in an incredibly good place. There's a great line in the premiere where she goes, "You catch 'em, I cook 'em." It's a really cool dynamic that they have. Oliver and Lance, everyone's in a good spot... Then we introduce a whole new set of problems. [Laughs.]

► Can you say what's in store for Oliver and Felicity?

The only way I can elaborate is to say that Oliver has one woman in his life this year, this season, and that woman is Felicity. That doesn't necessarily mean they are together. But all of the "Was he misleading her? Was it misdirection? Was it a ploy?" – all of that stuff we were left with in the finale – we resolve in the premiere. Fully, absolutely. You get a clear picture of how they both feel about one another. That doesn't mean they're going to be together though.

Emily Bett Rickards

Arrow's Felicity Smoak tells us why it's not all about the glasses...

• WORDS BY NICK SETCHFIELD • PORTRAIT BY BENNY HADDAD

Felicity Smoak is the ultimate breakout character. An appearance in *Arrow's* debut season was destined to be a one-shot deal until the power of viewer love promoted her to the show's frontline. Now a key player in Oliver Queen's vigilante taskforce, the timorous tech-queen injects the smarts and the snark, bringing light to the Starling City bowman's grim crusade. The role's a breakout for her alter ego, too. Until Felicity, the closest Emily Bett Rickards brushed against fame was a turn as a smalltown bride in a Nickelback video. Now she earns the kind of fan devotion reserved for the highest Tumblr deities. In London to promote *Arrow's* new season, she proves to be a bag of mischief when *SFX* catches up with her. "Fe-li-ci-ty Smoak," she sings, as we hit record. Is that the official Felicity Smoak song? "No, but it is the official Felicity Smoak jingle..."

BIODATA

► **OCCUPATION:** Actress
► **BORN:** 24 July 1991
► **FROM:** Vancouver, Canada
► **GREATEST HITS:** *Romeo Killer: The Chris Porco Story*, *Cowgirls 'N Angels 2: Dakota's Summer*, *Brooklyn*
► **RANDOM FACT:** Her first poster boy crush was Ashton Kutcher. "I had it inside my closet so my parents didn't know."

► Did you sense Felicity's potential right away?

I just thought she was great. Just a great little treat. At that time I didn't have a consistent job as an actor. I'd never had one. This is a total dream. I still feel like somebody's going to wake me up. You can't expect something like that. You can't expect somebody to expect something like that [laughs]!

► She's been embraced by the fans. Do you ever check out the online love or is that dangerous?

I never Google myself. That's weird. Someone told me "You should Google!" and I was like "That makes me want to puke." I don't want to do that. I can barely look at my yearbooks! I think it's cool, though. I mean, they really

like her; I don't know that they really like me! I'm glad that Felicity is just so relatable in that sense. She's kind of the audience's perspective, even from season one. She grows with the audience, grows into accepting what she's doing. I think the audience gets to see that and hopefully feel that – that's the goal. You guys need to feel it!

► It's all about the feels.

It's all about the feels. Which is a new term I've learned since doing this show. And shipping. I didn't know what shipping was. I was like "Wait, Costco does that? Fed-Ex?" There's Olicity

[fan fiction involving Oliver and Felicity]. And you should check... what is it... Oliggle?

► Illegal?

It's legal everywhere I'm from. Fifty states and Canada.

► Are the glasses key to your performance? Did you have to find the right pair of specs to find the character?

For the audition I used my glasses, and then they based Felicity's off of my glasses. I had to get new glasses for myself because I now associate those with Felicity so much that they aren't me any more.

► Do you get recognised without them, or is it a Clark Kent deal?

I'm very surprised when people recognise me. I do not really dress like Felicity. I remember walking out on set in the first season and David Ramsey was sitting outside the trailers. I was wearing a black leather jacket and black, black, black, black, black, and he was like "Hi, I'm... Oh my god!" He didn't even recognise me!

► Is that your secret biker chick side?

Yes, I'm so dark and mysterious. [Whispers into dictaphone] So dark and mysterious. *Mysterious*. I just want to make sure that's in there.

► Arrow's a show that's big on flashbacks. What would Felicity's flashbacks to five years ago be?

School. MIT. I think they'd probably involve the lacrosse player that she dated – which is weird, because you'd never think she'd date a lacrosse player. I always thought that was weird in the script. We'd probably see her taking a really bad trip on pot brownies. That would be a good one. The party where she accidentally took pot brownies because she thought they were real brownies.

► Are these romcom flashbacks? Sitcom?

I don't know. If you were to go back to her childhood I don't think it was as funny. That's probably why she's hiding behind the screen, right?

► You're lucky on *Arrow* – you get all the funnies.

I do get the funnies.

► And does that feel like a gift?

Oh yeah. That's a golden ticket, every time, because they don't go to anybody else... thank god, because I want them! Because I'm selfish. And humble. And so *mysterious*. **SFX**

Arrow season three comes to Sky 1 HD in October.





CONTINENT

THE TRAILER'S BIG ON BEASTS AND BLASTS BUT DIRECTOR TOM GREEN ASSURES STEPHEN KELLY THAT HE'S MADE A **MONSTERS** SEQUEL WITH A MESSAGE



FOUR YEARS AGO, DIRECTOR Gareth Edwards would unwittingly audition for the job of rebooting *Godzilla* with *Monsters*: a low-budget film that followed a young man and woman through Mexico's "Infected Zone", an area where a crashed NASA probe has helped spawn huge tentacled creatures. As anyone who's seen Edwards's debut knows, *Monsters* wasn't really about monsters at all. It was an otherworldly, almost

tranquil study of character and relationships, and the fear of monsters both internal and real. Made on a shoestring budget of \$500,000 with a six-strong crew and extras mostly made up of whoever was on location, it earned critical acclaim and \$4.2m. And now it's time for *Monsters: Dark Continent* – the sequel that isn't really a sequel at all.

Gareth Edwards remains as executive producer but has passed directorial duties to

Misfits' Tom Green, who, like Edwards circa 2010, is making his full-length debut. And then there's the film itself. In the trailer released earlier this year, featuring a spoken-word poem about "giant sand bugs", it was revealed that the setting had shifted to the Middle East and, rather than relationship drama, focused heavily on explosions and large-scale monster attacks. Reactions were, naturally, mixed. Had the filmmakers used the first film's indie

TALS SHIFT



cred platform to shovel out just another monster movie?

"No one's trying to coin it in from the first one, it really isn't about that at all," says Green, who has also co-written the script with Jay Basu. "It's not 'let's just make a shoot-em-up version of the first'. It's about the conversations the first one started. I think, from the trailer, it looks very much like an action movie and I'm not sure that's

completely representative of the film that's being made. I think what people can expect is a completely different film from the first one but one that's very much part of the legacy. It's contemplative and has slightly quieter moments – like Gareth's film does. It's a character film. It's going to get seen as a sequel but it isn't, really. It's only a sequel in terms of ethos, to have that human story against a science fiction backdrop."

That human story is told through two soldiers: eight tour veteran Noah (*Welcome To The Punch's* Johnny Harris) and young rookie Frankie, *Game Of Thrones'* Joe Dempsie. It's set ten years after the events of *Monsters* and the Infected Zones have spread across the world – including to the Middle East, where the pair must not only deal with the creatures, but a new wave of insurgencies. Like the first film, *Monsters: Dark Continent* will follow the ➔

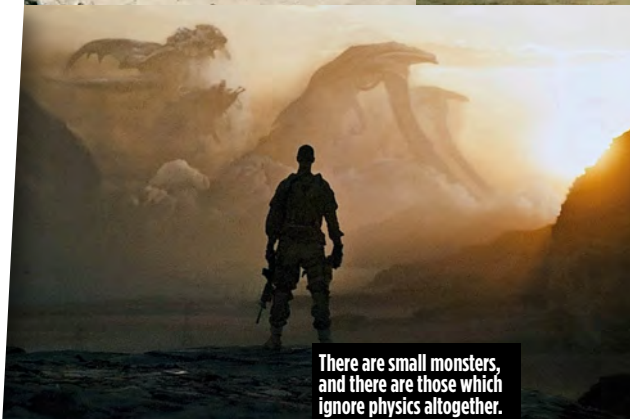
More explosions means a brazen disregard of health and safety regulations.



Johnny Harris ponders his excellent beard.



"Have those trainers been approved by the quartermaster?"



There are small monsters, and there are those which ignore physics altogether.

pair through an Infected Zone, where Noah is tasked with killing a fellow soldier who has gone rogue. Along the way, he and Frankie are "forced further and further apart" by both circumstance and a clash of ideals.

"Frankie's very idealistic about the notion of warfare," Green explains. "I think, though, by travelling with Noah, he becomes enlightened to the futility of war. In some ways it's a coming-of-age story for him. Conversely, Noah is on a spiritual descent due to a life spent in conflict, which is taking its toll. We explored post-traumatic stress disorder based on conversations with real soldiers. A lot of material in the film is based on their first-hand accounts. As such, I'd say it's a starker, darker, rawer film. *Monsters* was raw but I don't think it was so raw emotionally, I think it was more peaceful and contemplative, whereas this looks at some very dark and difficult issues around the realities of war... It's certainly not *Pacific Rim*."

DESERT STORM

Monsters: Dark Continent was filmed in Jordan and, although the second film looks bigger in scale, Green insists that the budget was modest, and entailed enlisting the help of the Jordanian military.

"We couldn't really afford to build sets. I wanted the film to have great scale, a great cinematic quality, but we needed somewhere

"THEY'RE ROAMING, HERDING... THEIR ONLY CRIME IS THEIR SIZE"

you can rotate your camera 360 degrees. In Jordan you get this wonderful texture and scale. It was extraordinary *Lawrence Of Arabia* country. We were able to get access to American-style military hardware from the Jordanian military. They helped us an awful lot. So we were able to get Black Hawks and all those things to make the film as authentic as possible, which was fantastic. It was a challenge, though. We really were pulling this out of the back of a couple of trucks and firing live ammunition in a sensitive area... It was pretty daunting for a first film."

Focusing the film on a US-occupied Middle East, of course, comes with certain connotations. Since the early noughties, the American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan – and the subsequent battle against insurgents – has dominated the news. By throwing in these huge alien creatures – who *Monsters* established were, in fact, relatively docile and only attacked when provoked – into the conflict, is Green trying to provide some sort of allegory?

"Genuinely, for me, that is for the audience to decide. In the screenings we've had so far, a lot of people seem to find it representing different things. That's not a cop out, that's genuinely what we talked about a lot: not representing one thing specifically. I think what everyone took from *Monsters* is that the monsters aren't the real monsters, but I don't think Gareth set out to make any points about immigration. The same goes for George Romero's *Dawn Of The Dead*: that it was about consumerism and the fear of HIV – but then it's also just a monster movie set in a shopping mall..."

"But, really, it was interesting to set it there to make a point about the human condition, warfare and what warfare does to people. That's the wider context of the film and I hope that makes it layered and interesting, and again, an allegory for people to find their own meaning in. I really did not set out to make a film with any particular point about any conflict. It's more about putting characters in an extreme scenario. I think a lot of the

We've heard of dogs chasing cars. But this?



Never a better time for *Airwolf*-style stunts.



"Seriously, these uniform infractions are getting way out of hand."

"So... I... I point this at the big things and press the bang button? Is that it?"



sequences in it are relevant to any war – be it World War 1, 2 or Vietnam."

ALIEN EVOLUTION

The setting has informed both the story and the evolution of the Monsters themselves – making them bigger, stronger and more varied.

"My thought was that the monsters are able to adapt far quicker than human or animal species. As they spawned in the Middle East, they developed. As it's a harsh, arid environment, they got harder shells, and they've evolved to match their environment. The main thing is that they felt organic. It was

great fun to design new creatures as well – it felt like *Jurassic Park* or something."

As alluded to earlier, the ending of 2010's *Monsters* gives its follow-up an interesting subject to tackle: that the alien creatures are not giant man-eating monsters from space, but merely animals that eat, breed, love and are more of a nuisance than a threat. Does *Monsters: Dark Continent* continue the theme?

"Yeah, definitely," says Green. "I feel that they're fairly benign creatures. They're absolutely huge – and mine have grown! – but they are, in a way, just like elephants: these huge lumbering creatures that have emotional connections with one another, that have

young... They're roaming, they're herding, looking for water, looking for resources and just surviving, really, in a way that any other animal in a natural world does. Their only crime is their size – they walk through cities and unintentionally leave devastation in their wake. They are a problem and people feel that they need to get rid of them. And I guess that's part of the whole idea behind the film, whether that's the right answer."

And what of the world of *Monsters* in general? If *Monsters: Dark Continent* does well, are there more stories to be spun from Edwards's creation?

"They're wonderful films, and they need to keep being made," says Green. "I feel like this film may find a more international audience, a wider audience, but the integrity of the filmmaking is the same and that's what it represents to me: the legacy of Gareth's film. I don't think Gareth would've wanted me to continue his narrative – that was personal to him, and my film is personal to me. I think it can be a franchise of people coming in and creating an original piece of work in this world. Anyone can discuss these creatures. That'd be fantastic. That'd be the best way to do a *Monsters 3*. That would be a brilliant legacy and a brilliant franchise – if it can be continued. I think it can." **SFX**



Specialist Japanese adult material hits the mainstream at last.

Monsters: Dark Continent is released on Friday 28 November.



MYTH MAKERS

“**W**E’VE MADE SOME big changes this year,” *Atlantis* co-creator Johnny Capps tells *SFX*. Familiar words in TV land, but for once it doesn’t feel like an empty promise.

As the heir to *Merlin*’s Saturday evening fantasy crown *Atlantis* still has a lot left to prove. The 13-episode first series was met with solid ratings but critical indifference and the notable absence of the Arthurian adventure show’s rabid fan base. What most forget, however, is that even the mighty *Merlin* took a year or two to find its groove, and *Atlantis* shows every sign of a similarly meaningful evolution in its second series.

“Our subtitle this year is ‘A New Dawn,’” says Capps during the final few weeks of filming. “It’s something the Oracle says to Jason very early on. To us that line heralds the fact that the series has moved on, and it’s a new start to the series as well. It’s a nice way of marking that.”

While wandering around the show’s colossal Chepstow studio (fun fact: it was once a Tesco warehouse), that new start →

Jordan Farley journeys to the fabled realm of Chepstow for the darker, deadlier second series of *Atlantis*

isn't immediately apparent. There are newly constructed sets – a beautiful Courtyard Of The Sun built around a decadent water feature, a dusty market street flanked by two-storey stone houses – and extensions to existing environments, but the changes are subtle and almost unconsciously immersive. When Pythagoras actor Robert Emms sits down in front of *SFX*, iPhone in hand, the now-everyday device suddenly looks startlingly alien.

“We wanted to make *Atlantis* feel like more of a lived-in world,” says Capps. “That’s what *Game Of Thrones* does so well and it’s one thing we’ve really focused on this year. We’ve also changed the tone of the series somewhat in that the actors’ performances are slightly more naturalistic than before. We’ve changed the costume designs. There’s a lot more dirt and sweat. And we worked very hard on the effects, so it’s been a fascinating journey this year making a fantasy show feel very real, visceral and rooted.”

WAR STORIES

Changes like these might not be the headline-grabbing kind, but one major change in *Atlantis* is bound to raise a few eyebrows: life has moved on a whole year at the start of the second series. Pasiphae is living in exile and there’s been a big shake up on the throne. King Minos is dead; long live Queen Ariadne!

“When an audience has waited a year it always feels slightly disappointing if you just pick up straight away. But also, we really like to shake things up!” Capps says. “We left series one with Minos a broken man, in very ill health, realising that Pasiphae betrayed him. We start this series a year later and on hearing of Minos’ death Pasiphae has sworn to take Atlantis back and we have Ariadne as the young queen trying to step into her father’s shoes.

“We’re putting this young princess into this very powerful position and she’s in the situation of a young Queen Elizabeth I – she’s a strong and dynamic woman but she has to survive in a very male world and prove herself as a young leader. Does she need to become ruthless like Pasiphae, or can she rule with a kind heart? Does she marry for love or strategically to keep Atlantis safe? It’s a really interesting journey for Ariadne because we see her growing up and the sacrifices she has to make to become a leader.”

Wasting no time, the opening two-partner will see war with Pasiphae’s forces erupt on the streets of Atlantis. Expect battles, bloodshed and the kind of scale series one could only dream about. “I’m very excited about the first two episodes,” Capps enthuses. “It tells quite an epic story and we’ve really pushed what you can achieve

How many Atlanteans does it take to kill a spider?

“WE’VE PUSHED WHAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE WITH TV TIME AND BUDGET”

on television time and budget. We have massive battle sequences and it’s a fascinating story about a young queen thrown into this huge battle and how Hercules, Jason and Pythagoras support her. It really sets the tone for this series; that lives are at stake, that a city’s at stake and this isn’t just a nice bawdy romp. This is now a much more mature series which is about the struggle for power and the ripple effect on everybody at the core of that.”

There have been some big changes behind the camera too. Though the writing team is largely intact (with *Misfits*’ Howard Overman once again penning the bulk of the episodes) the approach to plotting has undergone a significant reappraisal.

“Myself, Howard, Rachael Knight and Julian Murphy have storylined the series in a very different way this year in that it’s very serialised, which to us makes the series a lot richer and more emotionally dynamic,” Capps explains. “In series one they were self-contained stories. We’d become aware that people are watching television in very different ways now, so we wanted

to reflect that change. We still have a story of the week but the story of the week has intriguing character arcs through it with a lot of two and three-parters. It thickens up the stories and there’s a lot more jeopardy and intrigue. The struggle of feuding families and the struggle for power is a big theme throughout the series. It’s been very hard work but it’s been really good fun in that we’ve changed the way we tell stories.”

A lot of the thinking behind the new and improved *Atlantis* has been spurred by the fact that, where *Atlantis* was once a show written for 7pm but broadcast at 8:30pm, it’s now a show written and realised with a later timeslot in mind. “The interesting thing about doing high concept shows, especially for a Saturday night audience, is that as you get to know the characters and as the world thickens you can get darker and darker,” says Capps. “*Atlantis* was always designed for a seven o’ clock audience, but it was scheduled at eight thirty and it will be scheduled at eight thirty again this year. That’s exciting for us as programme makers because at eight thirty you can go a little bit darker and you can be a little bit more real and visceral with the world and so that was something we were keen to push and something we felt was right for the format of the show. We were very keen for it still to have a very broad audience appeal but we felt the

“That’s not a knife. This is a knife.”



"Cross my palm with silver, dearie."



We hope they had primitive sun tan lotion in Atlantis.

show was robust enough to push it in a darker way and explore the characters' darker sides as well."

DESTINY QUEST

For Jason, Hercules and Pythagoras, heartbreak awaits as their darker sides are fully explored, but the three Atlantean amigos start series two by living up to their billing as the Ancient Greek *A-Team*. "We set up in the first episode that they're the only ones who can work for Ariadne covertly if she needs people to go on missions for her. And in episode one she asks them to go on a very dangerous mission."

Having been cursed with her legendary serpentine hairdo in series one, Medusa will return in a "surprising way" which may eventually allow for a rekindled romance with Hercules. And there are some key new characters making a big impact in *Atlantis* this year, including Ariadne's fiercely loyal right hand man Dion (*300*'s Vincent Regan); Telamon (*Camelot*'s Clive Standen), who vies for Ariadne's hand in marriage; and Medea (*Being Human*'s Amy Manson), a crucial figure for Jason in the myths.

"Jason's journey in season two is very much about accepting his destiny and early on he realises that he needs to stop Atlantis being destroyed," says Capps. "But he's got a big

journey to go on, because as you know we left series one revealing that Pasiphae, Jason's sworn enemy, is his mother. So it's a very interesting story of a young man who accepts his destiny but doesn't realise what that entails – a very dark past about his mother and his father. That all gets explored in the series.

"Jack's done an extraordinary job as a young actor," Capps continues. "He's really grown into the role and there are some heartbreaking moments for him because not only does he have his past and his parents to deal with but he also has a really interesting emotional story with Ariadne. We explore his relationship with Medea as well, so as the series progresses there's a compelling love triangle."

Big changes then. And there's every indication that *Atlantis* will be a better show for them. After all, the team behind *Merlin* certainly knows a thing or two about playing the long game.

"Series two for us is all about the power struggle of Atlantis between Ariadne and Pasiphae, these two very dynamic women that are sworn enemies, and how Medea fits into that mix. Jason came to Atlantis to find his father and his mother and to find out the truth of that. And that's what he uncovers in this series; that to us felt a much richer story and far more adult and interesting and dark." **SFX**

Atlantis returns to BBC One in November.

HERO WORSHIP

Jack Donnelly on life as a legend



How did life change for you after your part in the first series?

► I was on a massive comedown as soon as it finished, but it was good. It's been nice not to have to go back to waiting work like I've done after other acting jobs. I did bits and pieces inbetween, and then in the weeks building up to the second series it was back into training, learning to sword fight and everything that comes with it.

How does it feel to suddenly have this heartthrob status?

► Weird. I've not really encountered it that much. I get told about it and I hear about it but so far no one's come up to me and been like "[gasps] You're a heartthrob!" Apart from my brothers and they're taking the piss.

Medea is an important figure for the Jason of legend, is that the case in the show?

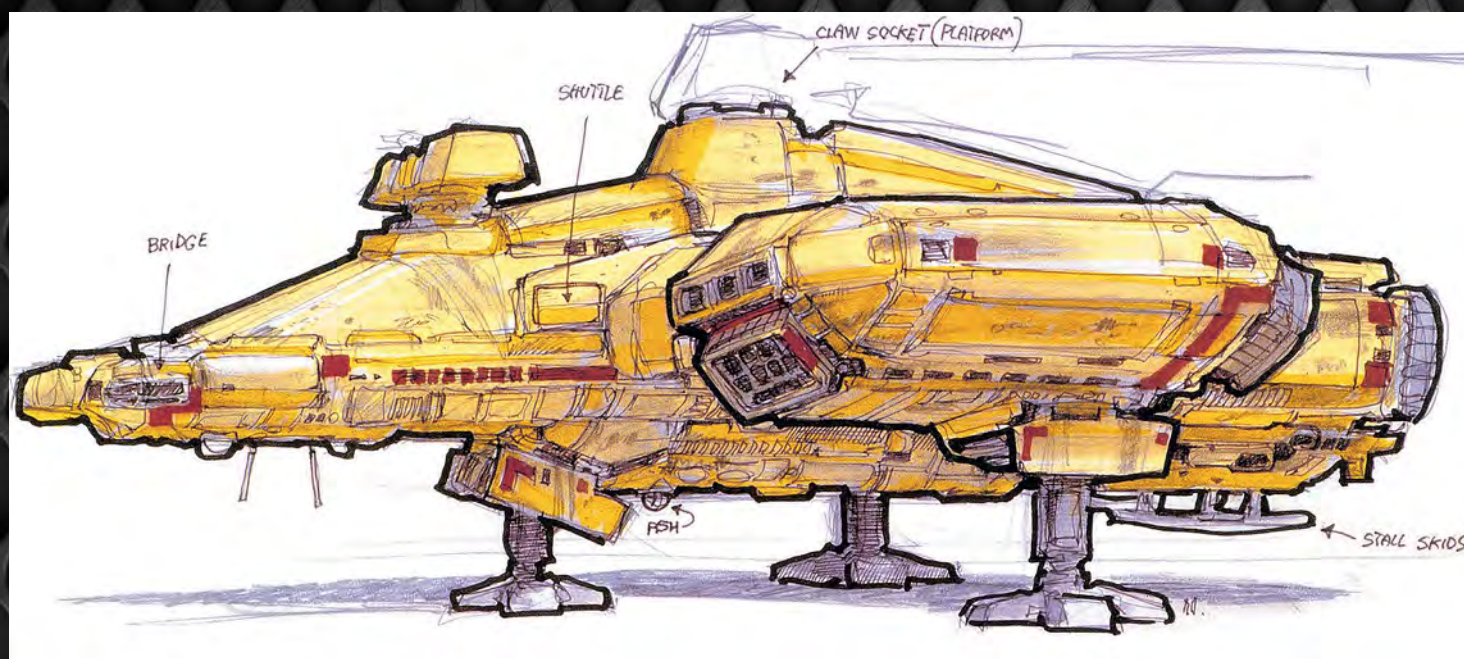
► I knew Amy [Manson] from drama school, she was in the year above me. There's a connection between the two of them. Medea in our story is very much an outsider who doesn't really fit in anywhere, doesn't know who she is, and she's led to the dark side. She and Jason find each other as kindred spirits. As it's progressed, it does seem that she could potentially be a rival to Ariadne.

We hear you were the victim of an epic prank during production...

► Mark and Rob keep playing pranks on me. They had me believe that the final episode was a musical episode and this involved my agent, Rob's agent, the producers here and a real singing teacher from London that they set up an email account for. Everybody was in on it. So I was off practising singing, thinking I'm going to ruin it, that this is the end of my career. And then at the last second they gave themselves away.

ALIEN VISIONS

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF XENOMORPHIC TERROR, NEW BOOK **ALIEN: THE ARCHIVE** RAIDS THE VAULTS TO REVEAL THE DARK IMAGINATION BEHIND THE FACE-HUGGING FRANCHISE **EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!**



▲ Concept artist Ron Cobb's original sketch of the ill-fated Nostromo.

▼ The Derelict ship and planet surface imagined by acclaimed comics artist Moebius.

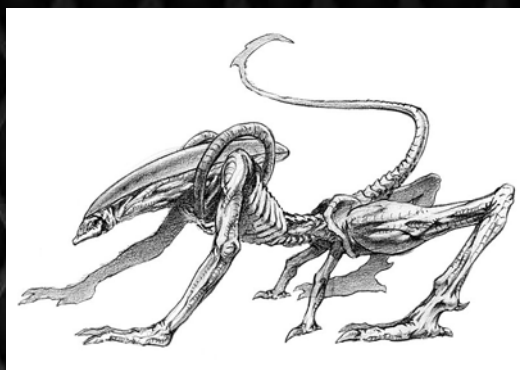
▶ An apocalyptic view of the wooden planet originally planned for *Alien 3*.





Getting a head in Hollywood... Ash is ready for his close-up.

Shiver at this six-legged xenomorph variant...



These corporate patch designs brought blue collar reality to the *Alien* universe.



Some of Ridley Scott's frame-by-frame storyboards, dubbed Ridleygrams by the crew.

HR Giger visualises the soon-to-be iconic Facehugger.



ALIEN
HR Giger 78

Alien: The Archive is published by Titan Books on 31 October.

FANNISH INQUISITION

NEIL GAIMAN

“Am I a creature that feeds on lost sleep?”

Nick Setchfield puts your questions
to the Dream King

● PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN NIXON

A CHARCOAL-SUITED Neil Gaiman is facing inquisition in a London hotel suite. “Will there be spikes?” he asks, refusing another pot of tea on the grounds that he has attained a state of “hyper-cafeination”. As ever he’s charismatic company, a mazy, diverting bookshop in human form. Placing his boots on the posh sofa with the diplomatic immunity of the famous, he’s here to talk up *The Sleeper And The Spindle*, an intriguingly fresh take on some well-worn fairytale characters (“What age group is it for? Humans”). *SFX* is taking this opportunity to throw your questions at him. Even the one that asks him to confront his own Death...

At what point do you decide an idea for a story is worth keeping?

Phillip Nicholson

► It could be anything from 20 years before it gets written in the case of *The Graveyard Book*, to ten years after you wrote it, when you look at a thing and you go “What was I doing? What was that for? That was rubbish.” A lot of the time it has to do with if something has sticking power, if it sticks around in your head. With *The Sleeper And The Spindle* it began with about five different things coming together, including my incredible boredom. When I did *Snow Glass Apples* 21 years ago it didn’t feel like anybody was revisiting fairy stories. And then you had that period where any idea that I would have had about doing something with fairy stories seemed almost redundant, because the whole world was doing them. And then, having the idea for this, I thought, actually, that’s a *Snow White* that nobody’s told, and it’ll be a really interesting *Snow White* to tell, and it’s a *Sleeping Beauty* that nobody’s told. And I can bring them both together, and it wouldn’t be about the things that people thought they were about. And even then I wasn’t sure if it was any good. I just knew that it was interesting enough to want to write it.

Have you ever had writer’s block?

Ramon Macario Martins

► I don’t believe in writer’s block. I really don’t. I believe that writers are really clever and we made up writer’s block to impress people, because it sounds so much better than “I got stuck” or even “I didn’t have anything to say”. Gardeners don’t get gardener’s block. Cellists don’t get cellist’s block. Taxi drivers rarely get up in the morning and say “Oh, I can’t do it today. I’m just blocked. I can’t find it in myself to taxi drive.” One of the things that I learned doing *Sandman* on a monthly deadline was that you can write on the bad days. You may not get as much done, and you may think it’s all stupid, but the truth is that the next day may be one of the good days, and you look at →

“WRITER’S BLOCK IS MADE UP – IT SOUNDS SO MUCH BETTER THAN ‘I GOT STUCK’”





"I WANT TO WRITE MORE DOCTOR WHO. I WANT TO WRITE FOR CAPALDI"

what you did and you delete that sentence and you move that bit around and you tidy it up, and, you know, ten years later, you're proofreading a big collected *Sandman* and you can't remember what pages you wrote on the day when you said "I'm useless – why am I doing this?" and the day the words dripped from your fingers like liquid diamonds. You know you had the fantastic days. You know you had the hard days. But what you're left with is the story.

Would you be interested in writing the screenplay should *Sandman* make it to the big screen? If so, which issues would be included?

Sarah Halsted

► For about 25 years I've been saying "no thank you" to offers to take *Sandman* to the big screen. It's like a roundabout. It goes around again, and right now we are at that point where Joseph Gordon-Levitt – as a producer, and probably a director – and David Goyer and a writer named Jack Thorne are working on *Sandman*. Speaking as someone who's watched these things happen, everybody does more or less the same thing for the first movie. You take the things you like from *Preludes And Nocturnes* and you take the bits you like from *The Doll's House*, and you tend to take Rose Walker, because she's a lovely viewpoint character, and you tend to take the structure of going and getting the helm and the sand and the ruby and use that as your movie structure. And you may go and take the serial killer's convention or you may not... Even in the most terrible scripts – and there have been some terrible ones – that's where they've gone. I do not want a bad *Sandman* movie to be made. I would prefer no *Sandman* film to a bad one. I would prefer a fantastic film that people walk away from stunned, enchanted and, more importantly, ordering their copies of the books to no *Sandman* film. But I'm very happy with no *Sandman* film and just the books.

Do you ever find yourself as a puppet master with your characters, putting them through hell just because they are your creatures and you can? Or do you find an intrinsic quality in the character that you just can't violate,



Words drip from his fingers like liquid diamonds. Some days.



even if it would be really funny or clear a problem in the story? (Dance, puppet, dance, bwah ha ha!)

Sharon Reine

► You make characters. You imbue them with a certain amount of life. You try and make them believable. You put the character in a situation. You watch how they react. People probably have the same conversation with God about creating characters with free will, and God's trying to explain it. And He says "Well, yes, you create them with free will, but they've got these parameters. I know who Nick [SFX] is.



he'd probably clean up a bit. And he would have opinions. I would feel very safe and comfortable with him. And he's not going to do anything brilliant and unexpected. The last thing you want is to be with a brilliant and unexpected person. They might say "Stay here, I'll be right back." No! It's a haunted house! You want somebody who'll say "Hey, there's tea over here. You want tea?"

