

INSIDE: FARSCAPE'S BEN BROWDER

PARSEC

Vol. 4, No. 2

Winter 2001

\$4.25

BABYLON 5 S

ANDREAS KATSULAS

FINAL CONFLICT S

LISA HOWARD

ANITA LA SELVA

LOST WORLD'S

DAVID ORTH

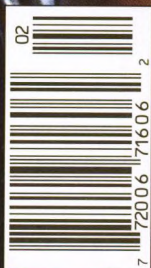
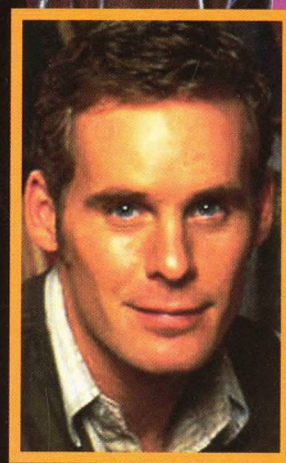
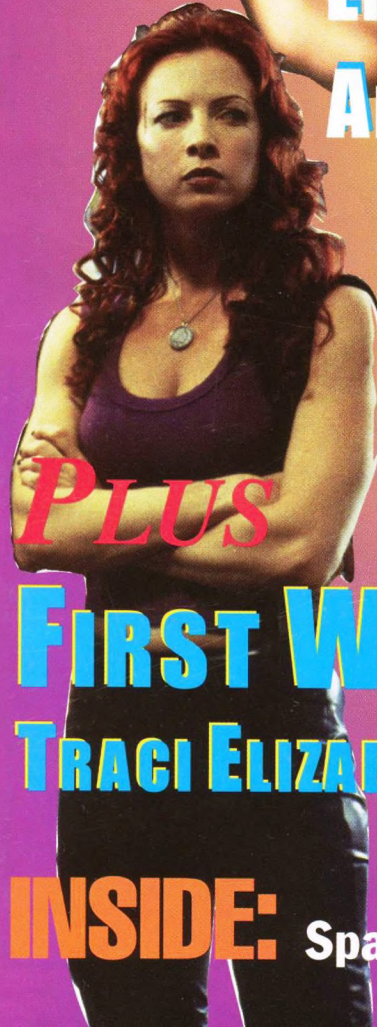
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FIRST WAVES

TRACI ELIZABETH LORDS

INSIDE:

Space: the Imagination Station's schedule



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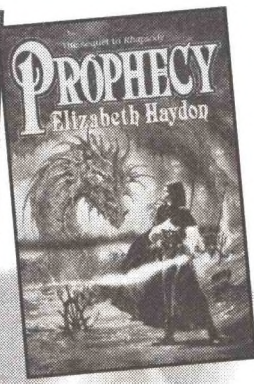
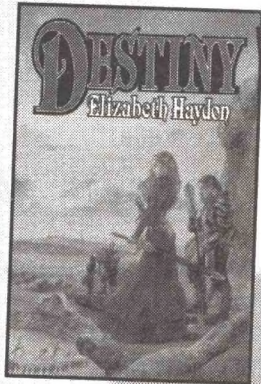
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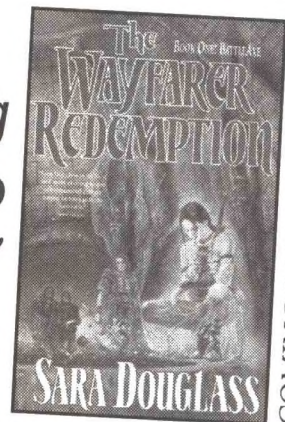


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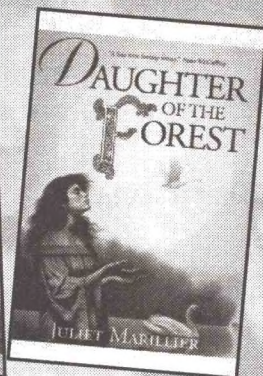
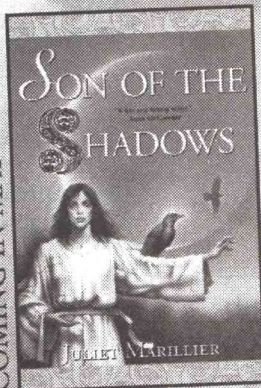
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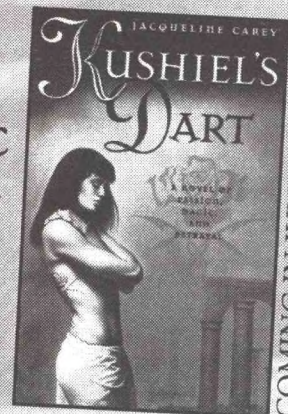


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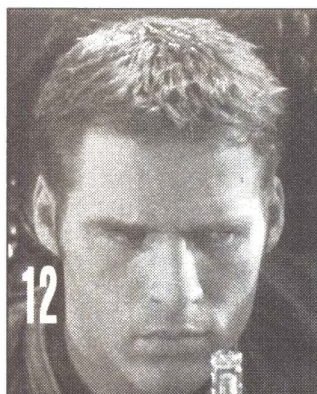
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VOLUME 4 NUMBER 2

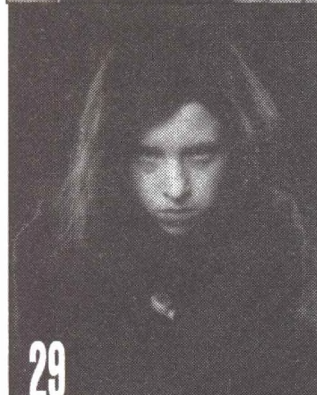
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Chris Krejlggaard
Publisher/Managing Editor

Donna Krejlggaard
Advertising Co-ordinator

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS

Gregg Chamberlain
West Coast Correspondent

**W. Richie Benedict, Sandy Carruthers,
Connor, Kevin Davies, Larry DeSouza,
Joanne Hansen, Janet L. Hetherington,
Lars Johanson, Derwin Mak, Jon Maynall,
Jean-Pierre Normand, Miki Okamoto,
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Dale Sproule, Ronn Sutton,
Emru Townsend, Stefan Vallent,
A. Jaye Williams**

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Canada Post Publishers Agreement
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UPC- 72006-71606-02

Parsec is published by the Parsec Publishing
Company, c/o Plaza 69 Post Office,
1935 Paris St. Box 21019, Sudbury, Ont.,
Canada, P3E 6G6

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Newsstand rates (not including applicable taxes):
six issues — \$25.50, twelve issues — \$51.

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It's studly to read comics

It's probably a guy thing. Once in your life (sometimes twice) there comes a point when you decide that it's time to chuck the comic books in the belief that that's what's grow-ups do.

Although I do know someone who, after spending upwards of \$100 a week in books and whose collection stretched back into the '60s stopped cold because his girlfriend didn't like comic books.

(You can insert your own crude joke here.)

On the other hand, there are some who tire of the spiralling prices, the multiple cross-overs and the nauseating number of X-Men titles all designed to hike the bottom line. These folks just say the heck with it and walk away ... never to return.

This also means that they are unlikely to share the fun of comics with their kids (memo to comic publishers: this is a target market).

At the Canadian Comic Expo last summer, a well-known comic writer told a small crowd of fans that the industry has done all it can to shoot itself in the foot.

Problem is, they don't know where the medical kit is.

Whenever I get the chance to talk to a comic industry professional, talk invariably turns to the industry's future. Does it have one? Where does its future lie? What can be done to slow the loss of readers?

These same questions are the same for any print media that has to adapt to the realities of the Technological/Internet Age. Of course, most print media outlets don't implode the way some comic companies have.

They also don't write books aimed at teenagers and above without giving some consideration to the kids the next age group down who are the ones companies should want to get into reading comics.

Now, Marvel is embarking on an effort to revitalize their characters with

the company's Ultimate line and is trimming the number of titles it publishes — specifically in the X-Men line. DC has brought Stan Lee onboard to redraft the origins of some of their characters.

Will these bring new readers into the fold or will the moves simply give existing readers another comic to buy?

These are the key questions company execs have to ask themselves.

Of course, all the moves in the world aren't going to bring back alienated readers or convince girlfriends it's OK for their stud muffins to read a comic.

☆☆☆

Ch..Ch..Ch..Changes...OK these aren't David Bowie-type changes, but they are changes.

In this issue you'll notice we've added reviews on music and videos. These come hot on the heels of our decision to bolster our anime coverage to complement the stellar work Emru Townsend has done reviewing anime and animation for us for the past four years.

Next issue, we add Aurora-Award Winning, Nebula-Award nominee and winner of more international awards than the United Nations, Robert J. Sawyer to our roster of columnists.

Rob, who's joining us to make amends for returning from Japan and promptly pulling a George Bush (Sr.) and tossing his sushi onto my dog Barney when he came for a visit, will be writing on all things science fiction.

We'll also be adding a well-known Canadian figure whose forte is rooting out the conspiracies around us. Who is it?

Well, you'll have to come back to find out.

Hell, we're barely into the year 2001 and it's already shaping up to be our best yet.

Til April.

Chris

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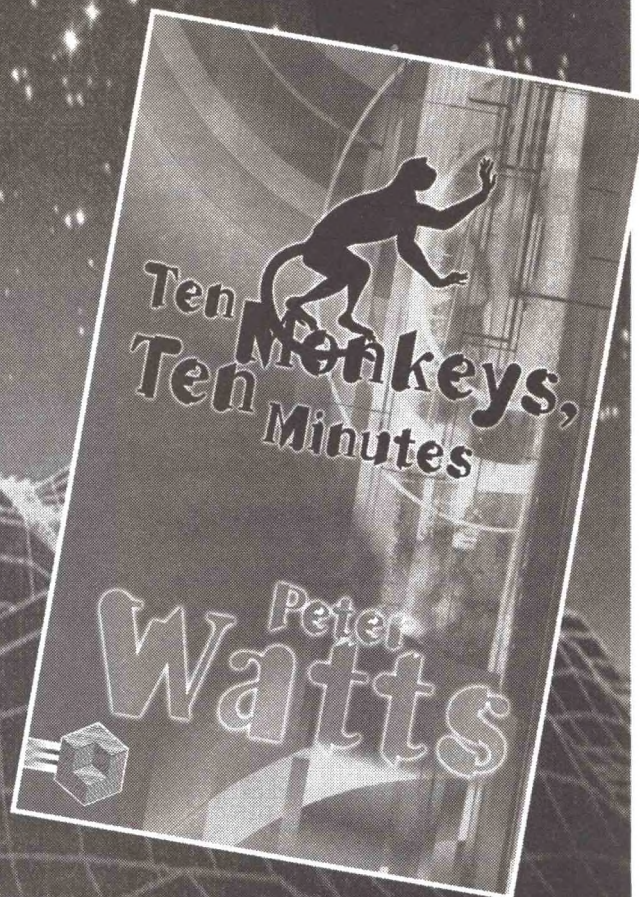
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Aurora Award nods sought

Nominations are being sought for the 2001 Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Awards. The awards will be presented at Convention 21, held in conjunction with V-Con 26 (www.v-con.org), May 4 to 6 in Burnaby, B.C.

The nomination and voting process is open to Canadian citizens, not necessarily living in Canada, or a permanent resident.

You may select up to three nominees in each category for works produced during 2000. All selections will be given equal weight. If you send in multiple ballots, the last one to be received will be the only one counted.

The categories are: Best Long Form Work in English, Best Long Form Work in French, Best Short Form Work in English, Best Short Form Work in French, Best Other Work in English, Best Other Work in French, Artistic Achievement, Fan Achievement (fanzine), fan achievement (organizational) and fan achievement (other).

Nominations should be sent to:

Prix Aurora Awards 2001
c/o Clint Budd
1003 Wolfe Ave, #6
Vancouver, BC V6H 1V6

All nomination forms must be mailed by Feb. 28. There is no fee to nominate.

For more information, visit the Aurora website: www.sentex.net/~dmullin/aurora or the V-Con 26 website

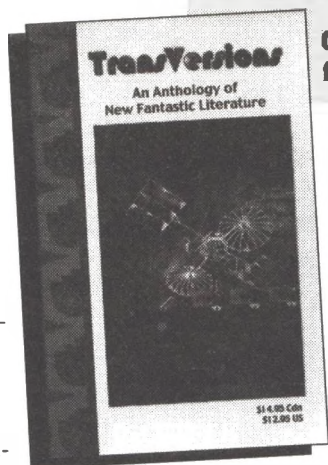
TransVersions changes format

Toronto-based literary magazine TransVersions has switched to an anthology format.

The anthology was launched at Sci-

Fi World.

The anthology includes works by Robert J. Sawyer, Spider Robinson, Ursula Pflug and Eileen Kernaghan.



New format for Canadian speculative fiction publication

Copies are available by sending cheque or money order (\$14.95 Canadian, \$12.95 US) to:

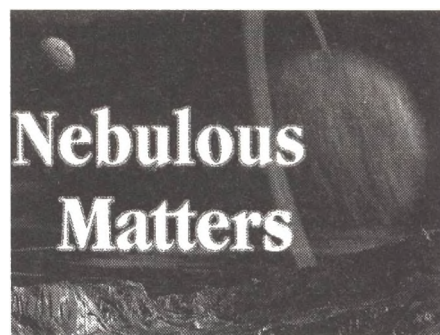
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GalaxyOnline.com buys magazine

GalaxyOnline.com has announced it has purchased Galaxy magazine.



Galaxy magazine was founded in 1950 and, under the editorial direction of H.L. Gold and Frederik Pohl, for the next two decades was a leading magazine in the science fiction literary genre.

Galaxy magazine ceased publication as a print periodical in the mid-1990s, although in recent years a website (www.galaxysciencefiction.com) had been introduced.

As part of their purchase of Galaxy, GalaxyOnline.com also obtains the rights to this domain and two others (www.galaxyezine.com and www.galaxyezine.org).

The material contained on the site

desouza

I ain't the emperor.
I'm the king, baby!



CENTAURIS PRESLEY

GOT NEWS?
send it to
editorial@parsec.on.ca

will ultimately be integrated into GalaxyOnline.com.

Game's artwork on tees, mugs

Artwork from the computer game King of Dragon Pass is now available on T-shirts, sweatshirts, and mugs.

T-shirts are available for \$13.99 in white, \$14.99 in ash grey, or \$19.99 for long-sleeved; long-sleeved sweatshirts are \$21.00. Mugs are \$12.99 for small, or \$13.99 for large. All prices are in US dollars.

The designs are available for a limited time on the web only, at www.a-sharp.com/buy

King of Dragon Pass, which runs on both Windows and Macintosh, won the award for Best Visual Art at the Independent Games Festival.

Renowned author offers writing workshop

Author Robert J. Sawyer is offering a week-long workshop entitled Writing With Style at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Banff, Alta., March 31-April 7.

The workshop is for writers of all levels. Writers will be given the opportunity to edit and shape a manuscript or work-in-progress under the guidance of an experienced editor.

The diverse writing community encourages the development of new

ideas and allows writers to gain confidence in their own style and voice.

Sawyer is the author of 12 science fiction novels, and has won 23 national and international writing awards, including the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America's Nebula Award for his 1995 novel — The Terminal Experiment.

He has also won the top SF awards in Canada (seven times), Spain (twice), France, and Japan and has been nominated five times for the Hugo Award.

The workshop fee is \$337.50 Cdn and \$225 US, plus accommodations and meals.

Enrollment is limited to eight in the science-fiction section.

The application deadline is Feb. 9.

Further information on application requirements can be obtained by contacting the Banff Centre at arts_info@banffcentre.ab.ca or at sawyer@sfwriter.com

The full application form can be found in PDF format at www.sfwriter.com/banff.pdf



Robert J. Sawyer will lead a week-long workshop in Banff, Alta.

Abebooks.com joins sfsite.com

Victoria, B.C.-based Abebooks.com has announced a partnership with sfsite.com. Under the agreement, the two websites will provide content for each other.

Abebooks.com, which provides independent booksellers with the capability to collectively list, sell or buy out-of-date and hard-to-find books, will provide the SF Site with content for a

new science fiction and fantasy webpage. The SF Site will provide abebooks.com with author interviews, book reviews and top 100 lists for its website.

The SF Site can be found at www.sfsite.com.

Sunburst awards

Administrators for the Sunburst Award for Canadian Literature of the Fantastic is a prized and juried award has announced the first awards will be handed out sometime this fall.

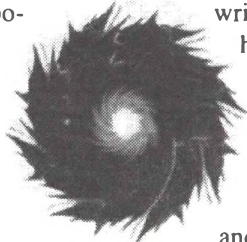
Based on excellence of writing, it will be presented annually to a Canadian writer who has had published

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a speculative fiction novel or book-length collection of speculative fiction any time during the previous calendar year.

Named after the first novel by Phyllis Gotlieb, the award consists of: a cash award of \$1,000 and a medallion which incorporates a specially designed Sunburst logo.



The jurors for the 2001 Sunburst Award are John Clute, Candace Jane Dorsey, Gotlieb, Monica Hughes and Leon Rooke.

The Sunburst Award Administration Committee (SAAC) and its researchers maintain annual reference lists of Canadian literature of the fantastic.

The administrators recommend that writers and publishers check the list to ascertain that their work(s) are on the list.

In order to be considered:

☆ The work must be literature of the fantastic, which includes science fiction, fantasy, horror, magic realism, and surrealism.

☆ The work must be a novel or novel-length short story collection.

☆ The author must be Canadian, that is a Canadian Citizen (native or naturalized; resident in Canada or residing outside Canada) or Landed Immigrant in Canada.

☆ Translations into English are considered on an equal footing with works written originally in English. Note, however, that only the first translation of a work is eligible.

☆ The work must be substantially text-based and have been published in book form.

☆ The work must be published and released during the calendar year, i.e., Jan. 1 to Dec. 31.

Further information on the award can be obtained by contacting the committee secretary at: 106 Cocksfield Ave., North York, Ont., M3H 3T2 or by email to mici@sunburst.org.

Christian experiments on GalaxyOnline.com

GalaxyOnline.com premiered a shortfilm, *Experiment*, featuring Claudia Christian on Jan. 5.

The short film, directed by G. Taylor Pinson, is one of a number of such projects that will be broadcast over the site.

In addition to this program.



GalaxyOnline.com is currently streaming numerous other original productions. *Fahrenheit 452: The Art Police* stars Tim Russ (*Star Trek: Voyager*) and Bruce A. Young (*The Sentinel*) in a humorous *Men in Black* meets *Cops* setting, while *Warped* is the Internet's first science fiction sketch comedy series.

Warped has already featured guest appearances by *Star Trek*'s Walter Koenig and Nichelle Nichols.

In February, GalaxyOnline.com will premiere *Star Warped*, an exclusive Claymation series which lampoons well-known science fiction icons.

↑
Claudia Christian experiments with three characters in *The experiment*.

lighter side of sf

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tye

NOVA'S FIRST WORDS.

A different kind of hero



Photo courtesy, TM and © of the Henson Group

John Crichton spends season near madness and Ben Browder couldn't be happier

By
Chris Kreljaard

The first thing that strikes you about Ben Browder is his laugh.

It's not the fraudulent kind of laugh some actors use to get through some dry or embarrassing expanses of a conversation.

It's a high-octane love-of-life laugh — tinged with a southern accent.

Browder punctuates a sentence with a chuckle the way most of us make do with a period or an exclamation mark.

Let's face it. The man is happy — even with 12- or 13-hour days.

And why shouldn't he be? Browder has the lead on a science fiction program that has been gaining fans and momentum since Day One and he has a family that gives him immense pleasure.

Browder's turn as Commander John Crichton on *Farscape* has female fans' hearts aflutter

An article on the IGN website quotes co-star Australian actress Gigi Edgley, describing him as "the Ultra-Cool American Handsome Hunk Boy."

But gaining matinee-idol status was far from Browder's mind when he auditioned for the role of John Crichton. The first was the prospect of a regular paycheck. The next was the fact it was the series lead and the third was the creative team that had been assembled to make the program a reality.

"The people involved ... Rock (creator Rockne O'Bannon) and David (producer Kemper) and the Henson Company made an immediate impression on me," he explained. "These are good people to be in

business with and I love science fiction."

Before auditioning for *Farscape*, the Memphis, Tenn., native played Neve Campbell's boyfriend on *Party of Five* and parts in such television projects *Paper Mansions: The Dottie West Story*, *Danielle Steel's Secrets*, *Innocent Victims*

During *Farscape's* second season, Crichton hallucinated his arch-foe Scorpius. It was an approach actor Ben Browder found daring for a television series.

“You go into these things and no matter what things look like on paper, you never know what’s going to happen when the camera’s start rolling.”

**- Ben Browder
on sci-fi series’
prospects for success**

and A Wing and A Prayer. Still Browder doesn’t believe his resume locked up the deal.

“I think Rock and David had an idea of what they wanted ... I think everybody had an idea of what they wanted,” Browder recalls.

“Somehow, I slipped through the cracks and got the part.”

By his own admission, Browder was not quite what the producers had in mind when he auditioned.

“I was counter what some people were looking for (in the role),” Browder explained. “The thing is when a series is cast, there’s the producers, there’s the casting people, there’s the production company and their executives and there’s the network and their casting people.

“So literally, by the time you go into the final audition there is anywhere from a dozen to three dozen people who have an opinion of who should be cast.”

While he isn’t sure how many people were part of the decision-making process in the case of *Farscape*, but he recalls auditioning for network series in what amounted to a mini-auditorium.

“There’s like 20 or 30 people there and you’re thinking, ‘Who’s making the decision here?’

“It’s almost impossible to

get so many people to agree. I don’t know if you want them all to agree. I think you want one or two people who are passionate about the show and that they want you and they’re happy with your work.”

Even with such a creative force as the Henson Company backing *Farscape*, Browder had enough experience in the business to know there are no guarantees for success.

“A lot of series only last for one or two episodes,” he explains.

“You go into these things and no matter what things look like on paper, you never know what’s going to happen when the camera’s start rolling.”

When they started rolling, that impact was staggering.

“The great thing about the first episode is that it gave you a sense of the scale of what was possible and that was the intent of the first episode,” he explained.

“You had characters being introduced who were archetypes so the audience could key into who these people are. The one who is least like archetype is John.”

Browder points out that even though Crichton is a focal point for the series, he is not a hero in the classical sense of the word. He’s a twist on the audience’s expectations.

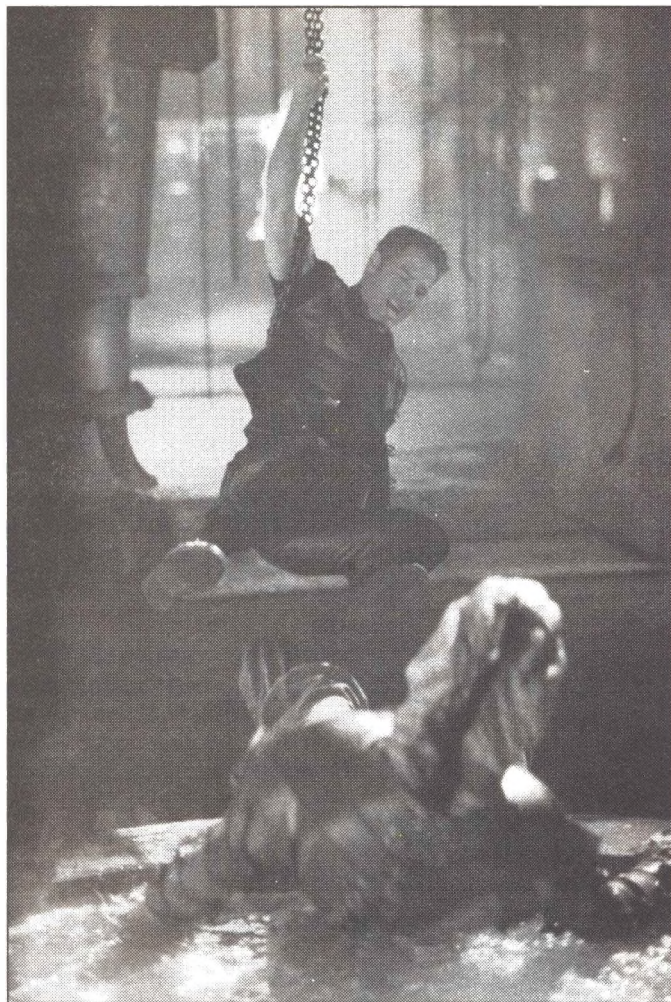


Photo courtesy of the Henson Group TM and © of the Henson Group

While *Farscape* has flourished in syndication, Browder doesn’t believe the series would have survived its first season had it been aired on network television simply because it wouldn’t have been given the time to find its audience.

“I think season two in regards to Crichton is pretty bold television,” he said. “They’re taking the hero of a television show and he’s hallucinating the bad guy and he has been for a long time.

“I just happen to think that’s pretty cool.”