Will you be writing another episode of Doctor Who?

Callum Trevitt

I very much hope so. I want to write more Doctor Who. I want to write for Peter Capaldi very, very much. He has an intensity that is amazing, and a power. He's the first Doctor we've had since Christopher Eccleston to utterly dominate the scene. He doesn't have to be saying anything and we're still watching him. We're still interested in him. And he's tortured, in a fascinating sort of way. But he's still the Doctor. That's who you write for. If, unfortunately, Peter Capaldi was eaten by space goats the night that I finished my script, I'd hope my script would work for the next guy. It's always about the Doctor. I have a few ideas. I got ideas for something that I would have loved to have done with Doctor Who when I wrote my *Nothing O'Clock* story for Puffin. And when I wrote it I thought maybe it'll be like a charcoal sketch of something that I could come back to, in the same way that Steven Moffat went back to his Doctor Who annual story for "Blink". As it is, I feel like I did everything I wanted to do with those characters and those ideas in *Nothing O'Clock* anyway, so I'd probably do something completely new. All I need is time. If people

I know who Neil is. There is no point during this conversation where they are both going to tear off their clothes, light up that fire, oil down and do naked wrestling like Oliver Reed. Because it's Neil and Nick and they don't do that." Hard though it is to resist, obviously. Neither are we both going to levitate and hang around the ceiling, discussing our plans to take over the Earth. Equally tempting as that would be. Because we aren't those people, and that would violate suspension of disbelief in anybody reading it. When I'm creating a character I want to believe in those characters. I want to believe in the things that they do. I want them to be consistent. I don't need to understand everything about them.

You created a very unique and different Death. Since many writers are haunted by their creations, how would you feel if, in the very distant future (I hope!), you meet Death, and there she is, just as you described in *Sandman*? Would that make it easier?

Guilherme Dobrychtop

That would make it fine for me, because obviously I created my Death, and that was part of the fun. So I would be perfectly happy with her showing up and saying "You know, you really should have looked both ways before you crossed that road." I hope it's a long time from now. When I do die I vaguely hope that the world is not going to be suddenly filled with drawings of Death taking Neil Gaiman by the hand and saying something cute... That I feel slightly more awkward about. And it almost definitely will happen. It's one of those things that didn't occur to me while I was writing it. But then again, I'm proud of her as a character, I love her very much. There are worse Deaths who could meet you.

Any words of encouragement to hopeful writers – especially those who suffer from intense procrastination?

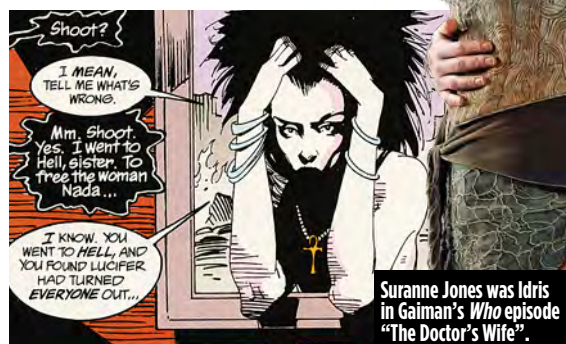
Lara Keane

Yeah, fucking write... Look, somebody once said to me "What do I do, because I want to be a writer and yet I do not write, I procrastinate, and I beat myself up over this." I said "It's fine. There are other people who'll do the writing." And it's true. There are other people who will do it. How do you do it? You do it. You put one word after another. Are there elves in the night who will come and finish your stories for you? No, there aren't. Is there a magic way that you can write your stories while still not writing them? No, there's not. You do it one word at a time.

If you had to be stuck in a haunted house with one of your characters, which one would you choose and why?

Ariel Carvalho

Merv Pumpkinhead. Because he's a cigar-smoking, pumpkin-headed janitor who would not be scared by anything in a haunted house, and he would be absolutely reassuring. Plus



can have a whip-round, if all of your readers could send me a minute each, I will take the time they send.

This is a completely serious and true question. By any chance are you a creature that feeds from your readers' lack of sleep? Like every minute we avoid sleep to keep reading your stories our sleep is magically transferred to you?

I guess that would explain a lot. *American Gods* is taking my sleep away, and I think I've never made such a good trade.

Mateus Feld

No, I do not feed on lost sleep. On the other hand I do feed on all missed buses and train connections. SFX

The Sleeper And The Spindle is published by Bloomsbury on 23 October.

Kim Newman

Haunting words... Kim Newman offers his take on the English spook tale

• WORDS BY JONATHAN WRIGHT • PORTRAIT BY WILL IRELAND

The English ghost story has a proud tradition, but it's a tradition largely associated with authors long dead, such as MR James, and disturbing scenes played out in Victorian and Edwardian drawing rooms. So can it be resuscitated? Or, at the very least, can we commune with its spirit? Novelist Kim Newman thinks so, which in great part explains why his new book is called, well, *An English Ghost Story*.

"Somehow the best [spooky] stories are English," Newman says. "England is a haunted country." Certainly, that's true of the isolated Somerset home, the Hollows, which provides the setting for Newman's atmospheric novel. It's here a dysfunctional family ("the classic English story is the unhappy family") makes a new start after leaving London. Initially, it seems like an idyllic spot, a place of healing, but gradually it becomes clear the house, previously the home of children's author Louise Teazle, is turning on its inhabitants.

It's a novel Newman initially wrote as a contemporary piece in the 1990s, but never sold to a publisher and put aside after it was optioned for a film version that got lost in pre-production. He's resisted the temptation to set the novel in the 21st century. Instead, *An English Ghost Story* is set at an unspecified point in those pre-9/11 years "after Tony Blair got elected, but before everybody got fed up with him, that cool Britannia period", a time that was also "the era of dial-up internet" where "people are online but it's kind of creaky".

There were good reasons for this choice. Partly, Newman says, the advent of broadband, smartphones and social media meant that while the book "worked dramatically, it just wouldn't play in terms of a story

happening now" if he'd simply altered the dates and cultural references. Besides, he adds, "One of the curses of contemporary horror fiction is the scene where somebody goes on the internet and finds out the history of the crimes in the area or haunted house. It's one of the most boring things imaginable in dramatic terms and yet it happens *all the time*."

But none of this means the novel is a period piece lazily dug out from a dusty drawer. It's too well written for a start, plus one of its main themes is what it means to be English. This is, of course, a subject brought to the fore both by the referendum on Scottish independence and the rise of UKIP. Whether by accident or design, Newman's book catches the zeitgeist in 2014. So what's Newman's take here?

"Englishness has always been kind of nebulous because English people have been kind of embarrassed to define it," he says. "And there's also this awful thing where the kind of people who most paint themselves with Saint George flags and go around calling themselves English are utter scum. It's kind of like being represented by the worst part of your country."

In contrast, Newman identifies with "an English mystic strain" that "manifests in authors like Dennis Potter". This in itself is an intriguing name to mention. Britain's most famous TV scriptwriter returned again and again to the Forest of Dean, where he grew up, as a setting for his work, notably *Blue Remembered Hills* (1979). Similarly, childhood haunt Somerset – specifically Sutton Mallet – recurs in Newman's work; it's the setting for *An English Ghost Story*, and played into a scene in Newman's autobiographical novel *Quorum*, where the devil shows up in the village. Newman first stumbled on the location – but not Satan, he cheerily stresses – as a teenager.

"It's [a story] involving bad driving and being an idiot to be honest," he remembers. "One night, myself and a friend of mine drove around Somerset taking down Tory election posters in the dead of night. There were blue posters everywhere and we were going through a kind of obnoxious radical phase." Things started to go awry when the duo got lost and Newman thought he spotted a sign for the town of Shepton Mallet (population circa 10,000): "We followed the signposts, and the road got smaller and smaller until we got to a big sign that said, 'Welcome to Sutton Mallet.'" It proved to be a fortunate misreading in terms of Newman's career: "In the middle of the night it had a weird, strange, ghostly feeling to it. In my work, I have returned to it as a magical, strange location."

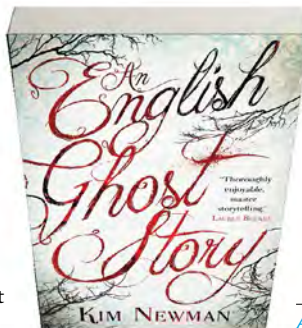
As for the wider work of writing, it began when Newman was still a teenager, as he scribbled stories and film reviews. In 1980, he graduated, only to find Thatcherism in full swing. Unable to get a full-time job, he wrote for fanzines and did some theatre work. By 1982, he'd begun to sell film journalism and stories to *Interzone*. Ten years later, *Anno Dracula*, the first book in his ongoing alternate history vampire series, made his name. He has subsequently become a familiar figure on TV too.

He refuses to see his apprenticeship as especially burdensome. "Many of the things that enabled me to get started as a writer no longer exist, like a benefits system that enabled me to leave home and move to London," he says. "That would now be impossible for somebody in my position." **SFX**

"The best ghost stories are English. England is a haunted country"

BIODATA

- **OCCUPATION:** Novelist and journalist
- **BORN:** 1959
- **FROM:** London
- **GREATEST HITS:** *Anno Dracula* is Newman's best-known novel.
- **RANDOM FACT:** Newman's *Hellboy* spin-off comic *Witchfinder: The Mysteries Of Unland*, co-written with Maura McHugh, also has a Somerset setting.



An English Ghost Story is out now from Titan Books.



DARK KNIGHTS

KICKING OFF OUR 75TH ANNIVERSARY BAT-CELEBRATION, JOSEPH MCCABE UNITES SOME GOTHAM CITY LEGENDS



THE DARK KNIGHT HAS loomed large amid the shadows of Gotham City for 75 years. He doesn't just weather decades of cultural change. He transforms himself accordingly, to become – to twist a phrase – the hero each generation deserves. And for each distinct incarnation of the Caped Crusader there's a corresponding team of comic book creators behind him, truly working in the shadows. *SFX* recently sat down with five of today's most prominent *Batman* writers, artists, and publishers for a once-in-a-lifetime, 75th birthday look at a genuine legend of the printed page... ➔



THE BAT-MEN

1 JIM LEE

The fan-fave artist and DC Comics co-publisher illustrated the acclaimed Dark Knight tale *Hush* and *All-Star Batman And Robin* (written by Frank Miller).

2 GEOFF JOHNS

The writer of *Batman: Earth One*, DC's Chief Creative Officer is

also an executive producer on the upcoming *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*.

3 FRANK MILLER

With *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Batman: Year One*, the famed writer/artist changed the public's perception of Batman from that of a camp clown to a grim avenger.

4 DAN DIDIO

Lee's fellow DC co-publisher,

DiDio oversees the company's current "New 52," titles, including the likes of *Batgirl*, *Batwing*, *Batwoman*, *Catwoman*, *Detective Comics* and *Nightwing*.

5 SCOTT SNYDER

With penciller Greg Capullo, Snyder has made the ongoing *Batman (Volume 2)* a standout in the New 52 and probably the most acclaimed Bat book since the 1980s.



Which one of you writes the best Batman?

Frank Miller: [Laughs.] Well, the best *Batman* I grew up with was written by Denny O'Neil and drawn by Neal Adams.

Geoff Johns: Frank Miller, in *Batman: Year One*. Between the past and the future, he's kind of defined [the character] in a way that no one else had before then. The influence is still felt. I don't think you can say that about a lot of characters, especially Batman.

Scott Snyder: Yeah, I still have my original issues of *Dark Knight Returns* at my parents' house... Growing up in New York, the thing that was so incredibly affecting about it was suddenly Batman existed in the city around us. You saw him facing problems in an actual landscape that looked like the city that we were living in, where you couldn't necessarily go to Central Park, and there was crime and there was graffiti. To see Batman saving people and being an inspiration in a city that was immediately my own was just a tremendous influence on me. It made me want to write, honestly. To see that you could make a superhero so relevant and personal and immediate was definitely the transformative moment for me in comics.

Miller: Thanks. He also really beat the crap out of a lot of people. [Laughs.]

Who's the most underrated Batman creator?

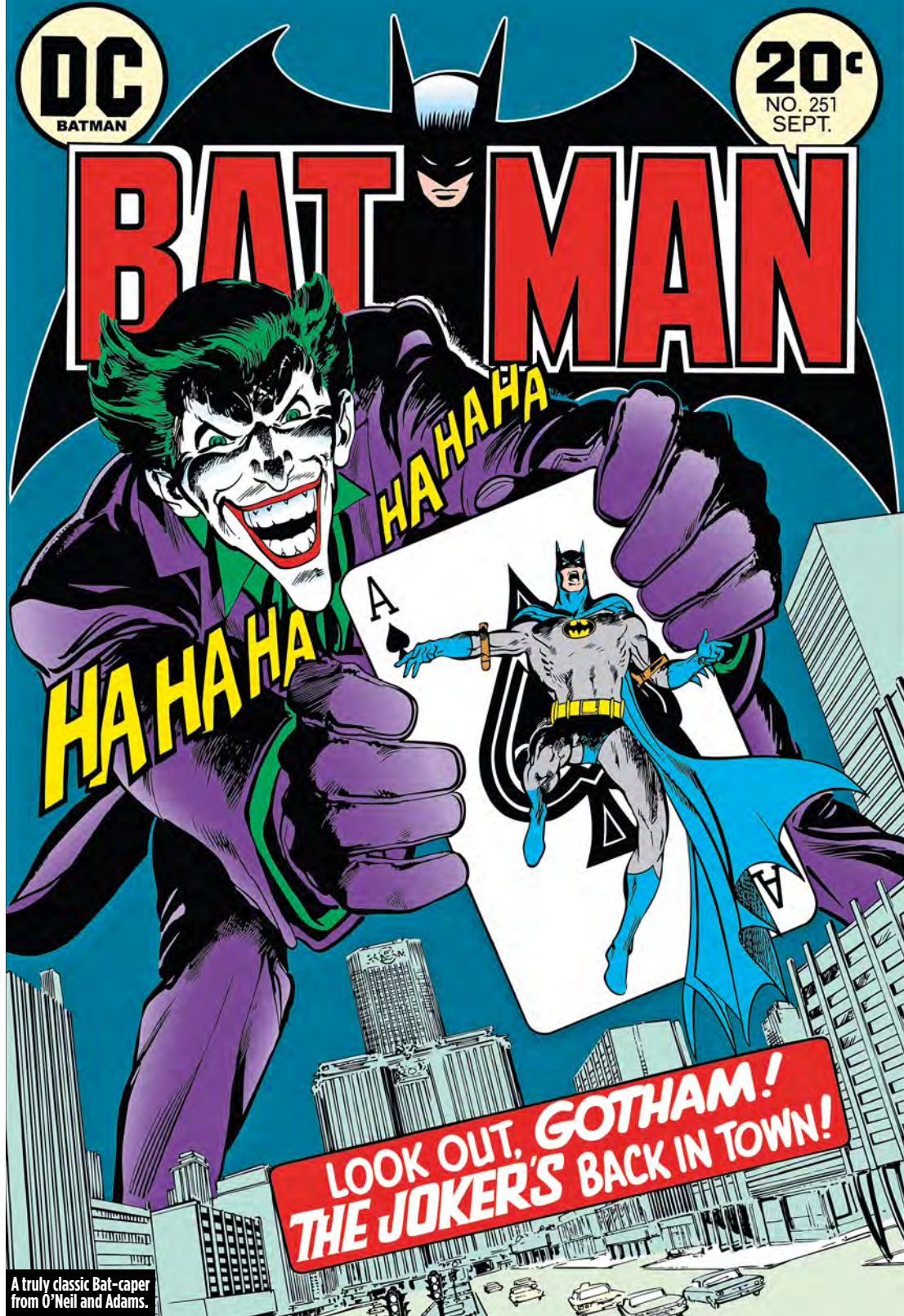
Dan DiDio: I was a huge Jim Aparo fan. Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams were definitive. But my favourite artist, and the one who defines Batman to me is Jim Aparo. The amount of work he did, the body of work, and just the fluidity and energy and life he brought to that character is one of the things that made me really love the character.

Miller: I'd bring two names to bear. One is Bill Finger, who was arguably co-creator of Batman, and the other is Jerry Robinson, who got very, very little credit for an astonishing amount of work, and who established a mood and a look for Batman.

Jim Lee: I'm gonna throw out Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers. They did this awesome Batman-Joker storyline which kind of redefined Batman for me. It was superheroic, but had a lot of detective elements to it. It was just dazzling.

Snyder: The work on *The Animated Series*, was really seminal. Bruce Timm and Alan Burnett. The reason it's underrated is because a lot of the origins of the villains and a lot of the things we assume are the modern interpretations of the characters that come from the comics, a lot of them filtered in from that animated stuff – Nora from Mr Freeze, and a lot of that stuff.

Miller: What Bruce Timm did – and I attribute it almost entirely to him – was he took the best Batman from every period, from Dick Sprang to Neal Adams through to my stuff, everybody's stuff, and managed to mould it into this almost composite Batman that was really a reminder to anybody who touches the character that Batman is



A truly classic Bat-caper from O'Neil and Adams.

essentially a force for justice. And also a big guy with a big jaw. [Laughs.]

Why has the character lasted 75 years?

Lee: I think one of the reasons is that the art form of comics is all about letting creators and the talent come in and do their definitive versions of these characters. We're not trying to say, "Hey, this is Batman. This is the style guide. This is the length of his ears, this is the length of his cape. Draw it just like this. You can only do these kinds of stories." We fortunately work in a creative field where people are encouraged to do new things, add to the mythology – the Court of Owls, new

costumes, new Batmobiles. That's how you keep it fresh and modern and contemporary. Everyone who comes to Batman, and every generation of fans, they go, "That's my Batman." It's slightly different from the one before, but at its core, its essence, it's the same character that we all know and love.

Miller: Well spoken. Now the lid is off the kettle, and it's a matter of the artists and the publishers working together to realize who is Batman and what is still Batman. Because you can go too rough with it.

Snyder: The thing that's so inspiring is that at the core, if you take away the wealth and the gadgets and all the fun stuff, he's somebody



Jim Lee's Dark Knight soars in *All-Star Batman and Robin*.



It's an icon bloodbath in Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*.

"HE'S A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR ANYONE FACING CHALLENGES"



Scott Snyder writes a flesh-creeping Joker.



Dan DiDio's fave, Jim Aparo, helped kill Robin.

who takes a traumatic event and turns it into fuel to become sort of the pinnacle of human achievement, this person that swings through the sky and says, "If I can take this tragedy and transform my body and myself into this almost impossible figure that can do anything, then you can overcome the things that you're facing in your life." As much as he strikes terror into the hearts of evildoers in Gotham, he's also a tremendous source of inspiration for anybody that's facing challenges. For me that's what makes him enduring as well.

Miller: You don't really think of that many Flash or Green Lantern stories that cut to your heart the way Batman does. When he has his

dalliance with Ra's al Ghul's daughter, it's a moment to remember – we don't know where this is going. We don't know this side of him.

What do you think you brought to Batman that was indelible?

Lee: Apparently treads on his boots. A lot of people bring that up for some reason. [Laughs.] You never know as you're doing the work what you're gonna be remembered for... Frank's work is what got me into comics. So anytime I take on a

new character I try to blend the things I loved about the work that came before me. Certainly what Frank was doing with Batman. Neal Adams was probably the other twin tower. Those were the two big influences. It's just trying to take that and kind of modernise it and do something and add something new to it. And kind of expand the Batcave a little bit, and try to make some sense out of where he keeps all his cars. Just try to apply some logic to this whole crazy concept of "I've got a cave. I'm just gonna fill it with computers and cars. I'll figure out a way to get that stuff out later." [Laughs.]

Miller: "I'll have the Boy Wonders around to do that." [Laughs.]

Snyder: That's a hard question... We added a few owls. [Laughs.] It's hard to talk about what the contribution is because we're in the middle of it, but I can say what the compass is for us, in terms of what we hope we're bringing to it. For Greg [Capullo] and me and the team on the book right now it really is trying to live up to the sort of examples of Frank and other writers on the book. They were always trying to tell stories that were fun and modern and immediate, and did revolutionary things with the character in a colourful, bombastic, muscular way on the page. But ultimately when you peel those layers back they're tremendously personal stories. You see Frank's interests across his Batman books. For me, that's what it's about. It's about bringing the interests through Batman that you find so incredibly inspirational about that character, but that are true to your experience of the character. In a way that makes the stories about your demons, your fantasies. We're trying to make a book that's at once personal, but kind of over the top and fun. I hope that's what we bring to it.

Johns: I'm in the middle of *Batman: Earth One*, and we've only really done one graphic novel. We're just finishing up the second one. Like Scott said, it's hard. We're going a very different way to a guy who is still struggling with loss and hasn't really found that compass. He hasn't really found Ra's al Ghul or training. Alfred is not the best role model in our world.

Snyder: He's definitely the coolest Alfred. [Laughs.] I love your Alfred.

Johns: Thanks. He's kind of an ex-military guy who's turning Bruce into a weapon in the *Earth One* universe. That's gonna play out in what we're doing next. Alfred is a very different Alfred. That's probably the biggest thing that we changed so far.

DiDio: As co-publisher, my only real addition is giving latitude to the creators to tell the best stories possible. I get as much enjoyment as the fans do, watching the stories come in. When I see Frank's work, or Geoff's or Scott's or Jim's, I know that I'm enjoying it and hoping everybody else is. I listen to the stories about when [Frank was] first breaking barriers, and we learn from [his] lessons and hopefully grow from that.

Miller: We got rid of that yellow circle [on his chest]. It took work. [Laughs.] **SFX**



GO WEST!

Holy cultural icon, Batman! At 85, Adam West is still revered as superhero royalty, as Dave Bradley discovers

WITH BEN AFFLECK SOON collecting the Batmobile keys, you'd think San Diego this year would have been all about the new chap in the pointy-eared cowl. But no, the true Batfans at Comic-Con were clamouring to see a slightly older resident of Wayne Manor: Adam West. It's clear that the star of the 1960s *Batman* series is much beloved not just by the generation who tuned in at the time, but their children and grandchildren, hooked on reruns. The classic series is available on DVD and Blu-ray this November for the first time, finally released from the purgatory of rights disputes. That, and a part for 1960s Batman in the upcoming *Lego*

Batman 3 videogame, gave West the opportunity to turn his undiminished Batcharm on us one sunny afternoon.

What do you think makes Batman so timeless and popular?

► Why has Batman endured? Because *you*, sir, can be Batman. All you have to do is be crazy enough to fight crime 24/7, right? That man is vulnerable. He's a guy who just developed his crime-fighting abilities, his physique, his mental capacity to an extreme degree. What I did, really, in creating that character, was just a sense memory of what it was like when I was a kid and I read a comic book. I said to my little brother, "You be Robin, I'll be Batman. Let's go

POW!!

"I have no idea how Ben Affleck is going to do Batman. I have a feeling he's going to be somewhat introspective and troubled. He's a very good actor. I would never dream of telling him how to do it. He'll be fine. He's got to shave his beard! I would like to see a sardonic kind of wit, and maybe they're doing that as well. If you can't laugh a little at yourself or the Joker... I just feel the audience likes that moment of relief occasionally. But they'll do it their way."

That's Burt Ward as Robin in the Batcycle's sidecar.



out and play! Come on! Out in the backyard, I've got a cape, I've got a towel here." As long as it's not gothic and serious – if you have the task of making it fun, a Bright Knight – then you've got to remember the fun you had as a kid playing Batman, because you can use all that. It communicates. It's contagious.

Everyone here grew up with your show, would come home from school and watch it...

► When I look at you and see that, gosh, you turned out okay – that's rewarding. Because I get judges, I get janitors, I get plumbers, I get doctors coming up to me all the time, and they say kind things. "Gee, I watched *Batman* and that changed my whole life. Because of you I'm out fighting crime."

There's a real resurgence of interest in your Batman right now. Why do you think that is?

► I don't know! I've hung around for 40 years!

BAM!


"I'd love to play a villain. When I first started under contract at Warner, I played villains and cowboys and all that stuff. It's always interesting and fun to dig in and try to play a villain. Well, I'd like to play an even more grotesque version of the Joker or Mr Freeze - and find Mr Freeze occasionally in his own environment enjoying, for example, a cold sauna! [Laughs] I won't go on."

When I was typecast early on, I decided after four or five years of hanging out on the beach and not doing anything that I'd better love this character, as I did at the time I was creating it. People love it, so why shouldn't I? I'm the luckiest guy in the world, to have been able to create a character that's become classic TV. And now things like the new Lego game! That gives me a chance to play Batman in a little different way. What I've done is update him a little bit, make him even more zany. One of my favourite lines is: "Help, I'm Adam West - I'm in some kind of peril!"

What would you have in your own utility belt?

Well, I'd like to have a quarter for the meter. And maybe a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. And, of course... some Bat Shark Repellent! Those lines were wonderful. We had really good, funny writers. The late Lorenzo Semple Jr had won a number of awards as a screenwriter. When I read his *Batman* pilot script it impressed me: so funny as a piece, and something that might have longevity. Lorenzo said afterwards, "That's the best script I ever wrote."

Did you ever imagine you'd become a pop culture icon to this many people?

No, I never dreamed of that. I just had a very strong desire to have success as an actor. I was really driven. I think it's because of my parents. My mother had to give up a promising career because she was pregnant and had me. I always felt she regretted that in a way, and maybe I could bring it to life for her somehow. That may have been a little bit of the dream for me. The other thing, of course... is just naked greed! 

KAPOW!

"People seem to like superheroes more than ever. Perhaps because this world has gone crazy, if you look around and hear the news. So superheroes are a remarkable escape. You can dream with them. For example, my Batman - he's a vulnerable guy and he's human. So you can pretend you're Batman too. We all have to occasionally dream and have fun with something - because it's a tough world out there."

Batman: The Complete TV series is released on Monday 10 November. Lego Batman 3 is released on Friday 14 November.



75 YEARS OF BATMAN

THE BUTLER DID IT

Tara Bennett gets the downstairs gossip from *Gotham's* rebooted valet

ONE OF THE intriguing aspects of prequel show *Gotham's* exploration of Batman lore is the fun it has twisting characters we think we know. From oily rat Oswald Cobblepot (the future Penguin) to impoverished urchin Ivy Pepper (Poison Ivy to be), its rogues' gallery of characters feels fresh yet familiar. But we're

set to discover an altogether different Alfred Pennyworth than the refined British butlers we previously saw brought to life by Michael Gough and Michael Caine. Sean Pertwee's Pennyworth is a bit of brawler, more muscular protector than font of genteel wisdom.

Executive producer Bruno Heller tells *SFX* they wanted *Gotham's* Alfred to embody a darkness that would help build the future Batman. "You had to have an actor with an edge of danger to him," Heller explains. "Who was not simply the good, loyal caretaker, but also someone with his own sense of rage inside him. Someone who could carry that, but lightly, and that's what Sean does so brilliantly."

From *Gotham's* New York City set, Pertwee tells us about his take on this cornerstone of the Batman legend...

We know there was a lot of secrecy in the development of *Gotham*. How did they bring you into the fold?

● It really was a dream come true. I was over here shooting *Elementary* with my friend Jonny (Lee Miller). I got a call from Warner Bros to go up for this thing, just with this extremely well written two-page piece of paper. It was a scene with this character going into a pub, breaking someone's windpipe and being really threatening. I was trying to figure out who the hell this character was and where it was going. Eventually they flew me down and I met [executive producer] Danny Cannon. He said, "Hello, mate how's it going?" as I had worked with him before [on *Goal! The Dream Begins*], and then I discovered it was *Gotham*!

***Gotham's* version of Alfred Pennyworth is a lot tougher than audiences are used to: an ex-Marine who doesn't suffer softness. What does all of that bring to the story?**

● It's an interesting avenue to experiment with and look into – the idea of someone being a valet, a confidant and a father figure put upon someone who had no experience in that, who's also dysfunctional and has a history in the military. My take on it is that in fact his father was the butler to the Waynes prior to me. I was in the military and came back to aid my father who was dying. I struck up a relationship with a very young Bruce Wayne (David Mazouz). My father died and I took over looking after the family. He blames himself for the demise of Thomas and Martha Wayne, thinking he

should have been there. So he's now made a pledge to himself and Bruce that he will never leave his side through death. That's our angle.

How deep into Alfred and Bruce's story have you gone?

● We're on episode eight now and we're beginning to open up. We're seeing Alfred become this enabler. He has issues. He's an extraordinarily multi-faceted character. You haven't seen this version of Alfred before, believe you me. (Laughs)

Do we get to delve into Alfred's past?

● You will get a lot more back story the further we go into it. Because the writing is so strong there's a real sense of how the city intertwines. You can see how the city is beginning to operate and how we're all drawn together. It's a fascinating process.

Does Alfred get to interact with characters outside of Bruce and Gordon?

● I got a chance to very briefly work with Donal [Logue, Detective Harvey Bullock] the other day, but my personal experience is mainly with David. I have a son called Alfred, weirdly enough, who is the same age as David so I have an awful lot to draw from in my relationship. I can only wonder at the pain this kid must go through. We've developed a very close working relationship and the kid is irritatingly brilliant. (Laughs) He's very good, such a pro and such a fine young man.

Alfred and Gordon are clearly the yin and yang of father figures for Bruce. What's Alfred's take on Gordon?

● The early scenes are ones of mistrust. Alfred doesn't trust anyone who comes into Bruce's world. He tries to keep everyone at a distance but he's totally inexperienced in this field of being a father, or knowing how to handle a child going through this extraordinary grief and bereavement. Together they are like a bizarre couple because they come from very different worlds.

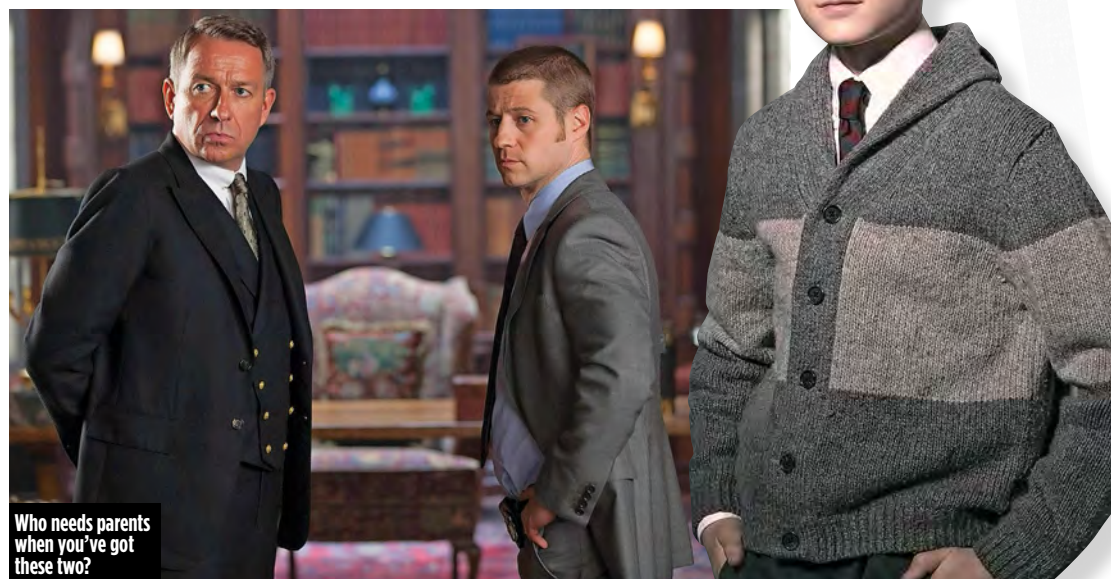


"HE TRIES TO KEEP EVERYONE AT A DISTANCE"

Can we hope to see Gordon and Alfred busting some heads together?