Thanks to an initial commitment of 13 episodes, *Farscape* was able to find its feet — and its fans. This comfort zone is especially important for science fiction series (a genre which traditionally has been a tough sell for television) which need to develop its characters and storylines to attract viewers, as well as smooth the seams between the actors and the special effects — in

Farscape’s case including puppets.

“If we were on network television, I don’t know if we would have been able to survive season one.”

Indeed, making it past the first season is a point of pride for Browder and *Farscape*’s cast and crew.

“Even with syndication, full on science fiction space programs ... except for *Star Trek*, which is a franchise ... has a science fiction program since *Babylon 5* been picked up for a third year?” he asked rhetorically to point up the tough sell sci-fi series face.

“It’s a hard genre, but then again making television is pretty difficult.”

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Even though he landed the role, Browder was not hot on the prospect of filming in Australia. The thought of packing up and moving halfway around the world from his North Carolina home did not thrill him at the onset.

Now, he considers living in Australia one of the key benefits of the job.

"In the end, it's one of the beautiful things about the show," Browder said.

"It's a beautiful country and the culture is great.

"You only live once and if you have the opportunity to live halfway around the world for a few years it's great."

Plus, he has an opportunity to work on a series which he considers "interesting, daring and creative."

The special effects, the prosthetics and the puppets used to make Farscape one of the most visually appealing and creative series to come down the pike in a long time also make for long days for the actors and crew.

"It's an ambitious show to try and shoot, so you don't get out early."

But the effects of the exhausting schedule are tempered by the anticipation of seeing the final product.

"It's exciting because you don't really know how it's going to turn out," Browder said. "You look at something and you go, 'Ohhh, I wonder how this is going to turn out' and you have to throw yourself at it and hope that it all meshes together in some seamless beautiful fashion.

"You wonder, 'If this monster looks like my pet gerbil, I'm going to look really stupid here.'"

It may not have been a pet gerbil, but Browder points out that there have been some embarrassing moments — especially during the early days when the scripted references to CGI-produced monsters didn't exactly match the final product.

"There were times when I really looked like a sissy." Now, Browder makes it a point to check and double-

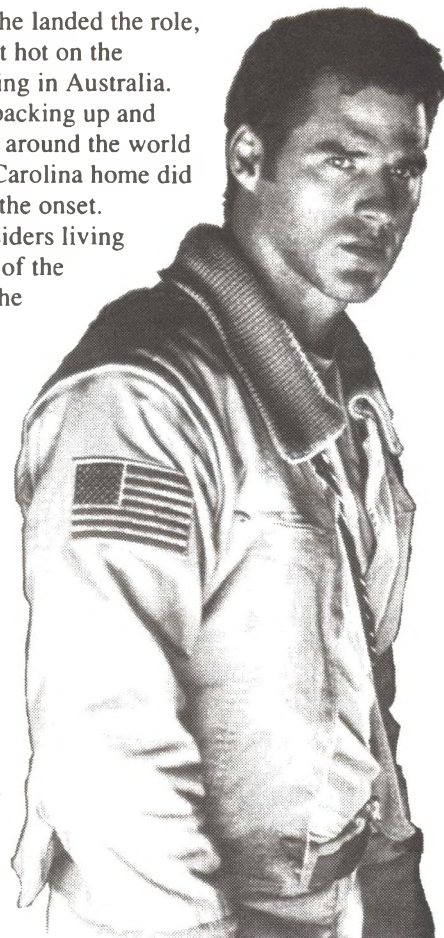


Photo courtesy, TM and © of the Henson Group

In John Crichton, Ben Browder plays a series lead who is not the archetypical hero. He is a character who is thrust into a situation where he has little control and simply just tries to survive as best he can.

check that what he envisions is close to what the writers and special effects crew envision.

"We can make adjustments on the day of shooting, but you can't make it with the CGI later," he said of the need to have a correct idea of what the final effect will look like. "Nor can you make your acting responses to the CGI."

But when it comes to special effects, Browder's preference is the puppets that are used on the set — Rigel and Pilot — even though the manpower required to bring the characters is immense.

"It takes six people to do the acting," he explains. "They have someone with a hand or a whole body up inside them and three or four people lying on the floor pushing them around."

"But a lot of times the puppets are better to work with than a lot of actors I've worked with."

Even between seasons, Browder is kept busy with the program.

Shooting on the season wrapped last June, post-production was completed in August and shooting on the latest season began in November (which was a little later than normal, but with the Olympics in town, what can you do?).

"Those damn Olympics," Browder said in mock indignation.

In between time, he was busy on the promotional tour and working with writers on a script for season two.

It will be the first television script which Browder has penned.

"I've written other stuff ...

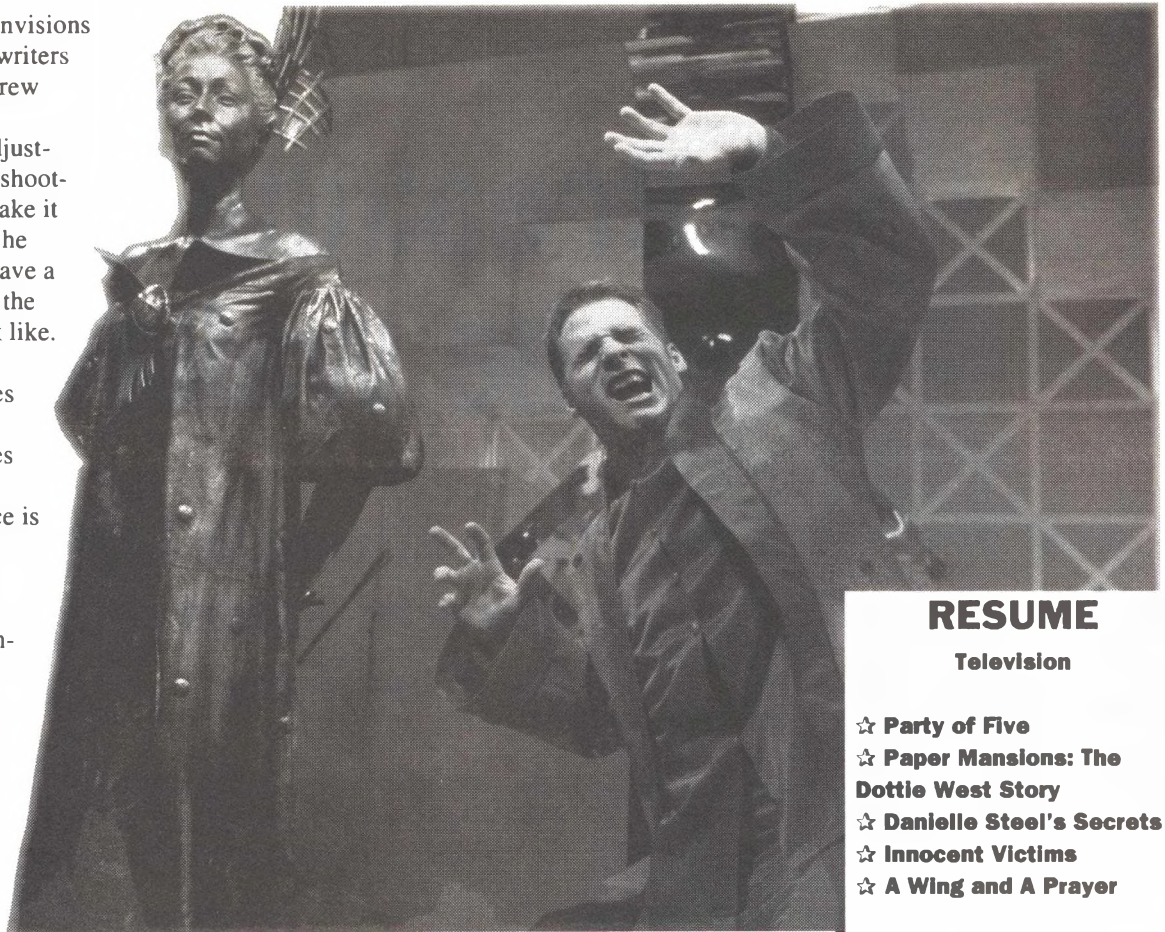


Photo courtesy, TM and © of the Henson Group

spec scripts and stuff like that," he noted.

While Browder has no intention of giving up acting, he wants to gain exposure to all facets of the creative process which brings productions to air.

"The disadvantage of acting is that it requires the permission of someone else to give you the job. Because you're interpreting and not creating the work. "Writing is another part of what we do in creating entertainment and creating television."

The actor likens the series to a vine familiar to the landscape of the American south.

"The show has kind of a life of its own and has grown over everything," Browder said. "So the look and feel of the show evolves naturally in a semi-organic environment (chuckle, chuckle).

"Farscape has sort of grown into a lot of directions and in a year it will be inter-

esting to see where it has gone."

Since Browder has been buried in the project, he hasn't had the perspective needed to watch the series' evolution. Still when he manages to step back and survey the landscape, he's ecstatic at the growth of the project.

"Being on inside of it, you sort of trudge through it and you're amazed at how much it's grown and how much it's changed.

"From what I see from my point of view, I like the trees that I see."



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Breaking down the walls

Traci Elizabeth Lords has plans to soften the resistance on First Wave

Traci Elizabeth Lords' career in Hollywood is the stuff of legends. For more than the past decade, she has worked hard to change that legend by crafting a reputation as an actress adept at bringing complex characters to life.

Playing Rikki on *Melrose Place* for a handful of episodes during the 1992 season may have gained Lords critical acclaim. But it is in science fiction productions where she has truly become a force.

She's tackled the role of "Luscious Delux" on *Hercules*, of Talia Massey on *Viper*, of Greta on the *Highlander* and Sharon Leshner on *The Profiler*. Lords has also tackled roles in such films as *Not of This Earth*, *Blade* and *Virtuosity* (she was the media zone singer).

"It just seems that science fiction is something that I feel really comfortable with," Lords said.

"I do play with it a lot because I'm really fascinated with the subject. I'm really interested in the subjects of science fiction. It's just so vast."

Now, she has taken on the role of Jordan Radcliffe, a resistance leader on *First Wave*.

Going into the auditions, Lords' character may not have been fully fleshed out, but what was on the pages handed her by producers Larry Sugar and series creator Chris Brancato were inspiring.

"I was totally floored by what Chris Brancato had written, because there was no script. There was just a couple of pages of dialogue that he had put together so he could give himself an idea of what he wanted her to be," Lords recalls. "I read it and the first thing I said to him was 'I love your words'."

"I meant it. I thought it was brilliant what he wrote and I was so touched by it and by the character."

Radcliffe's strength, passion and vulnerability, as well as her consuming anger hooked the actress.

"There are so many layers to Jordan," Lords explained. "That was really challenging and sad at the same time. I felt that this was



a person who I wanted to get into her head."

Perhaps, unconsciously Lords recognized a familiar chord with the character. It is a recognition that the actress slowly realized as her first season on the series progressed.

"Initially, I didn't see a similarity. I just thought it was the hand of Chris Brancato," Lords explained. "Now that I am five months into the series, I see so much of myself in Jordan and Jordan in me, I guess it's a credit to the writers.

"They do that with series' regulars. They start to adapt parts and they play on your life and your weaknesses and your strengths and they bring that into the character."

But by Lords' reckoning, Jordan is stronger and angrier than the actress who portrays her. In many ways, the actress notes, Jordan has a great deal in common with the character of Cade

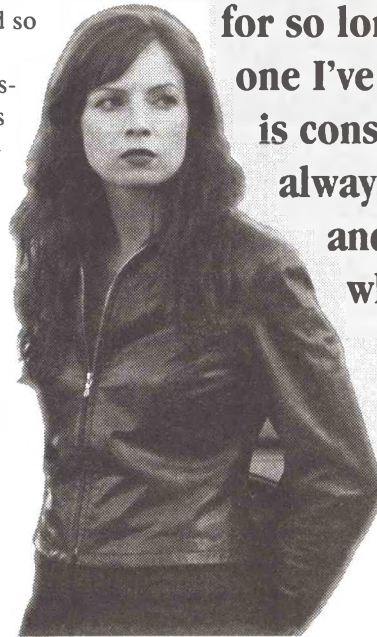
Foster two seasons ago.

"He started out with this real chip on his shoulder and he grew," Lords explains. "Jordan comes in and she's so bitter and so hurt and so angry.

"It's a slow progression, but Cade teaches her that there's another way."

Even though she had only filmed about half the season at the time of the interview, Lords could already see an evolution in the character ... even if it was just in fits and starts.

"It's pretty spontaneous," she says of the cast's knowledge of the season's scripts and story-



"He has done so much work on this show and he has had to carry the load for so long. Out of everyone I've worked with, he is constantly on it, he always knows his lines and he always knows where he is going."

**- Lords
on Sebastian Spence**



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lines. "We never really know what's going to happen. Which keeps it exciting but it's mind-boggling at the same time."

During the course of her first season on the show Lords wants to see Jordan's edge soften a bit. Lords would like to see her character fall in love and gain a measure of vulnerability during the season.

"Jordan is so complex and there are so many walls around her and I would love to see the walls come tumbling down."

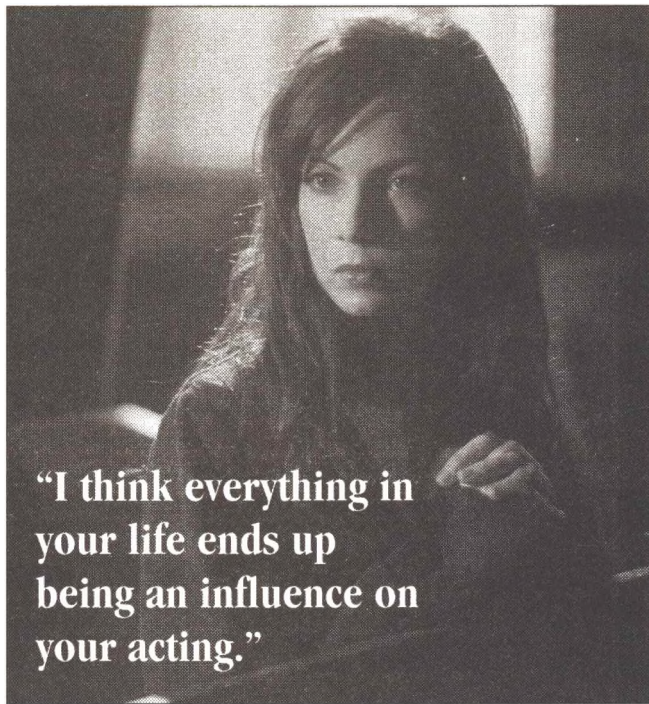
And the 32-year-old actress will have some sway in the process.

"First Wave is one of those productions where the

actors have a lot of input because if there's something that rings false to us, the writers do listen. So we're blessed that way," Lords explained. "But ultimately, when an actor goes in and plays a role, all they can play is something they have the knowledge of. You can pretend about certain things, but you have to have vast knowledge of emotions."

Lords' life experiences contribute to her ability to play such a strong and vulnerable character as Jordan Radcliffe. It is a circumstance which more than one actor on the series has noticed.

"Traci brings a whole



"I think everything in your life ends up being an influence on your acting."

new dimension to the cast. She brings a strong female role model to the show. It's like breathing new life into the show and helping push it to the next level," series' lead Sebastian Spence said in a separate interview.

Andrew Jackson, who

"She brings a wealth of life experience to her role and that is a wonderful thing to have as an actor," Jackson said recently.

"She's probably one of the most grounded performers I've ever met. She has a really healthy perspective on the industry."

Lords, on the other hand, discounts the effect of her experiences on portraying Jordan.

"A lot of actors draw from their life and their experiences when they play a part," she explains. "I've done that in the past, but don't see that I'm doing that now. I'm much more in the moment."

"Jordan is so emotional, she's so vulnerable, she's so angry, she's all of these things and they're all things that I've been in my life, so I don't find it terribly difficult to play her."

"I really love her and I really admire her in a lot of ways."

Making the task of playing Jordan easier is the fact her two main co-stars are

'Ultimate loser' reflects on love

On First Wave, he loved, he lost, he loved and then he lost again. Andrew Jackson, who played the Jaridian on *Earth: Final Conflict*, plays Jordan Radcliff's love interest (or disinterest depending on the status of the brainwashing) on one of Lord's first episodes on First Wave.

spoiler alert!

"This was an opportunity for her character to have an expose on her history," Jackson explains. "Up to that point, the audience didn't really know who she was in terms of where she comes from."

In the episode, *Legacy*, Jackson plays Davis, a man engaged to Jordan.

"I play a character who seemingly had everything, but ultimately had nothing."

"I refer to him as the ultimate loser."

Besides marrying Jordan, Davis also has been ordered by her father to run the family business. Just before the wedding, the Gua kill Jordan's parents and brother. So Davis gives her time to recover and he goes on to run the family business. At the end of the period, they've drifted apart so he allows the Gua to alter her memories so that she'll love him.

"Hence, the reason I call him the ultimate loser," Jackson jokes. "Seems like everytime he reached a point where everything is wonderful in his life, some tragedy occurs."

And in this case, the tragic circumstances reach a climax when Jordan's brainwashing doesn't take.



plays Jordan's intended in the episode which sheds light on Radcliffe's motivation to battle the Gua, was equally complementary of Lord's strength.

well-entrenched in their characters and could offer some assistance as Lords became acclimated to the character.

"All I have to do is look at them and I'm there."

Naturally, over the course of her career, Lords' approach has changed and she has become more confident in her craft.

"I think my work has changed. Then I used to be completely obsessed with researching things for a role," she said. "Now, I still research things but I memorize my lines, go on the set and try to be present in the moment. It's more natural."

Preparation is one of the key elements of Lords' approach to acting — that and a deep love for her profession.

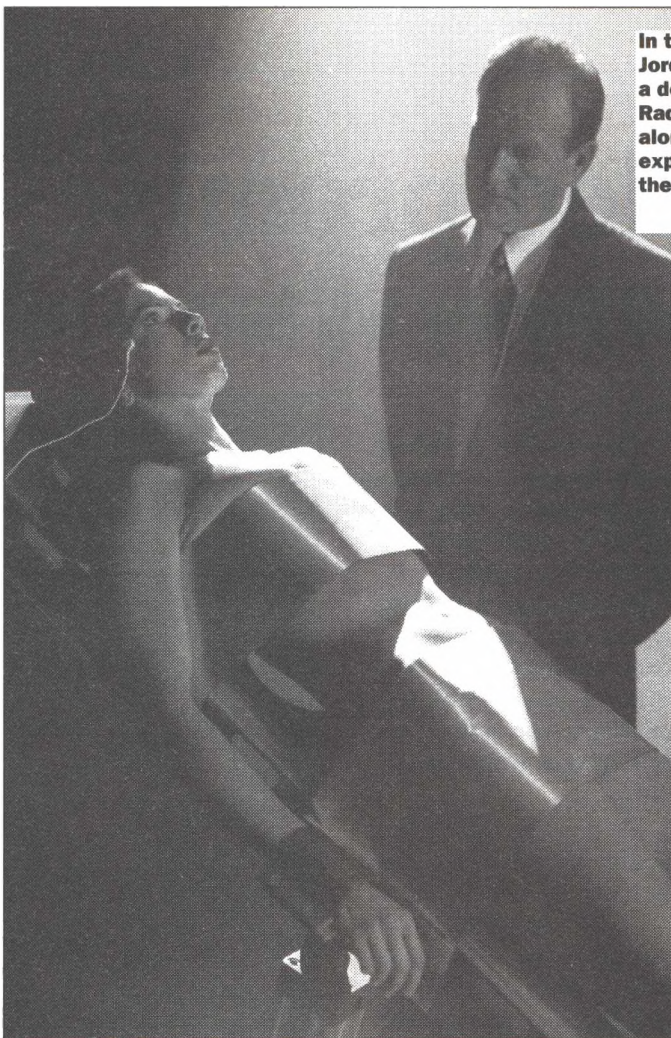
"I do love what I do and I take it very seriously," she pointed out.

Preparation and dedication are needed commodities when you're facing a production schedule which includes 22 hour-long dramas over eight months of the year.

Being a regular on *The Profiler* before joining *First Wave* may have given Lords a taste of what working on a series was like, but it didn't fully prepare her for the regiment and the long hours associated with being part of the Vancouver-based production.

"The hours are much longer and the work load is definitely much harder," Lords explained. "It is a challenge. But it is exciting because you always have to be completely on."

As demanding as the schedule is, Lords believes the experience has made her a much stronger actress — something which allow her to pursue her craft to other



In the episode —, the Gua brainwash Jordan Radcliffe transforming her into a docile wife for the CEO of the Radcliffe Company. The incident, along with the murder of her family, explains Jordan's anger and hatred for the Gua.

genres.

Even though she has become known for her work in such sci-fi projects as *The Profiler*, *First Wave* and Roger Corman's remake *Not of This Earth* and the *Tommyknockers*, Lords wants to branch out into comedy on the screen, as well as pursue opportunities behind it.

"I love the art of filmmaking."

Besides more than 200 acting credits to her name, Lords also has three movies sporting her name preceded by a producer credit. It is a

"I'm moving more into the field of producing, because it's something I love," Lords said. "It's not a control issue, but I love to oversee things and the prob-

lem-solving and I love making things happen."

It is here that Lords experience as an actor comes in handy. It provides her with a unique perspective and the skills some line producers lack when they need to solve problems which crop up on the set.

"Being a good line producer is about being able to think very quick and to be able to communicate with people," Lords said. "I think that I can talk to anybody and that is the key to being a good line producer."

And she has worked with some of the legends in the business.

Lords counts Corman, John Watters and Ian Sanders and Kim Moses, as well as Sugar and Brancato among

those who have helped her progress.

"I've been really fortunate to come across people who got me," she said.

In Corman's case, Lords gained first-hand experience with the legendary director's speed on the set.

"We shot *Not of This Earth* in 10 days in a lumber yard in Santa Monica," she recalls. "Corman is a genius about putting money together so tightly and still putting out a product that is reasonable."

"Of course, he'll be the first one to admit that sometimes it's kind of cheesy, but I think that's the point."

Although Lords says that she didn't consciously take any lessons from Corman or Watters in terms of her work as a producer, she does admit that he taught her that perseverance will lead to results.

"If anything, it gave me hope. But that's the great thing about life, if you put your mind to it you can make anything happen."

While some cast members use the four-month period between seasons to recuperate from a demanding filming schedule, Lords has no such plans.

During her down time after the season has wrapped, Lords plans to pursue her interest in music.

Lords released her first album, the techno *1,000 Fires*, four years ago and has plans to release a follow up

Continued on page 94

Unfulfilled promise

G'Kar's spiritual journey will have go on without actor

Andreas Katsulas was ready to play Narn ambassador for another five years

Andreas Katsulas feels blessed as an actor. In his career, he's had two roles among many which were so challenging and perfect — roles of a lifetime.

As a stage actor during the '70s and early '80s, Katsulas tackled the role of Ubu as a member of Peter Brook's International Company. On television, he took on the role of Ambassador G'Kar on *Babylon 5*.

"So few actors can look back and say they played two great characters and I played them for a long time and got a lot out of them," Katsulas says.

With Ubu, a series of plays which were written by 19th Century French playwright Alfred Jarry as a way of making fun of his teachers, Katsulas had the first character to call his own.

"The character is sort of an Idi Amin, only he's funny," Katsulas.

The acting bug bit Katsulas hard when he was young.

"I don't know why, it's something that you can't explain," he said. "For some reason, I shined in the per-

formance area."

At three, he was singing and taking part in pageants at the community centre in the St. Louis neighbourhood where he was growing up.

Reinforcing his budding aspirations, was his attendance in Greek school — a move his parents made to develop a love of the family's heritage within their only son.

At the school, Katsulas performed in skits and other recitals.

"So, I was already a bilingual performer by the time I was 10 years old."

Later on, Katsulas took part in some Grade 7 and 8 class shows, but it wasn't until he reached high school where he really began to pursue his interest.

"In high school, I looked around at the extracurriculars and for some reason being in the plays really grabbed me," he recalls.

After high school, Katsulas went onto St. Louis University and then received a masters from Indiana University.

While in university, Katsulas had to hide his ambitions from his parents.

"I lied a lot," he recalls. "I kept saying I want to be a teacher, that I want to teach drama and that would explain all the courses I was taking.

"Probably, at some point I didn't know I wanted to be a



Katsulas is scheduled to appear at Toronto Trek 15. The convention will take place July 20-22 at the Regal Constellation Hotel.

More information on Toronto Trek 15 can be obtained by calling (416) 410-8266 or at <http://tcon.icomm.ca>

professional actor. I was just taking courses that interested me."

It was only after he received a fellowship to study at Indiana University that his parents realized that someone was willing to pay their son to be an actor.

From there, he made the jump to professional theatre — albeit as a struggling actor — and spent three years in St. Louis, Boston and New York before joining Peter Brook.