● All I can say is that I hope so. I can't give spoilers but in this episode we see something change and their relationship changes and they make a bizarre pact. I relish the chance to do some of the work Ben McKenzie has been doing. I am in heaven doing this show. It's a very rare treat to be involved in something where you're unhappy not working every day. It's true! **SFX**

Gotham will start exclusively on Channel 5 in October.



THE KEEP

CALUM WADDELL LOOKS BACK AT MICHAEL MANN'S CHAOTIC SECOND MOVIE – A HORROR OF REWRITES, MONSTERS AND PLAIN INSANITY

MICHAEL MANN MAY BE best known for shaping TV's revolutionary *Miami Vice* and helming *Heat* and *Collateral*, but he followed his first film, '81's *Thief*, with one of the weirdest and most perplexing films in the history of horror. Adapted from the

pulp novel by Paul L Wilson, *The Keep* was bankrolled by Paramount Pictures and shot largely in London's Shepperton Studios and Llanberis, North Wales. But any notion of a smooth shoot in Mann's adopted homeland was soon shattered as the budget spiralled, the filming schedule faltered and key members of the crew decided to quit...

"I spent three months in pre-production on *The Keep*," begins Nick Maley, the film's make-up designer who, at the time, was fresh from the would-be genre blockbuster *Krull* (1983). "Then we began a three month shoot. But before I knew it I had been on the thing for a year. It really did go on for that long. So I left – I had enough. And from what I heard they kept filming even once I was gone. The movie was absolute chaos."

Set in 1941, during the early years of World War 2, Mann's movie tells of a barren old Romanian fortress, lorded over by an aging philosopher and his sons, that entraps an ancient red-eyed golem called Radu Molasar. When Hitler's army (led by familiar character actor Jürgen Prochnow) arrives in the area, two of the men steal a large silver cross from inside the citadel, which exposes an infinite gateway that unleashes the age-old entity. Panic ensues after one soldier is slaughtered, and a Jewish professor in medieval history (ably portrayed by Ian McKellen) is brought in from a concentration camp to try and figure out the nature of the marauding monstrosity. In the end McKellen, understandably

pessimistic about the planet's future, has to fight off the temptation to unleash the deadly demon into the wider world.

The macabre mix also includes a brief love story, a rival group of SS thugs, McKellen conversing with the film's English-speaking spectre, and an appearance by Scott Glenn as a shadowy sorcerer who blasts *The Keep*'s villainous beast back into oblivion. In other words, the whole shebang – as slick-looking as it is – doesn't make a single lick of sense.

"Michael Mann was doing rewrites on the story every night," says Maley, most famous for helping to assemble Yoda on *The Empire Strikes Back*. "That is also why the shoot went on for so long. Making the movie was not a lot of fun. It was hard enough to go to work in the morning let alone understand where the film was going. And because the script was getting rewritten all the time none of us knew what the hell we were doing anyway!"

For its time, however, *The Keep* was – at least – an aesthetically ambitious project. The entire end battle between good and evil, ➔



Jürgen Prochnow, between roles in *Das Boot* and *Dune*.



KEEPING IT OBSCURE

T Attend any film convention and, chances are, some slimy bootlegger will be there with a cardboard box full of DVD-Rs with photocopied paper covers. Nestled between copious copies of the *Star Wars Holiday Special* and Disney's *Song Of The South* will be *The Keep*. Often it'll be advertised as "uncut" but don't believe your luck: this is still the theatrical version, albeit preserved in widescreen, cribbed from the fuzzy mid-'90s laserdisc. However, Paramount has recently – and quietly – made the movie available via Netflix. That said, reported copyright issues with the sublime Tangerine Dream soundtrack, and Mann's rumoured disregard for the movie, means that anyone holding out for a Blu-ray special edition could be left waiting for far longer than *The Keep* took to complete.



featuring extensive laser beams and bursts of colourful light, would today be accomplished by CGI. In 1983, though, it was good old-fashioned (but time consuming) animation that accomplished these illusions.

Moreover, the sparse Welsh moors add to the film's desolate feeling while the dusty Romanian fortification that houses the film's phantom is nothing short of spooky. Maley's make-up work, meanwhile, holds up well. Aside from the expected gore (which includes one Hitler-sympathising schmuck being split in two) the monster that confronts the various Nazi squaddies is a hulk-and-a-half, intimidating and immediately iconic.

LONG HARD LOOKS

"There are some movies that drive you a little crazy," admits Maley. "But you still tend to do your very best. At the time I did *The Keep* I was based in Shepperton Studios anyway and I had a team of great guys working with me. So we were flat out. You are not going to be employed every day of the year anyway, so when a good job comes along you don't mind clocking in 16 or 17 hours a day. But when you are working with someone who, perhaps, isn't being co-operative or is pushing you to the end of your tether it can be incredibly frustrating. With that said, all you can do – even in difficult

"EVENTUALLY MICHAEL MANN TOOK COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE CARNAGE"

circumstances – is turn out the best work you are capable of. No one is going to put up words on the bottom of the cinema screen that say 'I know this part sucks but there is a good reason for it...' People will judge the movie that is out there. So my concern on *The Keep* was just getting the make-up work to look good – and if people responded to that then, of course, I am pleased. I have always embraced the idea of trying to create something original."

The Keep's status as a cult fave can be largely attributed to its cast. Ian McKellen, of course, adds instant class to almost anything he

Scott Glenn and Alberta Watson must stop the beast before it is set free.





Dr Theodore Cuza, played by Ian McKellen, attempts to tame the monster.



Nick Maley's team created numerous practical effects, adding to the atmosphere.



Muscles on the outside. The definitive sign of an ultimate monster menace.

STRAIGHT FROM THE MANN



T Nowadays Mann doesn't say much about *The Keep* but at the time of its release he was a little more vocal in his support for the surreal shocker.

Speaking to *Film Comment* in December 1983, he said, "The idea of making this film within the genre of horror films appealed to me not at all." Instead he insisted that he had created something "very dreamy, very magical, and intensely emotional." Subtly alluding to some of the production troubles, Mann admitted that he "storyboarded everything. Then I threw it all away", describing *The Keep* as "a reality that's not part of everybody's everyday reality; it's a dream... a penetration of psychological realities." No, Mann probably didn't have a clue what to make of the final film either...

appears in, but he is supported by some of the most prolific and underrated performers of the 1980s. Chief among these are Irish thespian Gabriel Byrne (who would later appear as Satan in the Schwarzenegger film *End Of Days*), Prochnow (whose genre CV includes *Dune* and *Judge Dredd*) and Scott Glenn, perhaps most famous for his turn in *The Silence Of The Lambs*. In addition, a scorching soundtrack from '80s prog-rockers Tangerine Dream and Mann's typically assured direction – including the requisite slow-mo shots of ultra-stylised misty malevolence – give the frequently confusing tale an eerie but distinctly elegant touch.

"It is a film with very little humour in it," says Maley. "It is not a movie you can laugh at. It is a very dark picture to watch and it was twice as dark to make. For me, I cannot separate the experience of making a movie with sitting down and watching it – and *The Keep* was such a difficult experience that I didn't want to revisit it for a long, long time. I didn't have any freedom on it. It was very much Michael's film."

MANN ALIVE

Even as *The Keep's* production schedule increased the demands on its crew, Paramount continued to prop up the promising young filmmaker who was calling the shots. So much so, in fact, that Maley reveals Mann eventually took complete control of the carnage himself.

"I try very hard not to get involved in the politics of a film. But it was difficult to avoid that on *The Keep*. Michael Mann made himself

the producer of the movie. Very few directors have that freedom, of course, but in the case of *The Keep* the studio let him do it. It all took place in just one weekend. It was quite an impressive feat."

Yet Mann would not quite come away with the auteur project that he initially envisioned. After handing in a reputed "director's cut" which droned on for over three hours, the filmmaker was forced by the studio to fetch his scissors. Ultimately the hacked up version of *The Keep* which hit theatres in December 1983 was only 90 minutes long, perhaps explaining the plot's notable and frequent gaps in logic and coherence.

Making matters worse, the critical reception to Mann's perplexing supernatural tale was generally negative.

"The thing that makes a really good movie is not the effects," states Maley. "There has to be something more than that. You need a really strong story. ET could have been Donald Duck and you would still have had a great film at the end of it. So when a movie doesn't work so well it can be down to a lot of things... but mainly it is the story. In the end, *The Keep* was a large part of me leaving the movie industry. It wasn't the only part – but it was certainly

one of the reasons. I always said that when I stopped enjoying my work I would do something else."

Even so, the legacy of *The Keep* lives on. Whilst Mann barely even mentions the movie (insisting it was a negative experience for him too), a legion of fans that discovered the film on VHS have grown to appreciate its otherworldly essence. *The Keep's* attempt to craft an adult fairy tale years before Guillermo Del Toro perfected the form with *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth* is perhaps part of this appeal. And it's in those more acclaimed outings that the film's influence really lies. Even if we may never have the chance to officially own the movie on Blu-ray or DVD, its rarity likely only adds to *The Keep's* off-kilter cult appeal. Add to this Mann's subsequent superstar status and this obscure example of his early work becomes all the more tantalising.

For Maley, though, *The Keep* led to further adventures in big-budget moviemaking – including Tobe Hooper's *Lifeforce* (1985) and the franchise-spawning *Highlander* (1986) – until in 1987 he opted to do something less stressful with his life.

"I went sailing in the Caribbean for a little while," he laughs. "I painted on the beach and then someone gave me the space to open a gallery. Eventually some of the cruise ships picked up on me as the guy who worked on all of these movies and now I am visited by fans from all around the world. What can I say? Drinking a pina colada on the beach is certainly preferable to going through *The Keep* again [laughs]." **SFX**



As it absorbs more life, the monster's form evolves.

PENNY DREADFUL



What's happening in the world of horror movies this month...



At least two brilliant releases this month. *What We Do In The Shadows* is a hilarious house-share comedy with vampires, while *Extraterrestrial* is a dark, dry relationship drama

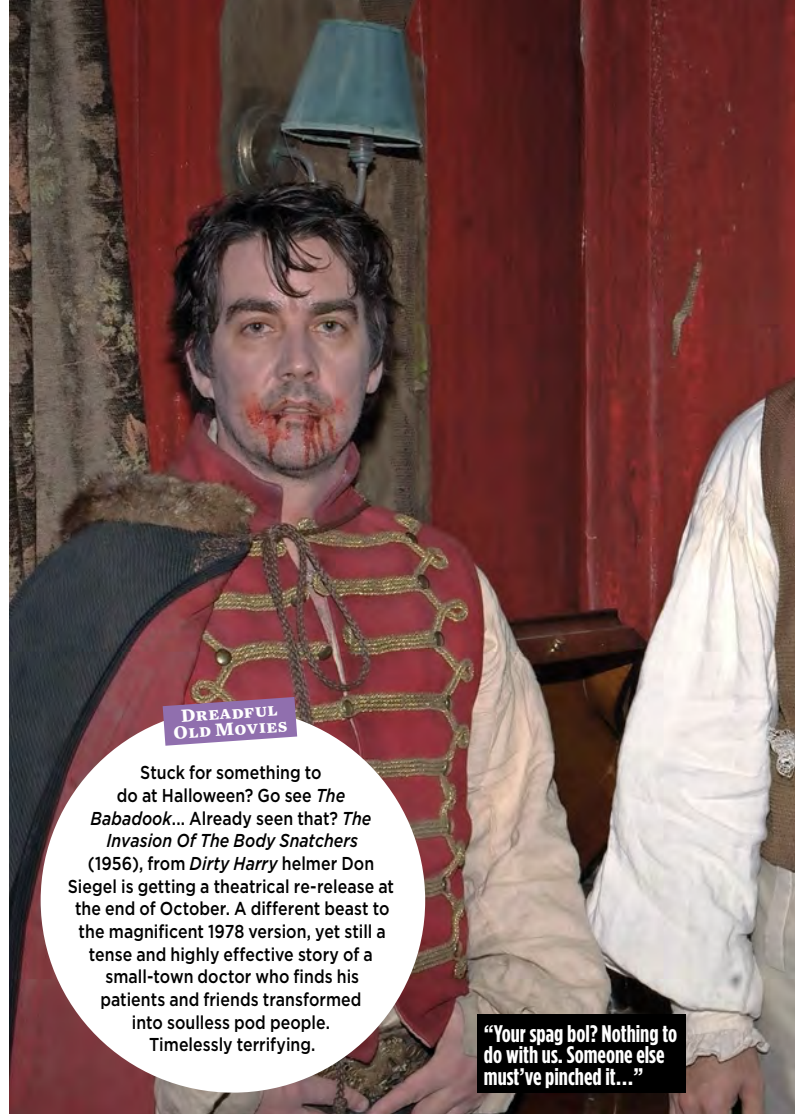
with spaceships. Then there's *Volcanosaur*. It's going to be terrible – of course it is! I'd still rather sit through that than cynical doll dirge *Annabelle*...



HORROR FOR DUMMIES

 *The Conjuring* made a boat load of money so naturally someone thought: milk it! Desperate to master the alchemy of how to turn grue into gold, *Annabelle* was born, a careless spin-off based around the premise that a leering, dirt-smeared, oversized doll crammed into white taffeta like the *Don't Look Now* dwarf on wedding day, makes an excellent gift for a pregnant woman. Or indeed anyone. The set up: late '60s, Mia and John are blissfully expecting a baby when a bunch of Satanists break into their house unleashing a series of events not particularly related to said creepy doll. Cue a depressingly obvious series of horror clichés. *Annabelle* didn't have to be

terrible. It's not horribly made, the acting isn't awful, there's even one moment that's quite scary (which is in the trailer...). It's just so insultingly cynical. And I hate this kind of thing. A film rushed out which hasn't bothered to develop its mythology, doesn't care that there are gaping plot holes, that the behaviour of its protagonists makes no logical or emotional sense and assumes its audience is so stupid it signposts the plot using ACTUAL SIGNPOSTS! The "scary doll" we all came to see never even moves by itself, making *Annabelle* inferior to *Dolly Dearest*. And no one wants that. Remember the mid-late '90s when all those cheapo post-*Scream* meta-slasher teen-movie cash-ins came out and everyone proclaimed it the death of horror? That.




DREADFUL OLD MOVIES


Stuck for something to do at Halloween? Go see *The Babadook*... Already seen that? *The Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* (1956), from *Dirty Harry* helmer Don Siegel is getting a theatrical re-release at the end of October. A different beast to the magnificent 1978 version, yet still a tense and highly effective story of a small-town doctor who finds his patients and friends transformed into soulless pod people. Timelessly terrifying.

"Your spag bol? Nothing to do with us. Someone else must've pinched it..."

YOUTH IN REVOLT

 And then along comes 19-year-old Drew Casson with his "microbuster" *Hungerford* and the future of horror is suddenly in good – or at the very least *interesting* – hands. This is a wildly ambitious horror sci-fi currently doing the festival circuit, shot over a period of just nine days on a tiny budget by a group of young non-professionals. Okay, so there are some problems – it could use a judicious edit, all the normal problems with found footage apply (why are you still filming?!) and some of the performances could use a more experienced director, but the world building, the creature effects (yes, there are creatures) and the sheer sense of scale is mind-blowing. *Hungerford* starts with a bunch of flatmates getting ready for a party, it teases that it's going to be cut-price zombie same-old and then, boom! becomes something so much more exciting. It's a calling card, but wow, what a calling card. Next up from production house Wildseed: drugs and witches in Bristol. As long as it hasn't got a creepy doll in it, I'm in.

NACHO MAN

 Two films called *Extraterrestrial* to choose from on DVD this month. Out 29 October *Extraterrestrial* – a bombastic, CGI-rich thrill ride from the directors of *Grave Encounters* starring sexy young starlets (and Michael Ironside!) as a group of youths who find a spaceship in the woods and have to battle alien invasion, government conspiracies and at least one probing. I haven't seen it, it looks like fun. Also out now: *Extraterrestrial*. Absolutely the opposite. A carefully observed, darkly funny relationship drama which happens to be set against the backdrop of a massive invasion, this is the latest from Nacho Vigalondo and it feels like a companion piece to his excellent time travel horror *Timecrimes* (2007). Julia and Julio have just spent the night together. But Julia is with Carlos. And nosey neighbour Angel knows. Oh and the aliens have landed. Wry, clever and just a little bit moving it's not quite horror though it deftly plays with all that we've learned from *Invasion Of The Bodysnatchers* and *The Thing*. Excellent.



DREADFUL A-Z OF HORROR

Penny's monthly dictionary of doom

I IS FOR... INSECTS

THE FLY

David Cronenberg, 1986

► The pinnacle of grim body horror where insect DNA mixes with Jeff Goldblum's to gradually erode his humanity, distancing him from love interest Geena Davis. An allegory of ageing and self disgust as man becomes insect while trying to hold onto his soul. The 1958 version is completely different - a tragic love story but very much worth watching too.



THEM!

Gordon Douglas, 1954

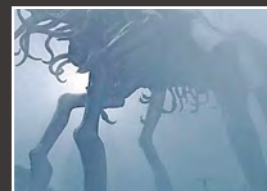
► Police procedural turns giant atomic ant horror in the first of the nuclear paranoia "big bug" films. Looks a bit hokey now but was nominated for an Oscar for its FX, as residents of a New Mexico town are terrorised by six-legged freaks until the military gets involved. Features a cameo from a young Leonard Nimoy.



THE MIST

Frank Darabont, 2007

► Underrated Stephen King adap with a notoriously bleak ending where the end of the world suddenly descends, trapping strangers in a supermarket. The foggy downpour brings with it mutant creepy crawlies prompting a skin-crawling sequence in a pharmacy before Thomas Jane's hero ventures into the wider world to find the bugs have taken over. Chilling.



BUG

William Friedkin, 2006

► An insect movie with no insects in it. Or are there? Brittle, damaged Michael Shannon and Ashley Judd hole up in a motel room and grow increasingly paranoid in the face of a perceived infestation in William Friedkin's itchy, twitchy character piece based on Tracy Letts's play. Friedkin's best since *The Exorcist*.



No one had warned her that this Ice Bucket Challenge involved mud.

GLOOMY ROOMIES

☠ "It's been like this the whole time - Deacon on 'dishes'. It still hasn't moved in five years!" Four vampires share a flat, argue about the cleaning rota, try to get invited into the coolest nightclubs and occasionally paint the town red. As detailed in Red Alert (page 9), *What We Do In The Shadows* is a horror-com mock doc from Taika Waititi and Jemaine Clement. Like all great comedy horror it's garnering comparisons to *Shaun Of The Dead* though they're different fish - *Shadows* has a higher zinger rate for a start though it shows the same love for the genre. Viago (Waititi) is a foppish dandy, Vladislav (Clement) a bloodthirsty Impaler type, Deacon (Jonathan Brugh) the sexy "young" neck nibbler and Petyr (Ben Framsham) a *Nosferatu*-style beast. Then

there's Nick, a new clan member who just wants to tell everyone he's a bloodsucker because it's cool. Absurd, timely and not massively scary, it's still going to be one of my top films of the year.

NAME-AGEDDON

☠ You've battled the *Piranhaconda*. You've faced down the mighty *Sharktopus*. You've sheltered from the *Sharknado*. And soon you can put on a hat and a waterproof in the face of *Sharknado: The Second One* (out 27 October). Now, mind your toes for the *Volcanosaur*! The latest from Syfy is about a giant dinosaur who lives under the earth's core and is so massive that... oh who cares. It's out on DVD on 17 November, if you must... Px





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★★★★★ Superb ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Average ★★★★★ Poor ★ Terrible



Horns

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Can you keep a secret? No. That's the point

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Gregory Maguire's book pulls on myth and Russian folklore to tell a compelling and fantastic tale.

Horns

Harry does Hill

★★★★★

Release Date: 29 October

15 | 123 minutes

Director: Alexandre Aja

Cast: Daniel Radcliffe, Juno Temple, Max Minghella, Joe Anderson, Heather Graham

DANIEL RADCLIFFE'S

progression beyond the role of Harry Potter has been both admirable and frustrating. He's shown no fear when it comes to pounding the boards of Broadway or the West End, performing as a hooper in a musical (*How To Succeed In Business*) or going starkers nightly for drama's sake (*Equus*). And on the film side of his CV, he's also made an effort to take on a range of unexpected genres, including horror. It's just unfortunate that his selections in that particular genre have been more style than substance.

Radcliffe's latest, *The Hills Have Eyes* director Alexandre Aja's adaptation of Joe Hill's novel, is a case in point. The source material is an almost *Buffy*-esque tonal mash-up which throttles non-linearly from satire to horror, with a bit of everything in-between. Aja attempts to do the same, but after dismantling the structure of the book and only skimming the surface of its darker themes, his cinematic version inelegantly rambles along with only varying degrees of success.

Ostensibly, the core of the story is a murder mystery revolving around

the death of Merrin Williams (played ethereally well by Juno Temple), beloved girlfriend of Ig Perrish (Radcliffe). Bonded since their pre-teens, the couple hit a next-life-stage impasse and have a dramatic, public falling out. Hours later, Williams is found dead in the woods, her head bashed in by a rock.

Perrish is immediately tried in the court of public opinion as the murderer because of his ill-considered comment to the cops of "It's all my fault", an expression of regret at leaving Merrin post-fight that's taken as a sign of criminal guilt. The film opens with the very promising visual of Ig blearily waking up post-drinking binge, spinning Bowie's "Heroes" while a pack of rabid reporters and upstanding citizens await him curbside, ready to pounce with accusations. It's a lovely, subtle moment of the sort which, alas, is rarely repeated as the film unfolds.

The hook of the piece gets introduced after the bewildered Ig has a one-night-stand with the town floozy and wakes to find he's growing a pair of horns from his cranium. Through some bizarre interactions, Ig discovers that everyone can see the horns - and they aren't disturbed by them, as he is. In fact, once he gazes upon them, everyone from complete strangers to his own family members feel compelled to unload their deepest, darkest truths and compulsions to him.

And here's where Aja makes a dire mistake, playing these confessions of racism, lust or malice far too broadly. These over-the-top declarations might work if the whole film was a satire, but it's not. At its centre is an incredibly sentimental romance that reveals itself, through several gauzy



"Don't worry darling, I'll have the horns soon."

flashbacks, to be the narrative engine of the entire movie. Trying to mix that sincerity with a series of very stagey character confessionals that repeatedly reduce Radcliffe to looking appropriately appalled while his co-stars shamelessly mug just doesn't work.

The film also isn't helped by the fact that Aja and screenwriter Keith Bunin transform the murder - a fascinatingly explored topic in the source material - into an appallingly thin construct, the solution to which can be guessed in the first act. They don't even attempt to compensate for that by adding credible character

development. We get some context via overly-long flashbacks which highlight seminal childhood moments for Ig, Merrin, their buddy Lee and Ig's brother Terry, but these don't provide the kind of nuanced connective tissue to the characters' adult selves that would elevate the investigation to anything resembling smart or layered. What's left are a few suspects, all of whom are conveniently revealed to be besotted with Merrin (was there only one woman in this town?), until the actual killer practically twirls his moustache while saying, "I did it!". Sadly, your average throwaway

The film rambles along with only varying degrees of success

MINDPROGE •

Alexandre Aja

Director, *Horns*



► How involved was Joe Hill in the adaptation of his novel?

He was really involved in the writing process. When it comes to adapting their work most writers get very nervous and he was worried, but the more we were making the movie, the more I realised that he was really intrigued and really into it. In Hall H at Comic-Con he said he felt the movie was even better than the book!

► How did you come to cast Daniel Radcliffe as Ig?

He came after me after reading the book, right before *The Woman In Black*, so for me he was Daniel Radcliffe-slash-Harry Potter, and not necessarily Ig. I was surprised after talking to him that he was very similar to the main character in the book, very humble but also passionate and romantic, loyal and genuinely good. I realised that he was the character and I had to make the movie with him.

► How did you come up with the look of Ig's horns?

A lot of the representations of demons and fallen angels in early 19th century Europe had horns that were very organic, very animalistic and very real and natural. It feels to me that if humans had horns they would look no different from a lot of the animals that we have around us. I wanted them to be something that you believe, something that could never feel funny, and something that would fit with the very American look Ig's wearing for the whole movie, with the leather jacket and the hoodie.

Richard Edwards

episode of *Law & Order* handles a crime of passion far better than this film's half-hearted execution.

But what's really wasted is the smart, metaphorical horror that could have been woven into *Horns* on the back of Ig's devolving into a demon. Aja placates his base by staging some random horror gags in the last half of the film, but they play out like morality-lite vignettes, replete with corny verbalised lessons from Ig: the likes of, "Vanity doesn't pay" and "Love made devils of us both."

The really interesting stuff, like the exact details of how and why Ig was "gifted" with the titular horns, is never

addressed via a quantifiable mythology, which is more than disappointing given their central position. And there's no sense - aside from having lost Merrin - of what Ig is giving up to get to the truth. In the book, he's a respected member of the community. In the film, Ig is merely a cipher with no community or familial respect, nor deep ties to his town. The director reduces Ig's demonic transformation into a simplistic, on-the-nose tour of religious iconography, from crosses to snakes, and it all ends up feeling like a series of very hollow ideas strung together.

Radcliffe gets points for being game enough to experiment with a role that certainly takes him another large step away from his Potter days. Ig drinks, has fairly explicit sex, and drops the f-bomb a lot. It doesn't ruin his career momentum in any way. But we're left with a frustrating sense of what Ig and *Horns* could have been with precise storytelling, a more deft hand and an ensemble allowed to come across as characters rather than caricatures.

Tara Bennett

? Daniel Radcliffe makes playlists for all the characters he plays. The one for Ig featured Radiohead, Megadeth and The Shivers.

The Babadook



The bad-a book

★★★★★

Release Date: 24 October

15 | 94 minutes

Distributor: StudioCanal

Director: Jennifer Kent

Cast: Essie Davis, Noah Wiseman, Daniel Henshall, Tim Purcell, Cathy Adamek, Hayley McElhinney

THE BABA-WHAT? Like its unsettling but strangely familiar title, this debut horror from Australian director Jennifer Kent is both heartbreakingly relatable and eerily uncanny, as a bedtime story becomes a monstrous nightmare.

Matrix Revolutions star Essie Davis plays frazzled widow Amelia, whose husband was killed in a car accident and whose six-year-old son Samuel (Noah Wiseman – endearing, infuriating, sweet, weird) is convinced there's a monster living in his house. And, unfortunately, there is. Samuel plans to smash the monster's head in with home-made weaponry, until one night he finds a book called *Mr Babadook* in his bedroom. It's about a grinning ghoul who knocks three times – “Ba-baba Dook! Dook! Dook!” – and who once he's come in will never leave.

Relying primarily on sounds and shadows, the Babadook himself is mostly insinuated through inexorably terrifying black charcoal

drawings in Samuel's book. You see the pictures, you hear the knocks, you can imagine exactly what's coming to get you. Indeed, the production design gives a sense of the film existing within a storybook too, a “pop-up book movie” as Kent herself has described it, with a narrative crafted carefully so as to be completely satisfying and logical as supernatural reality or as poignant metaphor.

Though you do get glimpses of the tangible form of the Babadook, this isn't a monster movie. Beginning like *We Need To Talk About Kevin* and moving towards the chills and emotional heft of *The Orphanage*, it hinges on Essie Davis's performance. As Amelia, she's terrific – brittle and anguished but always understated.

The Babadook feels very female- and adult-focused, centring as it does on a mother struggling to love her own child, though it carries its fair share of jumps and shocks and a vein of dark humour too. Far smarter and more original than anything coming out of America right now, this fresh, moving, and hide-behind-your-coat thriller will be the standout horror film of 2014.

Rosie Fletcher

For the Babadook, Kent invented a name that would be onomatopoeic and the sort of word a child might come up with.

“Hey, mum, are those my Christmas presents up there?”



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Cowabungled

★★★★☆

Release Date: 17 October

12A | 101 minutes

Distributor: Paramount

Director: Jonathan Liebesman

Cast: Megan Fox, Will Arnett, William Fichtner, Alan Ritchson, Noel Fisher, Johnny Knoxville, Jeremy Howard

THOUGH IT ARRIVES amidst a storm of controversy after producer Michael Bay emphasised that the title characters would have an alien origin, the fact that there's some tinkering with the backstory is the least of this film's worries. Because what director Jonathan Liebesman has delivered gets very little right.

Let's start with the positives, shall we? Despite their weird appearance (the animatronic versions from the '90s movies are less odd-looking), Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello and Raphael work relatively well as characters, their usual banter intact and their love for pizza at least briefly

on display. Raph is saddled with the usual plot baggage of feeling like the outsider, but it's a note that Alan Ritchson, the man beneath the CG, plays decently. The characters, for the most part, feel like themselves and have easy, charismatic sibling chemistry. And then there's Will Arnett, something of a Marmite

choice as reporter April O'Neil (Megan Fox)'s cameraman, but who manages to get in a few decent quips.

The bigger problems are with the film around the wisecracks. Liebesman and writers André Nemec, Josh Appelbaum and Evan Daugherty stick so closely to the formula for a movie like this that you find yourself

able to predict what will happen before it shows up on screen. The usual batch of brotherly bonding, heroes finding their way, and life lessons learned is doled out in routine style. The ridiculous lengths taken to link characters in previously unexplored ways will have most people sighing, especially when it comes to April O'Neil, her father and William Fichtner's Eric Sachs.

Action-wise, things are typically bombastic, with one or two interesting uses of the Turtles' natural advantages far outweighed by poorly choreographed fight scenes and some of the most clichéd moments in mainstream cinema this year. And when a film can waste a character actor as respected as Fichtner, you know there are bigger problems beyond a slightly hackneyed script.

The latest outing for those heroes in a half-shell is already a hit overseas, with a sequel in development, so no matter what you think, more is on the way. Let's just hope the next film fixes some of these issues. **James White**

Leonardo's feet could probably do with a wash.



Two mo-cap actors – Pete Ploszek (Leo) and Danny Woodburn (Splinter) – had their voices replaced. Dave Prowse sympathises.

Annabelle

Creeping, stalking living doll

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

15 | 99 minutes

Distributor: Warner

Director: John R. Leonetti

Cast: Annabelle Wallis, Ward Horton, Alfre Woodard, Tony Amendola

THERE ARE SOME FINE

scars in *Annabelle*. Gory home invasion, the ghost of a teen cultist, creepy kids' drawings, a demon in the basement... This sort-of prequel, sort-of spin-off of last year's *The Conjuring* chucks everything at the screen, as young mother Mia (Annabelle Wallis) is tormented by a doll from her collection. It's the 1960s and the doll was cursed during a ritualistic murder-suicide deal in the suburbs, y'see.