With Brook's theatre

troupe, Katsulas found himself immersed in experimental pieces as well as traditional works by such playwrights as Shakespeare.

"It was such a unique experience, that it spoiled the theatre for me," said Katsulas. "It left me without a taste to pursue the theatre unless it was with the same circumstances and people that I enjoyed then."

But as challenging and as enjoyable as his time in Paris was, it was tough to pay the bills.

"You try living in Paris on \$600 a month," Katsulas said. "But the experience with Peter was so unique, that anybody in their right mind would go for the experience rather than the money.

"But then, 15 years later you wake up with two children and you realize \$600 won't cut it anymore."

So, Katsulas decided to return to America and ply his craft in Hollywood.

Landing in Los Angeles in 1986, Katsulas found a steady flow of work in movies and television, including as the Romulan Tomalak on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Alien Nation* and as a network suit on *Max Headroom*.

It was such work that led his agent to send him on an audition for *Babylon 5*.

"I went in with 50 other people who wanted the part," Katsulas recalls. "I was very interested in the part and I loved the character right away, so I came with a great enthusiasm.

"I guess it showed that I was really hot for this character."

After playing so many "psychopathic killers" over the course of five or seven years, the role of G'Kar offered a chance to play a multi-faceted character.

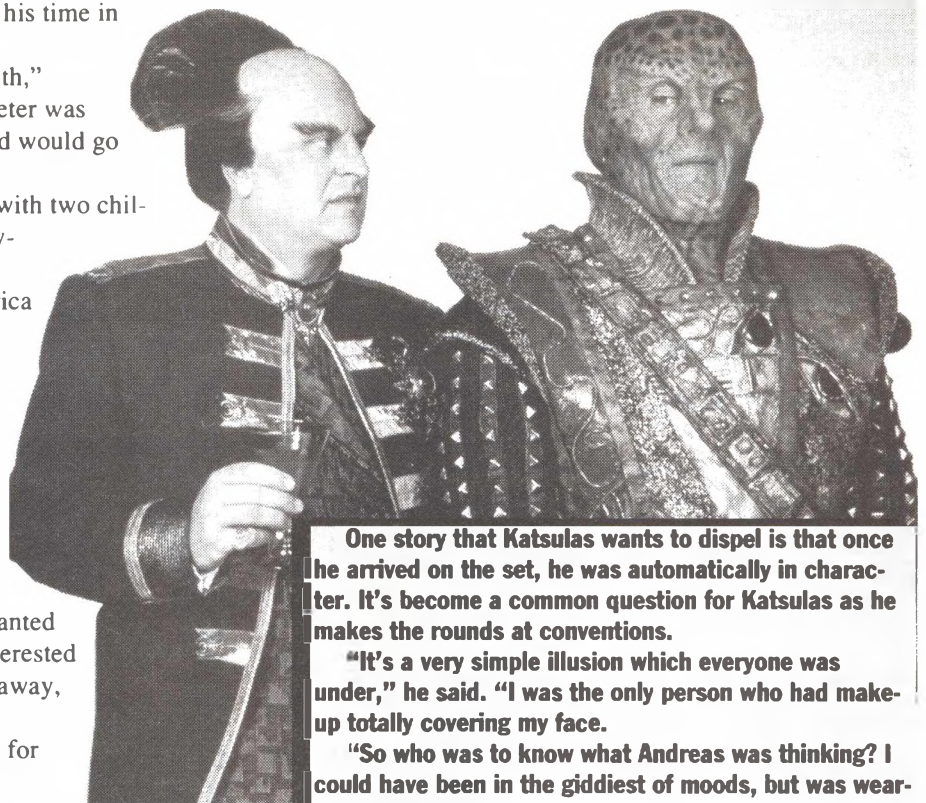
"Here was a character who was a diplomat, who had a taste for human women, who was a poet," Katsulas explained. "I thought this was as close on film as I would get to the theatre.

"The possibilities of that character just grabbed me."

And except for the make-up and the wardrobe, Katsulas was left to grasp the possibilities of the character.

"The costume was made from heavy leather and metal so I had to walk around in a very erect manner," he explained. "And from this I began to take on the mannerisms associated with walking that way and began discovering the layers of the character."

Part of the process was to decide how the ambassador should talk.



One story that Katsulas wants to dispel is that once he arrived on the set, he was automatically in character. It's become a common question for Katsulas as he makes the rounds at conventions.

"It's a very simple illusion which everyone was under," he said. "I was the only person who had make-up totally covering my face.

"So who was to know what Andreas was thinking? I could have been in the giddiest of moods, but was wearing G'Kar's makeup."

Adding to the illusion was Katsulas's practice of simply sitting and being quiet.

"They would judge my mood from that. Sitting quietly doesn't mean that I'm not telling myself jokes."

"Just thought that in a sense, people who travel a lot, back and forth to Europe develop an accent that's not quite American and not quite English ... it's called mid-Atlantic," Katsulas explains. "And I thought that whatever schools there were on Narn for diplomats, there would be some sort of common universal language.

"I just took it right on the nose that he would be capable of having a mid-Atlantic accent."

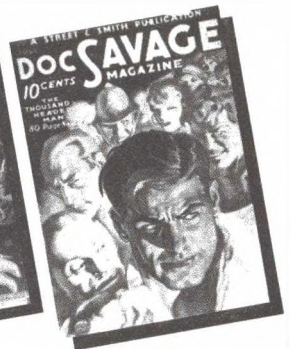
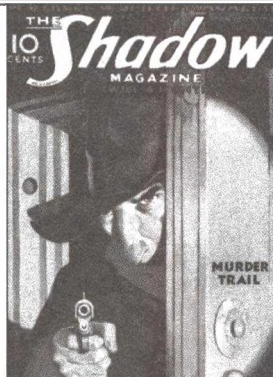
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Orth happy to find career has reached plateau

As Ned Malone, David Orth records life in the Lost World

It was a beautiful sunny Australian Saturday for David Orth.

He'd finished a week on the set of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* which was capped off with a car accident which left

him, Jennifer O'Dell and their driver with minor cases of whiplash.

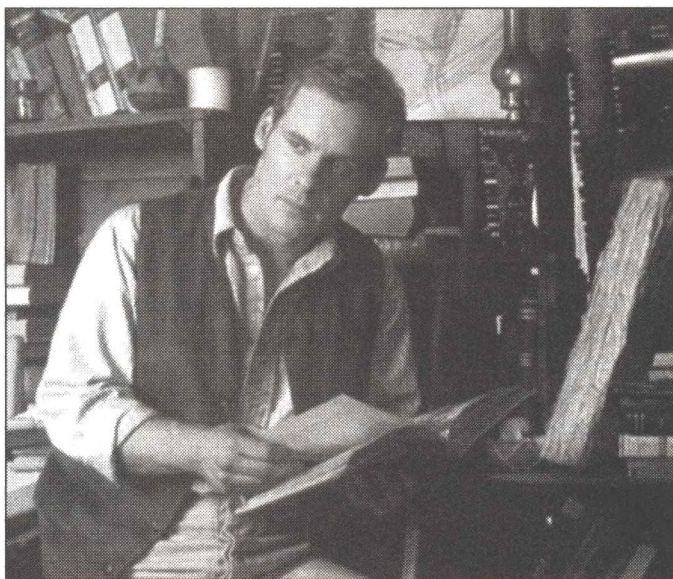
On the series, Orth plays Ned Malone. Malone served as a war correspondent during the Great War and served as the balloon's pilot during the ill-fated expedition which marooned five (now four) explorers on a lost plateau.

It took some astute work by his agent to get Orth on the plateau.

The series was being cast out of Montreal and, for whatever reason, a number of Toronto actors passed on auditioning for parts.

Orth's agent made sure he wasn't one of those actors.

"I had what I thought



was a bad audition and I left thinking, 'Well, you've got to blow one once in while,'" Orth explained. "I just lucked into the part."

Orth auditioned under the premise of going for another character because the producers were recasting the part of Malone after the two-hour pilot and didn't want word of the change to

leak out.

In his second season on the series, Orth is pleased that Malone will be fleshed out more as the season progresses.

"The characters on the series are pretty well-defined," Orth said. "I think I made some mistakes last season. I kind of played what was written and I don't think I put enough life into the guy."

"Being new to television, I didn't realize that they're not going to give you much direction on the character. It's just 'be here now'."

During the second season, new writers are ensuring that Malone will be "humanized" and the characters will gain more depth now that they have been established with the audience.

"The attraction with Malone is that he's a

During his time working for a film company, Orth had the opportunity to meet Bruce Dern, the actor who appeared in one of his favourite movies, *Silent Running*.

"I wanted to go up and say, 'You know what? Ever since I was a kid, I've wanted to be in movies and one of the main reasons was that movie.'

"But I didn't have the nerve."

Silent Running was one of Orth's earliest film memories and a film he considers "a seminal work."

growing guy and hopefully I can convey that.”

The journey to the *Lost World* has its roots in Orth’s Grade 8 days in Kitchener, Ont.

“I was just bumming around when the music teacher came up and said, ‘I’ve got a part for you in a musical,’ ” Orth recalls. “So I said OK.”

Acting was a talent that the youngster found came naturally.

During high school he continued to take part in school productions — including a plumb role in a Grade 13 production of *Grease* — and, even though he tried to find a “real job” after graduation, Orth was drawn to the profession.

“It was unavoidable, I tried to be a white-picket-fence guy,” Orth explained.

“I tried to get a degree, but I was drawn to acting.

“And I never got out.”

As he developed his skills and gained his feet in the industry, Orth supported himself by working as a driver for some Toronto productions, as well as loading box cars and waiting tables.

His first professional gig was as a member of David Carradine’s gang on *Night Heat*.

“A lot of guys got their start on *Night Heat*,” he said.

From there Orth landed jobs on *Traders*, *Labor of Life*, *FX The Series*; *Robocop the Series*, *Hidden Room*; *Beyond Reality* and *Ray Bradbury Theatre*.

Although one of his goals is to gain some film work, Orth professes a desire to return to the stage after his work on *The Lost World* is



completed.

“It would be nice to really work on a character and practise those skills and develop the arc of the character,” Orth said. “It’s pretty tough when you do 30-second takes day in and day out.

“It would be nice to go back to the stage in the future. I never thought I would say that, but it’s appealing to me more and

“I find that some of the people who teach acting have a sort of god complex. I find that creepy.”

**- David Orth
on acting workshops**

more.”

Such an realization is apparently borne from the experience he’s gained as an actor and the desire to “make a connection with the audience.

“That’s why you’re in the business. I love TV, but you don’t make a lot of those connections on a show like *The Lost World*.”



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Howard sad to abandon her baby

Lisa Howard helped create the character of Lilli Marquette. But when real-life motherhood beckoned, she reluctantly gave up her artistic baby

In essence, Lisa Howard left one baby to have another.

This season, Howard's character made what could be her final appearance on *Earth: Final Conflict*. Lili Marquette was written out of the series.

Howard's number of appearances on the series was reduced over the course of the third season before she left at the start of the fourth season. It was a move made to accommodate the actress's pregnancy and which allowed her to focus on raising her baby.

But it's a move that meant she had to give up her creative child.

"I helped create the show. For the first few episodes of season one, it was this great big collaborative effort. We were all throwing in our ideas and perfecting things," Howard said during a stop in Toronto. "When you're on the ground floor of something it's like your baby.

"And when you create a character and you work on her for so long, it's like a child in a way ... you're responsible for her character and for her presence in the world."

Howard originally planned to work through to her eighth month, have her daughter during the series' hiatus and then return for the following season.

Other cast and crew members — particularly those with kids of their own — thought the plan was a bit naive. Looking back, Howard admits that having a baby and the sense of responsibility that comes with it, makes her plan look silly.

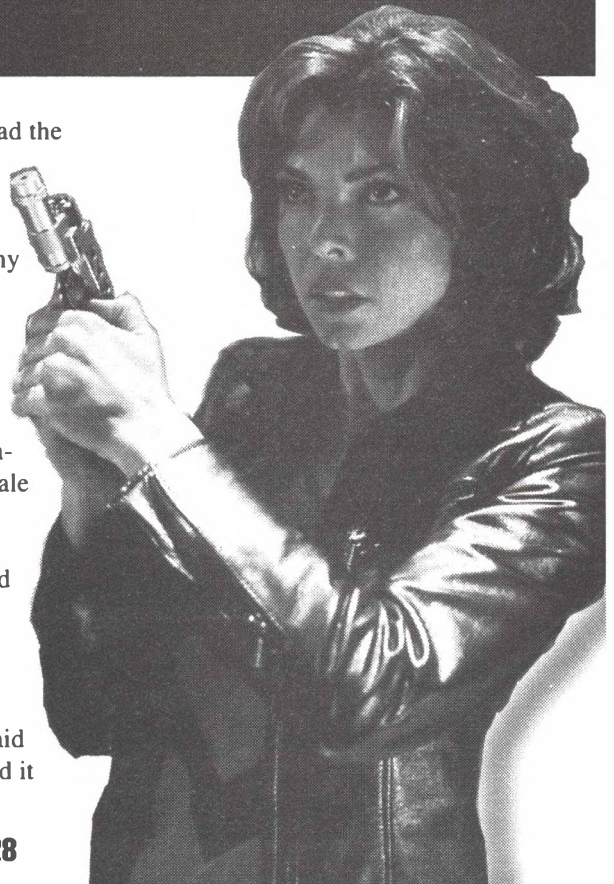


"They knew that once I had the baby, I wouldn't want to come back to work. And sure enough, I had the baby and I asked to be let out of my contract.

"They said 'come back when you want, for however many episodes you want'."

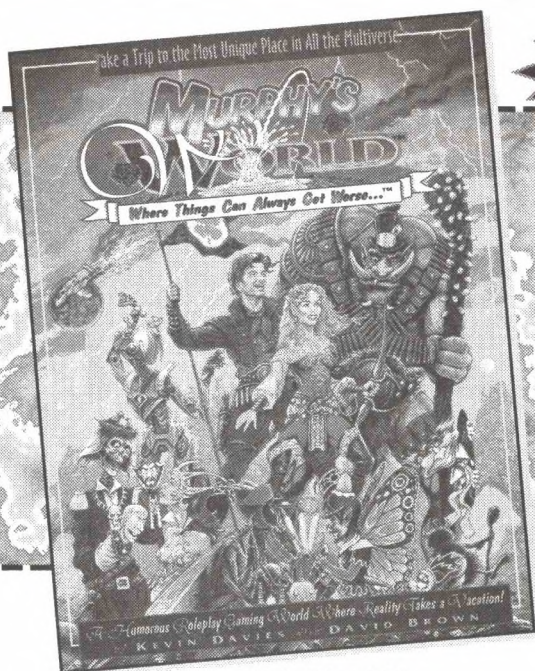
The studio's plan called for Howard to depart last season and have the series' female lead taken over by Jayne Heitmeyer's Renee Palmer, but the creative forces behind the show kept bringing Marquette back.

"They kept bringing me back and bringing me back, which I was happy to do," said Howard. "So I never believed it



Continued on page 28

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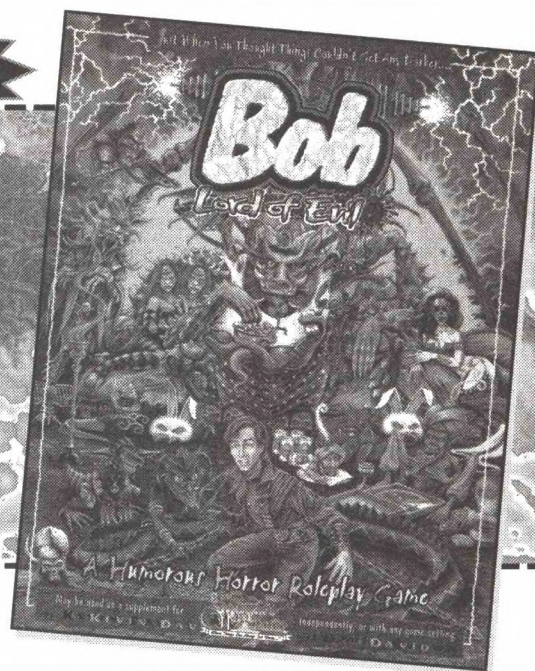
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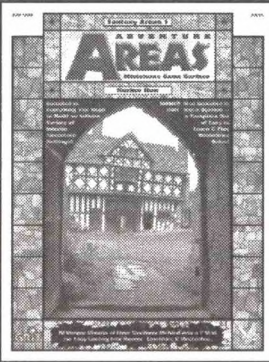
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PEREGRINE

Riding the maddness

La Selva grapples with becoming intergalactic Caligula

Anita La Selva is a Star Trek junkie.

Even after a long day on a Toronto soundstage, La Selva still makes an effort to find an episode of the original series on television. Invariably she does at some late-night hour and settles in for an hour-long fix.

"It's just such quintessential original sci-fi," La Selva explains. "Without all the sophisticated heavy-duty special effects, they're just really good stories.

"They're excellent stories that make you think. They deal with so many moral, human and ethical dilemmas."

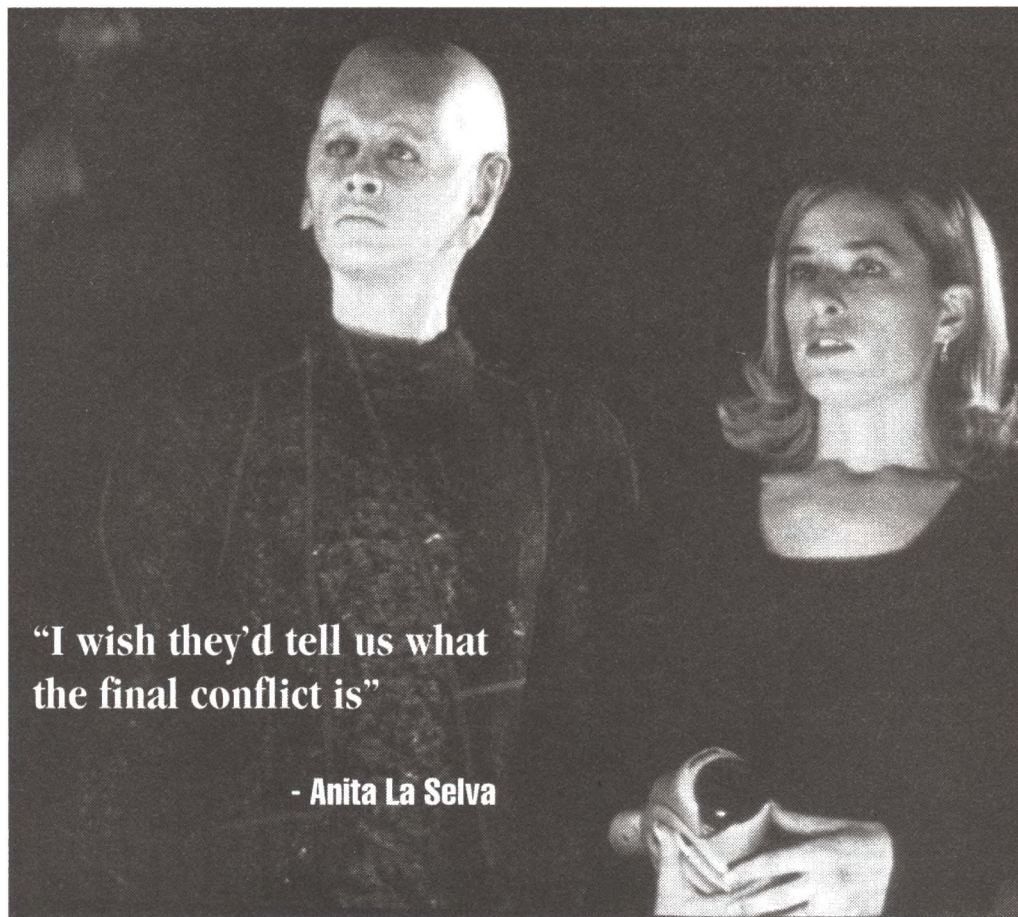
Of course, La Selva recognizes that not every episode was a work of genius. Some, by her description "were pretty hokey.

"Some of the stories, like in any sci-fi series are pretty funny."

Among the episodes she places in the funny category is —, where James T. Kirk is split into two people by a transporter accident. The way to tell them apart, La Selva notes, "The evil one wears too much eye liner."

But when it comes to episodes involving alien races and telepathy, La Selva was entranced by the concepts.

"They were incredibly



"I wish they'd tell us what the final conflict is"

- Anita La Selva

Photo courtesy of Alliance Atlantis

wonderful and most other sci-fi series since then have just repeated on most of these themes," she said.

When talking to La Selva about Star Trek (and to a lesser extent, Next Generation), you get a sense that she wishes some of the storytelling magic displayed by Roddenberry and his creative team had made it through the years.

"I found that they really made you think and that they weren't worried about pack-

ing enough action into the episode," she said. "Now, sci-fi seems to be going so much toward action and sexy babes, that's why I love the old series so much."

Being a Star Trek junkie makes La Selva's current job particularly pleasing.

La Selva plays Zo'or, the ruthless Taelon leader on Earth: Final Conflict.

Introduced early in the series' run, Zo'or was the "feisty Taelon." First shown as a computer image, the

As Zo'or Anita La Selva is a greedy and conniving Taelon leader. Expect to see the traits come to the forefront during the current season.

character in human form was introduced in the ninth episode.

"They auditioned for the role for quite a while," La Selva recalls. "I was out of town doing a theatre piece when they did the initial round of auditions and I actually went in on the last

day of the third round.

"I just kind of nailed it.

"It was one of those rare things where you go in and you know you had it."

The fact her character was an alien and she was joining a sci-fi series caught La Selva by surprise — she thought she was auditioning for a kids show.

When she received the script, descriptions about the character were lacking. The script basically warned La Selva that she would be wearing a prosthetic.

So she had to develop Zo'or from scratch.

"I decided to play Zo'or as very calm, very ethereal and very strong." La Selva explained. "It just happened to be what they were looking for.

"I think that some times the universe just happens to gives you what you're meant to get."

Taelon tutors

Leni Parker had about seven episodes of Earth: Final Conflict under her belt by the time La Selva joined the cast. So, Zo'or needed some pointers from Da'an on how to be a Taelon.

"I said 'Give me some pointers here,' La Selva recalls. "I had my own hand gestures, but I didn't want them to be too foreign from her's."

Over time, even though both characters have their own variety of hand movements, they share some common gestures which are shared by all Taelons.

"So, now what happens is that we'll have guest Taelons on and we'll work with them a little bit and make sure they get the hand and head movements right.

"We'll try to give them Taelon pointers."

Originally, serving as a foil for Da'an on the series, Zo'or has evolved into a calculating, manipulative, wild villain.

"There's really an element of madness to Zo'or. But he's more the classic villain than a tragic figure.

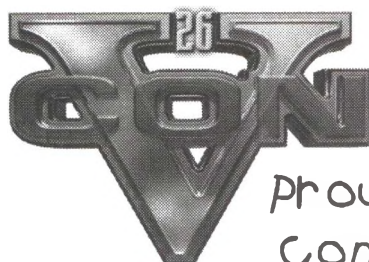
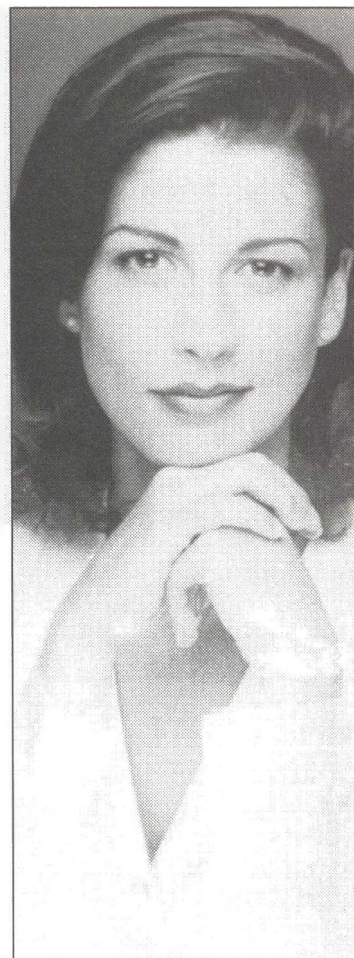
"I think that Zo'or is really going to get it in the end."

The madness and the

obsession with power and greed that was introduced in the third season are being built upon the in fourth season.

La Selva's time on the series also gives her access to a fount of information about the original Star Trek

Continued on page 98



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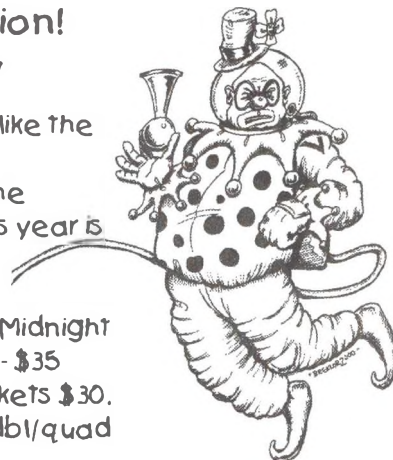
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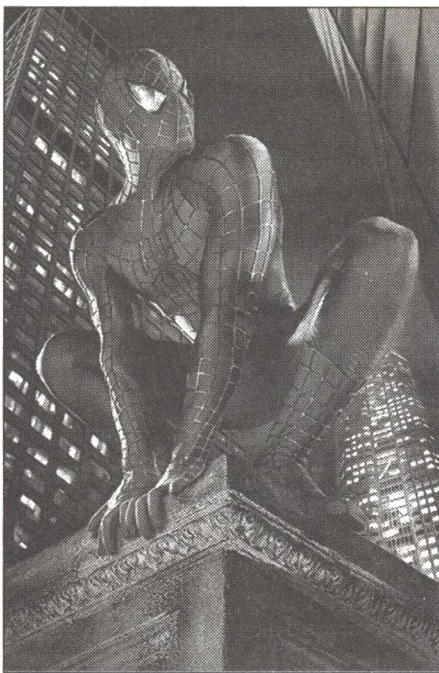
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In Space, no-one can hear you honk!



Spider-Man's costume unveiled

Even though the movie isn't scheduled to reach theatres until May 3, 2002, it's never too early to see what your fashionable neighbourhood wall-crawler will be wearing.

The costume which Tobey Maguire wears as Spider-Man was in design and development for six months, according to costume designer James Acheson.

"It is based on tension, and is one piece — all the way from the boots to the top of the head," says Acheson. "The boots have actually been built into the suit."

Acheson also revealed tidbits about the mask, which contains lenses by Oakley. The suit is printed with a computer-generated rectangular pattern in order to create an illusion of dimensionality — an almost 3-D effect.

There are more than 120 individual silk screens on the suit, for shading and highlighting. The suit's web has been molded in latex and dyed, but the actual design has been cut by computerized cutters. Teams of gluers and painters handglued the web onto the compressed suit and handpainted the web with various metallic finishes.

The movie will feature Maguire as Spider-Man, as well as Kirsten Dunst, Willem Dafoe and James Franco.

Spider-Man began principal photography on Jan. 8.

Howard

when they said it was the last episode."

There is a chance that Marquette will show up again down the road.

"They left it pretty open-ended storywise, which is smart to do," Howard said of her final appearance. "Although, in sci-fi you can still be killed off and have the person come back again.

"They could scoop me up into a dustbin and they could still bring me back."

Still, the pain of giving up her creative child is too fresh for Howard to watch the series during its fourth season.

"I'd like to tune in and see all the old faces, but it's too hard for me," she explained. "I really miss them and it would be weird to watch the show without Lili."

As much as Howard will miss the cast and crew, she won't miss working as a regular on a sci-fi series.

"It was a lot of hard work," she said. "I don't know if I will ever, ever want to work this hard again.

"The hours are intense and the technical elements are really taxing and this is coming from me, who played a human. I can't imagine what Leni (Parker) and Anita (La Selva) go through."

Plus, her departure will not only allow her to spend time with her daughter and husband (California-based scriptwriter Daniel Cerone), but it will also allow her to work in projects that have nothing to do with science fiction.

"Not being a regular on a series will give me a chance to diversify a bit," Howard said.

Her husband (who happens to be a science fiction fan) was the one who convinced her to audition for the series.

Family friend Kevin Kilner had already landed the lead role on the series when he noticed that Howard's tape wasn't among those who had auditioned for Lilli.

"I told him I didn't want to do science fiction again and I didn't want to go to Canada and be apart from my husband," Howard recalls. "So they sent me the script and I liked it, but I still I didn't want to go. Then my husband looks at the script and saw that it was a



"My husband looks at the script and saw that it was a Roddenberry show and said I was crazy."

Roddenberry show and said I was crazy."

At his urging, Howard met with the producers and their attitude and creativity swayed her.

Before signing on for *Earth: Final Conflict*, Howard had her share of spots on science fiction series. She appeared in such series as *RoboCop*, *Forever Knight* and *The Pretender*, as well as a two-season stint on the *Highlander*.

Howard also had guest-starring roles on such sitcoms as *Suddenly Susan*, *Cybill* and *Wings*. She also took dramatic turns in such TV movies as *Perry Mason: Case of the Shooting Star* and *Janek: Brownstone Murders*.

On the big screen, Howard has appeared in *Moonstruck*, *The War of the Roses* and two *Bounty Hunter* films.

"My next projects will definitely be away from science fiction, at least for the next few years until I get my energy back."

But Howard's main focus for the next few years will be on raising a family — something she says precludes a long-term commitment to series television.

"I'm going to spend the next couple of years nesting and hopefully I'll come out of it ready to work," she said. "I know some actresses can do both, but I just can't figure out how to keep the career going and have a family."

It was a fear that the 16-hour days on the set would take time away from her daughter and her family that led Howard to leave *Earth: Final Conflict*.

But should the series still be in production when she's done nesting, Howard admits she wouldn't mind returning to the series and to Lili Marquette.

Ginger Snaps turns horror on its ear

Empowered teenager or teen turning into monster, that's the dilemma faced by Ginger's friends

The creative forces behind *Ginger Snaps* took great pains to avoid the familiar themes and trappings of horror movies.

So, don't go looking for damsel's in distress or for moonlight transformations in the movie. They're not there.

Ginger Snaps director John Fawcett and screenwriter Karen Walton were determined to not only make a horror movie, but also to make a movie with a bit more substance than the traditional horror fare.

"John was the one who would say, 'Let's do a werewolf movie' and I said, 'Why?'"

"Exactly," was the response.

After kicking around ideas for a bit, the two settled on the foundation for what would become *Ginger Snaps*.

"John and I had been throwing ideas around for awhile ... looking for something intriguing to do," recalls Walton. "John had wanted to

do a project involving teenaged girls and he was interested in continuing his exploration of horror."

Fawcett, whose feature film debut *The Boy's Club* earned five Genie Awards, first plumbed the depths of horror with his short film, *Half Nelson*.

It was that film which created a spark which ignited into *Ginger Snaps*.

"John wanted to elaborate on the themes in *Half Nelson*," explained Walton. "He was interested in themes like the little monster, your body as a betrayer and things like that.

"He said he wanted to find a critter that hasn't been picked apart."

Since vampires were dealt with in *Half Nelson*, they opted to set their sights on the werewolf.

After writing the initial treatment without being immersed in werewolf lore, Walton and Fawcett began pouring over videos of his favourite horror movies — among them *American Werewolf in London* (Walton's favourite), *Dead*

An animal attack brings out the aggressive, confident nature of once-shy Ginger (Katharine Isabelle). Pictured here with a snack.



Ringers (because of the relationship aspect), Heavenly Creatures and Evil Dead.

"I was not a big horror fan at the time, so I had to educate myself on the genre," Walton said. "As a well-read person, I found them kind of frustrating and predictable."

Walton, who compiled an enviable resume in television, was aching to write her first feature film when she and Fawcett were fleshing out ideas.

"My thing was character and intelligent women," she said of her focus. "And defying the pretty low standards for women in cinema."

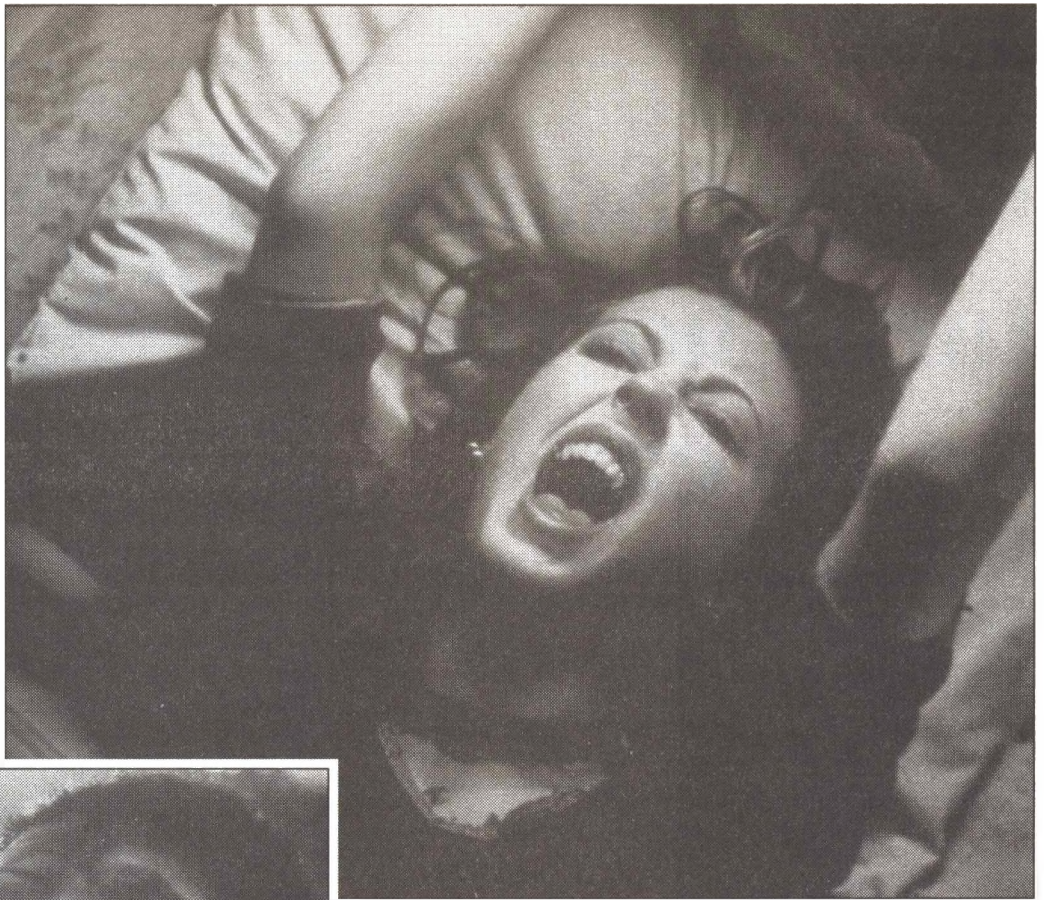
"It was really important to me that the two female leads be respectable people in their own right and who were capable of getting into and out of their own messes without the help of a capable young man."

The other convention of werewolf movies that ended up in the trash heap was the idea the poor schlub could change back and forth depending on the moon.

"John had the idea that it would be one long transformation," Walton said. "The end of the movie would be when the transformation would be complete and that it would act as a virus and the victim would change from inside out."

"This was the big thing. That if you get this, it will be your doom and the problem is that it feels really good, so it's hard to turn off the idea."

Ginger Snaps offers the



Ginger (Katharine Isabelle) goes through the pain that accompanies sprouting a tale and some hair. (Left) the teen's transformation is nearly complete.

tale of two sisters.

Bridgette (Emily Perkins) is a 15 year old who must try to save Ginger (Katharine Isabelle) from an infection that is transforming her into a monster.

Ginger is attacked as the two teens walk through the park. Even though she recovers from the wounds, there is something not quite right

with her. Once shy, Ginger becomes aggressive and has started growing a tail and hair from her scars.

"A good part of the movie is when one character believes she's just becoming an empowered teenager and a popular girl and her sister is convinced she's become a monster."

Walton points out that for the sisters, becoming popular is considered the worst thing conceivable.

"Ginger becomes a lusty, vengeful social creature and very sexual," Walton explains. "Ginger gets to act out all the thoughts us loner girls had in high school."

Adding to the strong women element of the movie is Mimi Rogers (X-Files, Austin Powers and Lost in Space) as the teens' mother, Pamela Fitzgerald.

"I think what distinguishes Ginger Snaps from other horror films is that, on the surface it's a genre film ... a horror film," she says. "But the script is much more intelligent than that, it's much funnier than that."

With Ginger Snaps ready to reach theatres in early spring, Walton says she's ready to try her hand at other members of horror communi-

Continued on page 45



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GODDESS OF LOVE GETS A MAKEOVER ... FERSURE

Alexandra Tydings melds
20th century icons into
one irresistable package



Take a dash of valley girl and a touch of Mae West, a pinch of Marilyn Monroe and the result? Aphrodite, goddess of love.

At least, on *Hercules* that is.

With a big clump of blonde hair and a “fer sure” vocabulary, Alexandra Tydings fits the role of the goddess to a “T.”

“The valley girl thing was already written,” Tydings said of the Aphrodite persona. “I was just as shocked as everyone else by the dialogue.”

Despite some initial misgivings about the ‘tude, Tydings’ fears were assuaged when she met the episode’s

director, Kevin Sorbo.

“Kevin said that a lot of times the actors rework their dialogue,” she recalls. “He said, ‘If you’re uncomfortable with the whole valley thing, then you can change that.’”

“He sent me into a complete panic because I’m not a writer. So, I decided to do what I planned to do in the first place.”

Although she decided against tinkering with the dialogue, she “added a little Mae West and a little Marilyn Monroe and a little Alex,” to flesh out the character.

Tydings decided on the two actresses because she considered them archetypical

Playing a Valley Girl-influenced version of Aphrodite on *Hercules*, was a departure for the actress who, until heading for New Zealand had been better known for her dramatic turns on such shows as *Party of Five* and *Red Shoe Diaries*.

Aphrodite figures.

“Aphrodite is an archetype and Marilyn Monroe is probably the most dominant example of that in recent history,” Tydings explains.

“Mae West, I threw in there just to be comfortable with the wonder bra and the sexuality and being so ballsy and out there.

“At the first read through, Kevin just said ‘It’s fine. Leave it the way it is’.”

Besides being a character more than a little different

from the actress who portrays her, Aphrodite was a departure for Tydings in other ways.

Until that point in her career, Tydings had focused on dramatic roles.

Trained as a dancer, Tydings took dramatic turns in such television productions as *Party of Five* and *Red Shoe Diaries* and on stage in *With a Hammer Well-Aimed*, *Noises Off*, *Live Spelled Backwards*, *Peter Pan*, *Stage Door* and

Isadora.

The bawdy comedic skills needed for Aphrodite were something new for her.

"In other projects, the characters have more of a backstory to them," Tydings explained. "With Aphrodite, I read the myths.

"Which haven't come in handy after the first episode."

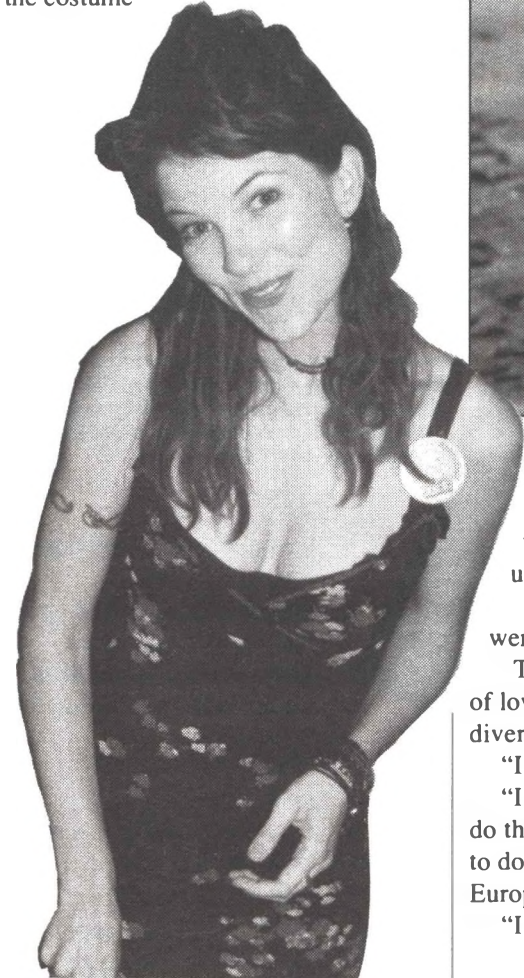
While some actors find joining an established series a daunting task, Tydings said her first exposure to Hercules was pretty easy.

"It's always hard to join an established show and it's always sad to be on location (location in this case being a 13-hour plane ride)," she said. "But Kevin and the crew were so welcoming and warm and it was an amazing time.

"Any fear I had went out the window."

Even though the cast and crew did their best to make the gig enjoyable for Tydings, there were some less-than happy aspects to the role.

"I wasn't crazy about the wig and the costume



it is really cold in the winter, but other than that, it was a ball."

It could have been worse. The weather during her shoot was unseasonably pleasant.

"My request to the weather gods were answered," she joked.

The experience playing the goddess of love did whet her appetite to tackle a diverse range of projects.

"I discovered I'm a ham.

"I want to take every role. I want to do theatre, I want to do comedy, I want to do action movies, I want to do European films.

"I want to do actually everything." ☆

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Actress seems destined to play hags, witches

'Dark and dirty' become a thread in Stansfield's roles on Xena and X-Files

The first thing that strikes you when you meet actress Claire Stansfield is that she is not like her Xena character, Alti.

Stansfield is a tall and attractive, Alti is ... well ... a hag.

It's ironic then that the two roles which have gained her the most notoriety are the ones which are the ones most unlike her.

"They're both similar in that they're both dark and dirty," Stansfield says of Alti and the Jersey Devil. "So, I guess I'm meant to play dark and dirty characters."

Of course, when she started her career it wasn't quite what she had in mind.

Stansfield was born in London, England, and spent much of her youth living in the High Park area of Toronto.

At 17, she returned to England for two years and enrolled at London's Central School of Drama.

After graduating, she headed for California to pursue her craft.

Stansfield made her entrance into films with a part in *The Doors* (look for her near Andy Warhol). Since then she has appeared in such movies as *The Drop Zone* and *Mindripper*.

On television, she had a

recurring role on *Twin Peaks*, as well as guest spots on *Frasier*, *Two of a Kind* and *The Flash* and *Night Heat*.

As an actress, Stansfield has forged a solid resume. But it is her turns as Alti and as the Jersey Devil on the *X-Files* that have gained her the most renown.

On *Xena*, Stansfield's character is an evil shamaness who delights in tormenting Xena and her friends.

Stansfield is set to reprise the role in the series' final season.

Take out the 'old'

When she first auditioned for the series, Stansfield had expectations of a different role.

"When I first auditioned, I thought they wanted me for the part of the Queen of the Amazons and not the old hag," she recalls. "But I took the part anyway."

"I asked them to take the 'old' part out, but they could leave the evil hag part in."

Even though the character wasn't created specifically for her, Stansfield was given the opportunity to put her stamp on Alti early in the process.

Before filming began,



Photo courtesy of USA Studios

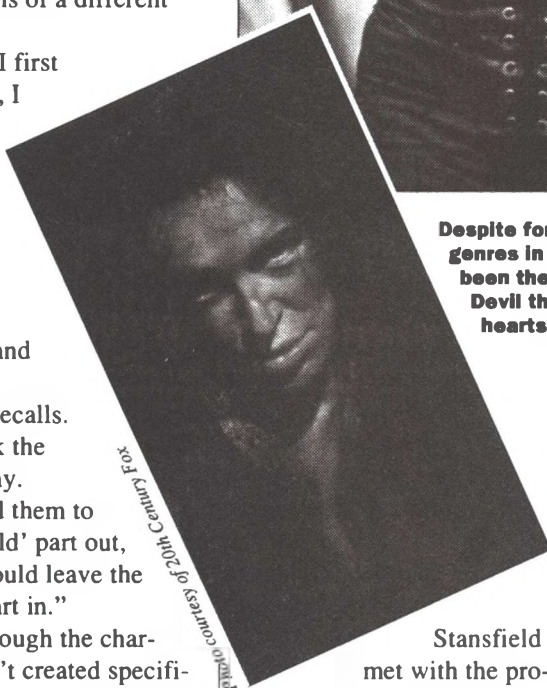


Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox

Despite forging a formidable resume in other genres in both movies and television, it has been the characters of Alti and the Jersey Devil that have etched Stansfield into the hearts of sci-fi fans.

the mini-series, *Merlin* and was enamoured with Miranda Richardson's performance as the Queen. Stansfield especially liked the voice Richardson used in the role.

"So, I borrowed it," Stansfield explained.

It was a wise decision. Many of the creative people behind *Xena* had seen the NBC series and grasped on the idea of borrowing from

Stansfield met with the producers and writers to discuss the character and her place in the series.

Just before she landed the role, Stansfield had watched

the character to flesh out Altı.

“They said, ‘That’s exactly what we want ... something that’s very scary and that’s a little out there,’” she recalls.

Joining show with such a huge fan following was a little scary for the actress.

“The show was totally established and I was very intimidated. There I was with this big character,” Stansfield recalls. “It was like this big hole, you just had to jump into it and not think about it.”

But she credits Lucy Lawless with pulling her aside and making the effort to bringing the shamaness to life a little easier.

“She was totally supportive and she came up to me after rehearsals and she said ‘Claire, just be her.’

“It was the best advice. She was right. I’ll just be her only with the blood and the horns and all the extras.”

The character proved a pleasant change-of-pace for an actress who had carved a

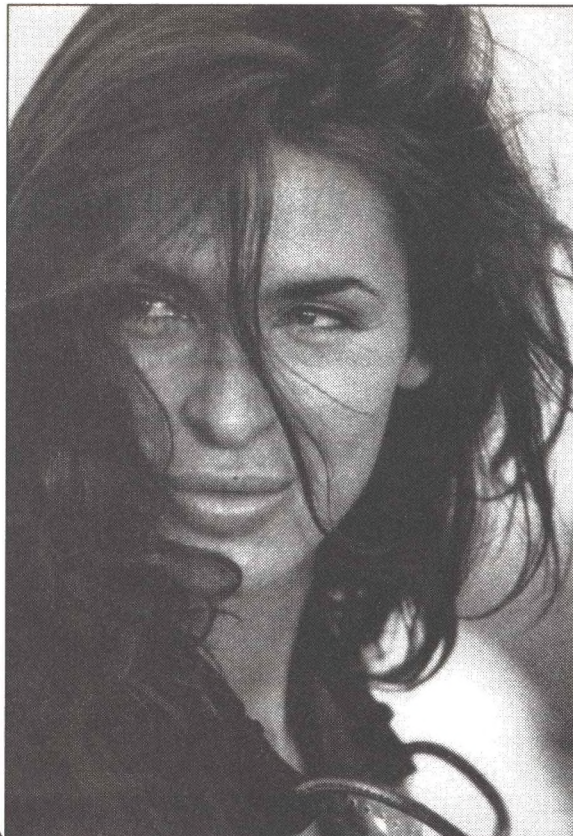
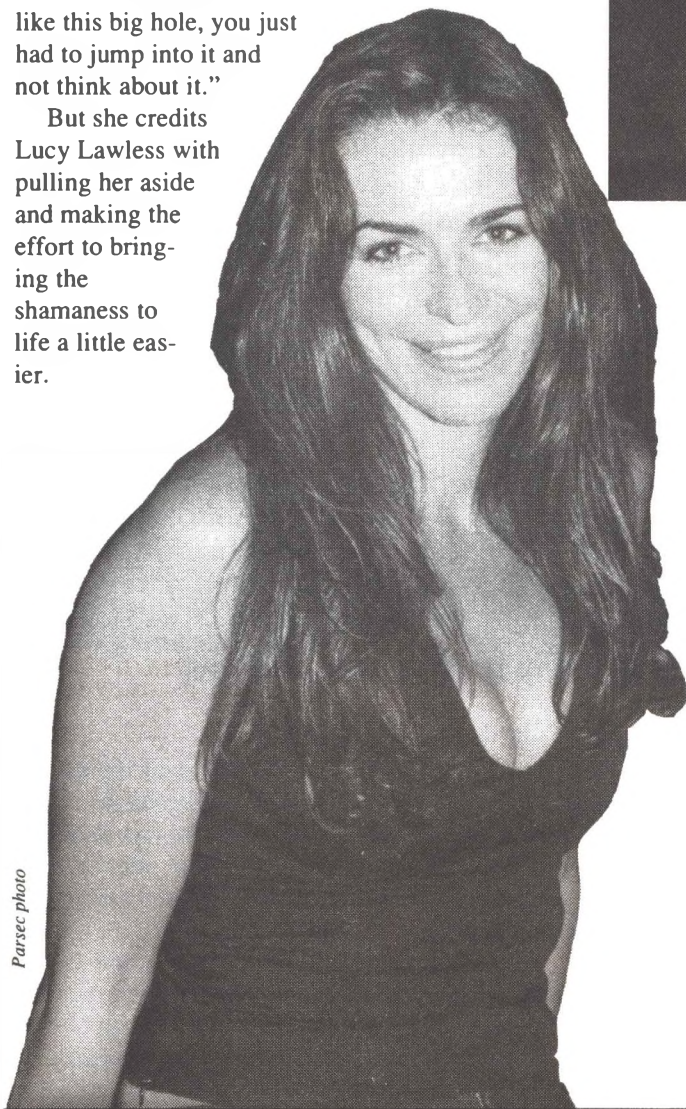


Photo courtesy of Claire Stansfield

“It is a beautiful place and Lucy Lawless is a wonderful woman to work with and there’s the whole fantasy thing ... I usually play lawyers and common characters like that. That’s what set it apart.”