But the story is muddled and unconvincing, not bothering to establish the rules of its own narrative. Is it a ghost story, an *Exorcist*-style tale of possession or a monster movie? The eponymous doll herself, apart from looking so gross no sane person would keep her in their house, mostly does eff all. Key plot and character points are tackled cheaply: news footage of the Sharon



The latest *Toy Story* was taking a disturbing turn.

Tate case plays on TV in case you'd missed the parallel, and there's no subtext; it could be an interesting metaphor for postpartum depression but the story deftly sidesteps any attempts at depth, and things we're told early on – babies in the womb sense everything that happens to the mother! – are completely irrelevant later. A clumsy script has Mia pondering aloud: "How do I stop it?" And when the climax arrives, the evil force tormenting her takes to actually scrawling instructions on the walls of her flat.

Annabelle is well acted, slickly produced and will make you jump – such a shame it all somehow adds up to less than the sum of its parts.

Dave Bradley

As with *The Conjuring*, the story is based on a true case investigated by Amityville's Ed and Lorraine Warren.

Filmed In Supermarionation

Nostalgia is go!

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

PG | 119 minutes

Distributor: Network

Director: Stephen La Rivière

Cast: Gerry Anderson, Sylvia Anderson, Jamie Anderson

NAMED AFTER ONE OF THE

most evocative phrases in sci-fi TV, this nostalgia-fuelled documentary shows why Gerry Anderson's groundbreaking puppet series are still loved by millions. Adapting his book of the same name, director Stephen La Rivière rounds up the key players for interviews, trawls the archives and sprinkles in plenty of clips to show how Anderson got from *Twizzle* to *The Secret Service*.

Even if you've heard the anecdotes before, there's a sense of fun here that lifts the film above the standard talking heads-plus-footage brew. Lady Penelope, Parker and Brains (voiced by original actors Sylvia Anderson and David Graham) come out of storage to "present" the doc and help with the exposition, while the production



The acting was a bit wooden.

design has a classy, Saul Bass vibe perfectly in keeping with the era. There's also something special about a recreation of the stunning slow-mo explosions that were a staple of Anderson's classics.

Told in chronological order, the film does take a while to get going – early shows like *Four Feather Falls* and *Supercar* have less appeal than later hits, and there's also less archive material to back up their stories. A bit more time could also have been devoted to key collaborators like composer Barry Gray and effects genius Derek Meddings. But during the doc's extended stay in that *Stingray*/*Thunderbirds*/*Captain Scarlet* golden run, Anderson fans will be in heaven.

Richard Edwards

The film is getting a DVD/Blu-ray release on 20 October, both solo and in a box set featuring key episodes remastered in HD.

Extraterrestrial

★★★★★

Release Date: 29 October

TBC | 106 minutes

Distributor: Signature Entertainment



COMPETENT

horror isn't hard: darkness, barely-seen big bads, many-trouths pacing pierced with

power-chord peaks. *Extraterrestrial* is, by this metric, competent horror; cleverly shot and creatively lit on a limited budget. But Canadian duo the Vicious Brothers have seen fit to write a script so lacking in any non-cliché dialogue that it's almost impossible to view it as anything other than a pastiche. Which doesn't seem to have been the plan.

The mystery gang at the centre of this cabin in the woods/alien encounter trope-fest is drastically unlikeable. The group only slightly veers beyond archetype in the film's grisly and ridiculous third act, which is a brief highlight before, finally, a little self-aware humour creeps in at the end. If only it'd been more knowing throughout. **Alex Cox**

Honeymoon

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

15 | 86 minutes

Distributor: Arrow Films



IN REALITY, IT

can take months or years before someone you love becomes a stranger. One of the most chilling tricks

genre can play is to accelerate that process – think Miles kissing Becky in *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*.

Debutant director Leigh Janiak's anguished horror plays in the same sandpit. It follows a young couple celebrating their nuptials in... yep, an isolated cottage in the woods. After sleepwalking one night, the wife develops strange wounds and suspicious memory lapses. Is she the same person?

Penny Dreadful's Harry Treadaway impresses as the increasingly paranoid, panicked hubby, and the film taps into one of the most basic universal fears with some success. But a belated stab at Cronenbergian body horror aside, it never explores any particularly surprising territory. **Ian Berriman**

COMING SOON

28 OCTOBER

GHOSTBUSTERS A one-night-only re-release to celebrate the film's 30th anniversary. Look out for SFX's Special Edition, out now.

31 OCTOBER

ALIENS James Cameron's 1986 SF actioner gets another run out for Halloween.

INVASION OF THE BODY

SNATCHERS Emotionless duplicates replace the residents of a small town in the 1956 classic.

OUIJA A group of teens awaken dark powers after trying to contact a dead friend in this horror.

7 NOVEMBER

INTERSTELLAR A team of scientists and explorers travel through a wormhole in Christopher Nolan's latest.

20 NOVEMBER

THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY, PART ONE

Katniss Everdeen becomes a poster child for the rebellion in the blockbuster YA franchise's third outing.

21 NOVEMBER

WHAT WE DO IN THE

SHADOWS Mockumentary about a bunch of New Zealand vampires, from Taika Waititi and *Flight Of The Conchords*' Jemaine Clement, based on their earlier short film.

28 NOVEMBER

MONSTERS: DARK CONTINENT

Troops take on "giant sand bugs" in the Middle East in the sequel to Gareth Edwards's 2010 breakout.

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

A BFI reissue of the enigmatic Stanley Kubrick film. "Open the pod bay doors, HAL..."

REVIEWED ONLINE



DRACULA UNTOLD

Luke Evans plays Vlad the Impaler in this origin story.



Sadly, screenings took place after our deadline. But be sure to check out our review online at bit.ly/filmsSFX.

Godzilla

Contemporary Kaiju carnage

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 27 October

2014 | 12 | 118 minutes | £29.99 (Blu-ray 3D)/£24.99 (Blu-ray)/£19.99 (DVD)

Director: Gareth Edwards

Cast: Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Ken Watanabe, Elizabeth Olsen, Juliette Binoche, Sally Hawkins, David Strathairn



IF ALL YOU

really care about when it comes to a new Hollywood take on Godzilla is that it doesn't commit the

kind of crimes against canon Roland Emmerich's 1998 movie did, then you'll be satisfied with Gareth Edwards's version. Edwards doesn't make big G scamper around like an over-sized iguana, rather than stomping about like an angry hod-carrier in platform boots. Neither does he strive to shrink the action down to human scale by aping *Jurassic Park* and unleashing Raptor-like Babyzillas. The look is faithfully scaly-spined; the roar is right; the atomic breath is present and correct. Edwards also knows that what most people really want from this franchise are epic rumbles – the monster movie equivalent of WWE. Once you've ticked off everything on your list of demands and breathed a huge sigh of relief, however, it may strike you that the

Our patience is rewarded in the third act, in which Godzilla finally enters into battle

Monsters director's take on the King Of The Monsters does have its issues.

In part these are to do with the problems of squaring fidelity to the source material with the demands of a modern blockbuster and a more sceptical, demanding audience. The high-concept is essentially silly, yet toss it out and you risk being on the receiving end of a fanboy fatwa. This leaves Edwards struggling to present a universe that seems plausible, yet in which a 300-foot-high lizard selflessly acts as the protector of humanity. Pity poor Ken Watanabe, twice tasked with delivering unconvincing dialogue about how Godzilla is an agent of nature, here to restore balance. Getting the balance right between showing the spectacle and maintaining audience anticipation is also a terribly tricky business.

The film is at its most successful in its opening third, which (righting another of Emmerich's wrongs) kicks off in Japan, and eases in Kaiju-phobes by disguising itself as a comparatively sober thriller with a tinge of *The X-Files*. Bryan Cranston is excellent as Joe Brody, a nuclear physicist turned conspiracy nut obsessed with unearthing the truth about the nuclear reactor breach that claimed his wife's life. Cranston projects Joe's anguished monomania with Godzilla-like force, but sadly is awfully underused; when the focus shifts to his son, a navy ordnance technician, the film loses one of the most powerful weapons in its armoury. Ford Brody (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) is a capable but cookie-cutter hero, who until the plot finds something for him to defuse, seems to have little to do, and makes equally little impression. Say

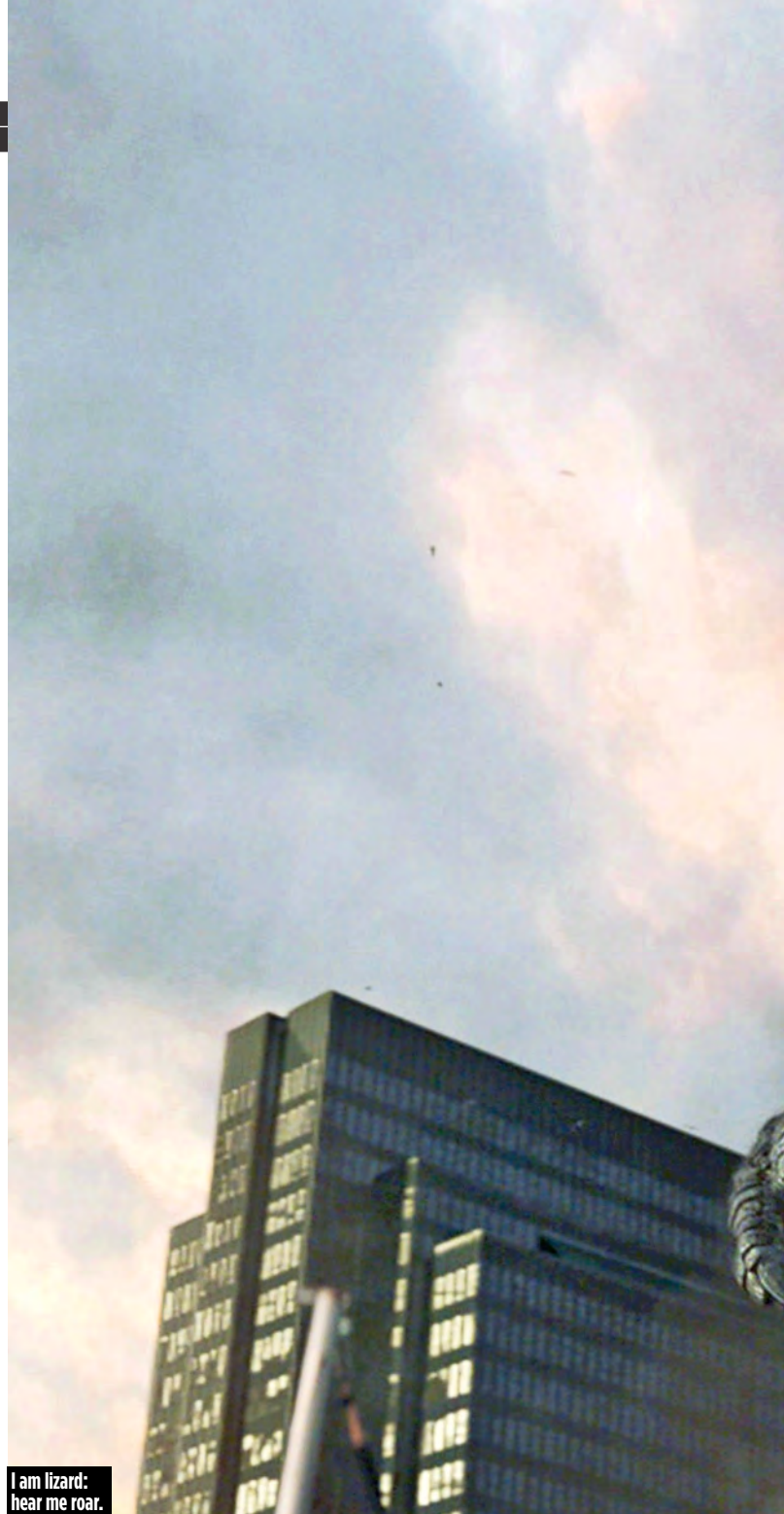
**I am lizard:
hear me roar.**

what you like about the Emmerich movie, but at least Matthew Broderick's geeky scientist was vaguely memorable.

Entering its second phase, *Godzilla* starts to echo globe-hopping disaster movies like *World War Z*. Flaunting its scale, it positively bristles with hardware; a *Godzilla* drinking game that involved downing a shot every time a military chopper was on-screen would undoubtedly end in liver failure. This section also suggests that when Gareth Edwards undresses for bed at night, he does so while humming "The Stripper" and seductively twirling his socks

around: frankly, the man is one *hell* of a tease. Once not one but three giant monsters are in position on the board, it becomes increasingly frustrating that we're only allowed fleeting glimpses of them, rampaging across 24-hour news in the background, or receding into the distance as the camera focuses on the aftermath of destruction rather than actually showing it in progress.

Our much-tested patience is rewarded in the third act, in which Godzilla finally enters into brutal, bestial battle. There are some particularly memorable moments here: skydivers leaping out of a plane





over San Francisco to the unearthly strains of György Ligeti's "Requiem" (soundtrack to the obelisk in 2001); the sight of Godzilla emerging from plumes of smoke and bellowing in rage. But again, there's a tension between verisimilitude and the demands of the genre. It's logical that these titanic scraps take place shrouded in flying debris (it's impossible not to think of New York streets filling with clouds of pulverised masonry as the Twin Towers tumbled down). But it's frustrating not to be able to get a clearer view of the action. It's like watching *WrestleMania* through a bonfire. Plus, the fighting feels like it's over too quickly. Maybe

the idea is to leave us hungry for more. Regardless, the longer the film progresses, the more you realise just how difficult it is to make a Godzilla flick in the year 2014. Gareth Edwards has made a very good stab at it, but perhaps a "great modern Godzilla movie" is simply a contradiction in terms.

EXTRAS: Buy the DVD and you get just two short Making Of featurettes. "A Whole New Level Of Destruction" (eight minutes) gives you a glimpse of the perverse power wielded by Hollywood directors: when Edwards decides that a brand new car that's part of the set dressing looks a little

too pristine, they casually squash it with a bloody great concrete block. Don't park across his driveway. "Ancient Enemy: The MUTOs" (seven minutes), includes interesting glimpses of the concept art for Godzilla's adversaries. Buy the Blu-ray (rated) and you get two more featurettes (23 minutes), which focus on reinventing Godzilla and the skydiving sequence. Fourteen minutes of leaked "classified files" complete the package. **Ian Berriman**

? When gliding, the look of the winged male MUTO was intentionally based on the outline of a B2 stealth bomber.

MINDPROGE •

Bryan Cranston

Joe Brody in *Godzilla***What's Gareth Edwards like as a director?**

► He's wonderful, because he has a perfect demeanour for being a director. He has a very specific idea of how he wants something to be yet he doesn't extend that to being belligerent or demonstrative. He allows his actors to create their environment and then guides them. The other factor that I found very refreshing is that when he didn't have an answer, he volunteered that. He said, "I'm not quite sure of the best way to play this moment," and you don't often hear that. It makes the actors rally round.

Do you recall watching any monster movies with your own family?

► Yes. In fact, my dad was an actor in one - *The Beginning Of The End*. It was about giant grasshoppers, and my dad was playing an army man perched on top of a building with binoculars, looking in one direction and sending in his report. Behind him you see these antlers coming up, then hear him say, "I don't see..." and he's attacked. So SF and monster movies were all part of it. My favourite is *Night Of The Lepus*.

Why is that?

► It's giant bunny rabbits! It's the most hysterical thing you've ever seen because they take these bunny rabbits and build these miniature buildings. And the bunnies are hopping along and knock down these little fences and things. Then they get some food colouring and put it on their lips as if they'd eaten some people. You've got to see this movie. It's hilarious!

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Edge Of Tomorrow

Saving Private Dyin'

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 12A | 113 minutes | £24.99 (Blu-ray)/£19.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Warner Home Video

Director: Doug Liman

Cast: Tom Cruise, Emily Blunt, Brendan Gleeson, Bill Paxton



SO WHAT WOUNDED

the clever, thrilling *Edge Of Tomorrow* at the box office? The diminishing wattage of Tom Cruise's star power? Or that ferociously focus-

grouped title, surely belonging to some Meryl Streep heartbreaker about the power of love and the limits of modern medicine?

This home release scrambles to fix at least one of those things: the cover now shouts the words "Live Die Repeat", a rebranding exercise that injects belated adrenaline while isolating the killer concept at the heart of this time-warping war story.

Cruise is William Cage, a military publicity officer railroaded into combat as mankind prepares for its final push against an invading alien force. Launched into a beachhead hellstorm of mud, fire and clanking armoured exo-suits, Cruise discovers he has the power to rewind time, cheating death only to face it over and over

again. Teaming with Emily Blunt – chilly, pragmatic and brilliant as the "Full Metal Bitch" – he begins to fight on a 4D front.

There's a constant tension between Cruise the actor and Cruise the star. He's infinitely more interesting as the slippery, yellow-bellied Cage we first encounter, but his inescapable A-list gravity – summoning all those *Top Gun* echoes of toothsome jockishness – tilts the character from slimy coward to smartest guy in the room to, finally, superhero.

The invaders never quite convince as anything other than flickering bursts of unreal videogame cannon fodder, but this smartly-scripted film remembers that the best FX are narrative ones – though once you've marvelled at its construction first time around you wonder how much replay value it packs. Irony, that...

EXTRAS: The DVD has two short featurettes on the aliens and the weapons (13 minutes). The Blu-ray (rated) adds a 40-minute discussion with Doug Liman, an eight-minute bit on the beachhead scenes, and more goodies including seven deleted scenes. **Nick Setchfield**



The film was originally titled *All You Need Is Kill* after the book that spawned it, only for the studio to fret over "negative chatter" about the word kill.



Do exoskeletons usually come with soles that thick?

Agents Of SHIELD Season One

It gets better! Honest!

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

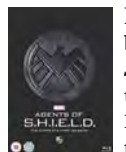
Release Date: 20 October

2013-2014 | 15 | 946 minutes | £34.99 (Blu-ray)/£29.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment

Creators: Joss Whedon, Jed Whedon, Maurissa Tanchiaro

Cast: Clark Gregg, Ming-Na Wen, Brett Dalton, Chloe Bennet, Iain De Caestecker



LAST YEAR,

before *Agents Of SHIELD* debuted on TV, the cast and crew hit San Diego Comic-Con and they were treated like rock stars. You can see it all on a featurette in this box set: how happy they looked; how thrilled they were to be basking in geek love. Alas, we all know what happened next. The show was sniffed at by critics, derided by viewers and, ultimately, deserted by

many of the exact same geeks who screamed at Agent Coulson and his cohorts as they grinned on stage.

The sad thing is, it was justified. The series starts off on a Joss Whedon-directed high but rapidly loses traction, floundering with a cast which doesn't gel, plots that are

Working with big-screen revelations, the show clicked

ordinary and, inevitably, a lack of the oomph you get from the Marvel movie projects (for "oomph" read "superheroes"). *Agents Of SHIELD*, while admittedly boasting a sweet, '80s *A-Team* vibe, a sunny disposition and breakneck pacing, somehow seemed just *too damn average*.

A noxious emission cleared the car in seconds flat.



But then along came *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and with it Hydra's sneaky infiltration of SHIELD.

And everything changed. The show, working alongside the big-screen revelations, suddenly clicked. The characters became a team, the writers raised their game; hell, even the plank-like Agent Ward became interesting. If the first two-thirds of this season run on sugar water, the final third is powered by jet fuel. So if you're one of the many people who gave up on *SHIELD*, it's time to give it another go. They got there in the end. Promise.

EXTRAS: ABC special *Marvel Studios: Assembling A Universe* (43 minutes), the featurette on SDCC, five short behind-the-scenes snippets, some VFX comparisons, an amusing gag reel and eight deleted scenes. There are also three commentaries, which range from "a little slow" to "holy cow, don't ever let Clark Gregg or Ming-Na Wen near caffeine again!" Unsurprisingly, these prove to be jolly good fun. **Jayne Nelson**



When the cast does a table read, instead of "Opening Credits" they all yell "MARVEL'S AGENTS OF SHIELD!" as loudly as they can.

Maleficent

Fairytale propaganda exposed

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 27 October

2014 | PG | 97 minutes | £29.99 (3D Blu-ray)/£24.99 (Blu-ray)/£19.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment
Director: Robert Stromberg

Cast: Angelina Jolie, Elle Fanning, Sharlto Copley, Sam Riley, Imelda Staunton



MALEFICENT

wasn't evil, just misunderstood. The vengeful villain at the heart of Disney's 1959 *Sleeping Beauty* isn't even a witch, even though that's how she's often remembered; she was a pissed-off fairy. Maleficent has suffered over half a century of bad publicity and this fairytale revision aims to redress the balance.

Angelina Jolie is magnificent as Maleficent, a goth Joan Crawford with architectural cheekbones; elegant, scary and sympathetic. The inversion of the classic tale is cleverly woven into the plot, while the cinematography and effects are often breathtakingly beautiful.

But the film is also lumberingly episodic and emotionally cold. It's a good 30 minutes before there's



anything you could call a real character-building dialogue scene. Maleficent is the only character expanded from the animated film version; everyone else seems even more two-dimensional than usual.

Oh, and Maleficent doesn't transform into a dragon. There is a dragon, but it ain't her. You can't help feeling short-changed.

EXTRAS: On DVD, just featurette "Aurora: Becoming A Beauty" (five minutes). The Blu-ray (rated) adds five deleted scenes and four making-of featurettes: "From Fairy Tale To Feature Film" (eight minutes), "Building An Epic Battle" (six minutes), "Classic Couture" (90 seconds of costume close-ups) and "Maleficent Revealed" (five minutes of effects shots). **Dave Golder**

! Maleficent's make-up was partially inspired by Lady Gaga: Jolie liked the way she used prosthetics to create pointy cheekbones.

The Originals

Season One

Bloodsucking Creole

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013-2014 | 16 | 930 minutes | £40.99 (Blu-ray)/£30.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Warner Home Video

Showrunner: Julie Plec

Cast: Joseph Morgan, Daniel Gillies, Phoebe Tonkin, Claire Holt, Charles Michael Davis



VAMPIRES AND

New Orleans go together like Michael Bay and explosions. Setting this *Vampire Diaries* spin-off in the Crescent City was a no-brainer, but it pays dividends. While it's hardly an original (ahem) move, the deep south flavour provides a simmering soupçon of exotic voodoo which fits these bickering vampires perfectly.

The differences between the shows are not merely cosmetic. The parent show continues to be *Beverly Hills 90210* with extreme necking, while *The Originals* is a supernatural twist on *The Godfather*; all power plays, territorial grabs and family infighting – except the clans here are made up of witches, werewolves and bloodsuckers.



The Originals shares some of the problems of its progenitor. The cyclical plotting, with enemies continually making alliances then falling out, means that a lot happens but nothing much ever moves forward. Klaus is a two-expression lead – manic and love-sick puppy. A few too many secondary characters do little other than frown. But in Elijah the show has one of the most eloquent vampires on TV, and you're guaranteed great moments of Grand Guignol gore and exaggerated fights.

EXTRAS: Commentary for the pilot; 42 minutes of deleted scenes; featurettes on the show's origins, the backstory and ties with real-world history (28 minutes); an hour of footage from San Diego 2013 and PaleyFest 2014. **Dave Golder**

! Before becoming the nemesis of the witches in *The Originals*, Phoebe Tonkin played a witch herself in *The Secret Circle*.

Penny Dreadful

Season One

Walk On The Wilde Side

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 435 minutes | £32.99 (Blu-ray)/£29.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Paramount Home Entertainment

Creator: John Logan

Cast: Eva Green, Josh Hartnett, Timothy Dalton, Harry Treadaway, Rory Kinnear, Reeve Carney, Billie Piper



THIS ISN'T QUITE

what you might expect from a series set in 1891, which makes use of such literary figures as Dorian Gray, Victor Frankenstein and *Dracula's* Mina Harker. For one thing, some of the latter are surprisingly under-employed. Dorian turns out to be a marginal figure. Mina's little more than a MacGuffin, a missing person there to inspire a quest.

It's also gleefully unrestrained. The production values are on a par with the Beeb's best period dramas,

but steer clear of watching with grandma – unless she's an unshockable old girl who won't choke on a cherry bakewell when confronted with mutilated body parts, back-alley knee-tremblers and industrial cussing. It's appropriate that a Grand Guignol theatre is a major location; this series is dark as coagulated blood.

Nan might approve of some of the language, mind – rife though it is with sweaty couplings, the series is equally sensuous in that regard. The scripts have a poetic turn of phrase, and are liberally sprinkled with highfalutin' vocab. To borrow the words of Frankenstein's creature, it's "rich with felicity of expression".

Of the literary figures it's the monster who's best served. Like Shelley's creation, he's articulate and sensitive, sympathetic and



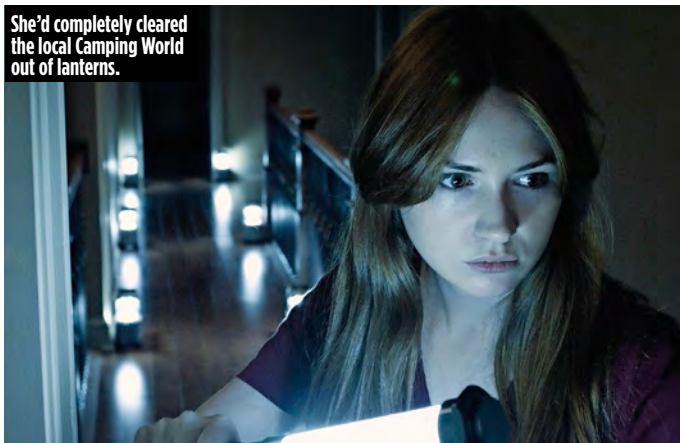
terrifying; it's a magnificent performance by Rory Kinnear. But the dominant character is freshly minted: Vanessa Ives, a psychic prone to possession. Eva Green spends much of her time contorted in Linda Blair-esque histrionics, and is utterly compelling. Also impressive is Timothy Dalton, who brings gravely gravitas to Mina's father. Watching how these and other characters spark off one another is always interesting.

All that's missing is a story worthy of all this first-rate effort.

The search for Mina ends in anti-climax, while vague hints of an over-arching plot concerning ancient gods have yet to come into focus. But this exquisitely ghastly series remains so watchable that it almost doesn't matter if it ever does. **EXTRAS:** Featurettes on costume design and the use of animals (seven minutes); nine production blogs (21 minutes) which delve into Victorian history. **Ian Berriman**

! The cast filming the séance scene were slightly freaked out when a butterfly landed on the table – even though it was winter.

She'd completely cleared the local Camping World out of lanterns.



Oculus

They do it with mirror

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 20 October

2014 | 15 | 103 minutes | £25.99 (Blu-ray)/£20.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Warner Home Video

Director: Mike Flanagan

Cast: Karen Gillan, Brenton Thwaites, Katee Sackhoff, Rory Cochrane, James Lafferty



THIS HORROR

turns a simple mirror into a genuinely scary villain, as Karen Gillan's Kaylie sets out to prove that it

was the creepy looking glass – and not her brother Tim – who was responsible for their parents' deaths.

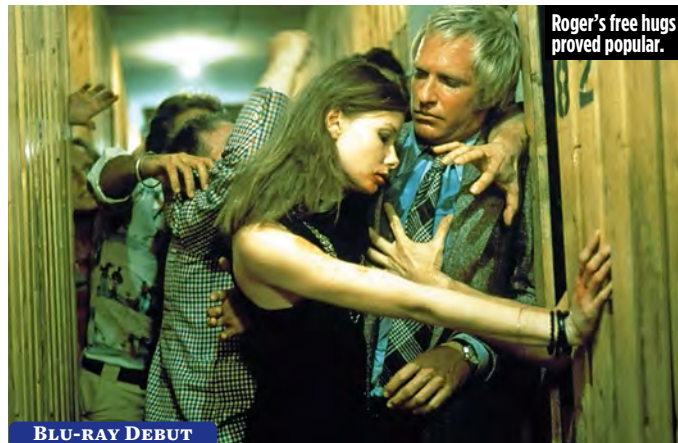
As the mirror toys with Kaylie and Tim's minds on their return to the family home, *Oculus* relishes the fact that what you imagine is usually much scarier than what you see.

Mike Flanagan thrives on the small budget that's become the trademark of Jason Blum productions, and keeps the effects to a minimum in a tight, spare production that could

almost work as a play. Flanagan's camera work is sublime, cutting expertly between Kaylie and Tim's fight for survival and flashbacks to their parents' death. You may see the dénouement coming, but even so, *Oculus* is brilliantly played, inventive and genuinely chilling.

EXTRAS: Nothing on the DVD. The highlight on the Blu-ray (rated) is Flanagan's 2006 short "Oculus Chapter 3: The Man With The Plan" (32 minutes). Much of it feels familiar after watching the main attraction, but it's a real treat to see the movie's minimalist origins. The "Inside The Mirror" featurette (10 minutes) is too brief but hits the key beats of journey from short to feature, while the six deleted scenes would have added little to the movie – especially the *Candyman*-esque coda. **Richard Edwards**

? *Oculus* director Mike Flanagan is currently working on a screenplay for an *I Know What You Did Last Summer* reboot.



Roger's free hugs proved popular.

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Shivers

Kiss Me Deadly

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1975 | 18 | 88 minutes | £24.99 (dual format Blu-ray)/

DVD)/£29.99 (Steelbook)

Distributor: Arrow Video

Director: David Cronenberg

Cast: Paul Hampton, Joe Silver, Lynn Lowry, Alan Migicovsky, Susan Petrie, Barbara Steele



SOME ARTISTS

develop their ideas over decades; others arrive fully formed. That's the case with David Cronenberg,

whose haunting feature debut is a compendium of all that came to be considered Cronenbergian: mutation, infection, aberrant sexuality.

Like JG Ballard's *High Rise*, it sees civilisation breaking down in a modern apartment building. The cause: a slug-like parasite which eradicates inhibition, liberating unconscious drives.

Though technically crude – Cronenberg admits he had no idea

what he was doing to begin with – *Shivers* still packs a punch. As this controlled, bourgeois environment descends into drooling polymorphous perversity, it's not scenic or sexy. Featuring flabby middle-aged flesh and glimpses of incest, it's the sort of orgy that'd have you fishing your car keys out of the fruit bowl.

EXTRAS: Effects guy Joe Blasco is the highlight of a Making Of (43 minutes) featuring four cast and crew; he has some great anecdotes about ingenious use of washers and condoms – and produces one of the parasite props. A 2008 edition of Canadian show *On Screen!* (48 minutes) covers much of the same ground, making use of old interviews with the director. Plus: a "video essay" (26 minutes); trailer; gallery. **Ian Berriman**

? Cronenberg was inspired by a dream about a woman with a spider living in her mouth, which emerged to wander about at night.

ROUND-UP

AFFLICTED

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 18 | 82 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)



Fed up with found-footage movies? We don't blame you – but this one's worth giving a chance. Filmmakers

Derek Lee and Cliff Prowse play versions of themselves, two buddies on a round-the-world trip who find things going pear-shaped after Derek develops a mysterious illness which gives him superhuman abilities. (Spoiler: think *Chronicle*, but for vampires) Featuring developed characters with real chemistry, inventive camerawork and impressive gore, this is a very promising debut.