— Claire Stansfield on the virtues of playing on Xena



Parsec photo

niche playing lawyers and doctors.

If Stansfield carries some disappointment it is with Altı’s backstory — there isn’t any.

“I would have liked to brought out her past and the reason why she was so evil,” Stansfield said. “But there never really was a reason.”

The actress says she has the reason — but it remains Stansfield’s property for now.

Being on a top-rated show wasn’t Stansfield’s first consideration when she tackled the role of the Jersey Devil on the X-Files.

At the time, the series was still being shot in Vancouver and the job was a chance to visit her mother.

The legend of the Jersey Devil follows the same lines as the Yeti and Sasquatch.

Stansfield’s character appears to be a human who has reverted to the most basic of animalistic instincts, a kind of carnivorous neanderthal.

In the episode, a cannibalized human body is discovered in New Jersey State Park, Mulder and Scully journey to Atlantic City in search of what may be a missing link in human evolution and Mulder believes the Jersey Devil might be that link.

“I had no idea that I was joining such a cult phenomena and that I would have all these Jersey Devil fans,” she notes. “Now, there’s even Jersey Devil card.”

Catch Xena on Space:

What’ coming up? Visit www.parsec.on.ca and find out

Bellisario's imaginative leaps

As a producer and writer, Donald P. Bellisario has helped create some memorable series

**By
A. Jaye Williams**

Gene Roddenberry, George Lucas, Chris Carter and Joss Whedon may be familiar to today's fans of science fiction and fantasy. But what about Donald P. Bellisario.

Bellisario, who has created and worked on some of the best television shows ever produced, should be remembered with the other names.

Bellisario has worked in television for more than 20 years. He's had a number of hit shows — and only a few misses. But even some of his misses were hits.

Remember the one-season gem *Tales of the Gold Monkey*? That series was a wonderful adventure show which started Stephen Collins, Roddy McDowall and a certain one-eyed Jack Russell Terrier.

Bellisario's most-noted shows also happen to be his most successful: *Magnum PI* which ran from 1980-1988, *Quantum Leap* which ran from 1989-1994 and *J.A.G.* which has reached its sixth season.

Of course, there was also *Battlestar Galactica*, *Airwolf* and *Baa Baa Blacksheep* ... to

name a few others.

Bellisario has not only served as writer and director for his three best-known series, but he has also acted as executive producer — thus shouldering a vast amount of responsibility.

"The executive producer is responsible for setting the tone of the show, the stories, the characters, the casting, picking the directors, the scripts," Bellisario explains. "He's the overall supervisor of the show."

The majority of the shows which Bellisario has worked on had at least one common ingredient: the military.

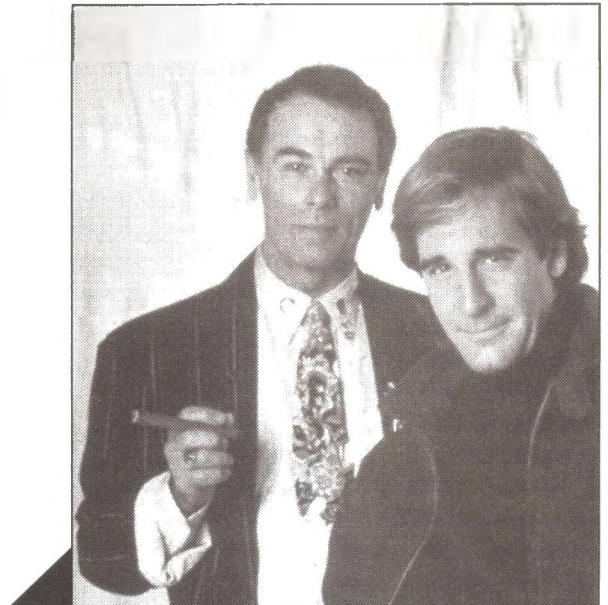
Even his science fiction programs shared that trait.

In *Quantum Leap*, Sam Beckett's loyal and oftentimes acerbic friend, Al Calavicci, was an admiral, and was seen on occasion in his dress whites.

As well, viewers will remember that Sam's brother was one of the casualties of the Vietnam War.

In *Battlestar Galactica*, the setting was militaristic with battleships in space and main characters — Apollo and Starbuck — who were warriors.

Bellisario was born in Cokeburg, Pa., and earned a journalism degree from Penn State University.



People-oriented? Quantum Leap had heart. Galactica had Cyloons and explosions

Photos courtesy of Space: The Imagination Station

It was in 1961 when he began honing his writing and filmmaking skills.

"I had been an advertising creative director and filmmaker for a number of years and I started off teaching myself.

"I was working for a small advertising agency. They were doing simple slide commercials. Then one day I borrowed a camera, shot my first commercial and won an award.

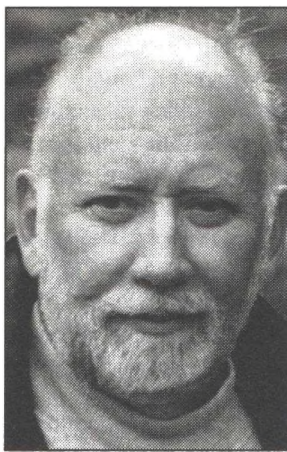
"That's what got me start-

ed."

When he made the move from Pennsylvania to Hollywood, he was already a director, writer, editor and producer — but all in commercials.

"So, I wrote scripts ... somebody read them, somebody said I was a good writer. Somebody asked, 'Have you ever thought about writing for television?'

"Baa Baa Blacksheep was on the air at the time and I said I was a former marine



“I would love to do a Quantum Leap movie.”

ward for him, but was a difficult sell to the networks.

“I was looking to do a show that was an anthology and the networks do not like anthologies. They hate them.

“And so I was trying to think of how I could do an anthology ... telling a different story every week. And Quantum Leap was an easy way to do it.

“The easiest was to do an anthology is with a single character who the audience invests in, or in the case of Quantum leap, two.”

When asked which episodes were his favourite, Bellisario doesn't back down an inch.

“The pilot. I loved the pilot. I loved the first time he leapt into a woman, the episode we did in which he leapt into a black man ... the Driving Miss Daisy episode.”

The casting of Scott Bakula and Dean Stockwell was another reason for the success of Quantum Leap.

Ironically, Bellisario had never seen Bakula prior to his reading for the part, but Bellisario had been a long-time fan of Stockwell's.

“Scott came in and read for the part and he just nailed it. He became Sam right before my eyes. So casting him was easy,” Bellisario recalls.

“And Dean had been a favourite actor of mine for years and when he

decided to do the part, it was a no-brainer.”

Unfortunately, Quantum Leap came to a premature end, leaving many more adventures and stories left to tell.

Of the episodes that Bellisario would have liked to have done, but couldn't, would have brought together two of his creations.

“I would have liked to have leapt Sam into Magnum.”

But was Tom Selleck interested?

“No. That's why I couldn't do it. He wouldn't consent.”

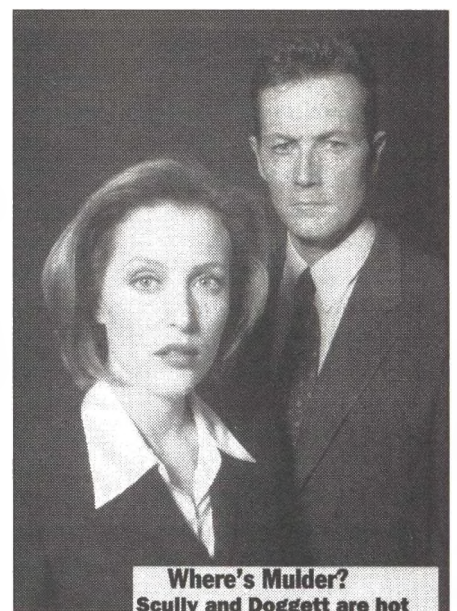
With regards to a return of Quantum Leap, Bellisario sounded pessimistic, but would relish the opportunity to do it.

“I would love to do a Quantum Leap movie. So far, there's been no interest on the part of Universal which owns the rights to do it,” explains Bellisario. “Scott would love to do it. Dean would love to do it and I would love to do it.

“I've been to Universal two or three times. Every time they have a change in management, I go in and it's the same story. No ... the same for Magnum.”

Having been in television for more than 20 years, Bellisario has developed a signature style for his shows.

What makes a Bellisario show stand out from other shows is the importance he places on



Where's Mulder?
Scully and Doggett are hot on the trail of the missing FBI agent during a four-episode arc in February.

Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox

TV sweeps period brings intense search for Mulder

A new agent joins the hunt for the missing Mulder, who was apparently abducted by aliens at the conclusion of last season.

FBI Agent Monica Reyes, played by guest star Annabeth Gish, is brought onto the case by Agent John Doggett to add her expertise to the mysterious Mulder X-File.

The series will feature a case Mulder had kept secret from Scully that may add clues to his unexplained disappearance. In *Medusat*, Scully learns of a flesh-eating life form terrorizing the Boston subway system.

Other episodes in airing for the first time include: *The Gift*, *This Is Not Happening* (written by series' creator Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz), and an untitled episode in which Scully's pregnancy may (or may not) be revealed to her fellow agent.

In the latter, Scully and Doggett are called in to investigate reports of alien impregnations of human subjects. As they discover more disturbing clues, Scully is forced to question whether she should reveal the secret of her pregnancy to Doggett. Clues to the identity of who — or what — the father of Scully's baby may be are revealed.

Three of the new episodes will feature appearances by David Duchovny.

and pilot. So I went in and pitched them a story, brought it back a week later and they went nuts for it.”

However, Bellisario emphasizes that all this didn't happen over night.

“I was about 40 years old before I shifted to television. I was always a writer and a voracious reader. I loved film.

“When television came along, I was very, very young and I like making them. I liked telling stories.”

Quantum Leap is a show which Bellisario continues to look back on with great fondness and admiration.

“Quantum Leap was a people-oriented show with a lot of heart in it and a lot of stories that were socially important,” he explains.

When compared to *Battlestar Galactica*, in which he was supervising producer and sometimes the writer during its first season, Bellisario explains, “*Battlestar Galactica* had some of that, but not a lot.

“*Galactica* was more action Cylons, spaceships and explosions.”

The rationale for Quantum Leap, Bellisario explains, was straightfor-

quality. He has earned an Edgar Allen Poe Award for his writing on *Magnum PI* and *Quantum Leap* was nominated four times for an Emmy for Best Drama over the show's run.

Bellisario's approach to creating a show is simple: "Most important is you better love it yourself. You better write for yourself and not anybody else."

But he quickly adds that technically, "it's easier to write an interesting pilot; it's much more difficult to make an interesting series, because a pilot is a one-shot. A series ... you have to keep people interested every week. And so, to make a pilot that has the elements and the characters that will allow it to have the longevity through season after season ... that's difficult."

The key elements that make a Donald P. Bellisario production unique is his basic philosophy of how to entertain the audience.

"There are a couple of things: always have an interesting twist in a show — a very interesting twist.; good production, good acting and good filmmaking."

The unexpected twist ending has always been an element in Bellisario's shows.

Perhaps, that approach to story-telling generated an interest in science fiction for him as well.

With the near-limitless potential of the science fiction and fantasy genre, unexpected twists and turns are often utilized successfully in order to tell the story and explore the characters in these genres — often more successfully in straight-fic-

tion settings.

Though he's done only one science fiction show completely on his own, Bellisario admits that, "I like to touch on mysticism. I think it's interesting."

He adds with a soft chuckle, "However, I'm not a mystical person at all. I mean people come to me with the stories .. and I've even had experiences myself that were sometimes difficult to explain, but I don't find myself really believing it very much

"I'm pretty level-headed when it comes to ghosts and spirits, but I like playing around with the genre."

Even his no-science fiction series, such as *Magnum PI* and *J.A.G.*, have explored aspects of the supernatural.

Though a strong sense of realism pervades all of

Bellisario's work, he still reaches further than most other writers and producers.

He's attended *Quantum Leap* conventions and in 1999 he attended the first *J.A.G.* convention.

Down the road, Bellisario plans on developing a feature film, tentatively called *Dreamland*. Though originally, he would have preferred to do it as a series, he found that the networks held no interest in telling the story that way. But, "They think it would make a good feature."

And he adds that *Quantum Leap* fans will love it.

He has another untitled project in the works too.

"The untitled project has more spiritualism to it or just amazement of the human mind, is what it's really about."

☆

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Passionate voice, sensitive issues

From Terror Train to The 6th Day, director Roger Spottiswoode takes audiences on a wild ride

It was an opportunity director Roger Spottiswoode couldn't pass up.

The Sixth Day provided the Ottawa-born director a chance to tackle issues such as cloning and genetic engineering and to assist Arnold Schwarzenegger in his process of remaking himself as an actor.

"Arnold is a person who has reinvented himself several times before and is in the process of reinventing himself again," Spottiswoode said during a recent interview. "He is still doing a few more action films, but he obviously wants to be something else as well.

"He wants to start making a change."

Schwarzenegger's scenes with Robert Duval and Tony Goldwyn on the set, according to Spottiswoode, helped

the action-hero icon on his quest to become more of an actor.

For his part, Spottiswoode said Schwarzenegger was given a role that was closer to "an everyman than one's he's played before and he made it work.

"He's always going to be Arnold, but he really created a character and had fun with it."

The movie's title is a reference to the biblical passage in Genesis relating to when God created man.

In the movie, Schwarzenegger's character, Adam Gibson, comes home one night to discover that his life has been stolen by his clone.

Gibson is chased by thugs, who have been sent to destroy him because the corporation they work for cloned the wrong man. Making defeating the villains more difficult is the fact that if they are killed, they can be cloned over and over again.

"Embedded in the film are a lot of really interesting issues and they are so much a part of the story. These issues

are all things that are right on our horizon and they are getting closer.

"And the way they are going to present themselves is going to become clearer and clearer."

Over the course of the movie, Schwarzenegger's character is transformed from someone who is opposed to cloning to one who comes to accept that cloning is not necessarily evil — a stance which the director also accepts.

In the movie, Spottiswoode found his voice in the persona of villain Michael Drucker played by Goldwyn.

Drucker is one of the richest men in the world and intends to use the cloning and genetic engineering technology for his own ends.

"In the end, the movie reflects what I believe," Spottiswoode said. "I believe almost everything the villain says except a couple of things which were really terrible.

"But a lot of what he has to say is very compelling and rationale."

The Sixth Day is a depar-

ture for the director — at least when it comes to big-budget movies.

Since directing his first feature film, the teen slasher classic Terror Train, in 1980, Spottiswoode has been involved in some of the most popular movies of the past two decades and has worked with many of the top actors in the industry.

Besides such action/adventure thrillers as Tomorrow Never Dies, Spottiswoode co-wrote the screenplay for 48 Hours and directed The Pursuit of D.B. Cooper, The Best of Times, Turner & Hooch, Air America and Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot.

Such mainstream offerings also are a departure from Spottiswoode's film lineage.

His father theoretician Raymond Spottiswoode came to Canada during the Second World War and made war-effort films for the precursor of the National Film Board.

NEXT TIME OUT

A galaxy worth of Andromeda interviews

Beastmaster's Jackson Raine, Marjean Holden

Lexx's Ellen Darbo, Lex Giggeroff

Shock Rocket's Stuart Immomen

Electropolis's Dean Motter

Authors: Edo van Belkom

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After Roger was born the family returned to England.

His father's work included producing a number of documentaries, as well as authoring texts on filmmaking. It was a family life that pretty much preordained Spottiswoode to a life in the Fine Arts.

"I grew up in a home where documentaries were played all the time," Spottiswoode recalls. "I grew up on the edge of the documentary movement so film was about social change. It had to have a social value to it."

Spottiswoode began his film career at 19 in the editing room on the 1966 comedy *Georgy Girl*. The experience led to further editing assignments on documentary and television projects over the next few years.

But it was his father's work that led to his big break in the business.

Producer Daniel Melnick had read the elder Spottiswoode's 1956 how-to text book, *Film and its Techniques*, which had a following in the film industry during the '50s and '60s. Melnick decided to hire the young film editor.

In 1971, Melnick gave Spottiswoode a job as senior editor on Sam Peckinpah's film, *Straw Dogs*.

During the next three years, Spottiswoode continued his association with the legendary director on *The Getaway* and *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. He also edited *The Gambler* and *Hard Times*.

The lessons Spottiswoode learned during those three years are still evident more than two decades later.

"Sam made passionate, strong violent films that were always very ethical," he said.

"He never did anything that was just about flash or style. Sam made films that were close to his heart. I think his heart was a painful and tortured place, but he was being agonizingly truthful."

His time with Peckinpah not only influenced the way Spottiswoode shoots and edits films, but it also shaped his philosophy regarding violence on the

screen.

"There was no gratuitous violence in Sam's movies. They were always about character and story."

He dismisses the one exception in his body of work, *Terror Train* — where a killer stalks Jamie Lee Curtis her classmates on a train of college partyers — as simply a chance to break into the business and likely his only horror film.

"I think the violence has become ridiculous," he said.

Even though the younger Spottiswoode has tackled such action-adventure fare as *Tomorrow Never Dies* and co-wrote the screenplay for *48 Hours*, his sensibilities lay elsewhere.

"The larger films, I hope, will be fun to make and that I'll find something interesting in them," Spottiswoode explained. "But you do the larger films so that you can do the smaller films."

"There are stories that I've had and developed for years and often I spend a lot of my own money and money from the big pictures to get them told."

Spottiswoode's paycheck from *The Sixth Day* will fund his next project, *The Spire*, based on the William Golding novel.

Spottiswoode has just begun to cast the project, which is scheduled to begin filming in England and France next year.

In his smaller films, Spottiswoode has tackled such issues as AIDS — *And The Band Played On*, which won an Emmy for Outstanding Made-For-Television Movie in 1994. He also tackled Nicaragua's Sandinista regime in *Under Fire*. Earlier this year, Spottiswoode revisited Nicaragua in his tele-film, *Noreiga*.

"I have another story I want to make, but that could be three years down the road," he said. "They are hard to get going, they're rarely commercial, they won't make its money back."

"Often, I tell investors they're going to lose their shirts."

"Sam made passionate, strong violent films that were always very ethical."

— Roger Spottiswoode
on the legendary director
Sam Peckinpah



Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox

Fox presents heroes for the millennium

He's Union City's greatest wrestler. He is a champion. He is every bit a gentleman. He is Lobo Fuerte, the Luchador.

He is also the centre of attention on Los Luchadores.

When danger calls, Lobo and his sidekicks Turbine and Maria Valentine are always ready to take on the forces of evil and send them back to oblivion as the Los Luchadores. The series promises to deliver unique heroes, groovy gadgets, muscle cars and choppers, great music and a wide array of outrageous characters — at least that's what the press clippings say.

The series also features a crime boss who has been best described as a "deranged chihuahua."

One episode will feature Canadian actor Andrew Jackson (see page 20) as fight promoter Gniknod (Don King spelled backwards) — sporting the signature vertical hair and a single eye in his forehead.

"I was a toon!" Jackson says of the role and the accompanying prosthetics. "I was very in keep with the Batman and Robin-style villain."

Gniknod beams up Lobo to his wrestling ring for the *Battle of the Constellation*.

In the U.S., Los Luchadores airs on the Fox Kids Network. Fox has ordered up 13 episodes of the live-action show, produced by Luchadores Productions, Shavick Entertainment and Fox Family Properties.

For the latest on Los Luchadores visit www.foxkids.com



Lack of TV deal keeps Privateers at bay

To make her brainchild *The Privateers* a reality, Debra Warner gathered a formidable creative team.

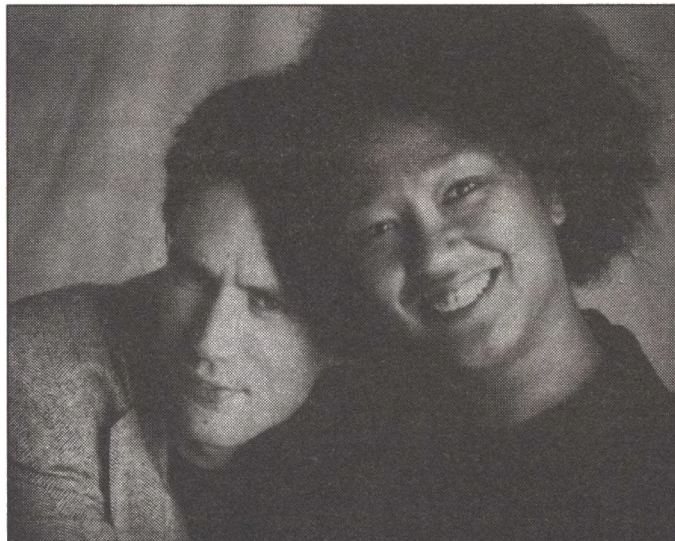
Warner, who developed the story from a unsuccessful spec script for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, has tapped the talents of her writer-artist husband, Jon Cunningham, director Dave Duncan (*Space, Above and Beyond*), and special effects geniuses such as Bob Chapin (who worked on the *Matrix*) and Ron Moore (former executive producer on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*).

All have either lent their expertise or offered advice to the fledgling production company.

The *Privateers* series centres on a group of pirates who travel among space stations and spaceports, engaged in the sort of commerce which keeps many legal governments secure because people know they can get what they need from less acceptable sources.

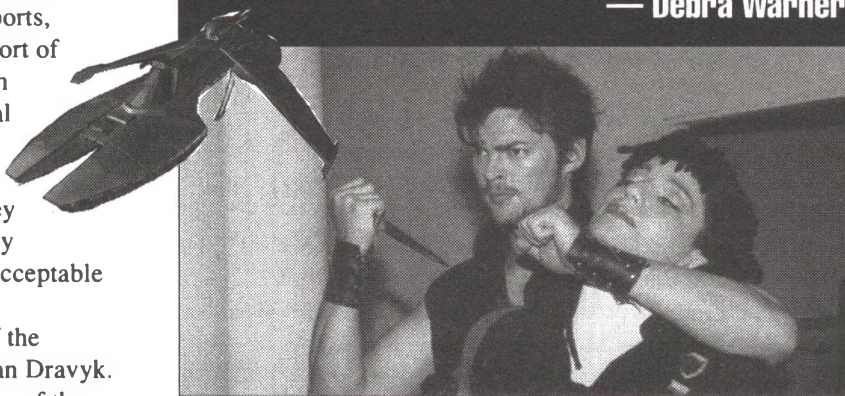
The leader of the *Privateers* is Aran Dravyk. Dravyk is captain of the *Privateer Rapier* and the only son of the rulers of Danoo. His family was murdered in a scheme engineered by archenemy Lord Rizlu, who runs his own criminal empire from his protected position as an ambassador.

Despite her affection for *Star Trek*, Warner says *The Privateers* will not be influ-



“We wanted to do something that was different. We wanted to do something where things didn’t run so smoothly.”

— Debra Warner



enced by the series.

“We wanted to do something that was different,” she says. “We wanted to do something where things didn’t run so smoothly.”

Also marking the difference between the two series will be the fact that characters will have relationships.

“*Voyager* and *Next*:

are going to be major relationships.”

But unlike *Lexx*, the relationships (and the heat they provide) will not be the focal point of the series, they will just be facets of the characters.

Debra Warner and Jon Cunningham have pulled together a dedicated cast and crew to make *The Privateers* a reality. Below, a scene from the trailer in which Aran Dravyk barbers with the life of Commander El-Minya.

So far, the troupe has filmed a 25-minute trailer for the series.

The trailer, which has been getting good reviews from fans, has been making the rounds on the convention circuit during the past year.

The fan reaction has also allowed Warner and Cunningham to refine the series’ pilot episode and adjust some scenes because of reactions and comments they have received.

Developing *The Privateers* was relatively easy compared to the challenge of getting the series on the air.

While Warner and her creative team were busy fine-tuning the series, a U.S. cable network and a major distributor expressed some interest in handling *The Privateers* once it was ready.

As a result, the producers put the syndication market on the backburner. It was a

Generation, to an extent, ignored the fact that they had these attractive beings in close quarters and nothing was going on,” Warner explained with a laugh. “That always seemed so unrealistic.

“So there are going to be some healthy attitudes toward the sexes and there

Continued on page 94

Artist choreographed mutant mayhem

Fill-in gig allowed Ron Hobbs a chance to bring out X-Men's butt-kicking best

By James Waley

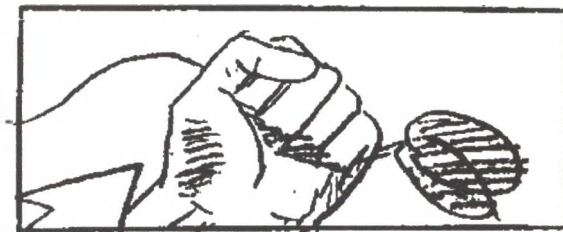
At around the age of 13 Ron Hobbs' main ambition was to one day draw Spider-Man.