DRACULA

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1979 | 15 | 109 minutes | £17.99 (Blu-ray)



Saturday Night Fever helmer John Badham's adaptation of Bram Stoker's classic novel makes its Blu-ray

debut. Frank Langella is seductive, vulnerable and mesmeric as the Count. Stylish, atmospheric and hugely romantic, it shifts the action from 1897 to the Edwardian era, pitching Dracula into a world of gramophones and motorcars. We said: "Its bleakly soulful English locations, fabulous cast and evocative period trappings make this one of the better stabs at Stoker's undying icon."

KITE

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | 86 minutes | £19.99 (Blu-ray)/£15.99 (DVD)



In this live-action take on a 1998 anime, an orphaned schoolgirl who was made into a sex slave

slaughters her way through a prostitution ring to get to the Mr Big responsible for her parents' deaths. Set in a post-financial collapse future, it's toned down compared to the original, but still pretty violent. The director's over-use of the smoke machine is annoying, and the whole teenage assassin thing feels pretty old-hat after *Kick-Ass* and *Hanna*.

MR PEABODY & SHERMAN

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | U | 92 minutes | £29.99 (Blu-ray 3D)/£24.99 (Blu-ray)/£19.99 (DVD)



Mr Peabody is a super-smart talking dog, Sherman the boy he adopts; both featured in cult '60s

toon *The Rocky And Bullwinkle Show*. In this movie, they travel through history in a time machine to see how important events actually happened. We said: "While some of it is naturally aimed a little too strongly at US audiences, there's enough sparkle, warmth and silly setpieces to make up for it."

TIMESLIP

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1955 | 12 | 90 minutes | £9.99 (DVD)



This '50s British B-movie from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* director Ken Hughes features a nuclear scientist who, thanks to radioactivity, now exists seven and a half seconds ahead in time, and so answers questions before they are asked. Not a great deal is made of this interesting plot device, though – the film is really a Cold War industrial espionage thriller with just a touch of sci-fi. Though that's disappointing, it does feature some lively performances and decent twists.

"Anderson created a British mini-Hollywood...in Slough." *The Guardian*

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Red Shift

Running Up That Hill

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1978 | 12 | 84 minutes | £19.99 (DVD)

Distributor: BFI

Director: John Mackenzie

Cast: Stephen Petcher, Lesley Dunlop, Charles Bolton, Andrew Byatt, Stella Tanner, Myra Frances



GATHER

round, children, and hear tell of an age before the apocalypse, before TV succumbed to the soul-crushing onslaught of *My Big Fat Nazi Wedding* and *The Boy With The Infra-Red Penis*.

Play For Today was BBC One's contemporary drama strand and *Red Shift* exists at the more head-scratching end of its remit: Alan Garner's adaptation of his own novel, it's a tale preoccupied with concepts of time, folklore and the unfathomable power of the English landscape.

The story splinters across three time periods, each of them haunted by a high and ominous Cheshire hill. A troubled romance in the modern day weaves between a fight for survival in



"Talk or the horse gets it."

Roman times and an English Civil War massacre. It's elliptical, uneasy and defines its decade's post-Aquarian fascination with the ancient past: the shiver of pagan currents running alongside motorway concrete.

Garner never explains the resonance of his title. Imagine that in an age before the internet, when only a trip to the library could unlock the puzzle you'd seen on the box last night.

EXTRAS: *Alan Garner - All Systems Go*, an autobiographical documentary from 1972 (40 minutes); brief crew interviews; *Spirit Of Cheshire*, a tourist-bait short from 1980 (20 minutes); an illustrated booklet with new essays, including one by Garner himself. **Nick Setchfield**

Garner was inspired to write *Red Shift* by some curious graffiti at a train station: "Not really now not any more."

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Ghost In The Shell

The pre-George Lucas'd version

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1995 | 15 | 83 minutes | £29.99 (Blu-ray Steelbook)

Distributor: Manga Entertainment

Director: Mamoru Oshii

Cast: Akio Ōtsuka, Atsuko Tanaka, Jemasa Kayumi, Kōichi Yamadera, Tamio Ōki



IF AKIRA IS

the *Star Wars* of anime, then *Ghost In The Shell* is its *Blade Runner*: the anime movie the cool kids prefer. It's a cyberpunk thriller infused with the kind of existential angst that would be pretentious wibble in a standard Hollywood movie, but put through a Japanese cultural filter feels deeply philosophical. Packed with cyborgs, cyberterrorism and bloody action, it transforms hardware, combat and cityscapes into painted poetry. It's hard as nails with a soft core.

Until now it's never been on Blu-ray outside of Japan. Not the real version, anyway. The



"Might as well wash this window."

mongrel *Ghost In The Shell 2.0 Redux* (2008), with its ill-advised CGI, has been available here, but now, mercifully, the original is out in the UK in a limited edition.

Based on the same master copy used for the Japanese Blu-ray, it arrives pure and untweaked. The English soundtrack is in 5.1 DTS-HD, but the Japanese track is the slightly less crisp 2.0 PCM – the same as on the Japanese disc, so we're not being deprived.

You don't need to like anime to love *Ghost In The Shell*, just decent science fiction.

EXTRAS: The actual disc is disappointingly vanilla, but you do get a 24-page Making Of booklet featuring an all-new interview with Oshii and more.

Dave Golder

The numbers you see in the opening credits are actually the names of the crew written in computer code.

WolfCop

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | 77 minutes | £19.99 (Blu-ray)/£15.99 (DVD)



THE PLOT OF

WolfCop is exactly what you think: it's about a cop who gets turned into a werewolf. Silly, yes, but it's not stupid. The werewolf lore underpinning the doughnut-munching shenanigans is surprisingly complex, and it's clear that a lot of care has been lavished on every aspect of the production. The one-liners might be daft ("Who are you?" "The fuzz") but the filmmakers clearly aren't.

The real selling point, though, is the gore. The camera never flinches from a skewered eyeball or an exposed bone and the prosthetics look brilliantly gooey.

And if the werewolf transformation isn't quite up to Rick Baker's standards, well, at least it looks like it really hurts.

EXTRAS: A behind-the-scenes featurette (44 minutes), bloopers, a music video and other bits and bobs. **Sarah Dobbs**

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Island Of Terror

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 20 October

1966 | PG | 83 minutes | £22.99 (Blu-ray)/£14.99 (DVD)



THE SPIRIT OF

John Wyndham looms large over *Dracula* director Terence Fisher's sci-fi invasion flick.

Scientists have been dicking around with a potential cure for cancer (those irresponsible fools!) but have accidentally spawned a race of near-indestructible "silicates" – dirty great woodlice that can turn your bones to jelly. Peter Cushing leads a group of boffins to the titular island to find out more and get chased and that.

A touch sluggish, *Island Of Terror* at least has the benefit of good monsters. There's something pleasingly relentless about the silicates, and the slimy way they replicate is authentically gross. Quaint rather than creepy, it's still fun, though the hints at global disaster are sadly never explored.

EXTRAS: An image gallery, a trailer and a booklet. **Will Salmon**

THE TICK LIST

THE BEST NEW DVDS – GOT 'EM YET?

1 THE TOXIC AVENGER
Trash classic about a mutant vigilante comes to Blu-ray.
★★★★★

2 STRANGE HILL HIGH VOLUME ONE
Surreal children's show from a former writer for *The Simpsons*.
★★★★★

3 ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE
Tilda Swinton and Tom Hiddleston are a centuries-old vampire couple.
★★★★★

4 THE WALKING DEAD SEASON FOUR
Rick Grimes and co are uprooted once more.
★★★★★

5 TWIN PEAKS: THE ENTIRE MYSTERY
Extras-crammed Blu-ray box set of David Lynch's surreal show.
★★★★★

6 VIDEO NASTIES: THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE PART 2
A new documentary, plus trailers for 82 "Section 3" nearly-nasties.
★★★★★

7 THE SHOUT
1978 arthouse horror about a man with a deadly yell, now on Blu-ray.
★★★★★

8 ARROW SEASON TWO
Another 23 episodes of the DC superhero show.
★★★★★

9 EXTRATERRESTRIAL
Alien invasion romcom from the director of *Timecrimes*.
★★★★★

10 RESURRECTION
A car crash survivor gains healing powers in this 1980 drama.
★★★★★

THE RULES: New releases push down old releases. DVDs drop out of the chart after three months.

WOI, NO DVD?

SOMEONE RELEASE THIS!

TIME EXPRESS

TV SERIES | 1979

Vincent Price starred in this short-lived show (just four episodes were made) as one of the debonair hosts of the titular time-travelling train. Each week it gave two passengers the chance to relive an important moment from their past.



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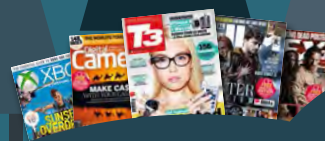


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American Horror Story: Coven

Third time's the charm?

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

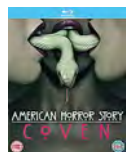
Release Date: 20 October

2014 | 18 | 595 minutes | £28.99 (Blu-ray)/£19.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment

Creators: Brad Falchuk, Ryan Murphy

Cast: Jessica Lange, Sarah Paulson, Evan Peters, Denis O'Hare, Taissa Farmiga



AMERICAN

Horror Story's third season performs the now familiar reshuffle, moving Jessica Lange, Sarah Paulson, Evan Peters et al into new roles and a new scenario. It's still a gory hoot though.

Zoe Benson (Taissa Farmiga) has a particularly rubbish supernatural power – everyone she has sex with dies. She's packed off to Miss Robichaux's Academy to master her abilities. But if she's expecting magic sweets and games of Quidditch she's in for a disappointment: the heads of the coven are engaged in a power struggle, the ghost of a serial killer haunts the building and virtually all of her classmates are dangerous lunatics.



The X Factor audition wasn't going well.

It's the usual jumble of plotlines, then. Where *Coven* wins out over last year's *Asylum* is the increased sympathy with its diverse cast of outsiders and a keener focus on the themes of abuse and prejudice. There isn't a moment as outrageous as *Asylum's* dance sequence (a clunky cameo by Stevie Nicks tries and fails to best it), but there's nothing else like *American Horror Story* on TV. It's awkward and annoying at times, sure, but it's also subversive, funny and a law unto itself.

EXTRAS: A trio of featurettes (37 minutes): "Zombie Halloween" is a behind-the-scenes piece on the Halloween episode; "Enter The Coven" explores the characters; "Meet Ms Nola" looks at the locations and sets. **Will Salmon**

During rehearsal of the scene where zombies attack a car, a worried passerby stopped to try and help rescue the driver.

The Visitor

Italian insanity

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1979 | 15 | 109 minutes | £19.99 (dual-format Blu-ray/DVD)

Distributor: Arrow Video

Director: Giulio Paradisi

Cast: Joanne Nail, Paige Conner, John Huston, Lance Henriksen, Shelley Winters, Mel Ferrer, Glenn Ford



"I HOPE YOU all have seatbelts..." Lance Henriksen's advice on viewing *The Visitor* doesn't go far enough. A helmet and elbow pads would help too, in case you need to escape by commando-rolling into the road.

This bonkers Italian effort was conceived as an *Exorcist* cash-in, but that remit seems to have expanded to cover *The Omen*, *The Fury* and *Close Encounters*. Eight-year-old Katy is the progeny of Sateen, an evil alien mutant who's passed on psychic powers. We learn this not via investigation, but cos it's info-dumped to a roomful of bald kids. By Jesus Christ. Who's blond. John Huston is the titular Visitor, here to stop more Sateen sprogs being spawned. He's just one of a



The king of wigs was in great demand.

host of well-known American actors you'll feel awfully embarrassed for.

Studded with memorable moments of madness – the opening psychedelic vision-scape; an ice rink sequence where Katy hurls fellow skaters through windows; an attack by swarms of birds – *The Visitor* looks like a masterpiece when compressed into a trailer, but the lack of a coherent narrative means that as a full-length feature it's a dog's dinner. Entertainingly awful.

EXTRAS: A trailer and three interviews (23 minutes), two of which are solid gold: Lance Henriksen is amusingly bemused, while the writer delivers hilarious revelations about a director who, if not reined in, would've made a film twice as barking. **Ian Berriman**

According to writer Lou Comici, the director was fired... then rehired after a relative put a gun to the producer's head!

Zombeavers

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 20 October

2014 | 15 | 77 minutes | £15.99 (Blu-ray)/£12.99 (DVD)



ZOMBIES

come with sharp, pointy teeth here, courtesy of the most lethal rodents this side of *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*. Alas, the killer critters are less convincing than Python's psycho bunny, and even they're more believable than a cast so wooden they were always destined to be beaver fodder.

Mock schlock is clearly the agenda of this lazy attempt to out-kook *Sharknado*, but *Zombeavers* isn't funny enough to be a spoof nor scary enough to be a horror. Instead, it's a cynical excuse for an unpleasant bunch of college students to get their kit off, and get out-thought by the beavers. The title's the best thing about it.

EXTRAS: The Blu-ray (rated) comes with audition tapes, three featurettes and a deleted scene. The DVD gets 3D lenticular packaging – whoop! **Richard Edwards**

BLU-RAY DEBUT

The Incredible Melting Man

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1977 | 18 | 84 minutes | £19.99 (dual format Blu-ray/DVD)



TAKE A '50S

B-movie, add gross-out effects, place under a high heat until it's melted into goo and... voila!

This '70s shocker establishes its premise – astronaut is affected by er, something to do with Saturn's rings, starts disintegrating, escapes, ambles about woods offing passers-by – in moments, then runs it into the ground.

The only thing that might inspire thought is the question of whether the comedy is intentional. Are we meant to howl at the most incompetent search party in history? Is the sight of an ear stuck to a bush meant to inspire guffaws? Probably, but the humour's so poorly developed it's not entirely clear.

EXTRAS: Director's commentary, two interviews, a booklet and more. **Ian Berriman**

Open Grave

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | 97 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)



NOT TO BE

confused with 2009's naff Eliza Dushku horror *Open Graves*, this zombie thriller stars *District 9's* Sharlto Copley as a man who wakes up in a mass grave with no memory of who he is or how he got there. It's a skin-crawling opening sequence that gets things off to an extremely promising start.

It's all downhill from there, however, as the plot settles into a wearily familiar pattern, the pacing slows to a shuffle and the clueless characters fail to generate any empathy whatsoever. There are some effectively creepy moments involving the ravenous lunatics roaming the forest, and the grimy cinematography is well-suited to the relentlessly bleak subject matter, but otherwise this is a film that's not worth digging up.

EXTRAS: None. **Jordan Farley**

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Curse Of The Crimson Altar

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1968 | 15 | 85 minutes | £15.99 (Blu-ray)/£14.99 (DVD)



FIVE YEARS

before *The Wicker Man*, Christopher Lee starred alongside Boris Karloff in this enjoyably clunky cult thriller. Antiques bore Robert Manning (Mark Eden) visits the village of Greymarsh. He spends the night at Casa Lee, where he dreams about long-dead local witch Lavinia (Barbara Steele) and her animal-masked cult. But are they just dreams? What do you think?

It's rote stuff, enlivened by the psychedelic "dreams" and a liberal dash of BDSM chic. An entertaining, if unremarkable, precursor to such genuinely smart shockers as *Witchfinder General* and *The Wicker Man*.

EXTRAS: Commentary by Barbara Steele; Making Of "Creating Curse Of The Crimson Altar"; an interview with Lee. **Will Salmon**

The 100 Season One

Criminally unoriginal

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 12 | 523 minutes | £39.99 (Blu-ray)/£29.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Warner Home Video

Creator: Jason Rothenberg

Cast: Eliza Taylor, Bob Morley, Marie Avgeropoulos, Thomas McDonnell, Henry Ian Cusick



The 100 FEELS

like the culmination of a massive experiment to create the ultimate CW show after years of teen-targeted, romance-fuelled telefantasy hits (*The Vampire Diaries*) and misses (*The Secret Circle*). Surprisingly, despite its blatantly cynical conception, it's competently diverting fluff.

The show sees 100 teenage delinquents from a space station sent back to a post-apocalyptic Earth to see if it's habitable again. Once there, they go all *Lord Of The Flies* – just a bit randier and with an endless supply of hair products. They all arrive with shady secrets which are revealed in drip feed over the course of the season. Meanwhile, back on



the Ark, the shifty political leaders try to hide the fact that the station is shutting down from a suspiciously credulous populace.

It's defiantly formulaic, staggeringly bereft of originality, and populated with characters who say and do the same things week in week out. But within those limitations it's a lively, fast-paced, well-cast, action-packed package, full of the kind of potential "shipping" combinations that guarantee heated social networking debates.

EXTRAS: A commentary and two deleted scenes for the season finale; four behind-the-scenes featurettes that explore the origins of the show, creating The Ark, costume design and visual effects; the 2013 Comic-Con Panel. **Dave Golder**

Eliza (Clarke) Taylor's mum is a total Trekkie, who's very proud to have a daughter starring in a sci-fi show.

All Cheerleaders Die

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 27 October

2013 | 15 | 89 minutes | £15.99 (DVD)



POM-POM waving is a dangerous business, at least according to directors Lucky McKee and Chris Sivertson. This is their second bash at a dead cheerleader film: a far glossier, but also kind of limp, remake of their unreleased 2001 cheapie.

Neighbours' Caitlin Stasey plays a snarky vlogger who joins the cheer squad after her BFF dies in a freak tumbling accident. Her revenge is put on hold when she's killed in a car accident... but then her ex-girlfriend brings her back from the dead. Cue pseudo-feminist witchy nonsense.

It's supposed to be a deconstruction of teen horror clichés, but it mostly just regurgitates them. And since Joseph Kahn's *Detention* exists, there's just no need for it.

EXTRAS: A trailer. **Sarah Dobbs**

coming soon

3 NOVEMBER

THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG The Extended Edition, featuring a cut 25 minutes longer, plus nine behind-the-scenes hours.

PATEMA INVERTED A boy from an upside-down world falls for an underground girl in this anime film.

THE SORCERERS An elderly couple take control of Ian "The Saint" Ogilvy in this 1967 horror, now on Blu-ray.

THE WHIP AND THE BODY Christopher Lee's sadist returns in ghostly form to carry on flogging in Mario Bava's 1963 horror.

10 NOVEMBER

BATMAN Kapow! A box set of all 120 episodes of the campy '60s series.

TRUE BLOOD SEASON SEVEN The final ten instalments of the Sookie Stackhouse saga.

X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST Bryan Singer brings together the *First Class* line-up with aged versions from a dystopian future.

17 NOVEMBER

DOCTOR WHO SERIES EIGHT

A dozen outings for ol' Attack Eyebrows and wide-faced girl.

EYES WITHOUT A FACE Georges Franju's poetic 1960 face transplant horror gets a Blu-ray release.

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2

Hiccup and friends fight a madman and his dragon army.

NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

Quatermass creator Nigel Kneale wrote this 1954 BBC adaptation of the Orwell classic, starring Peter Cushing.

THE PURGE: ANARCHY The sequel to the home-invasion horror in which all crime's legal for one night a year.

TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION Despite the Dinobots, the worst entry yet in the robots-in-disguise franchise.

WINGS OF HONNEAMISE On an alternate Earth, a young man trains to be an astronaut in this 1987 anime film, now on Blu-ray.

24 NOVEMBER

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA A Blu-ray box set of the original 1978 space saga and sequel show *Galactica 1980*.

DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES Ten years on from *Rise*, tensions rise between the surviving humans and the apes...

MOOD INDIGO A loved-up couple's quirky world turns nightmarish in Michel Gondry's surreal fantasy.

SPIRITED AWAY A young girl journeys to a spirit world in this celebrated anime film, now on Blu-ray.

THE THIEF OF BAGDAD Genies and magic carpets feature in this 1940 Arabian adventure, now on Blu-ray.

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Night Of The Comet

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1984 | 15 | 95 minutes | £14.99 (Dual format Blu-ray/DVD)/£13.99 (DVD)



JOSS WHEDON

is a fan of this post-apocalyptic curiosity, and it's easy to see why. Drenched in pop culture references, led by heroic teen girls, it's a clear antecedent of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

Stealing a cue from *The Day Of The Triffids*, the film takes place after the titular comet has wreaked global havoc. Surviving valley girls Regina (Catherine Mary Stewart) and Samantha (Kelli Maroney) join forces with Hector (Robert Beltran) and fight to survive.

Downbeat and melancholic, it's more interesting than funny. But the combo of '80s pop, zombie attacks and a doomy red sky make for a unique end of the world.

EXTRAS: Four lengthy interviews and a trailer. **Will Salmon**

Space Station 76

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | 93 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)



THE '70S SF

future is now as much the stuff of media archaeology as the rayguns and saucers of the '50s. Here's a film that nails that aesthetic perfectly. Bright, sterile corridors and flight deck instrument displays? Check. Hydroponic farms and Kubrickian space wheels? All here. Farrah Fawcett flicks, VHS decks and rollerskates? Present and correct. It's a retro rush brought to the screen with clear care and love.

But *Space Station 76* has more on its mind than its aesthetic. It takes aim at the pill-popping, psycho-babbling Californian suburbs of the baby boomer generation. Paced like a valium daze, its characters refusing to catch fire, the script never quite matches the wit of the visuals.

EXTRAS: A Making Of, three deleted scenes and outtakes.

Nick Setchfield

Argento's Dracula



★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2012 | 18 | 110 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)



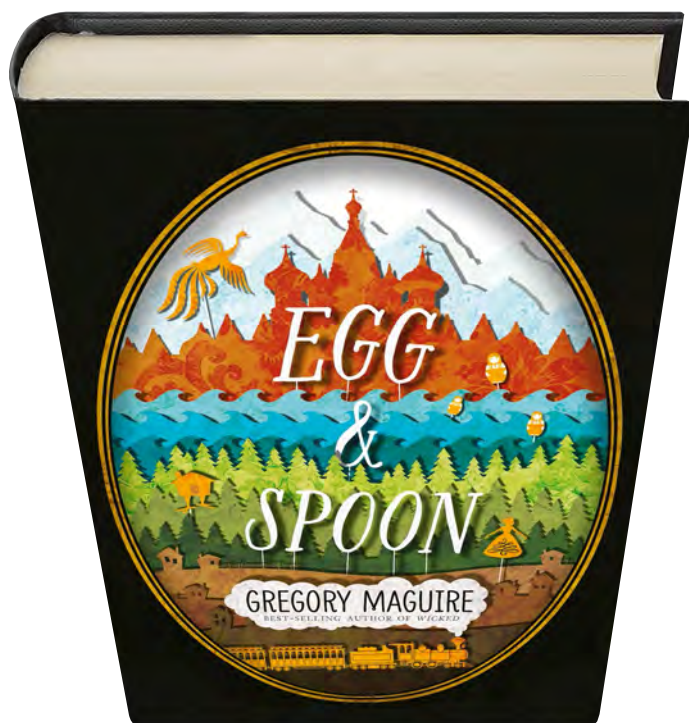
BRAM STOKER'S

novel has been adapted many times over the years, but Dario Argento brings something completely new to this attempt. Unfortunately, that something is a giant, badly animated praying mantis.

There are plenty of other things to criticise about this movie – it's far too long, the accents are hard to decipher, and the character dynamics have been unnecessarily swapped around, making nonsense of the story – but the mantis stands out as uniquely awful. Yes, Count Dracula has always been able to shapeshift, but it never seemed quite as ridiculous as it does here.

Argento used to be brilliant at intense and strange visuals, but those days are, sadly, long gone, and all we're left with is sub-Asylum movie CGI bugs.

EXTRAS: A trailer. **Sarah Dobbs**



Egg & Spoon

Defying Gravity, or toppling over?



Release Date: 6 November

476 pages | £14.99
Author: Gregory Maguire
Publisher: Walker Books

US AUTHOR GREGORY

Maguire has made a name for himself with his retellings of classic children's stories and fairytales. His most famous work is *Wicked*, a version of *The Wizard Of Oz* told from the point of view of the Wicked Witch Of The West, which was made into a wildly popular Broadway musical. *Egg & Spoon* sees Maguire this time turn his attention to Russian folklore, but the results are mixed, in part because the novel can never seem to quite decide which audience it's aimed at.

It's the eve of the Russian revolution. Repeated poor harvests – caused by a cycle of weather that could be considered inhospitable even by Russian standards – have left an already desperately poor population facing the spectre of starvation. In a tiny backwater hamlet, a girl named Elena nurses her ailing mother and ekes out an existence on scavenged nuts and

berries. Her father is dead, and at the start of the novel her elder brothers are both press-ganged into service far away: one in the army, one in a landowner's household.

Then a train en route for St Petersburg, carrying a unique gift for the Tsar and a potential bride for his godson in the shape of a girl named Cat, is stranded on the edge of the village by a damaged bridge. Elena's horizons broaden rapidly, not least because when the train finally departs, an unlikely mix-up leaves her on the train in Cat's place. Soon both girls are having encounters with mythical beings – Elena stumbles upon the Firebird, Cat falls in with the witch Baba Yaga – and the fate of the land lies in their inexperienced hands.

The set-up has a fairytale quality to it: Elena's situation has echoes of Cinderella skivvying for her stepsisters, just a fairy godmother and a glass slipper – or, in this case, a train and a magic egg – away from swapping a draughty cottage for a lavish palace.

But her plight (and that of her community) is so sharply and painstakingly drawn that it's rather

at odds with the cheerful tone of the narration and the freewheeling slapstick of the plot that develops. This dichotomy between grit and glee is the thread that runs through the heart of the novel.

On the one hand, *Egg & Spoon* is a book that's keen to celebrate a child's way of seeing the world. Much is made of the fact that only children are able to spot Baba Yaga's house running around on its chicken legs, its story largely revolves around the trials and tribulations of two girls just entering their teens, and the solution to most problems involves being true to your friends and believing in magic.

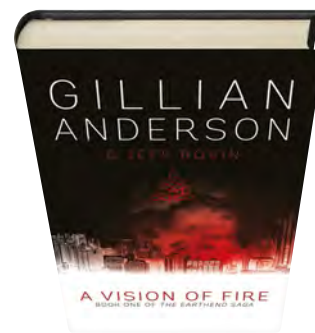
On the other hand, it also (understandably, given the setting) wants to show us certain things kids don't generally notice, like systemic abuses of power and the ways in which Cat's class privilege is an obstacle to a real friendship with Elena. At which point Maguire remembers he's also writing for children and switches back to the first hand, spelling out his moral messages with all the subtlety of an

A dichotomy between grit and glee runs through the entire novel

elephant tap-dancing on the roof of a car. Jokes in untranslated French rub shoulders with gags which carve deep grooves into the ground with their repetition; Baba Yaga's love of all things anachronistic and American is initially fun – she has Cheerios in her cupboard and *Cats* on her turntable – but wears thin.

The overall effect can sometimes resemble whiplash: crippling poverty! Wisecracking cat! Terrible oppression! Ice dragon! Maguire's attempt to create family fun often comes unstuck. Individual elements work, sometimes very well – the characters are well-rounded, the descriptions colourful, the dialogue lively, and the issues thoughtful – but, set alongside each other, they tend to clash more often than they compliment. Even if they're not always successful, though, these juxtapositions make the book spikier and more interesting than it first appears. **Nic Clarke**

Maguire doesn't want to talk about his next project, for fear of "falling down rabbit holes". A new take on *Alice*, then?



A Vision Of Fire

Try not to think of Scully...



Release Date: OUT NOW!

290 pages | £12.99 (hardback)/£6.49 (ebook)
Authors: Gillian Anderson and Jeff Rovin
Publisher: Simon & Schuster

YOU CAN'T HELP IT. IT'S

near impossible. At some point while reading Gillian Anderson's debut novel, you will think, "This is like an X-File."

Admittedly, protagonist Caitlin O'Hara – a psychiatrist – is more like Anderson's character from *Hannibal* than Scully (and a lot less sceptical), but the central conceit is pure Mulder-fodder. When the Indian ambassador narrowly avoids assassination during UN peace talks, his daughter's reaction seems over-extreme; she's not just in shock, she's acting like she's possessed. Caitlin, called in to help, discovers cataclysmic secrets spanning millennia and continents.

The novel – the first in series *The Earthend Saga* – reads suspiciously like the pilot for a TV show. At just shy of 300 pages you might expect something lean and mean; instead it feels stodgy and padded. Not much actually happens bar an awful lot of speculation tinged with cheesy pseudo-science that borders on Californian New Age hippyshit (not excused by the fact that the characters admit it sounds like Californian New Age hippyshit).

In its favour, the prose is crisp, the main characters are well-defined and likeable, and the story takes place in a vividly real modern world of international crises, Google hangouts and psychological neuroses. There's also an intriguing conspiracy arc plot going on in the background. Which is a bit like... oh, you know where this is going. **Dave Golder**

In David Duchovny's *Holy Cow* (due Feb) a wise-cracking bovine and a Jewish pig help unite Israelis and Palestinians.

An English Ghost Story

Sleepless Hollow

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

304 pages | £7.99 (paperback)

Author: Kim Newman

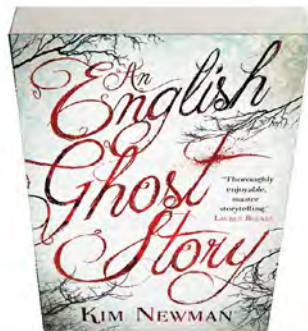
Publisher: Titan Books

FILM CRITIC AND GENRE

cognoscenti Kim Newman is best known for his Anno Dracula novels, which take a tantalising premise – what if the Count conquered Europe? – and use it to weave an epic alt-history. *An English Ghost Story* couldn't be more different in both tone and scale: it's a standalone work focusing on a single family.

The Naremore family have moved to the Hollow, an isolated house in rural Somerset, where they soon realise that there are supernatural forces at work – which is fine with them. It's a happy place. Gradually, however, the silent treaty between spirit and human begins to fray.

All the elements of a classic spook story are here: a mysterious building with a mind of its own; half-glimpsed figures who may or may not be there; a deep sense of



foreboding. But the Hollow isn't the Overlook Hotel and the ghosts are generally benign. The problems stem instead from the Naramores' troubled history and strained personal relationships.

Newman captures the madness and mundanity of family life well. Vintage-loving teen Jordan occasionally feels like a slightly obnoxious mouthpiece for his views on contemporary pop culture, but that's forgivable in this beautifully written book, which begins with a fairy tale-like sense of wonder before giving way to something much more sinister. **Will Salmon**

Also out from Kim Newman this month: a slim volume on Hammer movie *Quatermass And The Pit*, in the BFI Film Classics series.

221 Baker Streets

Plenty to write Holmes about

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

381 pages | £7.99 (paperback)

Editor: David Thomas Moore

Publisher: Abaddon Books

THE RECYCLING OF

popular characters is not the end of imagination; far from it. We say, with our pseud's hat on, that western culture is in the throes of inventing a new pantheon of heroes to supplement Thor, Robin Hood, King Arthur et al. Sherlock Holmes is one of these secular myths.

Holmes is like the Doctor – geeky, dangerous, supremely intelligent, but on the side of the angels – and attracts similar adulation and peripheral activity like this anthology, which presents lady, metafictional, magically conjured, gay, near-future, contemporary, and teenaged-girl versions (and more!) of the great man.

Assigning a score to a book of this type is a conundrum worthy of Holmes's own intellect. All the stories are well penned, but being told primarily for the love of the character, they lack a purpose of



their own. All have merit; none completely capture the essence of their inspiration.

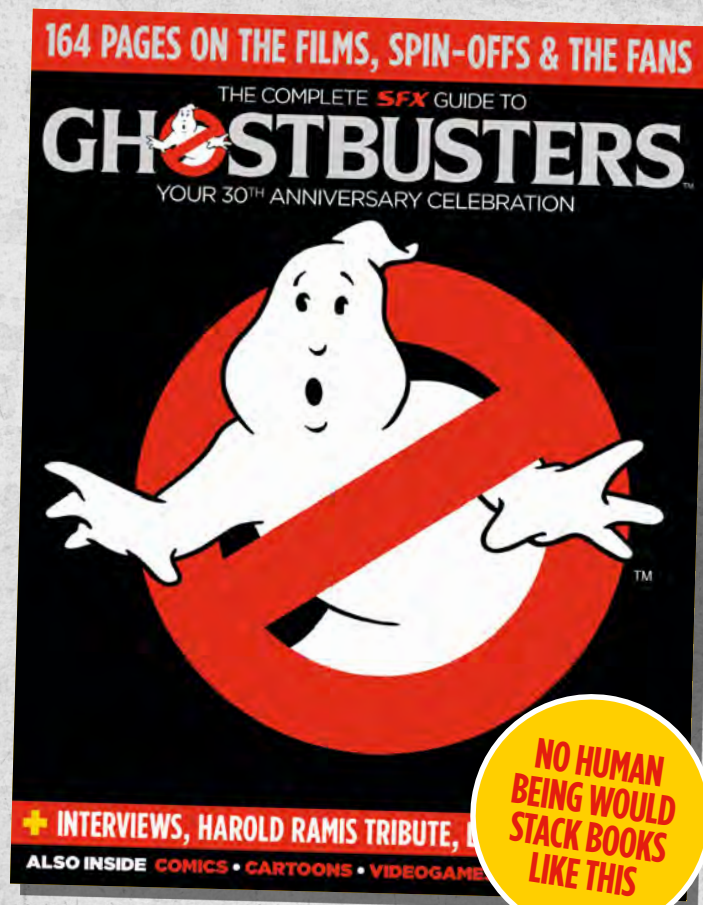
Apeing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is a tall order, so the stories that are most successful are those that deviate furthest from the template, or those that adroitly exploit the relationship between Holmes and Watson. A couple fail, but nobly. Perhaps the best is "A Study In Scarborough" by Guy Adams, whose bizarre yet artful recasting of the detective duo as 1970s comedy stars comes closest to catching the many facets of the originals.

James Kingsley

Holmes stories by others are nothing new. Among the earliest was a 1913 Greek novel, *Sherlock Holmes Saving Mr Venizelos*.

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On Set With John Carpenter

Negative experiences



Release Date: 24 October

176 pages | £24.99 (hardback)

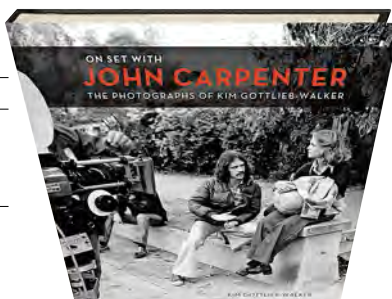
Author: Kim Gottlieb-Walker

Publisher: Titan Books

PHOTOGRAPHER KIM

Gottlieb-Walker worked on five features with John Carpenter, from 1978's *Halloween* to 1983's *Christine*, and this collection of stills will fascinate fans of the director.

There are some classy, artistic shots here: in moody portraits, the likes of Donald Pleasence and Lee Van Cleef direct a piercing gaze into the lens. A fair share are pretty unremarkable, but a scattering of priceless images of cast and crew goofing around make up for that: Nick Castle (one of the men behind Michael Myers) making the mask "drink" a can of Dr Pepper. Kurt



Russell eyeballing a caged rat on the set of *Escape From New York*.

Accompanying quotes add anecdotes about on-set mishaps and pranks – the cameraman falling through the floor; the producer convinced his Porsche had been crushed. By all accounts, a Carpenter set was a place of camaraderie, laughter and fun. **Ian Berriman**

? Kim Gottlieb-Walker has a cameo in *Halloween II*, as one of the reporters who crowds around Laurie at the end.



Jamie Lee Curtis poses in-between shooting *Halloween*.



Kurt Russell rehearses strangling Lee Van Cleef.



James Cameron touches up a matte painting.



Kurt Russell and stunt double Dick Warlock.

Discovering Scarfolk

A local book for local people



Release Date: 16 October

191 pages | £12.99 (hardback)

Author: Richard Littler

Publisher: Ebury Press

THE PAST IS A DIFFERENT

country. And in the case of the '70s, that country increasingly seems like a place you wouldn't like to visit – certainly not without taking some mace spray and getting your jabs.

Spun off from the excellent Scarfolk website (<http://scarfolk.blogspot.co.uk>), Richard Littler's book presents itself as a collection of materials relating to a mysterious north-west town that's off the map, and only seems to have existed from 1970-1979. It dials up all that's outdated about history's brownest decade, making the xenophobic attitudes more shameless, the food more inedible, the health and safety standards even more shoddy. Then it stirs in the paranoia of *The Prisoner* and the absurdism of Python or Vic Reeves. The result: a strange alternate-universe realm of



fondue sets, cannibalism and constant surveillance.

The text, which reports the nightmarish experiences of a man who became trapped in the town, does an entertaining enough job of presenting lunatic goings-on with a straight face. But the main draw are the witty visuals: a public information poster that treats babies as a threat like rabies; an ad for ice lollies with names like Gammon Bedsore; the cover for a guide to brainwashing children. Beautifully realised, they're crying out to be made into a range of visitor-baffling framed prints. **Ian Berriman**

? As a boy, Littler played hooky to gawp at location filming for *Empire Of The Sun*. He still treasures the second AD's autograph.

The Hive Construct

Pratchett prize prose



Release Date: OUT NOW!

352 pages | £16.99 (hardback)/£6.99 (ebook)

Author: Alexander Maskill

Publisher: Doubleday

LOCATED IN THE SAHARA,

New Cairo is a city of extremes, where money and power are concentrated in an elite with roots in corporate dynasties. The poor get by as best they can, at least until a virus that attacks the biotech implants on which so many depend starts to spread. As the city goes into lockdown, revolution is in the air.

We see this unrest through the perspective of a few key characters, primarily hacked-off computer whizz Zala, privileged kidnap victim Ryan and security expert Alice, who works for those agitating for change but mostly just wants to escape.

As the situation starts to unravel and the chances of compromise pass, debut author Alexander Maskill – latest winner of Terry Pratchett's annual prize for first-time novelists – ratchets up the tension in



fine fashion. Until the final few pages, that is, where there's the sense of a writer struggling to bring different storylines to satisfying conclusions. One character's fate is positively glib in moral terms.

There are other flaws. New Cairo is far too generic to be truly convincing as an African city of the future. There's a nagging sense too that Maskill hasn't thought carefully enough about how tomorrow's tech might differ from today's.

Still, let's not underestimate the achievements here: this is a genuinely promising debut.

Jonathan Wright

? Alexander Maskill wrote *The Hive Construct* in just five months, while studying for a politics degree.



Shadowboxer

Thai Hard

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

228 pages | £7.99 (paperback)

Author: Tricia Sullivan

Publisher: Ravenstone

THERE'S A LOT TO LOVE

about this YA novel, which draws together the stories of American Latina mixed martial artist Jade, Thai-based Burmese refugee Mya, and Welsh-Asian journalist Shea.

Mya is being forced by the sinister Mr Richard to lead him into the mystical Himmaman forest, which she can access through meditation but he can only visit with the help of a child guide. After she encounters Jade and Shea, the three work together to bring down Mr Richard's criminal enterprises.

So many of the standard genre tropes – white lead characters, obsessions with clothes and boys, college dramas – have been thrown out. And the spiritual domain of the Himmaman, and the strange creatures that live there, meshes beautifully into Jade's gritty world of cage fights. **Miriam McDonald**

? Tricia Sullivan has practised martial arts herself since she was 13. She got kicked out of a karate class for insubordination!



Mountwood School for Ghosts

Too ghoul for school

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

253 pages | £9.99 (hardback)/£8.05 (ebook)

Author: Toby Ibbotson

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

LONG BEFORE LETTERS

swarmed down Harry Potter's chimney, Eva Ibbotson was writing tales of ghosts, mistreated orphans and supernatural schools. Toby Ibbotson's debut, based on one of his late mother's ideas, has a great deal in common with her work.

After a lost ghost ends up in his house, Daniel and his friend Charlotte discover Mountwood School, and end up calling on its pupils for help when their street in a north-eastern town is threatened with redevelopment by a crooked local politician.

The blend of very traditional storytelling with some modern themes mean this should be a favourite with both boys and girls for some years to come – and there's just the right amount of gore. **Miriam McDonald**

? Ibbotson's grandfather Berthold Wiesner was an infertility treatment pioneer suspected to have fathered hundreds.



Timebomb

Teen trio's temporal trials

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

281 pages | £13.99 (paperback)/£7.99 (ebook)

Author: Scott K. Andrews

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton

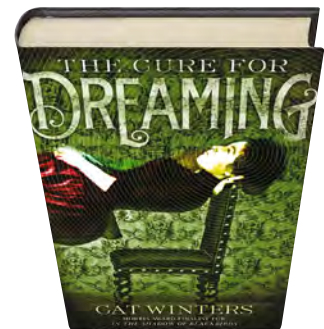
AN EXERCISE IN DELAYED

gratification, *Timebomb* may be proof that the goldfish-brained MTV generation is either dead or reading James Patterson. Because this YA time travel novel is a product of the *Lost* generation; lots of questions, few answers.

It's much pacier and action filled than *Lost*, though; three teenagers from different time periods (past, present, future) are brought together (Why? By whom?) because together they can time travel (How?) and hopefully stop some major temporal tragedy (What?). Cue laser beams in the English Civil War.

Light and frothy, it's *MI High* meets Moffat's *Doctor Who*, except the gags are weaker. But likeably spiky characters, some fun paradox shenanigans and a cracker of a cliffhanger mean you'll be back for book two of three. **Dave Golder**

? Scott Andrews's previous books include an unofficial guide to *Farscape*, updated and free at <http://bit.ly/Farbook>.



The Cure for Dreaming

Votes for women!

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

368 pages | £10.99 (hardback/ebook)

Author: Cat Winters

Publisher: Amulet Books

IF A PARENT THOUGHT

their child's dreams were irresponsible and impossible, would it be kinder for them to remove those dreams? And what if those dreams were things as simple as education and equality?

In 1900 Oregon, Olivia Mead's father is so horrified by her sympathy with the suffragists that he pays a hypnotist to help her see the world as it truly is, which results in her seeing corrupted visions of the nature of people.

Olivia is a frustrating character, at once convinced of her rights to education and emancipation while continuing to allow the hypnotist to control her. This book is a timely reminder that political equality is hard fought for and hard fought against, but it's too simplistic to fully engage. **Rhian Drinkwater**

? The 19th amendment gave US women the vote in 1920. In the UK, some got the vote in 1918, with full equality by 1928.

REISSUES

CAT OUT OF HELL

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

£7.99 | Author: Lynne Truss

Publisher: Hammer



Cats are the source of horror in the *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* author's darkly humorous tale about a retired librarian, a decades-old talking moggy and a satanic cult. We said: "It's a quite ridiculous premise, and yet it works perfectly. Everything has a sense of joyous abandon... a tale that's sure to make you smile."

THE GOSPEL OF LOKI

★★★★★

Release Date: 6 November

£12.99 | Author: Joanne M Harris

Publisher: Gollancz



The *Chocolat* author retells ancient Norse legends of the rise and fall of the Trickster god in a first-person style that feels like a good pub tale. We said: "Most of all, *The Gospel of Loki* is funny. You just can't take this naughty chap seriously, even when he's responsible for mayhem and death."

ON THE STEEL BREEZE

★★★★★

Release Date: 30 October

£8.99 | Author: Alastair Reynolds

Publisher: Gollancz



In book two of the *Poseidon's Children* sequence, a holoship blow-out puts a clone at the centre of momentous events. We said: "Reynolds's ability to make you care about his characters and make the spectacle seem driven by their choices is rare. As good as contemporary SF gets."

PROXIMA

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

£8.99 | Author: Stephen Baxter

Publisher: Gollancz



This first half of a duology concerns a risky colony mission to Alpha Centauri, and cold war between the Chinese Empire and the UN after alien artefacts are found on Mercury. We said: "Baxter details a fascinating planetary ecology. The depth of this part has one thinking of *Rendezvous With Rama*."

RAISING STEAM

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

£7.99 | Author: Terry Pratchett

Publisher: Corgi



The 40th Discworld novel is a fantasy take on the railway fever that gripped Victorian Britain at the height of industrialisation. We said: "Pratchett has fun with vignettes drawing on railway history, but this is also a novel about what progress should mean for the wider population... It's laugh-out-loud funny too."

The Frood

Adams' abandoned ideas

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

471 pages | £20 (hardback)/£9.99 (ebook)

Author: Jem Roberts

Publisher: Preface Publishing

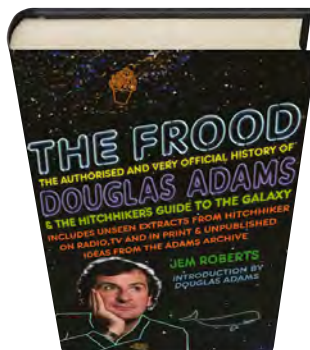
INTERVIEWED BY SFX A

while back, *The Frood* author Jem Roberts was happy to admit his good fortune. When embarking on this new biography of the “roof-troubling” author of *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, he didn't know that a meeting with Douglas Adams's daughter, Polly, would result in him being given the keys to an Aladdin's Cave of unused scripts, hastily scribbled notes and abandoned ideas at the Adams archive in Cambridge.

These never-seen-before gems were clearly always going to be the most headline-grabbing, marketable aspect of the book, but Roberts hoped that even if he'd never discovered them, his fresh approach to chronicling Adams's life would be reason enough to buy.

He needn't have worried. It is.

Roberts's lively conversational prose never tries to ape Adams's



own style, but tells the story of his life in an accessible, compelling flow. He's not judgmental about the author, but doesn't whitewash him either, and places biographical details in historical context.

Occasionally he assumes the reader must have as much knowledge of late 20th century UK comedy as he does, a few events are glossed over, and you might expect a few more original quotes from family and colleagues in a book which so boldly affirms its official status. But for the most part, this is a thoroughly absorbing read.

Dave Golder

? Douglas Adams first introduced Richard Dawkins to his future wife, *Doctor Who*'s second Romana, Lalla Ward.

Nyctophobia

Edge Of Darkness

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

320 pages | £7.99 (paperback)

Author: Christopher Fowler

Publisher: Solaris

NYCTOPHOBIA IS THE

pathological fear of the dark. It's one of a number of problems newlywed Callie is struggling with. A vindictive mother, a history of abuse and the not-inconsiderable difficulties of emigrating to Spain are also giving her grief.

Still, her husband Matteo is devoted to her and the new house is an enormous sun-trap. Exactly what Callie needs to get over her phobias. Except there are locked, unlit rooms where no one goes... and Callie can hear things moving behind the doors.

Christopher Fowler is known for dancing between genres, so it's slightly surprising that *Nyctophobia* is a very traditional haunted house story. The spirit of *The Shining* is invoked and the narrator's sanity is constantly in question, as in *The Innocents*. Also like those films – and in spite of the



title – many of its scares take place in the harsh light of day. In fact, Hyperion House is swathed in so much sunlight it occasionally reads like the characters are living in a giant greenhouse.

So *Nyctophobia*'s not hugely original, but then it's increasingly hard to be in a genre as seasoned as this. Where it wins out is in its deeply uneasy atmosphere and Fowler's assured, witty prose. This is a dark, sad tale, but Callie makes for a likeably self-effacing protagonist with a pleasingly pragmatic approach to the supernatural. **Will Salmon**

? Fowler reckons that the creepiest ghost story is William Hope Hodgson's 1908 novel *The House On The Borderlands*.

Spark

Doesn't hit the mark

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

302 pages | £16.99 (hardback)/£6.56 (ebook)

Author: John Twelve Hawks

Publisher: Bantam

NEAR-FUTURE SF IS ONE OF

the hardest subgenres to get right, and also one of the easiest ways for “mainstream” authors to trip themselves up in embarrassing ways. Creating a convincing extrapolation for today's privacy-free, smartphone-obsessed society isn't easy, and while new thriller *Spark* tries its best to use the near-future setting to explore provocative questions, it's ultimately dragged down by its routine plotting and pretentious tone.

Jacob Underwood is an assassin employed by a massive financial corporation called DBC who suffers from Cotard's Syndrome – a mental disorder that makes him believe he is dead. Blank and emotionless, he “erases” his targets with no problems, but when he's assigned to hunt down a runaway female DBC employee, and is then asked to kill an entire family, things



get out of control. Jacob's logical façade crumbles as he starts experiencing feelings and questioning his world view...

The core of the book is a bog-standard globetrotting thriller. Around this are wrapped thin character drama and sci-fi concepts that often feel like a very '90s version of the future. Creaky dialogue combines with overplayed philosophical themes. The result is a confused mishmash of spirituality, SF and anti-surveillance polemic, whose most interesting ideas have all been done before by better, more memorable writers. **Saxon Bullock**

? Twelve Hawks recently published a free ebook called *Against Authority*. Download it from <http://bit.ly/againstauth>.

The Hawley Book Of The Dead

Now you see her...

★★★★★

Release Date: 23 October

333 pages | £16.99 (hardback)/£8.49 (ebook)

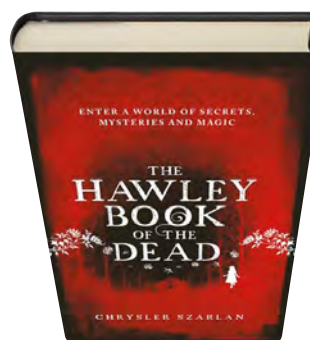
Author: Chrysler Szarlan

Publisher: Century

AN OPENING SENTENCE

that grabs the reader is worth its weight in gold. The doubts you might have had on picking up a book with a cutesy cover whose marketing blurb promises that it's “the kind of novel that makes you believe that magic really exists” are challenged once you turn to the first page and read, “On the day I killed my husband, the scent of lilacs startled me awake.” Short, sharp, intriguing: here's what is going to happen, but don't you want to know *how*?

The writing isn't all as taut and stark as this. But while it does get a little (if you'll forgive the pun) flowery at times, Chrysler Szarlan has a keen eye for imagery that uses the visual to mirror characters' emotional responses. The Nevada sun that first morning



is, we're told, “sharp as a knife, the heat already settled into every crevice of the day”.

Furthermore, the central mystery of how and why a stage magician could have died during a routine Las Vegas performance powers the plot very effectively, and the protagonist's day-to-day struggle to keep herself and her family going in the wake of tragedy gives it some heft.

Towards the end the story gets bogged down in unnecessary levels of detail about Irish folklore, but by and large, Szarlan's tale is paced for page-turning. **Nic Clarke**

? Szarlan recalls being “a terrible magician's assistant”. We're pretty sure she means she was terrible, not the magician.

As You Wish

Princess Bride memories

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

256 pages | £11.99 (hardback)/£9.99 (ebook)

Authors: Cary Elwes and Joe Layden

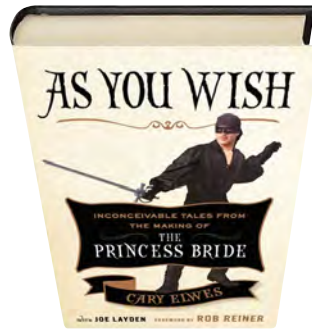
Publisher: Simon & Schuster

PART AUTOBIOGRAPHY,

part making of, *As You Wish* is a breezy but entirely toothless trip down memory lane for fans of *The Princess Bride*.

Penned by the Man In Black himself, it's an account of Cary Elwes's journey on the film from the day he first met director Rob Reiner to a cast/crew reunion 25 years later. Pictures and interview snippets with most of the key players are sprinkled throughout, giving the book an oral history feel – though peculiarly people occasionally feature before they're introduced in Elwes's prose, leaving you to wonder who the heck some of them are.

Elwes offers plenty of insight and anecdotes, a lot of which will be new, even to people who've sat through all the Blu-ray special features. Barely a single scene goes unmentioned, with the iconic cliff-top swordfight covered in the



greatest depth. "Inconceivable" may be a stretch, but there are a handful of surprising and hilarious tales, most featuring Andre The Giant, whose voice is sorely missed elsewhere.

It's lovingly written – Elwes's passion for the film plainly evident throughout. Elwes is so enamoured with the production and everyone involved, however, that after the twentieth time hearing about how wonderful someone or something was his boundless praise starts to lose impact. It's difficult to escape the sense there's a better warts-and-all story to be told. **Jordan Farley**

Among the *Princess Bride* fans who Cary Elwes has met are Bill Clinton and Pope John Paul II.

Firefall

Human obsolescence beckons

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

761 pages | £20 (hardback)/£5.79 (ebook)

Author: Peter Watts

Publisher: Head Of Zeus

BY TURNS BRILLIANT AND

merciless, *Firefall* is a science-fictionalised philosophical argument that human sentience is neither inevitable nor necessary, and that free will is an illusion. Dressed up, naturally, with aliens and spaceships and such. Originally two books, it's been released here in one volume.

Blindsight is set at the tail end of a post-singularity 21st century. The catalysing event is the unexpected survey of Earth by an alien intelligence. A mission's sent out to investigate, crewed by a bunch of barely human transhumans and a vampire. (Watts's vampires are an offshoot human species that died out, resurrected from junk DNA by modern idiots.)

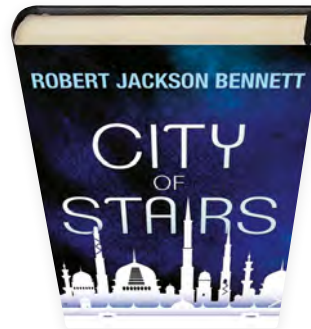
Sequel *Echopraxia* concerns a second mission. Another story where characters sit around in a spaceship arguing the ontological toss makes for a certain amount of



over-familiarity, and it lacks the first's impact.

A sort of callous *Rendezvous With Rama*, the book's tone tends to the didactic, while the over-the-top abilities of Watts's vampires in particular betray the author's contempt for the human condition. Watts is a sort of anti-HG Wells, or a latter-day Kevin McCarthy shouting unbelievable, unpalatable truths into the traffic. However, there's an immense amount of actual science, applied creatively, which provides food for thought. By no means nice, this is SF harder than granite, and about as compromising. **Guy Haley**

"Synthesists" process complex information for consumption by the masses without understanding it. A sly pop at SF writers?



City of Stairs

After the epic

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

420 pages | £20 (hardback)/£6.17 (ebook)

Author: Robert Jackson Bennett

Publisher: Jo Fletcher Books

EPIC FANTASY DEALS IN

the big canvas: huge, fate-of-the-world tales after which nothing will ever be the same again. It's rarer for the genre to explore what happens next.

Robert Jackson Bennett's swords-and-sorcery novel does just that, opening a couple of generations on from a great war in which the once enslaved Saypuri conquered the Continent and overthrew their former masters' gods. But when the epic is done and all that's left is the slow and messy task of rebuilding, who wins and who loses? What's remembered, and what's forgotten?

It's invigoratingly ambitious, and Bennett's imagination is up to the challenge. The difficulty of forging a brave new world is brilliantly invoked in the idea of the "Blink", a destabilisation of reality caused by the gods' defeat. Across the Continent, landscapes have been violently rewritten; Bulikov, the titular "city of stairs", is full of half-buildings and vanished streets and staircases that lead nowhere. Yet little pockets of the past bleed through, both literally and in the hopes of a frustrated population.

The book's mechanics don't always keep pace with its imagination: the dialogue creaks under the strain of infodumping and the plotting sometimes relies upon a very clever protagonist being too slow on the uptake. But this is an absorbing and mature work, with some fantastically creepy monsters. **Nic Clarke**

If Bennett could choose a theme song that played whenever he walked into a room, it'd be "Tarzan Boy" by Baltimora.

THE TICK LIST

THE BEST NEW BOOKS – GOT 'EM YET?

- 1 THE BONE CLOCKS**
Immortal beings are at war in *Cloud Atlas* author David Mitchell's latest. ★★★★★
- 2 FOOL'S ASSASSIN**
Fitzchivalry Farseer returns after nearly two decades in Robin Hobb's latest. ★★★★★
- 3 THE INCORRUPTIBLES**
Hellish rites power steamboats in John Hornor Jacobs's Western/fantasy mash-up. ★★★★★
- 4 JOSS WHEDON: GEEK KING OF THE UNIVERSE**
Impressively candid biography of the *Buffy* creator. ★★★★★
- 5 BROKEN MONSTERS**
Lauren Beukes's new novel is a supernatural-tinged police procedural set in Detroit. ★★★★★
- 6 BÊTE**
Animals start talking back after being artificially enhanced in Adam Roberts's latest. ★★★★★
- 7 THE TALON OF HORUS**
Ezekyle Abaddon is the subject of the latest *Warhammer* novel. ★★★★★
- 8 THE ABYSS BEYOND DREAMS**
Peter F Hamilton returns to the Commonwealth universe. ★★★★★
- 9 GLEAM**
Tom Fletcher's new series combines dystopia, mythic quest and squishy monsters. ★★★★★
- 10 HORRORSTÖR**
This haunted house tale set in a furniture store is presented like an IKEA catalogue. ★★★★★

THE RULES: New releases push down old releases. Books drop out of the chart after three months.

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS

SCI-FI CHRONICLES

Release Date: OUT NOW!

567 pages | £25

Editor: Guy Haley

Publisher: Aurum Press

- ⊙ A chunky, cleanly designed overview of the genre.
- ⊙ Write-ups on 234 significant works/creatives are arranged chronologically.
- ⊙ Each has a colour-coded timeline – some of these are pretty complex.
- ⊙ Most of the contributors also write for *SFX*, so they know their onions!



The Iron Man

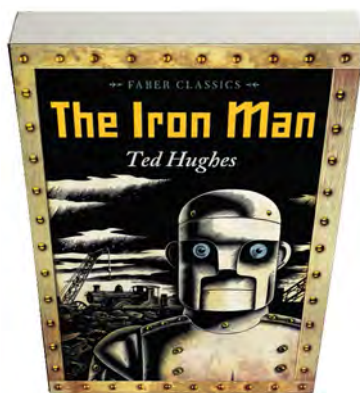
Ted Hughes, 1968

Author Jonathan Green investigates the children's classic that became a big-budget animated movie

IN THIS ERA OF THE MARVEL mega-movie masterplan, children are introduced to science fiction from an early age. Fantasy is something that they may come to later in life, via the poorly-lit avenues of YA vamp-lit and urban fantasy. However, it was fantasy that was the first speculative genre I encountered as a child, and the particular brand I encountered first was the fairytale.

The Iron Man – written by one-time poet laureate Ted Hughes and published in 1968 at the height of the Cold War – is subtitled “A Children’s Story In Five Nights” and is very much a modern fairytale, at least compared to the recognised classics. It is effectively three different stories split over five chapters. In the first chapter we meet the mysterious, mechanical Iron Man, with no explanation ever being given as to where he came from or who might have made him. At this stage, the Iron Man is very like the creature of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, seemingly having little awareness of the world around him or his place within it. By the end of the book, though, he’s become a sentient, compassionate being, and a bona fide hero to boot.

In one of the most memorable passages, right at the beginning of chapter one, the Iron Man is destroyed but then proceeds to put himself back together, piece by piece. It is also here that it becomes apparent that *The Iron Man* is a book that should be read aloud. It is full of exaggeration and inconsistencies, as are many fairytales. The size of the Iron Man, for example, alters to serve the needs of the narrative; at one point his hand is small enough to be carried by a seagull, later his head is described as being as big as a bedroom. But the story follows the tacitly accepted rules of fairytale: bargains are made,



This tale of giant robots and alien monsters was simply magical

challenges are issued, promises are kept, and the dragon is defeated.

At the same time Hughes also subverts these rules: the farm-destroying giant becomes the saviour of mankind, a terrifying monster of continental – nay, apocalyptic – proportions is won over and comes good, and through the Space-Bat-Angel-Dragon’s redemption we learn that the true enemy all along was man’s own violent and war-like nature, which, unchecked, will be the end of us all.

The coming of the Iron Man at the opening of the story is pure fantasy, while by the end of the book the arrival of the Space-Being brings us fully into the realm of science fiction. But whether it is seen as SF or fantasy, what the book most definitely is, is poetic.

Just as the first storytellers of many early cultures were poets, *The Iron Man* harks back to the ancient sagas, stories that were told and listened to, rather than read, in which sea serpents are so huge they encircle the earth and a giant’s glove can seem like an entire system of caves, even to a god.

To my impressionable young mind, this tale of giant robots and alien monsters wasn’t SF or fantasy. It was simply magical. It was the first monster movie I ever “saw” – the poetry of the language, as my father read to me, creating incredible visuals that played out like a summer blockbuster inside my head. And it helped to engender in me an enduring passion for all things genre.

So I will say again, *The Iron Man* needs to be read aloud; not just Hughes’s wonderfully poetic turns of phrase, but even the way the words appear on the page demand an oral recitation. And what better way is there to introduce a new generation of children to the wonders of what we would now term “genre” than by reading to them? **SFX**

Look out for Jonathan Green’s new book *You Are The Hero, a history of Fighting Fantasy gamebooks*, available now from Snowbooks.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE!

The Iron Woman by Ted Hughes (1993)

Rich in poetic symbolism, this sequel, just reissued by Faber & Faber, is a polemic against man’s wanton destruction of the environment.



Doctor Who And The Giant Robot by Terrance Dicks (1975)

A satisfying novelisation of the Tom Baker story “Robot”, written by a master of this particular literary form, comes replete with its own moral dilemmas.



YOUR OPINIONS

Join the debate at fb.me/sfxmagazine

Like all the best children’s books *The Iron Man* captivated my younger self by exciting and terrifying me in equal parts. The giant’s sudden, unexplained appearance, and its relentless, silent determination made him a fearsome adversary for the scrawny boy defending the farm equipment. The passage describing a re-animated, Thing-like hand combing the beach for its missing limbs and torso, is truly unsettling yet extremely evocative!

tameblue

Struggled the first time to like this, second time, loved it. There’s a wonderful rhythm in the language.

Mark Richardson

Can’t separate the book and Tom Baker’s reading of it on *Jackanory*!

Dean Newman

I had forgotten how beautiful the ending is. Wonderful to read again.

@AliceMartha

It’s a very simple but very beautiful story. I love the way it’s written, which is like a cross between a fairytale and poetry. I also like the themes of talking being the solution to problems rather than fighting or violence, which are instead usually the cause of problems.

Boo

Short poetic sentences, lovely visuals (such as the highlight eyes), a story about how we accept “the other” and a charming boy-robot relationship. A gorgeous read.

Runalong

Know it inside out and read the whole book to my six-year-old son two years ago.

Richard Lawrence

I had this book read to me at primary school. Thinking on it in my modern years, it seems too whimsical to really stick out as a classic separate to the happy memories it evokes.

texmex1

GET READING

In issue 256, novelist Stephen Baxter will examine Nevil Shute’s post-apocalyptic *On The Beach*.