This dream eventually led him to attend a cartooning course at the renowned Sheridan College, but in time his mainstream comic interests waned. For a while he pursued work in the independent comics field producing the Snake, a film-noirish pulp adventure written and published by another Toronto-based creator Dave Darrigo (best known for his highly acclaimed Wordsmith comic series).

Like many other illustrators/graphic artists Hobbs had artwork published in various newspapers and magazines and even had brief stints doing assembly and animation work.

It was, however, during the late '80s and early '90s that he broke into the storyboard field when he landed his first work on a direct-to-video film, No Contest, starring Shannon Tweed, Andrew Dice Clay and the late John Colicos.

"As bad movies go this one had no contest," Hobbs joked. But this was the begin-



LOGAN GRABS TAGS MID-AIR



"THESE ARE MINE"

"This was the first time I'd ever done a storyboard where I was given action figures to work from. Most of the time, of course, I'm just drawing from my head."

— Ron Hobbs

ning of his career in the field.

While storyboard work bore a strong relationship to his previous comic book artwork Hobbs describes his knowledge of the field as self-taught — through a lifetime love of movies and studying various books.

Comics had, though, been his first love and the first training ground for his artwork. Now he had the opportunity to combine two fields he thoroughly enjoyed,

movies and comics, and the work began to pour in. TV work and commercials eventually led to more movies which are now the mainstay of his current storyboard works.

Among those films are the following: Booty Call, Bait, The Corrupter, Half-Baked, Frequency, Urban Legend 2 and the upcoming All That

Glitters with Mariah Carey and Cletis Tout with Richard Dreyfuss.

The X-Men movie was, to say the least, a dream assignment, but it was one that almost didn't happen for Hobbs.

Busy with other work when the film went into production in Toronto, Hobbs called the studio partway

The scene you'll never see...

through the shoot on the off chance that work might be available.

"The person who took my call said my name was familiar to the crew and requested more information. I faxed over my resume and waited for a call back."

He didn't wait long.

The film's production co-ordinator made a brief call the next day demanding to know who told Hobbs that they needed a storyboard artist.

"I could see, right away, there was a suspicious mind-set," Hobbs observed, "They were very worried about security and how information leaked out."

He assured them that he had not received any inside information on the film, but had simply called out of professional curiosity.

He was given an appointment to meet the second unit director, Conrad Palmsano, to discuss the possibility of storyboard work on the movie.

Hobbs describes Palmsano as a former stuntman turned stunt co-ordinator turned second unit director.

They sat down and quickly Palmsano requested "OK, I want you to draw Sabretooth" which Hobbs proceeded to do.

That was followed by "OK, draw Wolverine."

And another quick pencil rendering by Hobbs.

Pleased with the

results Palmsano then announced, "OK, I guess you're hired" and introduced Hobbs to the other artists in the studio.

The weekend flashed by in a blur as Hobbs looked forward to joining the production of the most highly anticipated movie based on a comic series since Batman.

Early on Monday morning Hobbs was given his assignment and it was a critical scene in the film — the climactic fight between Wolverine and Sabretooth on top of the Statue of Liberty.

The scene had been previously drawn by head storyboard artist Mike Ploog who had been called away unexpectedly. Major script changes had been made to the scene after Ploog's work and new storyboards had to be drawn. Hobbs soon learned, quite clearly, that the movie had been rescripted and restoryboarded many times for a few years.

The room Hobbs worked in at the chilly warehouse studio had a large staff of artists on hand and the walls covered with many previous storyboard attempts.

"This was the first time I'd ever done a storyboard where I was given action figures to work from," Hobbs remarked. "Most of the time, of course, I'm just drawing from my head."

It was, however, an excellent way for the director to communicate what he wanted. They would position their Sabretooth and Wolverine figures atop a structure similar to the statue's head.

There would be a couple more firsts for Hobbs on this film. He had to sketch stuntmen in rehearsal and on the set as they performed their manoeuvres.

The troop was an Asian group that once had Jackie Chan as a member and had previously worked on *The Matrix*. Stunt performers would execute flips and moves of extreme precision with kicks sometimes ending up inches from his face as Hobbs sketched away.

This was also the first time that Hobbs had done all of his storyboard work for a film on the studio premises rather than working out of his own studio. This was done due to the constant security concerns regarding the film — an aspect of this movie that would rear its head even more for Hobbs further down the road.

Hobbs did a month's worth of work on the film as he completed his scenes,



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And one you did



LOGAN CLAWS IN

(Top) a scene which has Sabretooth take a chomp out of Wolverine's neck never made the final cut. (Below) Hobbs' rendition of the climactic scene atop the Statue of Liberty.

splicing some into the original boards when possible, and even working on a few scenes that would later hit the cutting room floor (one in which Sabretooth gives Wolverine a bite on the neck as if he's gone vampire).

He also did some preliminary work on the interior scenes at the Statue of Liberty when Mystique and Wolverine battle, but these would later see a major re-writing by the film's principal director, Bryan Singer.

It would be Ploog, on his return to the production, who would later complete this sequence.

But despite the work, if you watch the credits, you won't see Hobbs' name.

Hobbs' explains that considering the large number of storyboard artists on the film they were well within their rights to be selective about credits and that perhaps there had been another ... complication?

"After I finished the job, I got a call a month later from the executive producer on the film saying there was a problem with my storyboards," Hobbs recalls.

Assuming it was something they wanted redrawn he was taken aback when informed of the fact that a copy of his boards had turned up for sale on eBay.

There had been a non-disclosure section in his contract (as there were for all participants in this production) that stated all the dire legal consequences that would result if he so much as talked about his work on the film before it was released ... and he hadn't.

As it turned out Hobbs wasn't even online at the time and the producer agreed that it was unlikely that he could be a suspect in this breach. Hobbs got a look at the eBay listing on a friend's computer just prior to the studio having

it yanked before a final bid could be received.

An eBay listing for X-Men storyboards did not surprise Hobbs.

"They were very proud of their security on the X-Men, but I also know that I walked by our studio room one day and I saw a stack of copies of my boards on the table that anyone could have stolen."

He continues, "So, it was not as airtight security as they would have thought."

While the likelihood of Hobbs' X-Men storyboards turning up on the deluxe DVD package was remote, considering the number of artists involved on the film, this was not the case on another film he'd worked on.

He was thrilled to learn that the disc for Frequency made extensive use of his artwork in their list of extras offered.

"I'm looking forward to seeing it, I've been promised a copy of the DVD ... certainly it's good promotion ... down in L.A. they'll see my drawings, they'll see me associated with the movie, and my name will be that much further known in the community — so it's definitely a bit of an honour!i.

While Hobbs doesn't believe he's yet in a position to pick and choose the films he works on his preference are those featuring special effects, science fiction elements or action/adventure.

These include more of the type of stuff he's used to drawing and are more interesting to him than simply "talking heads, people walking around or crowd scenes."

That's clear from an offhand remark he makes about one of his top choices of movie scenes to draw, "I'd rather just draw a couple guys punching each other out."

ty.

"I'll definitely work in the genre again," Walton said, noting she has a couple of monsters in mind. "It's useful to some people to have women writing horror.

"We're scarce."

It took three years to go from the genesis of the idea to the start of shooting in Scarborough, Brampton and Etobicoke.

The chief reason for the long development was the decision on the part of Fawcett, Walton and producers Steve Hoban and Kareen Lee Hall decided to develop the film themselves rather than seek studio backing.

This meant that they worked on other projects to earn a living while they brought life to Ginger Snaps.

"We took our time and we had a pact that we'd continue to work on it until it was the movie we really wanted to make before we took it out into the world."

Even with investors now on board, Ginger Snaps remains very much an independent film.

Since the project had matured during latter half of the '90s, the investors who came on board were people who shared the vision of the producers and creators and refrained from trying to tinker with the movie.

"I think because we were really clear with what we trying to do and the script had matured and was servicing our vision really well, we didn't attract the kind of people who didn't want to do it," Walton explains.

"Canadian films operate quite differently than studio films in America."

This difference, Walton says, meant the difference between having the movie made and it remaining just words on paper — a reality, she says, which was affirmed by American producers during conversations after the movie was unveiled at the Toronto International Film Festival.

"Their standards and practices are very different. Here, it's very much an independent filmmaker's forum.

Ginger Snaps is scheduled for a theatrical release in early spring.

DarkTales unveils chapbook

DarkTales Publications has announced the release of the chapbook novellas, *Natural Selection* by Weston Ochse and of *DeadFellas* by David Whitman, co-authors of *Scary Rednecks and Other Inbred Horrors*

Natural Selection features *Survival of the Fittest* a tale of a bouncer at a small

bar along the coast of Florida who finds love, first in the form of a woman who begs to be abused, then within the alien mind of a saviour known only as Bastion.

Scary Rednecks and Other Inbred Horrors features 23 tales of horror ranging from dark comedic redneck farces to traditional supernatural southern Gothic.

For more information, visit <http://www.darktales.com/current2.htm>



First Wave cards set for later this year

Rittenhouse Archives has produced the first-ever trading cards based on First Wave which are available for purchase at www.scifihobby.com.

The six-card set features Sebastian Spence as Cade Foster, along with some of the show's other stars.

Each card is foil stamped in gold, and the set is a limited edition of 2,001.

More First Wave cards are expected later in the year, with autographs of several of the show's stars and guest stars.

Dragonball Z finally hits North America

Artbox Entertainment presents the Original Japanese Hero Collection Series II cards.

This new series brings collectors cards previously available only in Japan.

The set features 72 standard cards including pin-ups of popular characters, anime episode scenes and custom artwork. In addition, the set has 12 special holo cards, 16 silver-etched cards, and three rare double gold sticker cards. There are 10 cards per pack. 24 packs per box.

Rittenhouse takes advance orders for Xena

Rittenhouse Archives has now made available for sale its upcoming Xena: Warrior Princess, Seasons 4 and 5 Trading Cards. Orders can be placed online at www.scifihobby.com. The series will be released on March 28.

The series will include randomly inserted autograph cards signed by Lucy Lawless (Xena), Ted Raimi (Joxer), Kevin Smith (Ares), Jennifer Sky (Amarice) and Claire Stansfield (Alti).

The base set consists of 72 cards, and there will also be several levels of bonus cards, including Xena Enemies, Xena Allies and Gabrielle: The Battling Bard.

Inkworks helps X-Files fans left hanging for five seasons

By
Connor

X-Files fans have a lot of catching up to do when it comes to collectible cards.

Even though the series has reached its eighth season, it's been a while since collectors have seen new cards to commemorate the show. Inkworks aims to end that drought.

In March, the Raleigh, N.C., company will be releasing a 90-card set focusing on the X-Files' fourth and fifth seasons. Then in October, seasons six and seven will be the centre of attention, while season eight takes centre stage in 2002.

"This is a program where we are basically catching the collectors up to date," said executive vice-president Martha Modlin.

"The product licensing had stopped at season three and the movie, so people who wanted to finish their collections have been left waiting for someone to step in and catch them up."

Modlin points out that Inkworks aims to better the cards that covered the early days of the series.

The two X-Files sets scheduled for this year will be an intense experience for collectors.

In order to fit two seasons into the 90-card set, Inkworks personnel have



Box set
Seasons four and five will be the focus of Inkworks' March release.

crammed more information, including episodic summaries, behind-the-scenes notes, mythologies and paranormal creatures.

The set features an intricate design which includes multiple images for the episodic cards.

"We've tried to develop a set that has as many levels and intrigue as the show itself," said Modlin.

One of the special features of the March release is the inclusion of a six-card subset that looks as if the mysterious black oily substance from the series is actually on the cards.

The series also includes Inkworks' trademark autograph cards.

The X-Files seasons four and five set features a series of five autograph cards

— Chris Carter, Bruce Harwood, Jerry Hardin, Laurie Holden and Brendan Belser.

Plus, there is a three-card foil puzzle entitled "I want to believe."

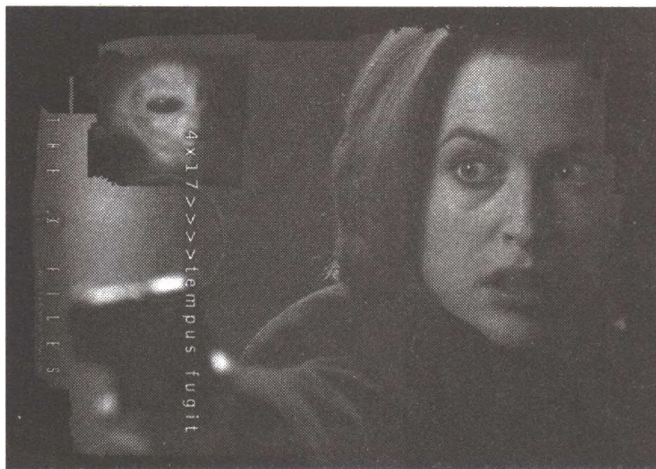
And if you want something special to keep all your cards in, then Inkworks is producing a premium collectors album.

The album features holographic foil stock so there is an eerie illusion.

The suggested retail price is \$19.99 US.

Factoid

Release date:
March 2001
Nine cards per pack
Suggested price:
\$2.99 US



Artists nurture revolutionary spirit

Ikuhara and Saito take Utena to the big screen

by
Derwin Mak

Last summer, Kunihiko Ikuhara and Chiho Saito took part in the Canadian premiere of their anime movie, *Revolutionary Girl Utena: Revelation of Adolescence* (Shoujo Kakumei Utena: Adolescence Mokushiroku).

Ikuhara began directing anime television episodes in 1986. After years of working for the Toei company, he directed several episodes of the *Sailor Moon* television series and the *Sailor Moon R* movie. (For those who delight in the quirky plots of anime, that's the movie in which poor Usagi/Sailor Moon thinks a male alien has romantic designs on boyfriend Mamoru/Tuxedo Mask — in the uncut, uncensored version).

He wanted more creative control over his work, however, much more than Toei would give him. In 1996, he founded a creative group of artists and animators called Be-Papas. The name means "to be a Papa," that is, to be the parent of one's own work. With his new colleagues and staff, he created and directed the TV series *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (Shoujo Kakumei Utena) in 1996 and the *Utena* movie.

The main character is Utena Tenjou, who was rescued by a prince when she was a little girl.

The prince gave her a ring with a rose design and told her that they would meet again someday. Years later, Utena



Saito

attends Ohtori Academy and wears the school's uniform for boys because she wants to be like the prince (actually, she wears only the tunic from the boy's uniform; she wears red shorts instead of pants).

The Student Council of Ohtori Academy is bent on "student revolution," but they have other, stranger interests.

They also wear rose rings similar to Utena's and challenge each other to sword duels over another student, who turns out to be "the Rose Bride."

In their mysterious world, control of the Rose Bride can change the world, and Utena joins the intrigue and sword duels, hoping to find her prince again.

Saito is one of Japan's most popular shoujo manga artists.

The Japanese manga publishing industry tends to create specialized magazines for very specific segments of society (boys, men, salarymen, single working women, married working women, housewives and even single mothers with children born out of wedlock). Shoujo manga are comic books aimed specifically at girls and women.

Shoujo manga stories are usually not action-oriented; their stories are about human relationships, love, dreams and desires. They are almost always drawn by women and have a visual style very different from manga aimed at other segments of society.

Saito's first manga story, *Lady and Sword*, was published by Coronet



Utena Tenjou attends Ohtori Academy where the Student Council of Ohtori Academy is bent on "student revolution."

Magazine in 1982. As she became more popular as a shoujo manga artist, Ikuhara invited her to join Be-Papas.

She became the original character designer for *Revolutionary Girl Utena*.

"I made the *Utena* movie for two reasons: to say things I couldn't say on TV and to exploit the success of the series," says Ikuhara.

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Comic & Book Emporium	1247 Granville St., Vancouver, V6Z 1M5	(250) 682-3019	C	BI	RPG	AR	MI	M	AP	B	Md	HS
Curious Books and Comics	631 Johnson St., Victoria, V8W 1M7	(250) 384-1656	C	BI	RPG	AS	MI	AP	CC	M	Md	WL
Up-Start Comics & Games	1483A Bowen Rd., Nanaimo, V9S 1G4	(250) 741-0101	C	BI	RPG	AR	MI	M	AP	B	Md	HS

Alberta

Comic-Kazi	Northland Village, Calgary, T2L 2J8	(403) 286-0544	C	BI	RPG	AS	Md	M	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B
Saturn Comics	5726 104 St., Edmonton, T6H 2K2	(780) 430-0598	C	BI	RPG	AS	B	M	AP	CC	OL	Cat	WL	**

Saskatchewan

8th Street Books & Comics	1010 8th St. E., Saskatoon, S7H 0R9	(306) 343-6624	C	BI	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	B
Phoenix Comics	2806 Dewdney Ave., Regina, S4T 0X7	(306) 757-9091	C	RPG	BI	AS	CC	M	WL	B

Manitoba

Comic Cave	1104 Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, S7H 0R9	(306) 318-9636	C	BI	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	Cat	OL
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Ontario

Big B Comics	1045 James St. Hamilton, L8K 1B4	(905) 312-6977	C	BI	RPG	Md	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B		
Comics North	106 Elm St. Sudbury, P3C 1T5	(705) 674-1015	C	BI	RPG	AS	AR	Md	MI	AP	CC	M	HS	WL
Now & Then	90 Queen St. S. Kitchener, N2G 1V9	(519) 744-5571	C	BI	RPG	AS	AR	Md	MI	AP	CC	M	WL	

Quebec

Empire Comics	1221 Crescent St., Montreal, H3G 2B1	(514) 871-1402	C	BI	RPG	AP	CC	AS	WL	B
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Prince Edward Island

The Comic Hunter	63 University Ave. Charlottetown, C1A 4L1	(902) 566-2926	C	BI	RPG	AP	CC	AS	WL	B
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New Brunswick

Stange Adventures Comic Books	384 Queen St. Fredericton, E3B 1B2	(506) 450-3759	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	AP	CC	AS	WL	B	WL	M	Md
Halley's Comics	25 charlotte St. St. John's, E2L 2H3	(506) 693-4835	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	AP	CC	AS	WL	B	WL	M	Md

Nova Scotia

Mirror Universe Cards, Comics & Games	79 Alderney Dr. Dartmouth, B2Y 2N7	(902) 466-8884	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	AS	M
Websligers	Halifax Shopping Ctr., Halifax, B3C 2H8	(902) 455-4949	C	BI	RPG	Md	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B	AS	HS

** Saturn Comics' website for ordering can be found at www.compumart.ab.ca

Legend

C = Comics	AR = Anime Rented	Cat = Catalogue Available	HS = Hobby Supplies
BI = Back Issues	MO = Mail Order	CC = Collectible Cards	WL = Want Lists Filled
RPG = Roleplaying Games	MI = Minatures	M = Magazines	B = Books
AS = Anime Sold	AP = Apparel	Md = Models	OL = Online Ordering

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ReBoot overcomes viruses, network suits

Purged from ABC by Disney, Dot Matrix and her friends followed their own rules and survived

**By
Emru Townsend**

In the beginning, there was Tron.

That 1982 film gave us our first peek into the supposed inner workings of the computers that were just starting to impinge on the industrialized world's collective conscious. It was sort of the microscopic equivalent of gerbils on a treadmill under the hood of a car: little guys in freaky blue, red, and orange outfits running around, doing the omnipotent and invisible users'



(that's us) bidding.

Twelve years later ReBoot came along, with a similar premise. But unlike Tron, which was more of a cult hit than anything else, ReBoot has had a sustained popularity since its first airing.

The first television series created by Vancouver-based Mainframe Entertainment, it was unlike anything ever seen on TV when it first appeared on YTV in Canada and ABC in the United States. Here, the beings inside the computer —

sprites, viruses, binomes, nulls — still see users as mysterious, otherworldly beings, though in this case a little more threatening: their usual interaction with them is when a Game Cube descends ominously onto their city of Mainframe, transforming the location and everyone in it to fit the parameters of the game. Failure to win the game means disaster and destruc-



tion for that sector of Mainframe.

The end result: a TV show with all the hyperkinetic absurdity of any video game. Episode after episode, our heroes Dot Matrix, her younger brother Enzo, the Guardian Bob, and their ever-increasing band of allies did battle in the games, each of which followed its own bizarre rules and objectives.

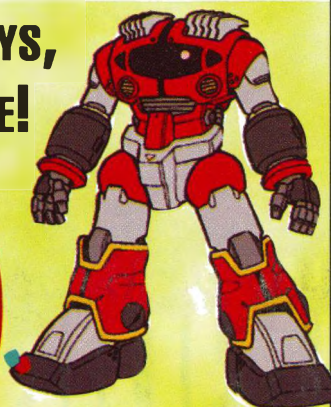
It was a winning combination.

Kids loved the fun and energy each episode exuded; adults loved the whimsy and the corny in-jokes (which, admittedly, favoured the techno-savvy). More than anything else, though, the appeal was in the interplay between the main characters, including virus super-villains Megabyte and Hexadecimal, a brother-and-sister duo representing the extremes of order and chaos.

As the series progressed into a second season, every-

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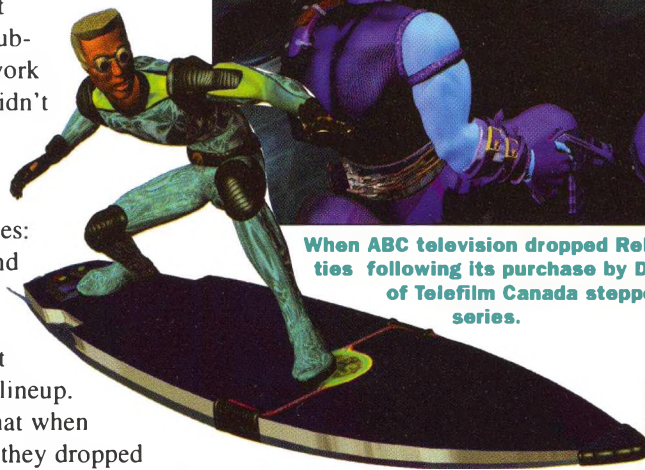
thing was on the rise: more assured storytelling, better visuals, and the escalating war between Megabyte and the heroes of Mainframe. The end of the second season saw an invasion of creatures from the Web and, during the siege, Megabyte's disposing of Bob, Mainframe's most powerful hero, by launching him into the Web and sealing the portal behind him. With increasing popularity and a cliffhanger season ending, ReBoot seemed poised for runaway success.

Then the hammer fell.

When Disney bought ABC, the Mouse House subsequently purged the network of most programming it didn't own or produce. Quirky shows like *Bump in the Night* and *ReBoot* were axed in favour of *Gargoyles*: *The Goliath Chronicles* and Disney-owned shows that would become the foundation of their current "One Saturday Morning" lineup.

"It is essentially true that when Disney took over at ABC they dropped all independently produced children's programming," says Gavin Blair, one of *ReBoot*'s four creators.

"YTV in Canada has always been of great support and even a co-producer, but a Canadian broadcast sale [alone] is never going to be enough to finance the production of a series."



When ABC television dropped *ReBoot* along with other independent properties following its purchase by Disney, the Canadian government in the form of Telefilm Canada stepped forward and provided financing for the series.

However, according to Blair, being Canadian is what ultimately saved the day.

"Luckily, Canada has some great government funding programs for home-grown properties, so Telefilm Canada came on board to help with the series financing."

The return
After two years of reruns on YTV, the third season of *ReBoot* finally saw the light of day, with 16 new episodes compared to the earlier seasons' combined total of 23. All the elements that made *ReBoot* a hit were back, only more so: even better visuals (just about

Continued on page 54

Futurama goes another 18 episodes

The Fox Broadcasting Company has announced it is picking up its animated much-moved-around-the-television-schedule-

until-you-puke series *Futurama* for an additional 18 episodes

The three-year-old series explores life in the 31st century, and follows the intergalactic adventures of Fry, Leela, Bender and the Planet Express crew. From New New York City, to outer space and to parts beyond.

AnimEgo delays Macross DVD set

AnimEgo has announced it has delayed the release of its *Macross* DVD set until early summer.

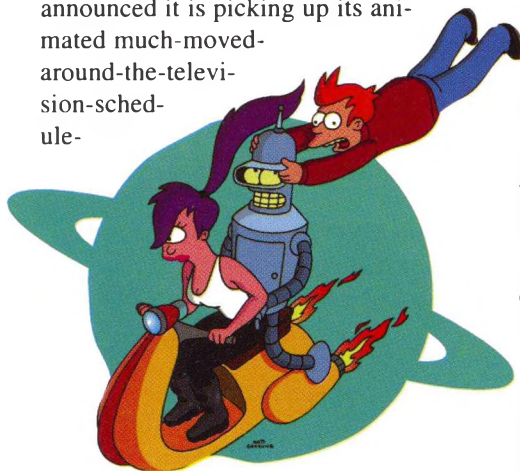
The delay will enable the Wilmington, NC, company to fine-tune the package and address some compatibility issues.