NEXT ISSUE

Read Elizabeth Moon’s award-winning 2002 novel *Speed Of Dark* along with Jaine Fenn.



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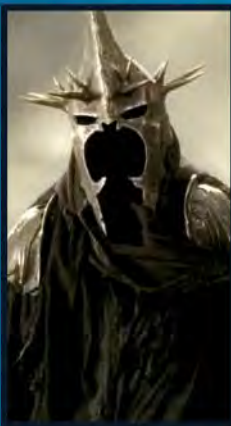
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Torchwood



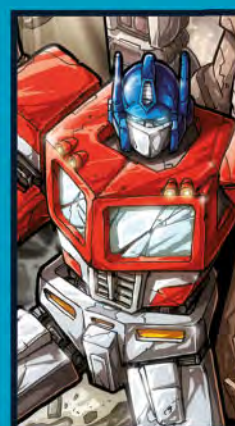
DAVID BRADLEY

Game of Thrones



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JAMES COSMO, OWEN TEALE, DAVE PROWSE, BOOKER T,
JAMES MURRAY, SARAH PARISH & EMMETT SCANLAN

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FIRST READ
AN EXTRACT FROM A NEW BOOK

An English Ghost Story

by Kim Newman

In this brand-new novel, acclaimed *Anno Dracula* author Kim Newman crafts a chilling gothic tale with a modern twist



THE AUTHOR

Kim Newman is a novelist, critic and broadcaster. His fiction includes the *Anno Dracula* series, *Jago*, *The Quorum*, *Life's Lottery* and *Professor Moriarty*. *The Hound of the D'Urbervilles*, all published by Titan Books. His non-fiction includes the seminal *Nightmare Movies*, *Ghastly Beyond Belief* (with Neil Gaiman) and *Horror: 100 Best Books* (with Stephen Jones).

His books and short stories have won a number of awards, including the Children of the Night Award for Best Novel from the Dracula Society, the Bram Stoker Award, the International Horror Guild Award and the British Fantasy Award. His official website is www.johnnyalucard.com.

At first the Naremores are charmed by their perfect new home, the Hollow. But soon the secrets of the house that brought them together will rip them apart...

Jordan saw it all at once, from the road, and was certain. This was the place. It was like her first kiss, Doris Day's "Que Sera Sera", the taste of strawberries, her car accident. Instant and all-encompassing, wondrous and terrifying, a revelation and a seduction.

Zam-Bam, Alla-Ka-Zamm!

The strangest thing was she knew her parents felt the same. Mum actually turned and smiled at Dad, who let his hand stray to her wrist for the tiniest of intimate squeezes. Tim looked up from his game, the Elvis lip-curl he'd shown the loser places replaced by open rapture.

"Kew-ell," said Tim.

Jordan was caught up in the spell.

Just this once, nothing else mattered. Her mind was settled in. The shock passed and she got comfortable with the feeling. It was like coming home.

They got out of the hunchback in a tangle and overwhelmed the agent. If he expected city folk to keep their cards to their chest and strike a hard bargain, he was surprised.

"I love it," said Mum. The shift was miraculous: suddenly, she was relaxed and open, uncontrollably smiling. "I just love it."

Jordan saw she had been wrong. The spotty agent's smile wasn't fake. Of course, he had *known*. He had been waiting by the Hollow for a few minutes, and he was familiar with the property. He could feel it too.

The *charm*.

This was what they needed. A new place, to start all over again, to put the past behind them, to build something. Yet an

old place, broken in by people, with mysteries and challenges, temptations and rewards.

They might as well cancel the remaining viewing.

"I'm Jordan," she imagined herself saying to her new friends, "I live in the Hollow." No, "I'm *from* the Hollow."

Was the Hollow the house or the land? The name was misleading. Weren't hollows dents in hills or woods? The property rose a little above the surrounding moorfields. An island that had come down in the world, it still refused to sink into the Somerset Levels.

Her arms didn't feel cold. A million tiny dandelion autogyros swarmed on warm winds.

"Brian Bowker," said the agent, "from Poulton and Wright's."

His spots were mostly freckles, though some had whiteheads. He looked as if he was blushing all the time, perhaps a handicap in his business. Unlike Rowena Marion, he didn't try to hide his West Country accent. He didn't sound like a yokel, though; it was just a way of talking, a burr.

Dad shook hands with him.

"This is the Hollow," said Brian Bowker, standing aside and making a flourish as if signalling stagehands to haul open the curtains.

Tim had to be restrained from running. Jordan did the honours, hugging her little brother with a wrestling hold. Mum and Dad put arms around each other's waists and a hand each on a child's shoulder, as if for a family portrait.

"We're the Naremores," said Dad. "I'm Steven, this is my wife Kirsty, and our children, Jordan and Tim."

"Pleased to meet you all," said Brian Bowker.

"I think this is it," said Mum, out loud.

The agent's smile became a grin. "You ought to look closer; not that I should say that."

"We will, old man," said Dad, "but I think Kirst is right. I can feel it. Have you sprinkled fairy dust about the place?"

For once, Jordan wasn't embarrassed by Dad. She knew what he meant. It wasn't just the spring-blossom; the air seemed

to dance. This was the season of the songs, the happy songs about love blooming with the greenery, not the melancholy songs of faded flowers remembered in fall.

The house stood in the middle of a roughly square patch of land, boundaries marked not by hedges or walls but still ditches from which grew bright green rushes. A moat ran alongside the road and the Hollow had its own bridge, wider than it was long, for access. Mum, cautious after the dispiriting fuss at Clematis Cottage, had parked on the road. That felt wrong: they should have driven through the gate and across the bridge, up to the barn, which was large enough to garage a fleet of cars.

Apple trees grew in what Jordan supposed was a deliberate pattern. The largest lay on the ground, roots exposed like a display of sturdy, petrified snakes, hollowed-out body sprouting a thick new trunk, fruiting branches stretching upwards. Tim was enchanted by this marvel, which had been smitten but survived. He had to be called away from exploring before he disappeared entirely inside the wooden tunnel of the original trunk. A couple of trees beyond the house, at the far edge of the grounds, were too close together, upper branches entangled and entwined, like giants kissing.

"The property used to be called Hollow Farm," said Brian Bowker, consulting his clipboard, leading them along a paved path that wound through the trees. "It goes back as far as there are parish records, to the Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century, the surrounding fields were sold off to one of the big local farmers and it became just the Hollow. The householders kept only this small apple orchard. You'll still get all the cooks and eaters you need."

Jordan could hear the trees. They moved, very slowly. Each leaf, twig, branch and trunk was rustling or creaking, whispering to her. There were trees all over London, but any sounds they made were too faint to be heard above traffic and shouting. City trees were furniture, but these were living things; worlds in themselves, populated by insects, birds, squirrels.

"In the barn, there's a cider-press," said Brian Bowker, "disused since the thirties. It'd cost a fortune to fix, I'm told. A shame. Miss Teazle, the last owner, didn't work it, but liked having it there."

The walk was further and the house bigger than Jordan had thought they would be. The house stood on raised stone foundations – Dad said something about a high water table and flood country – and was an obvious patchwork of styles and periods. Matched follies, the towers seen from the road, rose to either side, above a greenish thatched roof, topped by hat-like red tile cones with gabled Rapunzel windows. Aside from the towers, it was a farmhouse built at twice life-size. The ordinary-scale front door looked tiny. Ivy had been encouraged to grow, perhaps to cover the jigsaw-sections of red brick, white plaster and grey stone. Over the centuries, parts of the house had been replaced when they collapsed or people got tired of them. It had grown independent of any architect's designs or council's planning permission, evolving to suit its inhabitants.

Brian Bowker unlatched the front door.

"You might want to put locks on the exterior doors," he said, "though Miss Teazle never felt the need."

Dad was horrified.

"This isn't exactly a high-crime area," the agent said, "but times have changed since the old girl was a young thing. It won't be a big job to make the house secure."

Brian Bowker stood aside so they could step into a foyer. A combination of veranda and conservatory, it had a pleasant, damp straw smell. The ceiling was so low Dad banged his head on a dangling light-fixture – which would be the first thing to go. It took moments for Jordan's eyes to adjust to the green gloom.

Plants were all around, some overgrowing their pots, extending tendrils across the stiff, brushy doormat. Something like ivy grew *inside* the foyer, twining around a wrought-iron boot-scraper, creeping up a trellis. A row of brass hooks was ready for a burden of coats. Several pairs of boots were tumbled together by the door. A bright yellow pair of wellies looked scarcely worn.

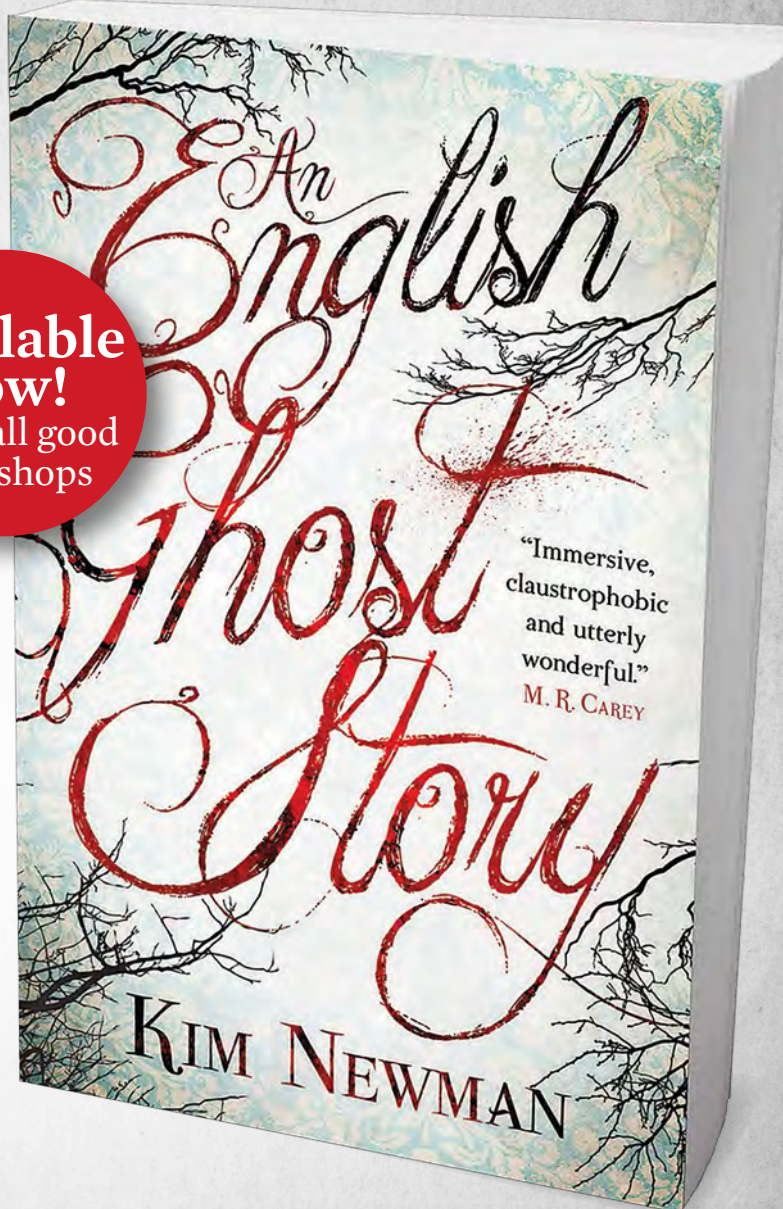
"Miss Teazle's things are still here," said Brian Bowker. "Her relatives in Australia want to throw in furniture and bric-a-brac. A lot of charity-shop stuff, but there might be treasures. She was rich, after all. Now, come on through and see this..."

He touched a section of the wall. A pair of doors slid open like secret panels, with a woody scraping sound. Beyond was cool darkness and a windowless hallway. The agent shepherded them inside and along a cramped corridor to another set of doors, which he pushed open.

As one, the family gasped.

To find out what happens next, pick up *An English Ghost Story*, out now from Titan Books (RRP £7.99). Ebook also available. www.titanbooks.com

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From all good
bookshops**





OVERVIEW

MPH

Need for speed



Release Date: OUT NOW!

\$2.99 | Publisher: Image Comics

Writer: Mark Millar

Artist: Duncan Fegredo



LOVE HIM or loathe him, there's no stopping Mark Millar at the moment. Barely has one comics project or movie adaptation kicked off than there's another waiting in the wings. So there's something oddly fitting about such a prolific writer tackling the idea of unstoppable super-speedsters.

MPH is Millar's latest creator-owned miniseries from Image

Comics, and its story begins in the once prosperous, now financially bankrupt city of Detroit, where small-time criminal Roscoe Rodriguez ends up imprisoned and sold out by his bosses. Stuck in jail, he turns to drugs – but the first one he tries is a mystery narcotic called MPH, which features some incredible side effects.

Each MPH tablet gives Roscoe the ability to move at impossible velocities, and after using his enhanced speed to escape jail, he teams up with his friends to use the drug on a crime spree against the bankers that wrecked Detroit's economy. However, the US government is soon on the trail of Roscoe, and they have a super-speedster of their own...

The natural heir to Stan Lee's brand of bombastic, attention-grabbing storytelling, Millar could never be accused of subtlety, and MPH is as broad-strokes as mainstream comic books get nowadays. The first three issues are

slickly executed and pacy, showcasing Millar's deft touch with imaginative action sequences and his fine eye for memorable visuals – it's just a pity they also feel like the kind of Hollywood blockbuster where the story beats are all too predictable.

The basic high concept is compelling, but while Millar has been pulling off genuine political themes in *Jupiter's Legacy*, the attempt at social comment in MPH feels much thinner, as if he's just scribbled down notes after binge-watching *The Wire*. He also doesn't succeed in making us care much about the characters, with a cast of downtrodden heroes that rarely feel three-dimensional or make much impression.

What lifts MPH above these flaws is the excellent work from regular Hellboy artist Duncan Fegredo, who here employs a much tighter and more controlled style reminiscent of previous Millar collaborator Bryan Hitch. Each page is packed full of impressive detail that's enhanced by the grounded colours from Peter Doherty, while the super-speed sequences pull off a number of moments that take full advantage of the wonderful anything-can-happen nature of comic book storytelling.

MPH may be free of the obnoxious button-pushing "extreme content" of previous Millar stories such as *Nemesis*, but it also doesn't achieve the energy and sharpness of his better work like *Starlight* or *The Ultimates*. Already optioned for a film, it could soon be joining the likes of *Kick-Ass* and *Wanted* on screen, but right now this superpowered crime romp simply doesn't feel distinctive or essential enough. **Saxon Bulcock**



As well as his comics work Fegredo has moved into movie storyboards; he did extensive work on Darren Aronofsky's *Noah*.



GRAPHIC NOVEL

The Motherless Oven

Now we're cooking



Release Date: 16 October

160 pages | £12.99 (paperback)

Writer/artist: Rob Davis

Publisher: SelfMadeHero



AH, SCHOOL

days. Mechanical dinnerladies.

Sheltering from sudden knifestorms on the way home. Not

being able to skip lessons because the school lions were patrolling the playground...

This is the world of *The Motherless Oven*: a mundane British town, which could be placed in more or less any era between the '60s and the present day, overlaid with dozens of surreal flourishes. Children build their own parents, although none of them remembers doing this. Television is replaced by a spinning patterned wheel. And most significantly, your deathday is known in advance. Scarper Lee is only a teenager and his deathday is in a couple of weeks, which is a bummer – on the other hand, it means he's got nothing to lose. And the new girl at school, Vera Pike, is determined that Scarper should seize his final days.

Rob Davis's monochrome artwork helps ground the book, so that while its imagery is vivid, it's never in danger of drifting off into self-indulgence. It remains focused and economical, and is often very funny. Don't expect all your questions to be answered – this isn't that kind of book – but rest assured that despite large areas of ambiguity, it doesn't leave you feeling dissatisfied. You're drawn in by its strange world and you come to care about its characters, and both are so vivid that the result is an outstanding piece of work. **Eddie Robson**

The book expands upon four-page strip "How I Built My Father", which you can find at <http://bit.ly/mothoven>.

OVERVIEW

Supreme: Blue Rose

Warren Ellis does strange superheroes

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

\$2.99 | Publisher: Image Comics

Writer: Warren Ellis

Artist: Tula Lotay



HOW WEIRD DO you like your superheroes? If “very weird indeed” is the answer, then *Supreme: Blue Rose* may be the right bag of oddity for you, as it’s certainly the most out-there superhero reboot to arrive since Brandon Graham’s wild reinterpretation of *Prophet*.

Here, the character getting a top-down overhaul is Supreme, Rob Liefeld’s “extreme” take on Superman. Warren Ellis is in the driving seat for a radical new version that plays as if David Lynch had directed a superhero movie.

The woozy, mind-warping storyline concerns investigative

journalist Diana Dane, who’s hired by reclusive businessman Darius Dax to find a man named Ethan Crane, all while dream-like visions and messages from the future are collapsing the barriers of reality.

The tone of the first three issues is genuinely Lynchian, and captures a particular blend of dislocated, slow-burning strangeness. Much of this is thanks to the incredible art by

Tula Lotay, which combines beautiful figure work with eye-catching digital inks, giving the whole comic the feel of being viewed through a medicated haze.

There’s clearly layers of meaning and mystery to unpack, although the low-key, abstract storytelling makes it a somewhat frustrating read in single issues. The eventual collected edition will allow Ellis and Lotay’s weird and perplexing vision the chance to truly shine, but until then this is one for those who like their comics demanding, offbeat and seriously strange. **Saxon Bullock**

? Lisa Wood (aka Tula Lotay) is also co-director of Leeds comic festival Thought Bubble, taking place on 9-16 November.



GRAPHIC NOVEL

Zenith Phase One

Morrison madness, price now more modest

★★★★★

Release Date: 23 October

112 pages (hardback) | £20

Writer: Grant Morrison

Artist: Steve Yeowell

Publisher: Rebellion



ZENITH HAS LONG been regarded as one of the jewels in 2000 AD’s crown. This acid house alternative to

Watchmen and *The Dark Knight Returns* proved to be one of the best cape comics of the ’80s.

It has, however, had a spotty publishing history, with legal quibbles preventing it being reprinted until last year when Rebellion put out a lavish (and extravagantly priced) collected edition. Now here is the first of four affordable hardbacks, which separate the story into its constituent “phases”.

Robert McDowell – aka Zenith – is a pop star with powers. Vain and superficial, he’s more concerned with selling records than saving lives. It’s not long, however, before a Nazi superman starts causing havoc and Rob finds himself teaming up with a group of washed-up heroes and an avaricious Tory MP to fight back.

Zenith may be nearly 30 now, but it still feels fresh. Bright and funny,

while shot through with a vein of cynicism, it reads like an early draft of some of Grant Morrison’s later, more ambitious work. His regular tropes are all present and correct – occultism, extra-dimensional beings, pop-culture references – but *Zenith* is fletcher of foot, no doubt partly due to the restrictions of 2000 AD’s episodic format. Steve Yeowell’s (mostly black and white) art, meanwhile, grounds extraordinary events in the everyday. *Phase One* isn’t quite *Zenith* in its prime, but this is still an essential introduction to the series. **Will Salmon**

? Yeowell says Zenith’s leather jacket in the second book was based on the one George Michael wore in the video for “Faith”.



GRAPHIC NOVEL

Meteor Men

A meatier alien invasion

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

128 pages | £14.99 (paperback)/£9.18 (ebook)

Publisher: Oni Press

Writer: Jeff Parker

Artist: Sandy Jarrell



IF A MYSTERIOUS meteor landed near us, we’d go and have a look, wouldn’t we? Even though, as SF fans, we know that this

probably wouldn’t end well. But in *Meteor Men*, being first on the scene might be the only thing that saves you...

Teenager Alden Baylor is watching a meteorite shower with his friends and neighbours. A projectile lands on the farmland he inherited from his parents. It quickly becomes obvious there was something inside that’s now escaped – and many more of these strange objects have landed all over the world.

In many ways this follows the typical pattern of such things: the person who made contact with the aliens pleads for understanding, while the authorities treat it as a threat, in the process making the situation worse. The revelation of the aliens’ true nature, although it’s a smart idea, isn’t hard to guess. But Jeff Parker unfolds the story confidently, and Alden is a well-developed character. Sandy Jarrell’s artwork creates a cinematic feel, often using panels that stretch the width of the page, with inventive touches that illustrate how the alien thinks and communicates.

The book really comes into its own in the final act: it dodges easy answers, and instead constructs a more open ending. Is it a happy conclusion or a downer? Because of the character work earlier on, Alden’s actions at the climax carry real weight. **Eddie Robson**

? One major influence on the alien was “Daddy And The Pie”, a story drawn by Alex Toth, first published in *Eerie* in 1977.

Destiny

Traveller's tales

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

£59.99 | Format reviewed: PS4

Also available on: Xbox One, Xbox 360, PS3

Publisher: Activision



BUNGIE

redefined sci-fi shooters with the seminal *Halo* series, but after leaving Master Chief behind

for star systems new, the inevitable question was: what next? How about the most expensive game ever made?

Reportedly costing \$500m, few games have arrived with the burden of expectation that *Destiny* is saddled with. Rush through the scant main missions about a darkness consuming the galaxy and you might be baffled as to how such an astronomical sum was spent on six hours of confused and underwhelming storytelling. But the real journey begins when the story ends.

Hit level 20, the nominal level cap, and a world of possibilities opens up.

Shooting militarised space aliens will take up the majority of your time, but the underlying structure is more like *World Of Warcraft* – an MMO where grinding for better gear and embarking on ultra-tough Raids with five friends is your ultimate goal. This can be achieved by replaying Strike missions, journeying into finely balanced multiplayer arena the Crucible or picking up Bounties, mini objectives used to fast-track your progress. If you're prepared to put in the hours it's an addictive and hugely rewarding endgame.

Part of the problem though is that *Destiny* does a terrible job of explaining itself. There are multiple, distinct vendors selling armour and weapons, none of which get more than a cursory introduction. Expect to learn a lot from discussing it with friends or by trawling forums. The same is true of Bungie's world-building. The art direction is sensational, impossible vistas ripped straight from the covers of '60s sci-fi novels brought beautifully to life, but the storytelling is unforgivably bad. The majority of the world's lore



Battling big armoured bad guys: never gets old.

The real journey begins when the story ends

is hidden behind unlockable cards that can only be viewed via Bungie's website. It's a barrier to exploration that leaves the world feeling shallow.

Bungie has a 10-year plan for *Destiny* though, so there's plenty of opportunity to make amends for the narrative's duff first chapter. And crucially, murdering in *Destiny* is always fun. Bungie know their way around an FPS and the shooting is *Halo*'s genre-defining gunplay evolved and perfected – weighty, tactical and oh-so satisfying. Thirty hours in there's no sign of it getting old.

Go in expecting a *Mass Effect*-style sweeping space opera you can play on your lonesome and prepare for disappointment. Embrace its idiosyncrasies, and drag a few friends along for the ride, and *Destiny* is worth every penny. **Jordan Farley**

? Xur, who sells incredibly rare Exotic armour for Strange Coins, can be found somewhere in the Tower, but only on weekends.

Bayonetta 2

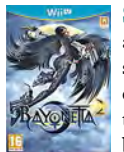
Thatch Entertainment

★★★★★

Release date: 24 October

£39.99 | Format: Wii U

Publisher: Nintendo



SPINNING

around stark naked and slaying hordes of angels on top of a fighter jet that's screaming between New York skyscrapers; dodging tentacles on the roof of a hurtling train while the track collapses; pounding the face of a monolithic dragon with fists made out of your hair – and that's just the prologue. Welcome back *Bayonetta*. We missed you.

Sprung from development limbo by Nintendo funding, gaming's favourite witch now lives on Wii U. Any fears that the change in platform might blunt this third-person action game's barbs are laid to rest in seconds courtesy of a barrage of crotch shots, f-bombs and decapitations.

Bayonetta was an action pioneer back in 2010, and has yet to be equalled. But shortly after game two's prologue our deadly-haired



Don't call her specky four-eyes.

star finds herself battling a headless titan on the side of a cathedral and surfing through a raging waterspout to announce that this outing – in which Bayo's given a day to travel to Inferno and save her friend's soul from eternal damnation – is every bit as frantic, inspired and laugh-a-minute-insane as the original.

At times it's even better: a new two-player online co-op battle mode is most welcome, and brilliantly bright colours popping off the screen make the original's setting feel muted in comparison. Mostly, however, this is a glorious rerun of old-favourite mechanics, with new backdrops and more spectacular setpieces. Nintendo's just got itself a stunning new star.

Matthew Pellett

? The special edition includes the original *Bayonetta* on Wii U for the first time, with bonus Nintendo costumes.

The Walking Dead Season Two Episodes 4-5

Blunt force trauma

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

£3.99 per episode | Format reviewed: PS3

Also available on: Xbox 360, PC and iOS

Publisher: Telltale Games



AFTER A

dependably strong start, *The Walking Dead*'s second season ends on an uncharacteristic whimper with "Amid The Ruins" and "No Going Back".

Episode four begins well enough. Having escaped Carver's clutches the group is split, leaving Clem and Jane to find their way back to the rest of the gang. Jane proves a compelling new addition to the cast – a resourceful tough nut with sensitively explored vulnerabilities. Her exchanges with Clem are among the episode's high points. Some supremely tense setpieces follow, including an agonising shuffle through a baying zombie horde, and a skin-of-the-teeth trailer park



Little League baseball was getting increasingly bloody.

escape. But when the band do get back together the story slams on the brakes and slows to a tedious crawl.

The season finale is the real disappointment, mainly because it has none of the impact that a final episode should. The twists and turns are telegraphed a little too clearly, the deaths feel hollow and the Big Emotional Moment pales in comparison to last year's. However, it's admirable that for a series where your choices rarely have a major impact on the trajectory of the story the season can end with several drastically different outcomes.

From scene to scene it remains well-written and convincingly acted, but the final episodes fall disappointingly short of the series' stellar standards. **Jordan Farley**

? The complete second season will be released on disc for PS4, PS3, Xbox One and Xbox 360 later this year.



AUDIO CDs

Doctor Who

Back to the gothic era

Philip Hinchcliffe Presents

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

291 minutes | £55 (CD)/£45 (download)
Publisher: Big Finish

Mask Of Tragedy

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

118 minutes | £14.99 (CD)/£12.99 (download)
Publisher: Big Finish

Signs And Wonders

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

136 minutes | £14.99 (CD)/£12.99 (download)
Publisher: Big Finish

Domain Of The Voord

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

133 minutes | £14.99 (CD)/£10.99 (download)
Publisher: Big Finish

OF ALL THE DOCTOR WHO

eras, one of the best-loved is 1974–1976, the early Tom Baker years when the show was produced by Philip Hinchcliffe. Now Big Finish have invited him to oversee a box set of two Fourth Doctor adventures. The results are as dark and atmospheric as you'd expect.

The set begins with *The Ghosts Of Gralstead*, where the Doctor and Leela arrive in 1860s England and encounter a freak show, a haunted manor house and a pair of body-snatchers. A lurid six-part pulp mystery, it features strong performances (especially from Baker), but like other six-parters feels rather stretched at times.

Tighter at four episodes, *The Devil's Armada* pitches the Doctor and Leela into the superstitious chaos of 16th century England. This rollicking adventure gets slightly hampered by random plotting in its final episode, but overall this box set is still an entertaining dose of Hinchcliffe-style *Who*.

Elsewhere, a double-bill of regular releases wraps up the latest trilogy for the Seventh Doctor, Ace and Hex. *Mask Of Tragedy* sees the crew

visiting Ancient Greece for a holiday that's soon disrupted by a mysterious plague and a powerful alien mask. The story starts well, and Samuel West gives a great performance as Aristophanes, but the plot gets increasingly loopy, while attempts at epic storytelling result in endless amounts of bombastic shouting.

In *Signs And Wonders*, the Doctor brings Hex home to Liverpool in the 2020s, just in time to encounter an apocalyptic cult, a race of eagle-like aliens and the potential resurrection of an ancient entity. It's a continuity-heavy story that will be pretty much incomprehensible to new listeners, and it's pitched at such an over-the-top level that despite a few touching moments, it's ultimately exhausting rather than enjoyable.

Finally, *The Early Adventures*, a range of stories set during the Hartnell and Troughton eras, launches with *Domain Of The Voord*, a tale featuring the first TARDIS team and narrated by Susan (Carole Ann Ford) and Ian (William Russell). A visit to the watery world of Hydra sees the Doctor once again encountering the evil Voord from 1964's "The Keys of Marinus". This ripping yarn has an epic scale that fits early *Who*'s semi-educational tone, and captures just the right blend of gently-paced retro adventure. **Saxon Bullock**

Also out: Big Finish's 15th anniversary release *The Worlds Of Doctor Who*, a box set featuring a variety of spin-off characters.



BOARDGAME

Golem Arcana

Not an appy experience

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

Two players | £65.00
Designer: Jordan Weisman
Publisher: HBS Games

KICKSTARTER HAS HAD

an energising effect on gaming, and for that we geeks are thankful. But where goes success, goes also failure, and this Kickstarter-funded title is suckling at failure's bitter teat.

Golem Arcana has fine production values, including nice models representing the titular magically-empowered battle automata, and the game mechanics are sound. It would have made a good collectible miniatures wargame, or a cool tablet game. Unwisely, it tries to do both.

The game comes with a Bluetooth stylus that reads data from the game components. The idea is that a tablet app runs the game mechanics for you while you play. But: oh dear. Never mind that you need expensive tech, and that the app crashes a lot, but jabbing at the models with a pen is literally clumsy.

Tablets are a useful adjunct to the kind of complicated game we love. Interactive rules, army lists, character sheets, maps... bliss. But the tech isn't there to integrate the physical with the digital. And why would you want to? This kind of gaming's a tactile affair. Here there's so much attention on the tablet that the board and models feel superfluous.

If the app worked faster and cleaner on a wider range of devices, *Golem Arcana* might possibly be a winner. As things stand, it's a no-hoper. **Guy Haley**

This is the starter set. Expansions, including additional golems, factions and board sections, cost from £15–£40.

Box Of Delights

What we've been playing with this month

1 The Impossible Set

Character Options | Height: 16.5cm | FPI price: £29.99 | Catalogue number: B7505

Doctor Who's given us "The Impossible Planet", "The Impossible Astronaut" and the occasional impossible fan. Now here's The Impossible Set, a poseable plastic salute to Matt Smith's final run of adventures. Accessorised with a sonic, Smithy looks strangely forlorn in his Artful Dodger topper from "The Snowmen", while Jenna Coleman's uber-cute pixie nose is immortalised as Oswin Oswald from "Asylum Of The Daleks". She comes complete with a burnt soufflé accessory, just so your Black Widow figure can laugh at her.

2 TARDIS Tinned Mints

Zeon | Height: 8.5cm | FPI price: £4.99 | Catalogue number: B8050

Lift the lid off this wee replica of the Doctor's beloved craft and you'll find a bag of little peppermint mints, shaped like the "DW" logo. They pack a menthol kick which means they're pretty darn powerful, making this the ideal stocking filler for Whovians with halitosis.

3 TIE Fighter Bottle Opener

Diamond Select | Width: 10cm | RRP: £16.99 | FPI price: £14.99 | Catalogue number: B7262

The pedants among you will have spotted that this solid metal bottle opener is actually based on Darth Vader's TIE Advanced craft rather than a bog-standard TIE Fighter, but we'll forgive it: this is actually a pretty cool way to open a beer. It has magnets on the back so you can stick it to your fridge. Please remember, though, that the Empire does not condone drinking and piloting.



1

2

3

4

THREE
OF A
KIND

Star Wars Command



EPIC ASSAULT

£19.99 | www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk

These new Hasbro playsets include everything kids need to stage an epic battle. This one's tied into hot new show *Star Wars Rebels*, and features the likes of young hero Ezra Bridger.



MILLENNIUM FALCON

£24.99 | www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk

The figures are pretty basic – rather like the green plastic soldiers we used to play with as nipers. This pack also includes a pull-back-action Falcon for easy jumping to light speed.



STAR DESTROYER

£49.99 | www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk

Finally, this pricier set has a remote control element. Using the "command controller", kids can move the Star Destroyer back and forth and fire "energy blast balls".

4 Harley Quinn And Yoda Fabrikations

Funko | Height: 18cm | RRP: £18.99 | FPI price: £16.99 | Catalogue numbers: B8279, B8276

Of all Funko's new Fabrikations line, this Yoda is possibly the closest to being a full-scale recreation of its subject. It's a shame, then, that it looks more like a weird green pig than a Jedi Master - even if we like the detailing of his corduroy togs and ickle green lightsaber. While the Harley Quinn is rather less convincing on the size front, her look feels much more in keeping with the character - though to be honest, we're more preoccupied working out how her mallet would fare against Yoda's 'saber.

4

5

FUNKO PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

5 Interchangeable Magnetic Vinyl Figures

Funko | Height: 4.5cm-5cm | RRP: £8.99 each | FPI price £7.99 each | Catalogue numbers: B8482, B8483, B8484, B8485, B8486, B8488, B8489, B8490, B8492, B8493, B8494

Ever wondered what it would look like if Batman had Superman's chest and Harley Quinn's feet? And, er, was square? Well, finally you can find out! Held together by magnets, these wee DC figures can be easily pulled apart, allowing you to swap the body parts around to make peculiar hybrids. Hours of amusement beckon. Pictured above: Bizarro, Black Manta, Dark Knight Batman, '60s Batman, Harley Quinn, Robin and Superman. Also available: Aquaman, Deathstroke and The Joker.

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BORG ICE CUBE TRAY

ETA: FEBRUARY

"THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR ORANGE SQUASH WILL BE DECREASED. RESISTANCE IS FUTILE". The sight of this iconic *Star Trek* spacecraft is usually pretty chilling, but not in this way... You don't just have to use this for ice cubes, of course. Pour in some melted chocolate instead and you could make a nummy cyborg snack.



EXPECT TO PAY

£19

ALIEN EGG BANK

ETA: FEBRUARY

Yes, it's a money box shaped like a Xenomorph egg, complete with facehugger squatting on the top. In an ideal world it would sense you approaching with a handful of coins and flower open in a troublingly gynaecological fashion. In our more disappointing universe, however, you'll have to make do with feeding your coppers into the slot.



EXPECT TO PAY

£60

DEATH ANKH NECKLACE

ETA: MARCH

The ankh is an ancient Egyptian symbol representing eternal life... but that's not why you groovy goth ladies will be purchasing this. You'll want it to complete your cosplay as Death from Neil Gaiman's classic comic *The Sandman*. Made of solid sterling silver, it measures about two inches tall.

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VIEW SCREEN

TV REVIEWS
AND OPINION

edited by Jordan Farley



Life as a sci-fi TV fanatic is a serious business. By the end of October there'll be about 25 shows airing around the world every week, at least

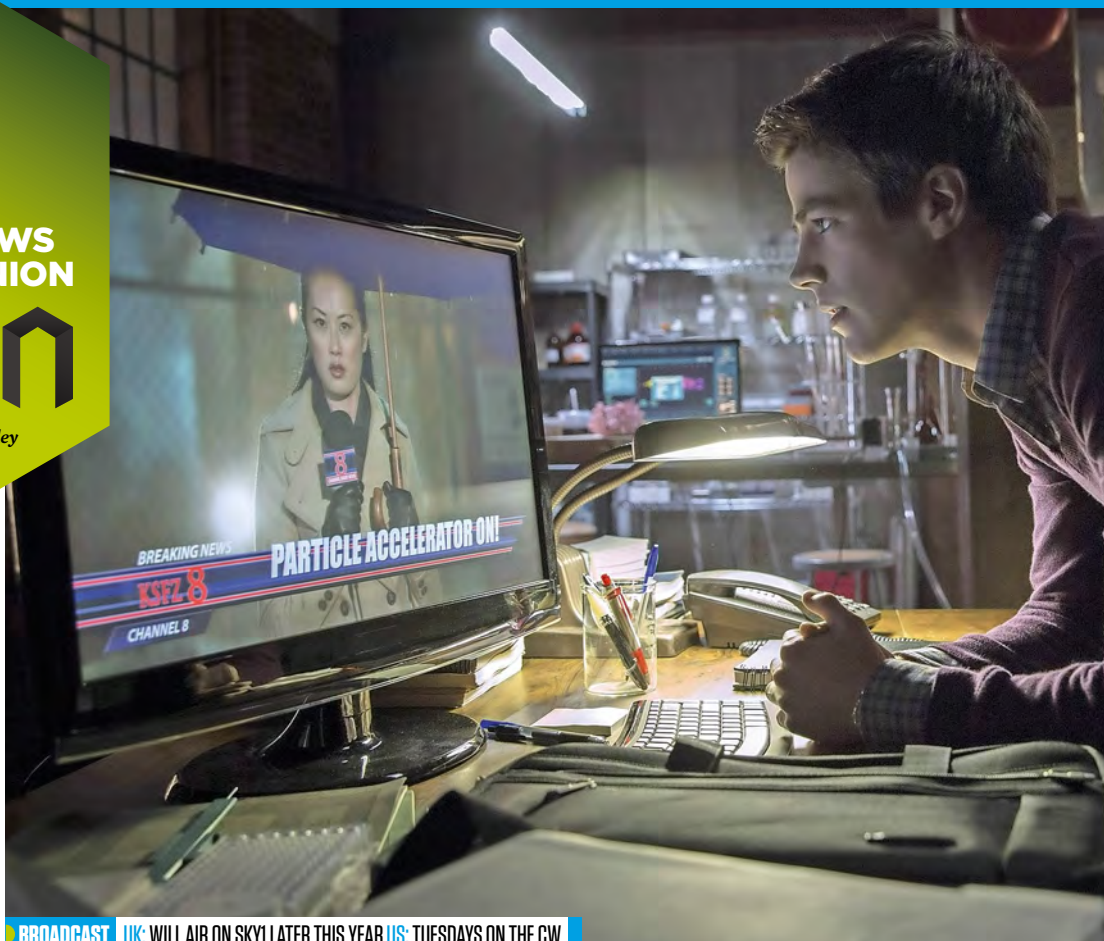
half on UK TV. You don't need to be a maths whizz to realise that's a lot of telly to keep up with.

Returning series such as *Doctor Who*, *Supernatural*, *The Walking Dead*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Arrow*, *Agents Of SHIELD* and *Haven* are all firmly in my must-watch pile. Already there's little space for upstart interlopers, which means I've had to think long and hard about what I'm willing to commit my rapidly dwindling time to now that the new TV season has rolled around.

Top of my list is *The Flash*. *Arrow* might just be my favourite superhero show ever and a new series set in the same world – one which embraces the fantastical – sounds unmissable. Despite mixed reception to the pilot I'm also hugely excited about *Gotham*. Cramming Batman's entire rogues gallery into his formative years may be contrived, but the comics have some of the best villains ever, so why not make them the real stars of the show?

Finally there's *Star Wars Rebels* (skip to p127 to read what we thought). The odd insufferable Jar Jar episode aside, I adored *The Clone Wars* and a new series from the same team would be more than enough to draw me in. But since executive producer Simon Kinberg revealed that "characters, vehicles and imagery" could be introduced in *Rebels* before appearing in *Episode VII*, my excitement levels have gone into hyperspace. What's at the top of your must-watch list? Let us know: sfx@futurenet.com

Jordan Farley



BROADCAST UK: WILL AIR ON SKY1 LATER THIS YEAR US: TUESDAYS ON THE CW

The Flash

Hits the ground running

SINCE THE 1960S, DC COMICS HAS suffered from something of an inferiority complex. With characters designed in the '30s and '40s for an audience of Depression-era children, and a universe assembled piecemeal over several decades, the company was blindsided by Marvel's rapid construction of a cosmic campground for post-pubescent, and the phenomenal success that followed. Which is not to say DC's characters are in any way inferior to Marvel's; they're simply built for kids. And with a few notable exceptions, the preponderance of magic rings, lassos and words tend to work best when deployed with a light touch.

All of which is to say that the best thing about *The Flash* is the way it fully embraces its brainy but socially awkward Scarlet Speedster's role as surrogate for an audience of beautiful dreamers, kids of all ages who will love its adolescent power fantasy and sci-fi sense of wonder. In casting Grant Gustin as forensics scientist turned superhero Barry Allen, executive producers Greg Berlanti and

Andrew Kreisberg have, quite frankly, found the best pairing of actor and superhero since Robert Downey Jr's Tony Stark built his first suit of armour. Gustin is everything *Flash* fanboys could want – a combination of deft wit, singular focus and postmodern matinee-idol looks (he's even got an alliterative secret-identity name). His Barry is haunted and fuelled by the tragic death of his mother, and his father's resulting incarceration. But Barry's no brooder. Unlike its parent show *Arrow*, *The Flash* is optimistic in its outlook, if not exactly sunny. It's awestruck by human potential rather than fearful of it, and it's alive with the promise of tomorrow's technology. It's also more than a little reminiscent of the character's Silver Age incarnation, created by writer Gardner Fox and editor Julius Schwartz, along with artist

BONUS FEATURES

► **Did You Spot?:** The demolished "Grod" cage at STAR labs gives us hope a certain hyper-intelligent super-ape will soon be causing trouble in Central City.

► **Highlight:** Even if *The Flash* pilot's finale hadn't followed 30 minutes of awesomeness, it still would have impressed, depicting a scene we've waited our whole lives to see – the Flash running circles around a tornado until it unravels. Can a giant boomerang be far behind?

► **Influences:** The pilot recreates one panel from the Flash's first appearance (in *Showcase Comics* #4), in which Barry's newly acquired super-speed makes him witness a waitress's tray of food tumbling in slow-motion.

► **Best Line:** Barry: "Lightning gave me... abs?"



Carmine Infantino, whose run on the '60s *Flash* comic with writer John Broome remains the definitive interpretation of the Crimson Comet.

Gustin is ably supported by a game cast, including Candice Patton as Barry's best friend/would-be girlfriend Iris West (a stronger, more confident female lead than *Arrow's*); Jesse L Martin as Iris's dad, Detective Joe West, who raised Barry after his mother's murder; Tom Cavanagh as Dr Harrison Wells, the STAR Labs scientist whose particle accelerator accident creates the Flash, as well as his infamous rogues gallery; and John Wesley Shipp (the original live-action Barry Allen from the short-lived 1990 *Flash* show) as Barry's father Henry. Danielle Panabaker and Carlos Valdes lend strong support as the STAR brainiacs of "Team Flash" – Dr Caitlin Snow (whose fiancé will soon appear in the form of Ronnie "Firestorm" Raymond, played by Robbie Amell) and Cisco Ramon (the alter ego of the Flash's fellow Justice Leaguer Vibe). It's Ramon who designs Barry's iconic costume, and gives the villains their suitable comic-book codenames.

That super suit (designed by *Arrow* costumer Colleen Atwood), by the way, may be a tad darker than that of the comics, but it looks great in action. There's a lovely moment in the pilot where Cisco, explaining why he's applying a certain trademark lightning-bolt emblem to the suit's chest, declares, "Because it's not boring". It's a mission statement as well as a grace note, one we hope creators Kreisberg and Berlanti (as well as their fellow executive producer Geoff Johns) remember throughout what should be – fittingly for *The Flash* – a long and healthy run. **Joseph McCabe**

IMAGES © REX (1)

MINDPROBE •

Brett Dalton

SPOILER WARNING!

The duplicitous Agent of *SHIELD* on life as the bad guy

What do you think Ward has to do to pay for his Hydra sins?

It's a good question. He's done questionable things. We're joking that Ward has to go to an African village and work with kids for 20 years straight.

Where is Ward's allegiance when the season starts?

The question of allegiance to Hydra was more about John Garrett (Bill Paxton). Ward's done some good things and some bad things, so the stuff of season two will be figuring out who Ward is.

Which version of Ward do you prefer playing, Agent Ward or Hydra Ward?

I think it's more fun and interesting to play him the Hydra way. There's a depth and unpredictability to the badness. Is he bad? Does he enjoy being bad? Or is there still a good guy in there?

Ward does seem genuinely conflicted over Chloe by season's end. Are there real feelings rattling around inside him?

It was the longest Ward was ever undercover and feelings happen. I'm sure even the hardest stone has a crack in it somewhere. As we've seen with May, she seems impenetrable and yet still human. I think despite Ward's best efforts, and despite Agent Garrett's advice, there's feelings and affection there...

Are you scared they're going to kill you off this season?

Absolutely, but I'm definitely in season two. It seems the fans are really enjoying the turn. I hope they want to see it explored as much as I do, as I'd like to consider myself an antihero and not a villain. **Tara Bennett**

Agents Of SHIELD season two airs on Channel 4 from October in the UK and is currently on ABC in the US.



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BROADCAST UK & US: CURRENTLY AIRING ON DISNEY XD

Star Wars Rebels

Totally, unmistakably *Star Wars*

WHATEVER YOUR FEELINGS about the prequels, one of their biggest slip-ups was failing to recapture the spirit of the original *Star Wars*. Yes, there are lightsabers, Jedi and familiar characters. And the continuity (mostly) checks out. But the Old Republic era is too clean, smooth-edged and, well, artificial to truly feel part of the same universe.

Now that Disney has spent a few billion dollars on the keys to George Lucas's Empire, however, it seems keen to get back-to-basics. The bits and pieces we've learned so far about the live-action movies suggest they'll feel more *Episode IV* than *I*, and *Star Wars Rebels* – the first screen offering from the Mouse-ified Lucasfilm – is setting the tone by homing in on

what made Luke, Han and Leia's Imperial entanglements inspire a generation.

Rebels' first masterstroke is centring on a group of ordinary civilians, a ragtag group of freedom fighters scoring victories against the Empire where they can. They have the potential to be people you can root for, unlike the prequel trilogy's Jedi who were a bit too pious and powerful to be relatable. One of them was also destined to become the baddest dude in the galaxy, but that's a different story.

Rebels' second act of genius is exploiting the largely unexplored territory between *Revenge Of The Sith* and *A New Hope*. It's simultaneously new and familiar, an era when the Emperor and his lackeys are busy tightening their grip on the galaxy, and every major player from the original

BONUS FEATURES

- **Keeping The Faith** Dave Filoni, supervising producer on *The Clone Wars*, has transferred over to take the reins on *Rebels*.
- **Don't Miss It** Pilot episode "Spark Of Rebellion" is out now on DVD.
- **Trivia** Ralph McQuarrie had no movie experience before *Star Wars* – he'd previously designed for Boeing.
- **Influences** The designs of Zeb and Chopper are based on McQuarrie's original concept art for Chewbacca and R2-D2 respectively.
- **Best Line Stormtrooper:** "Aaaaarrghh!" Not just a noise, but a Wilhelm Scream perfectly executed – and it's executed twice.

movies – Obi-Wan, Admiral Ackbar, Lobot – is making their way in the universe.

But the thing that could really make *Rebels* is its total devotion to its source. The audio is authentic, the Empire are the bad guys, and the look of the ships and backgrounds is amazing. The decision to riff off Ralph McQuarrie's concept art gives the show a pleasing aesthetic, while the impressive number of nods to *Star Wars* lore mean it could be as much for die-hards as kids.

It's enough to make us look beyond the slightly-too-cutesy character design and the by-the-numbers make-up

of the show's core team. *Rebels* could be the perfect *Star Wars* hit to carry us through to *Episode VII*, and – you never know – it may even turn out to be as good as *The Clone Wars*.

Richard Edwards

YOU HAVE BEEN WATCHING... EXTANT

SFX's Facebook and Twitter users on Halle Berry's alien baby thriller

► I kept watching expecting it to improve. Just watched the season finale and it didn't.

Katie Eloise Kalani

► Annoyingly crap.

Richard Newbigin

► I enjoyed tonight's finale.

Motherhood's clearly made Halle Berry a more confident actress. I think it's her best performance.

Melodie Smith

► It's glacially slow.

Karl Baird

► I watch it but I don't know why. Maybe I hate myself. The big "threat" is getting closer though, so I'm still a little gripped.

Jeb Bearstone

► I gave up after five episodes. Technically brilliant, but so, so dull.

Tony Pressley

► I love it. The story meanders a bit, but the future tech is well realised and I love the questions it raises about AI.

Mark Armstrong

► It promises so much yet the delivery has fallen totally short of the mark.

Mark Barrett

► Excruciating.

Richard Lake

► I like the tech but it's painfully slow. How many shows have been cancelled while dross like this gets made?

Richard Jones

► A chore to watch.

Stephen Doyle

► If this turd of a show doesn't get cancelled then the world has gone mad.

Mark Causer

► I was more interested in the subplot surrounding the artificial son.

Neil Bartlett

► Why an A-list actress would agree to do this dud is a mystery to me.

Debra K Gallagher

► I just couldn't get past Halle Berry's fringe.

Rebecca Hunter Eastgate



BROADCAST UK: STARTS OCTOBER ON BBC TWO US: SATURDAYS ON BBC AMERICA

"Yes, I'm immortal. But you're not doing that."

Intruders

A mystery about... erm... well...

BOILED DOWN TO A ONE-LINE pitch, *Intruders* is a curious beast indeed. After four episodes it's still near impossible to sum up this new BBC America show in a sentence. We wouldn't be able to sell it to someone in a lift.

But let's try anyway: it's the one where a nine-year-old girl is possessed by some creepy

old guy with a foul mouth. Ah, yes, but it's also the one where John Simm plays an ex-cop turned mystery author whose wife claims to be immortal. And then it's also the one where an assassin is killing seemingly unconnected people. And for good measure it's the one where a man claims to have built a ghost machine. Somehow these all link together.

To be fair, it may all end up being very simple. Certainly there are patterns rapidly emerging and the fact that *Intruders* is based on a novel by Michael Marshall Smith (and not a convoluted story made up as it goes along, like *Lost*) gives you hope there's a satisfying rationale behind it all. But the show seems to go out of its way to try to keep viewers

off-kilter. There's a snow globe approach to the script. It's like shards of disparate plot elements are bouncing around inside a glass dome, only slowly settling into something recognisable as a plot. If you think you know what's going on, you're clearly not paying attention.

What keeps it watchable is that each individual scene has something great to offer. Any moment featuring Madison is an unnerving delight, with Millie Brown utterly convincing as the possessed little girl. James Frain is coolly chilling as the assassin Richard Sheppard. Simm turns out to be a great action hero as well as an endearingly confused husband.

Director Eduardo Sanchez (*The Blair Witch Project*) gives the show a stylishly low-key spooky sheen, in which figures moving beyond frosted windows and ringing phones suddenly take on an eerie resonance. Some of the dialogue is a little cheesy, but he's good at smoke and mirroring the exposition into something more dramatic.

The whole thing may ultimately turn out to be a case of style over substance – it's a show that engages intellectually more than emotionally – but it's refreshing to so far have a new show that *can't* be described as, "It's like this year's big hit meets the X-Files."

Dave Golder

BONUS FEATURES

► **Ratings:** The show is now performing well in the States where it lost over half its audience between episodes one and two, suggesting that the oblique approach to storytelling did not appeal to most viewers.

► **TV Genes:** *Intruders* is exec produced by Jane Tranter and Julie Gardner, the team who helped relaunch *Doctor Who* in 2005. Scriptwriter Glen Morgan, meanwhile, is best remembered for his writing partnership with James Wong on much loved episodes of *The X-Files* such as "Squeeze", "Tooms" and "Musings Of A Cigarette Smoking Man".

► **Calling The Shots:** Following Eduardo Sanchez's stint on the show, the final four episodes are directed by Daniel Stamm, best known for horror flick *The Last Exorcism*.

► **Best Line:** Marcus Fox as Madison: "See, no boobs yet, either, Todd."

BROADCAST UK: TBC US: FRIDAYS ON SYFY

Z Nation

Z-list television

A T FIRST GLANCE THIS apocalyptic zombie show looks like Syfy's answer to *The Walking Dead* – washed out, ultra-serious and full of surprisingly good gore. Then the sprightly undead toddler appears and suddenly the words "from the company that brought you *Sharknado*" start to make a lot more sense. Mockbuster production studio The Asylum is responsible, or rather to blame, for *Z Nation* – a show so awful it should come with its own health warning.

The premise is about as basic and generic as you could possibly get in a zombie story. *Lost*'s Harold Perrineau (the only actor to emerge from the pilot with his dignity intact) plays Hammond – a soldier tasked with escorting a



A show so bad you could say he's, er, scarred for life.

prisoner to California during the zompocalypse; a prisoner whose MacGuffin blood may hold the key to a cure. Along the way our hero hooks himself up with a rag tag bunch of strangers, each of whom is utterly unable to make the turgid dialogue sound remotely convincing.

The joy of The Asylum's trashy TV movies is that you can have a good giggle at their awful production values, performances and plotting for 75 minutes and then move on with your life, never to give *Mega Python Vs Gatoroid* or *Almighty Thor* a second thought. *Z Nation* is a

BONUS FEATURES

► **Behind The Scenes:** *Z Nation*'s co-creator Craig Engler used to run Syfy's Twitter feed. Hey, they all have to start somewhere.

► **Star Turn:** All credit to Harold Perrineau – compared to the rest of the cast, his performance is Emmy-worthy. Luckily for him, Hammond's killed in the first episode.

► **In-Joke:** At one point Hammond says he passed some people in a prison – a reference to Rick and the gang's home in *The Walking Dead*'s third season.

► **The Z Word:** There's one thing *Z Nation* does have going for it – at least the inhabitants aren't afraid to use the word "zombie".

► **The One Good Line:** Hammond: "Good I hate moral dilemmas."

13-part series that entertains for barely 13 seconds in its first episode. And perhaps that's being generous to its charms.

What's most sad is that there is plenty of room on the schedules for a great zombie show to be made that doesn't take itself too seriously. One with the lunatic imagination of *Return Of The Living Dead*, or Capcom's strap-a-chainsaw-to-an-oar *Dead Rising* games. Humour and zombies are not mutually exclusive. Sadly *Z Nation* is not that show. Not even remotely.

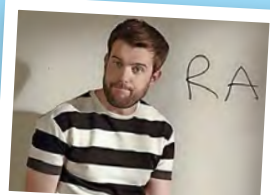
At times it threatens to spring into life – a character choosing a spiky baseball bat over a gun, the stupid yet momentarily brilliant

zombie baby – but these brief cute moments are never enough to convince you it's a show that's worth sticking with. Avoid like the (zombie) plague. **Jordan Farley**



SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest moments from the month in TV



● SPOILER OF THE MONTH

In *Bad Education* Alfie keeps his class in order by writing a *Game Of Thrones* season five spoiler if they misbehave!

● OVERSIGHT OF THE MONTH

For the most secure room in the most secure bank in the universe, that human-size air vent on *Doctor Who* sure is convenient.



● DODGY COSTUME OF THE MONTH

This Hydra foot soldier has gone full gimp on *Agents Of SHIELD*.

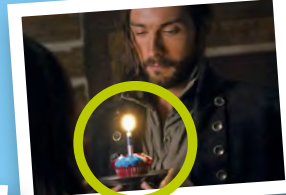


● SURGERY GONE WRONG OF THE MONTH

What was The Master thinking getting collagen lip implants on *The Strain*?

● NOPE, NOPE, NOPE OF THE MONTH

You cannot un-see *The Strain*'s freaky eye worms.



● MOST PATRIOTIC CAKE OF THE MONTH

A birthday cake fit for an honorary American on *Sleepy Hollow*.



● ILLEGAL PLAYER OF THE MONTH

We're not lacrosse experts, but we're guessing this Berserker is breaking some rules on *Teen Wolf*.



● HOMAGE OF THE MONTH

This shot in the Steven Spielberg-produced *Falling Skies* can't be a coincidence.



● GROWTH SPURT OF THE MONTH

When did *Defiance*'s Irisa get big enough to have her own asteroid belt?



● PURPLE RAIN OF THE MONTH

The end of the world has never looked so fabulous on *Defiance*.



● SPLITTING HEADACHE OF THE MONTH

Unfortunately we don't think paracetamol is going to help this fellow in *Forever*.

● SUBTLE FORESHADOWING OF THE MONTH

Who could this plant-obsessed future supervillain be in *Gotham*?

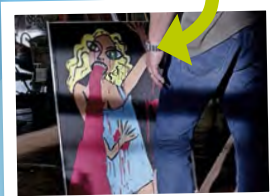
● ONE RING OF THE MONTH

Claire needs to watch out for Ringwraiths in *Outlander*.



● UNSETTLING ARTWORK OF THE MONTH

That's just... weird on *Under The Dome*.



TOTAL RECALL

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF TIMELESS SF

OMNI



PETER F HAMILTON, GUEST WRITER

OMNI was the glossiest of all the glossy magazines our genre has ever produced. I bought the very first edition (and still have it) which came out in October 1978, and the reason I knew in advance it was coming out was from the TV advert. Yeah, that's right, a TV advert for an SF-themed magazine! I said OMNI was glossy, and that meant money, lots of money. Backed by Bob Guccione of *Penthouse*, er, fame, it drew in plenty of expensive full page advertising; where else could you get colour ads for big aerospace companies alongside fine wines and Jovan Sex Appeal Aftershave (no I'm not kidding, that was a real cologne). Back then OMNI was an amazing blend of SF, science and the paranormal, with the most wondrous artwork. That first edition even had a t-shirt iron-on page featuring the space shuttle Enterprise on its drop flight test. See, you just don't get that in today's webzines.

So apart from the gloss, what made OMNI so memorable? Well, for a start, there was the fiction. Over the first few years subscribers were treated to William Gibson, George RR Martin (writing SF), Asimov, Frederik Pohl – basically all the SF royalty of the day. The interviews: Freeman Dyson, Alvin Toffler, Robert Redford, and Albert Hofmann, among others. The monthly Continuum section, a sublimely bonkers version of *Tomorrow's World* printed on eye-killing silver pages, detailed all the future products and ideas that would be in every home real soon now. Intelligent articles which explained science for the everyman,

along with the more quirky pieces on UFOs and psychic abilities. OMNI was also an unapologetic space advocate, the holy grail for those of us suffering Apollo program withdrawal symptoms. And then there was the artwork and photography, which is where that high quality gloss really paid off. There wasn't an issue I didn't stare at and marvel at the realistic future it revealed in exquisite detail.

Ask any SF writer of my generation about it, and they'll produce a fond smile of recollection. We were all inspired by OMNI. Damn, even the cartoons were funny. **SFX**

Peter F Hamilton's The Abyss Beyond Dreams is out now from Macmillan.

FACT ATTACK!


- The first edition of OMNI cost only 95p.
- The print version ran between 1978 and 1995. The web-based OMNI ran from 1996 to 1998, closing on the death of its co-founder Kathy Keeton.
- OMNI printed extracts from Steven King's *Firestarter*, and Robert A Heinlein's *Number Of The Beast*.
- In 1982 Guccione was worth \$400 million. When he died of cancer in 2010 he was effectively broke.
- The 2014 Hugo winner for best short form editor, Ellen Datlow, was OMNI fiction editor from 1981 until 1998.
- OMNI was published in six different countries, including Russia, Germany, Japan and Italy.
- Peter F Hamilton never did iron-on that space shuttle page to his t-shirt.




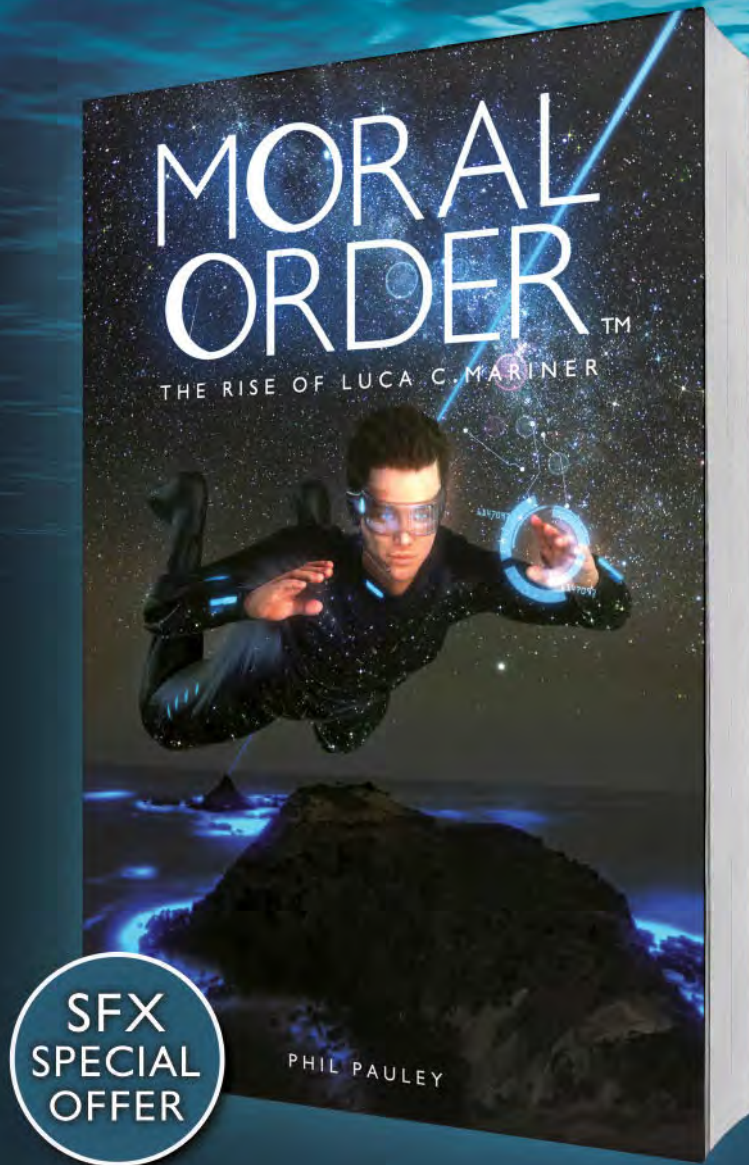
SEE YOU NEXT MONTH! WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER DETAILS ON PAGE 27

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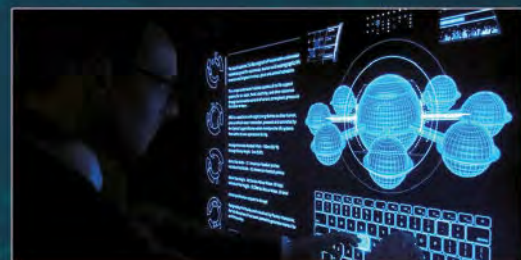
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