AnimEgo says the set, which carries a suggested retail price of \$360 US, will be of the original *Macross* and not of the later *Robotech* adaptation.

The set will not contain any English-language dubbing. It will contain all the scenes shown on Japanese TV, including scenes edited out during the *Robotech* adaptation. This is a subtitled-only set.

All episodes will be unedited, uncut from new digital masters, with subtitling and copious liner notes.

As of presstime, the company was still debating whether to format the series as nine DVDs (four episodes per DVD) or 12 DVDs (three episodes per DVD). The company is taking preorders through its website at www.animego.com



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Bandai releases second Escaflowne installment

The second home video installment of the television series, *Escaflowne*, is being released by Bandai Entertainment in February.

In Past and Present, amidst all the fighting, Millerna makes a shocking discovery. Zaibach's forces march through Freid, destroying everything in its path. Folken is determined to retrieve the legendary sword of Atlantis and make Hitomi's vision a reality. During the battle, Van and the *Escaflowne* suffer near-fatal injuries.

Will they survive?

☆ **Produced by Sunrise & Bandai**
 ☆ **Running Time: Approx 75 min.**
 ☆ **Rating: 13up**
 ☆ **VHS English SRP: \$19.98 (US)**
 ☆ **DVD bilingual SRP: \$29.98 (US)**
 ☆ **DVD bilingual SRP: \$29.98 (US)**

Samurai X conclusion released in March

ADV Films is releasing *Samurai X: The Motion Picture*, the climatic conclusion to the hit Billboard Top 10 anime prequel in March.

The war against the Tokugawa Shogunate ended years ago. But there are some who are not happy with the outcome. Shigure Takimi watched his friends and family get slashed down in the name of freedom and prosperity.

Now he and a band of desperate rebels have sworn to settle one final score. Only one man stands in their way: Rurouni Kenshin.

Will the former assassin take up his sword to fight again?

☆ **Produced by ADV Films**
 ☆ **Running Time: Approx 90 min.**
 ☆ **Rating: 17+**
 ☆ **VHS Dub SRP: \$19.98 (US)**
 ☆ **DVD bilingual SRP: \$29.98 (US)**

Animation distracts in Jubei Chan

By Miki Okamoto

I really want to like *Jubei Chan: The Ninja Girl*. (Bandai) I want to stress that.

But it's a tall order. The story is a strong one.

Yagyū Jubei is the greatest swordsman of ancient Japan. On his deathbed, he charges his disciple to search for someone worthy to carry on his name and the mantle as the greatest swordsman. Once the person is discovered, they must be given the lovely eyepatch.

Three-hundred years later, the disciple succeeds and discovers the swords is a well-endowed girl by the name of Jiyū Nanohana (nickname: Jubei). Battling bad guys, denying her heritage and dodging the amorous overtures of her male classmates, *Jubei Chan* has the ingredients of a great production. But the animation gets in the way.

The video can't make up its mind if it wants to be a serious anime (when it does, it's stellar) or slap-dash buffoonery (which detracts from the production).

Rated 13-plus. Contains leering and lust; Dubbed.

☆☆☆

Tenchi UniverseSpace II (Pioneer) is a fun, irreverent piece of work.

Following the misadventures of *Tenchi Masaki* and his friends as they have to deal with engine problems (the running gag of the engine continually blowing up was a nice

Reviews

touch) and the effects of an unstocked galley.

The three episodes which comprise this DVD — *No Need For Hunger*, *No Need for a Ghost* and *No Need for Runaways* — feature fine animation and stories which display a fine touch of imagination (particularly *No Need for a Ghost*).

Extras on this DVD include character information — which helps newcomers get caught up — as well as a lineart gallery and scene access.

Rated 13-up; 75 minutes; Bilingual with English subtitles.

☆☆☆

Bandai's special edition of *Gundam Wing: The Movie (Endless Waltz)* lives up to its name.

The special edition includes a theatrical version with additional footage, as well as an uncut three episode video version.

This release is intended to take place one year after the conclusion of the television series — one year After Colony 195. The *Gundam* pilots discover they have sent their weapons suits away for destruction a tad early.

Visually, the movie is a treat and the DVD features a strong, clear sound.

Extras on this DVD include an encyclopedia, an image gallery, trailers and a textless ending.

Rated 13-up; 180 minutes; 75 minutes; Bilingual Japanese/English.



Inkworks gives fans, collectors a little extra

Autographed inserts, glowing cards are just two examples of company's efforts to give customer's their money's worth ... and more

**By
A. Jaye Williams**

Since 1995, Inkworks has been producing some of the best non-sports trading cards centred on the world of entertainment.

Inkworks — currently best known for its line of Buffy the Vampire Slayer trading cards — has produced a solid line of exceptional and delightful cards that are designed to capture the imagination, interest and fascination of all those who have collected cards or are curious about starting.

Inkworks broke ground with a line of trading cards featuring everyone's favourite British spy, James Bond. The set was unveiled during the premiere of Golden Eye. This proved to be quite fitting at the time — a new James Bond to go with a new company.

"Bond has always done well for us," said executive vice-president Martha Modlin. "Of course, we have a special affinity for James Bond, that he was our first."

Since then, Inkworks has expanded its licencing and



Photo courtesy of Inkworks

grown at a steady and progressive rate.

Modlin explains, "The first year for us was getting the licences, because a lot of the licences are assigned a year or two years out.

"The first year, we probably had some properties that were available at the time. After that, then we were big players. We started to get all the good ones that we wanted to get.

"So now, we're able to get the A licences that we're going after."

The line up of trading cards from Inkworks reads like a prime-time delight for science fiction and fantasy fans of television: Buffy, Angel, Charmed, The Simpsons, Roswell and The X-Files (slated for release in early spring).

The shows are the cream of the crop, critically and cult-wise. Their popularity is either growing or is already evident, with a tremendous amount of potential.

For Inkworks, "We've

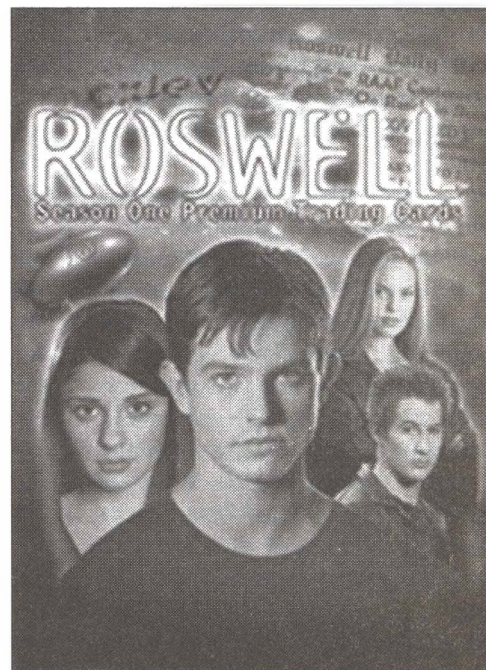
done very well with Buffy. We've done six sets so far with Buffy and all have been sell-outs or we're just about to sell out.

"And the things that are associated with Buffy ... Angel has done well. In general, these products are a little bit easier because retailers know that there is a lifespan.

"Movies are a little bit harder, so we try to pick movies that retailers understand the property of," Modlin explains.

Some of the movies that Inkworks will be tackling in 2001 includes

Inkworks president Allan Caplan and executive vice-president Martha Modlin celebrate the launch of The Simpsons anniversary set last year. The fall releases of The Simpsons and Roswell (below) capped off a great year for the company.



Continued on page 55

“Around 1995, I had an inspiration: I became obsessed with the end of the world theme.”

— Kunihiko Ikuhara



So it seems that commercial, not just artistic, reasons motivated Ikuhara and Saito to make the movie. What was

the reason for changing the voice actress of Utena to Michi, a popular idol singer (young female singer who is promoted as an idol to be adored)?

“Michi is a fan of Utena,” says Saito, who knows Michi and had recruited her to be the voice of Utena. “I wanted her.”

Ikuhara nods. “I went to one of Michi’s concerts. Michi is capable of bringing in an audience of 10,000 girls, so I wanted her to teach me how to be popular.”

Ikuhara explains the origins of Revolutionary Girl Utena. “Around 1995, I had an inspiration: I became obsessed with the end of the world theme.”

Hence the dark, brooding atmosphere of Utena. His high school and university days also influenced Utena.

“In the late ’60s, there were a lot of student movements in Japan. There was a charismatic leader called Siji Teriyama. Teriyama has passed away, and the student movement lost to the establishment, but Teriyama’s writings still inspire teenaged readers. When creating Revolutionary Girl Utena, I wanted to show a glimpse of what it was like to be in the student movement in Japan.”

Ikuhara had also wanted to work with Teriyama but never did.

Continued on page 60

each episode is unique in its look and feel); a darker, grittier feel as the war between the viruses and the subsequent aftermath lead to tragedy and further strife; and, curiously, more levity as well.

Though few episodes in the third season quite approach the sustained flights of fancy of the second season (such as when Megabyte invades Enzo’s birthday celebration and ends up battling Bob in an electric-guitar duel), the in-jokes and homages to other shows are cleverer and, occasionally, more thorough: episode 7, “Number 7,” is a brilliant, episode-long riff on *The Prisoner* that probably left as many people scratching their heads as Patrick McGoohan’s old show.

Fans who want to catch up on the third season no longer have to wait for it to air on YTV, which has been rerunning the entire series without fail. (In the U.S., the Cartoon Network has started airing the show.)

AD Visions has recently begun releasing the third season on videocassette and DVD, one four-episode arc at a time. Best of all, this is just a warmup: though the third season provided a fair amount of closure, there are still loose threads to take care of — which is where the two new *ReBoot* TV movies, due for next year, come in.

“[The movies] were originally going to be two two-hour movies which would break up into eight episodes for TV,” Blair explains.

“The first one, *Daemon Rising*, picks up where Season III left off and deals with the problems of the infected Guardians and the supervirus, *Daemon*. It also answers some of the questions the fans have always asked: What happened to the other city of Mainframe?”

What’s the deal with Dot and Enzo’s father? What’s Bob’s backstory? Things like that. The second movie covers new ground and deals with the outrageous cliffhanger which comes at the end of *Daemon Rising*! Aren’t we stinkers?”



Stinkers? Maybe. But it’s that sort of waggish humour that makes the show what it is, and gives fans so much to look forward to. Which is fitting, since Blair credits them with the show’s continued popularity and the chance for new life. “It’s the fans who are largely responsible for *ReBoot*’s return. Without them bugging the broadcasters constantly, Cartoon Network might not have given it a chance.

Without the great run on the Cartoon Network, we wouldn’t be talking about more shows. So here’s a big thanks to our loyal fans — they never gave up on the show, and it’s paying off!”

Not bad for a show that’s been in reruns for about half of its existence. Better still, Blair reports that the order has increased to four more episodes — another movie — and another episode, which will be a musical.

“There is [also] now a very real chance that the order for shows will go to 26, the interest in the show is so great!” he adds.

So far as Blair is concerned, this is just the beginning.

“Very few people had Internet connections when the series first aired. Now everybody has heard and experienced the concepts contained in *ReBoot*. We will explore the explosion of the Internet. There are hundreds of stories left to tell, not all of them within the town of Mainframe. The first four episodes will start the ball rolling. But, mainly, *ReBoot* is a character-driven show, and there are lots of things left for our characters to do.”



Ennu Townsend only stops talking about animation long enough to write about it. Visit his website at <http://www.planetmedia.com>

“So, we try and do everything we can so the after-market value will go up, not down. And we try to make it fun.”

**— Martha Modlin,
executive vice-president
Inkworks**

some of the years potential blockbusters such as Jurassic Park III, Tomb Raider and The Mummy Returns.

Unlike a television series, in which there is already an audience and a fan base, movies are slightly trickier. I may help a bit when choosing sequels like Jurassic or the Mummy, but with Tomb Raider, it's a little different.

Still “with Tomb Raider, and even though it's a movie and there's some risk there for retailers, they know the comic books have done well, they know the properties have done well,” Modlin said.

“So there's a comfort level there.”

The initial selection process — choosing which show or movie to represent in a trading card format — isn't as easy as one might think. Even though there are many more highly rated shows on television than the ones licenced by Inkworks, most of them wouldn't translate into the trading-card medium. Shows like E.R., J.A.G., The Practice and Law & Order, though exceptional and highly rated, don't have the ingredients that Inkworks believes makes a good trading card.

“Picking a property that's going to translate to trading cards isn't about ratings, you need an aspect of good versus evil,” Modlin explains. “You need characters that are compelling, that you actually want to collect ... and learn about. It's those properties that really get the fans involved in the series.

“And that's what we try and capture in a set.”

This philosophy of Inkworks applies very well for them. The feedback they have received from both retailers and



Inkworks' president Allan Caplan poses with Seth Green of Buffy the Vampire Fame during last year's San Diego Comic Convention in San Diego, Ca.

fans has been very positive and encouraging. With all the demanding work of building and collating the sets, getting the product out there and even providing customer service for those who may have questions or problems, Inkworks has been able to, not only survive in the crowded marketplace, but to flourish.

Modlin adds proudly that, “We work really hard from start to finish to make sure the customers have a product that they love and that we stand by it.”

This is emphasized by the Inkworks written guarantee. The guarantee states: “Inkworks is the only major card manufacturer that has established an Inkworks Guarantee. The guarantee assures collectors that each display box contains a complete, defect-free basic set. Inkworks pledges the highest quality production, printing and packaging.”

Quality and customer satisfaction is

of the utmost importance to the trading card company. They emphasize the fact that they will replace any damaged property or missing cards — rare as that is — when asked. They are also exclusively focused on entertainment properties. Inkworks isn't branching out in different directions at the same time.

“We are the only entertainment player that is focused on just entertainment property. Which means that we don't have a lot of sports licences on the side,” Modlin says. “We are really focused on entertainment.”

The fact that Inkwork's president Allan Caplan is also an avid trading card collector adds to the focus on quality, entertainment and enjoyment the cards are intended to bring to collectors.

“Because Allan is a collector and because people here are collectors and fans, as well as doing our other jobs, we

know that collectors are investing a lot of money and they want something that's going to be worth something after the fact," Modlin explained. "So, we try and do everything we can so the after-market value will go up, not down.

"And we try to make it fun."

Some of the things Modlin speaks about includes many unique and sometimes outrageous items. The Simpsons trading card set, included a decoder device to read the backs of some cards, there are chase cards and nuclear power plant cards that glowed in the dark, clear cards and printed cards that were meant to lay over each other and create a number of different multi-layered scenes.

"Because that property lends itself to that kind of stuff, we really wanted to make it interactive," Modlin explained.

As well, in all the different sets of trading cards which Inkworks offers, there are the autographed cards which appeals to the fans and are popular with collectors. But overall it's the high quality of

the cards that stand the true test. In each set — whether it's Buffy, Angel, Charmed, James Bond or The Simpsons — all the cards are crisp, clean, solid with strong dynamic images.

Whether it's a particular scene from an important episode, a beautiful portrait of a key character or even a behind-the-scenes snapshot, Inkworks has managed to capture plenty of wonderful images that proudly represent the sets. And this can't help but satisfy the demands of the collectors.

While a number of the coming sets will be based on potential blockbuster movies, it's The X-Files that may prove to be the biggest winner of them all.

Fans of Chris Carter's dark and gritty saga of alien abductions, government conspiracies, wandering Sasquatches and the like have a long line of fans and devoted followers.

With eight years of episodes, action figures, novels, magazines, comic books and a big-screen movie and with a bright future still ahead for the series, The X-Files trading cards could out

do them all.

As well, Inkworks plans on releasing a new set of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel and The Simpsons trading cards during 2001. And you can bet there will be something unique about the sets.

Attending comic conventions over the years, Inkworks has discovered that this is the best way for them to know for sure what fans and collectors want. There, they can meet people face-to-face, listen to what they have to say and ascertain what they want. The conventions also give them the opportunity to retailers and collectors and gain the best business and fan-oriented knowledge about their product.

"The two biggest ones for

us in the summer are the Wizard Con and the San Diego Comic Con. That's where we take our big booth and show off our upcoming products and we really give the fans a chance to either see what's coming up or what just came out," Modlin says. "We also give them exclusive promo-cards that they can only get at the shows."

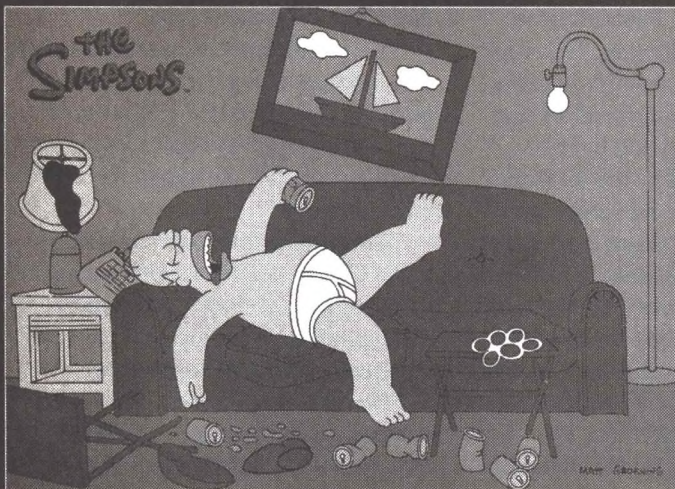
For Modlin, she enjoys both the creative and the fan aspect that goes along with working at Inkworks.

"It's a very creative business, to be able to take fun shows that you love to watch anyway and to create these cards that a bunch of people are going to really enjoy.

"It's just a fun business to be in."

★
new releases
Page 46

Television series prove less a risk for card manufacturers than movies. Still, even though Titan AE did less than spectacular business at the box office, Inkworks' card set was a fan favourite last summer.



Future of gaming: Virtual shape of things to come

But need for speed remains stumbling block to online gaming achieving full potential

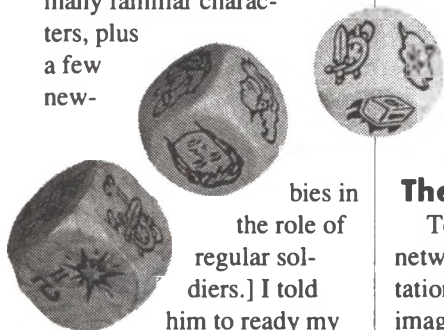
By **Kevin Davies**

I activated my v-link at the scheduled time.

"Good to have you back with us Ethan, er... Captain. I think we're going to need everyone today. Scouts were sent out 40 minutes ago. Enemy contact is highly probable."

As the dawn fog lifted, the faint whiff of wet foliage and breakfast was discernible.

[Good, that new aroma emitter is working.] I retrieved a notebook from within my jacket while an aide offered a cup of coffee [I noted his ID for later. A glance around the camp, reviving after a fixed period of downtime, revealed many familiar characters, plus a few new-



bies in the role of regular soldiers.] I told him to ready my horse and to begin striking camp. We reacted to the distant gunfire at the same time.

"We're under attack..."

defensive positions, NOW!" I yelled. Shots rang out as one of our scouts galloped into the camp and collapsed from her foaming horse into the arms of a trooper.

"Rifle company... quarter mile, north-east. Caught us in a gully..." [Even with the game's manipulation of her words to reflect exhaustion and injury, Cindy was one of the best roleplayers around.]

Her words were silenced by bloodloss. "Get this trooper to a medic. All right people, prepare for battle..."



In the not-too-distant future, it will be possible to participate in computer-mediated networked games providing an immersive experience that will entertain and stimulate like no other media in history.

Eventually, it will rival reality.

For SF fans this may not seem like news. Most are familiar with the concept of Star Trek's holodeck and other fictional descriptions of virtual reality.

But how will we get there and will our arrival be a good thing?

The Need For Speed

Today's constraints on network gaming include limitations on information and image generation processing power and data transfer rates.

While processing power is increasing daily, bandwidth may prove a longer term problem. Cities will soon be



Most are familiar with the concept of Star Trek's holodeck and other fictional descriptions of virtual reality.

fully integrated with fiber-optic cable and optical switches, but rural areas will lag

due to infrastructure costs; satellite access may help. For some time, the best solution for high-end entertainment will be high-speed local or closed-network configurations.

Once a sufficient number of users have the necessary processing power, game designers will increase graphics quality, achieving life-like imagery of natural or supernatural situations.

Software will enable detailed environments to be created on the fly, or combined with existing geogra-

phy for an infinite variety of realistic settings. Memory and data storage will not be an issue.

Artificial intelligence routines will permit NPCs to coexist with players in games and even stand-in for players when they log-off (game-specific conditions will deny or permit the activity, wounding, or death of a player-NPC while the player is offline).

Eventually, the only way a player will be able to tell that a character is a person or not is via an ID query (if allowed by the game; the information available will vary).

Face the Interface

New technologies that go well beyond the joysticks, steering wheels, foot pedals, and vibrating chairs will soon be widely available.

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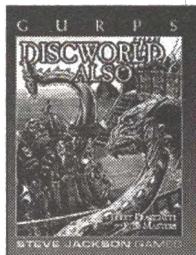
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Fantasy and Historical Games a specialty

Steve Jackson unveils Discworld guide

Everyone had such a good time with GURPS Discworld, that Steve Jackson Games has decided to send gamers to Discworld a second time.

The guide for GURPS Discworld will take gamers to the Lost Continent of XXXX (and its Cart Wars), and allow gamers to meet the Hermit Elephants and a very big troll. The guide carries a suggested price tag of \$20.95 US and is scheduled to ship in March.

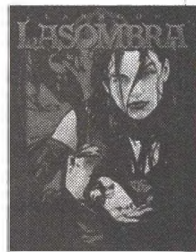


White Wolf revises Clanbook: Lasombra

Author Bruce Baugh, developer: Justin Achilli and cover artist: John Van Fleet offer the next entry in the revised lineup of clanbooks.

Lasombra takes one of the classic Vampire® sourcebooks and brings it into a modern context. All-new information accompanies revised material, inviting gamers to add as much depth to their character as they like.

The 104-page book has a suggested price tag of \$20.95 US and is scheduled to ship in March.



Secrets of Naboo for Wizards' Star Wars game

Wizards of the Coast will be releasing the Star Wars accessory, The Secrets of Naboo Campaign Pack in February.

The 96-page trade paperback by J.D. Wiker and Steve Miller has a suggested retail price of \$19.95 US.

The accessory will give players the first-ever book detailing adventures and source material about the planet.

Audio has already attained a high level of sophistication. Quality speakers or headphones can vastly improve a virtual experience by convincing the ear sounds within the artificial environment are emanating from various 'spaces' around the listener. A player can be convinced that footsteps are really coming from behind them.

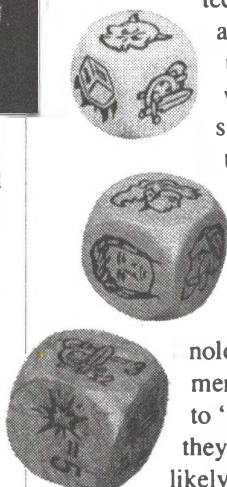
Eye visors will enable users to view digital media in 3D without the need for monitors. By freeing up head movement, this will encourage game designers to develop 3D-panoramic environments, greatly contributing to the 'reality' experienced by the player.

Olfactory emitters will further improve the virtual experience and stimulate memories (presumably only desirable or pleasant odors will be generated).

Eventually, data-sensory glove and clothing technologies will extend the freedom of players to affect the position and movement of their characters based on their own physical movements (exaggerated as desired by the player and the limitations imposed by the game).

A glimpse of the potential of this technology is currently available from installations at Palladium, where players stand in specific areas and move their bodies to affect the actions of characters projected on a huge screen between them.

The ultimate holy-grail of interface technology is a device or garment which enables users to 'feel' the artificial world they're experiencing. It's likely that devices offering this capability will range in completeness and sophistication and find their initial customers in the erotica market (consider that most new media technologies are adopted first by the erotica industry before attracting a



broader use).

I would not be surprised if the earliest versions of such technology are available within the next five years.

Virtual Death

As a romantic-realist, while enthusing about the value of virtual reality as an entertainment and inevitably as a

communications, training and learning aid, I feel compelled to include my vision of a cautionary downside to this marvel.

Should we find ourselves in a future where the ability to achieve gainful employment is reduced for the

The lower strata of society will be warehoused in inexpensive virtual pods.

majority of the population to part-time work supplemented by a guaranteed minimum income, the masses might be cynically encouraged by the elites to exploit virtual technology as a relatively inexpensive means to a "better" life.

The frustration experienced by most people that their lives continually fall short of the standards of "success" projected by the commercial media will be alleviated by the "artificial lives" they'll construct in virtual space, which may or may not be shared with other 'real' users.

Effectively the lower strata of society will be warehoused in inexpensive virtual pods while the wealthy pursue their ambitions in real-space.

Like every new technology considered or adopted by humankind, virtual reality is a double-edged sword.

It will be up to individuals and societies to ensure that it achieves the promise of contributing to a better world. Virtual or real.

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Kevin Davies is a publisher, game designer, and illustrator. His company Peregrine produces the humorous roleplay games *Murphy's World* and *Bob, Lord of Evil* and can be reached at peregrine@peregrine-net.com or <http://www.peregrine-net.com>



Creator finds 'high concepts' overlooked

Inability to create villains causes Dave Wohl to abandon his pet project — Witchblade

Growing up in New York City, Dave Wohl rarely — if ever — cracked a comic book.

It took a decision in high school to send him down a path that led him to become one of the creative minds driving Top Cow.

Wohl admits that he was “never really in to comics.”

“I never thought that was something I would do with my life. But it was a job that they gave me.”

Despite aspirations of a career in everything from garbage collector to beach-dwelling poet to entertainment lawyer, it took a turn of fate to land Wohl in his current profession.

While in high school, Wohl decided to work at Marvel Comics as part of a co-op course (the school wouldn't let him work at Baskin-Robbins).

At the time, it didn't seem like a major step for the student. His first job at the comic giant was opening mail and making copies for such professionals as Chris Claremont.

“Chris would come over and read his mail,” Wohl recalls. “I thought that was so cool.”

It was while he was at Marvel that Wohl developed his interest in comics. Then, he began reading Thor during Walt

Simonson's tenure on the book.

“I was just so impressed by him,” he said.

From there, Wohl took a stint on Marvel Universe. The work involved researching Marvel characters — a task which gave him a firm knowledge of the company's many characters.

“There was a lot of times along the way when I could have ended up doing something else and I wouldn't end up working in comics. But it's kind of lucky the way things

turned out,” Wohl said.

After a number of stints with Marvel, Marc Silvestri hired Wohl on to work with him at Top Cow.

Now at the California-based company, Wohl finds himself making the very deals which he dreamed about as a teenager — when entertainment lawyer was a career option.

Besides writing, Wohl helps develop concepts aimed at bringing characters to the television or movie screens.

Of course, Wohl is best-known as a co-creator of Witchblade.

Even though the script for the television movie went through a number of hands and drafts, the end result was closer to the character during the comic's early days than was originally envisioned.

Still, Wohl was less than enthused with Sara — treatment at the hands of television creative types and the effect of a limited budget on the story.

“It's gotten panned critically and I agree with what the critics are saying, I know there are problems with the movie,” Wohl said. “But hopefully if it gets turned into a series, those things will be ironed out.”

But being self-confessed

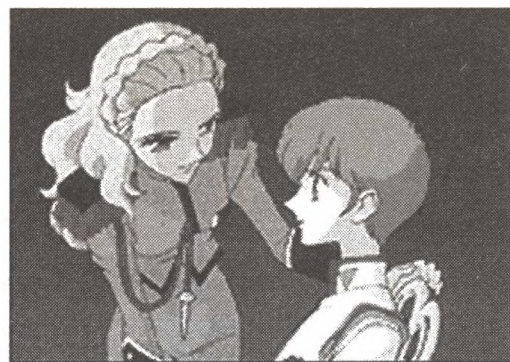
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Utena

“Teriyama was also a stage choreographer. When I was a teenager, I went to see a stage production of Teriyama’s and was strongly impressed. I wanted to collaborate with him, but a few years later, he passed away.”

The name, Utena, has also been in Ikuhara’s mind for years. He says, “The name Utena comes from a writer [one of the writers from *Be-Papas*]. We had been discussing writing a story using the name Utena for 13 or 14 years. I was fond of the name. In Japanese, Utena sounds close to the name of the Greek goddess Athena. But the one thing I really liked about —Utena is that it’s a Japanese word, but sounds very foreign to Japanese speakers. They



don’t realize that it’s a Japanese word. It refers to the part of the flower at the base of the petal that gives support to the flower.

“But everyone was opposed to the name Utena. There was a children’s shampoo called Utena! I went to the author and asked him if he knew about the shampoo. Yeah, he knew about it. But we used the name anyway.”

In addition to the Utena TV series and movie, there is

a Utena musical performing on Japanese stages. Chiho Saito saw it: “It’s based on the manga version and is for a younger audience. It wasn’t as dark as the television Utena, so it wasn’t as satisfying. It was made for children, but older people showed up.”

Ikuhara describes his visit to the musical’s cast and crew: “Before the production, I went to see the rehearsal. I thought it wasn’t good and told them on the spot. The

choreographer and I had a lot of sake, and then the Utena actress came to me and said, — Oh, Mr. Director, please have mercy on us.”

I said, ‘OK, no problem’.”

The end of the world, student movements, flowers: was there anything else that inspired Ikuhara to create Utena?

“I thought I could be popular with girls by using so many roses in my anime,” he says. ☆

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Characters, good quality draws Kubert to mutants

With his comic industry lineage, it's easy to believe that Adam Kubert was pre-ordained to become an artist.

"I always liked to draw, but it was never something that I thought I would want to do as a livelihood," Kubert recalled.

That changed in his senior year of high school when he took part in a commercial art program. His instructor helped him compile a portfolio that was good enough to gain him entrance into the Rochester Institute of Technology.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in medical illustration, he attended his father's art school (The Joe Kubert School of Art)

"He encouraged me to do whatever it was I wanted to do, whether it was drawing or whatever," Kubert explained. "He was behind it."

But the elder Kubert did have an influence on his son as he began working in comic books.

"I went through his school, I had him as a teacher. Even to this day, I'll run things through him to get his impression."

While the two Kuberts' styles are different, the younger Kubert says his father's influence can be seen in his storytelling — particularly when it comes to the pacing of the story, the angle selections and clarity.

As of late, Kubert has brought those storytelling talents to the X-Men.

It's also a move that added to his stature among fans.

"It's a very contemporary idea," Kubert said of the title's appeal. "The basis of the X-Men is that they are different and people are against them because they are different. Kids can relate to that."

"It's a concept that will never go out of style."

Besides having what he considers great characters, the artistic production work on the books also attracted him.

The books were being sent out to independent separators — companies which prepare the colour plates for printing.

The high-quality work performed by these companies meant that Kubert's art wouldn't be diminished by a slip-shot colouring job.

"One of the most important things about comics today is reproduction and colour," Kubert said.

"Colouring can make a bad job look good, just like it can make a good job look bad."

In addition, Kubert notes, it's disheartening for an artist to work long hours (in Kubert's case, 60-hour work weeks are the norm) producing a book, only to see the work damaged by a "lack of quality control" later in the process.

Adding to the artist's workload on the X-Men is the fact there are so many characters to work with.

"There's a lot of reference, there's a lot of drawing involved. "It's not just one character in a snow storm. You're dealing with a lot of different personalities.

Of course, with the creation of Ultimate X-Men, the problem posed by so many characters is largely gone.

With the new title, the unwieldy number of mutants has been brought down to a workable team.

"This is not to say that having a lot of characters are bad. Having a lot of characters in 22 pages is bad because there is no place to take a breather and no place for the reader to get their bearings."

In addition to the paring down of the ranks of the X-Men, the new title also starts with a clean slate, so there isn't a 30-year history to shackle the writer or the artist.

"I'm approaching as if I were doing the X-Men movie," Kubert explained. "I'm trying to introduce new characters to a new audience."

The lack of a backstory allows readers to begin following the X-Men without the need to deal with references to incidents that happened in the '60s.

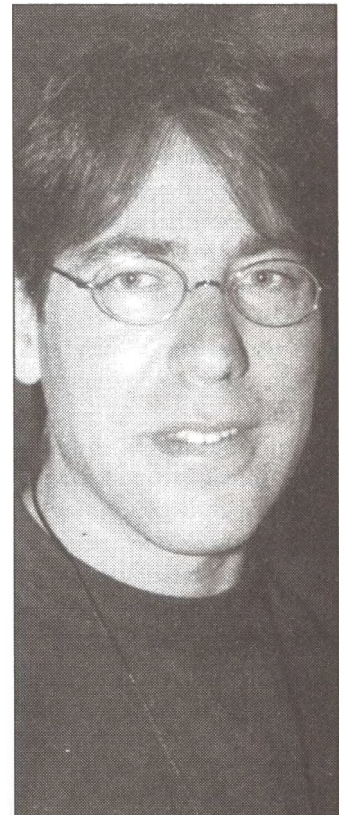
His work with the mutants, he says, is one of the reasons he has topped recent fan polls.

"I think it's only because I draw the X-books,"

Kubert said of his standing with fans. "I don't think I'm any better than any one else."

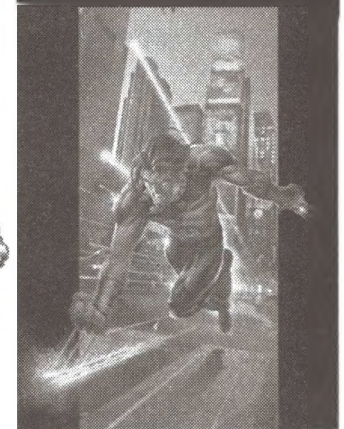


Continued on page 63



"It's a concept that will never go out of style."

— Adam Kubert on the X-Men's popularity



There's just too many mutants, says Claremont

By
Chris Kreljgaard

Chris Claremont is holding court at a convention. Five or six of us are talking mutants after the doors have closed and the fans have left.

Claremont, for those of you who have been spelunking in a cave in France for the past 25 years, is the man who gains a good chunk of credit for the fame and fortune enjoyed by The X-Men (and by the company who owns them).

He wrote the series during their golden era in the late '70s and early '80s before moving on to other projects and writing a fantasy novel or two. Now, he's back with the mutants trying to push the books creative envelope some more.

But listening to him talk with store owners and workers after the fans have gone, you can glean a sense of creative frustration from the legendary scribe about what happened to the book in his

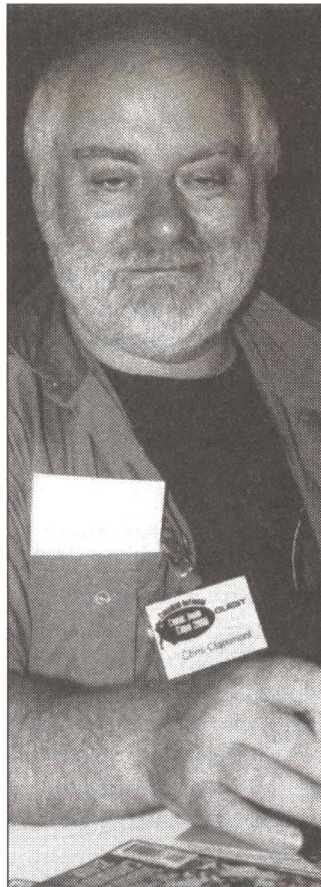


Photo: Gumbit, Archangel and Banshee are TM and © of Marvel Comics

absence.

"I killed off a character ... who would have expected them to bring her back?" he said in reference to Jean

"The old joke is that I could write a silent story and still be accused of over-writing."

Grey.

After making his mark in innumerable other projects, why has he returned to old, familiar ground?

"They asked me," he says matter of factly.

Later, he admits from story-telling standpoint, it would be difficult to pass up the opportunity.

"Great characters, the possibility to tell great stories," Claremont explained. "It's the same attraction of writing any good series at Marvel or DC.

"It's just that the X-Men have more potential."

But even though he is revisiting old friends, Claremont has no intention of revisiting tales from his glory days with Dave Cockrum and John Byrne.

"The past is the past," Claremont explained. "You use those elements of it that

can generate good stories in the present, you learn from the mistakes you made and you move on.

"Far too many people get caught up in focusing on the past and retelling old stories new ways. But I've been there and done that."

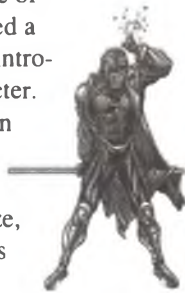
"There are too many mutants. The rule of thumb is you need a page of story to introduce each character. So if I have seven heroes and I have a villain team of equal size, you're two-thirds of the way through the book and all you've done is introduce the characters.

"God help you if you have ancillary characters.

"Plus, four characters have their own books and that's a complication. And there's books up, down and sideways."

Still even with such a sizeable canon as the X-Men's, Claremont has little trouble keeping the mutants straight.

"One good thing about Chris is that he would, even though he has been writing it backwards and forwards, he'll give a short little character descriptions," explained Adam Kubert who worked



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Continued on page 65

Kubert

"But it's flattering."

His visits to conventions provide Kubert with an opportunity to gain feedback from fans and, at times, fine tune the work in response to the comments he receives.

Case in point: after taking samples of his work with him, Kubert noticed that fans stopped at splash pages with large images.

"I thought, 'Wow, this is what they like, so I'll do more of them.'"

And such changes will continue in Kubert's work even after he has moved on from the X-Men.

Down the road, Kubert — like most artists — would like to tackle the challenge of producing his own characters.

"That's where you're really hanging yourself out for the readers."

While his 10-hour work days don't give him a lot of flexibility to pursue the development of his characters, Kubert does have one in mind.

"But I wouldn't call him a spandex-type superhero, but he is super."



Wohl

newcomers to television, Wohl and Top Cow had limited input into the highly rated movie.

Some of the things Wohl would like to see addressed when *Witchblade* becomes a series would be the reinsertion of some of the high concepts that were removed because of the restrictions of the movie.

"I think they toned the story down to make it understandable, but a lot of the character's obsessions and negative aspects were boiled down to stereotypes," he said. "We always envisioned that if this went to series a lot of these elements would be unravelled over time."

This, he said, would give a viewer a reason to return week after week.

While the movie process moved forward, Wohl also kept busy working with Pat Lee and Dreamwave Productions on a *Witchblade/Darkminds* cross-over.

The project allowed Wohl to explore some of the untapped elements of the book.

For instance, the *Witchblade* is not a force for good, it's a weapon that thrives on peoples compulsions and obsessions.

"It's looking for a zealot and it doesn't care what your zealot for," Wohl explained.

"It thrives on pure thought as long as you're single-minded."

Steeped in mythology, *Witchblade* is far from being a traditional superhero... which is fine with Wohl.

Don't count on it.

"I don't think I can do it. I've tried to create those kind of villains and it all seems corny to me somehow."

"The only time I've ever do it is

when we have cross-overs with other companies."

Wohl reasons that the reason for this failure is his aversion to comic books as he was growing up.

"I didn't have dreams of doing a

superhero book," he said. "I'm just into doing real-life stories."

Case in point: one of his villains sports the moniker of Debbie.

This inability also played a role in Wohl's decision to leave *Witchblade*.

"I acknowledge that I can't do villains and since she has this glove that can do anything, you need villains that could combat that glove," he explained.

"I had trouble doing that. It went out of my realm all of a sudden."



COMING RELEASES

Selected winter/spring releases and their suggested retail price in US dollars.

March

DARK HORSE

Buffy the Vampire Slayer #31	\$2.99
Spyboy #16	\$2.99
Angel: Earthly Possessions (TP)	\$9.95

DC

Enemy Ace	\$5.95
The Crusades	\$2.50
Detective Comics #756	\$2.50
Brave and Bold (TP)	\$12.95

IMAGE

Rising Stars #15	\$2.50
Hellspawn #8	\$2.50
Witchblade (TP)	\$14.95
No Honor #2	\$2.50

INDIES

First Wave: Double Vision #1	\$2.99
Gigantor #10	\$2.95
Tarot: Witch of the Black Rose	\$2.95
Rose #2	\$5.95

MARVEL

Thunderbolts #50	\$2.99
Daredevil: Yellow #1	\$3.50
Mutant X 2001	\$2.99

April

DARK HORSE

Lone Wolf and Cub vol.9 (TP)	\$9.95
Rock Star Games Oni #3 (of 3)	\$2.99
Usagi Yojimbo #47	\$2.99
Silke #4 (of 4)	\$2.99
Spyboy Trial and Terror (TP)	\$9.95

DC

Danger Girl Sketchbook	\$6.95
Top Ten Book One	\$14.95
Superboy #87	\$2.25
Gen ¹³ Science Friction	\$5.95
Action Comics #778	\$2.25

IMAGE

Distant Soil	\$3.95
Aria: The Soul Market	\$2.95
The Disciples #1	\$2.95
Doltz #1	\$2.95

INDIES

Dahlia the Vampire #1 (of 6)	\$2.95
Futaba-Kun Change	\$2.95
Murder Me Dead #5	\$2.95
Crux #1	\$2.95

MARVEL

Amazing Spider-Man #30	\$2.25
Daredevil: Yellow #2	\$2.50
Black Panther #31	\$2.50
Mutant X #32 (finale)	\$3.50



"It's kind of lucky the way things turned out."

Tellos returns high adventure to comics

Todd Dezago and Mike Wieringo have been part of the revitalization of fantasy in comic-book form.

Tellos finished its 10-issue run last fall and work is under way on the next set of tales due for release later this year.

According to Dezago, the coming Tales of Tellos trade paperback is an opportunity for the creators to tell some of the various character's backstories, "To uncover some of the mysteries that weren't revealed during the first story arc and to tell some new stories."



With Tellos, Mike Wieringo and Todd Dezago have given fantasy in comics a huge jolt. Right is Serra and below left is Koj.

on Serra's back?

The new book is also an opportunity for the duo to showcase some of their friends in the business, introduce a few new artists, and to plant some seeds for the next story arc, Tellos: Second Coming.

The next six-issue set will take up after Jared's return from a coma in issue 10. Beyond that, Dezago won't say what's next.

For Dezago and Wieringo, the creation of Tellos met their need to interject a measure of lightness into comics.

The two had met during a stint on the Sensational Spider-man, and discovered they "were really on the same page in many ways as to the



Photo courtesy of Stuart Immonen. Serra and Koj are © and TM Mike Wieringo and Todd Dezago

kinds of comics we wanted to create, the same kinds of stories we wanted to tell."

Dezago includes Orson Scott Card's Seventh Son series, Stephen King, Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, Lovecraft and Caleb Carr's The Alienist as literary influences on his work. While in comics "Alan Moore destroys me! Frank Miller rocks me," he said.

To counter the darker stories that were prevalent during the first half of the '90s and to work in a genre they enjoy, the two tried to interject some lighter moments into their Spider Man stories.

"Both Mike and I are big fantasy fans. From Tolkien to Eddings to Brian Jaques Redwall series, we dig all over it. And it's something we felt was sorely lacking from comics at the time,"

Dezago said. "As a matter of fact, we tried to introduce some fantasy aspects back into our Spidey run with a Dr. Strange story. We really wanted to create a very diverse and vibrant world that everyone and anyone would love to escape to."

But after leaving the book and having a less-than-amicable relationship with the hierarchy at Marvel at the time the two decided that, "it was time to go and do our own book, telling stories the way we wanted," recalls Dezago.

"Over the course of one long telephone conversation on a Sunday afternoon, Tellos was born. A high-adventure fantasy with bold and unique characters seemingly trapped in a battle between good and evil, but there was something more going on behind the scenes."

From there, Wieringo assembled the creative team that included colourist and letterer Paul Mounts and inker Nathan Massengill. Massengill had to leave because of other commitments and Rob Stull stepped in.

Indeed, the artistic team has produced some of the most colourful and breathtaking work on the market.

It is, says Dezago, Tellos's strength.

"I feel like I'm the luckiest guy in the world being able to work with such an incredible artist like Mike He makes my imagination come to life and adds so much more to this world we've created," he said. "And obviously, Paul Mounts' colours don't hurt either."

Continued on page 70



Among the mysteries that will be uncovered, says Dezago are where did Tom go after Tellos 7, where did that Genie originally come from, and what's that design

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Claremont

with Claremont on the X-Men.

"I think that's great, I'm always looking to see what angle an artist is taking and if he can clue me in a little bit on his interpretation of the character, that helps me out a lot."

It should be noted that, since the interview, Marvel has launched its Ultimate X-Men title.

The new book pares down the team to a more-manageable group.

Claremont, on the other hand, has taken over writing duties on X-Treme X-Men.

The cast for the first issue consists of Storm, Rogue, Psylocke, Beast, Bishop, Thunderbird and a new character named Sage

Besides keeping track of his mutants, Claremont also serves as Marvel's editorial director. In that guise, he oversees the Marvel universe to ensure that storylines from the various books don't step on each others toes.

New readers

After so many years and so many stories, there is an expectation among fans when they see Claremont's name on the title page.

"It depends on which fans you talk to and what kind of mood they're in," Claremont said

"Some fans have an expectation based on my early days with the X-Men, others have prejudice that a Chris Claremont story represents a certain mode of writing a certain approach to characters that they either like

or dislike. The old joke is that I could write a silent story and still be accused of over-writing.

"But I think that's true of anyone who has been around for awhile and has a track record.

"We all get pigeon-holed by the assumptions of the audience."

Adding to these expectations is the fact the audience has become older and knows the books better than younger readers. As arguably Marvel's flagship title, the X-Men are key to attracting the younger readers the company needs.

"We're just not bringing in the new readers," he said. "Any publishing company needs to bring in new readers to survive."

In his role as editorial director, Claremont's goal was to strengthen the editorial

product as much as possible. It's a goal he believes has been achieved.

X-Treme X-Men, which Claremont has described as a high-adventure, big-time-romance book, will give him and artist Salvador Larocca an opportunity to introduce the characters and concepts to the widest spectrum of readers and, perhaps, tap into the younger crowd the company seeks

Admittedly, Claremont's duties as editorial director left little time to pursue his writing, either for comic book or novel. Still his level of involvement in so many projects is awe-inspiring.

"Chris has so much energy even after writing all these stories, it still amazes me," said Kubert. ☆



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RECOMMENDED READING

Looking at the racks upon racks upon racks of comic books until you're catonic? Can't decide what will give you the biggest bang for your hard-earned buck?

Here's what some of our experts have been suggesting to their customers

"Ultimate Spider-Man. The writing is getting better and the story is exciting. I hope this will be the turn-around for comics."

Jeff Smith
The Comic Hunter

"All the Ultimate titles are wonderful."

Pat Thompson
8th Street Books and Comics

"Transmetropolitan is rock solid with quality writing and artwork. It has most everything you look for."

James
The Comic Cave

"The JLA. The storyline has been excellent"

Gordon Frew
Triple Play Cards and Comics

Also mentioned:

100 Bullets
Danger Girl
Rising Star
The Authority
Top 10
Superboy
Blade of the Immortal
Gross-Gen titles

Stay away from:

Daredevil
"Big disappointment."

Gerry Macdonald
Phoenix Comics & Books

In April ... be here for:
Stuart Immonen...Todd McFarlane
... Tim Devins...Dean Motter

PARSEC'S Top 10 Countdown

These are the top selling books in Canada, according to a national survey of retailers. To find out who's taking part in the survey, please see page 98

#1 Ultimate X-Men 2

Duh...
Story: Mark Millar
Art: Adam Kubert
Inks: Isanove



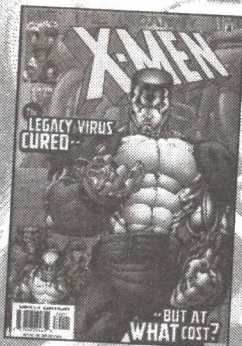
#6 Punisher 11

Story: Garth Ennis
Pencils: Steve Dillon
Inks: Jimmy Palmiotti



#2 Ultimate Spider-Man

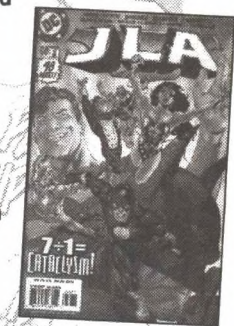
Again, duh...
Story: Brian Michael Bendis
Art: Mark Bagley
Inks: Art Thibert



#7 JLA 50

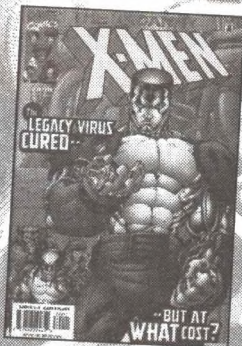
Landmark issue... with so many artists and inkers, what else could it be?

Story: Mark Waid
Pencils: Bryan Hitch, Phil Jimenez, Ty Templeton, Doug Mahnke, Mark Pajjarillo
Inks: Paul Neary, Kevin Nowlan, Drew Geraci, Walden Wong



#3 X-Men 390

Ditto
Story: Scott Lobell
Pencils: Salvador Larroca
Inks: Various



#8 Avengers 37

Wicked spells and new leaders...

Story: Kurt Busiek
Pencils: Steve Epting
Inks: Al Vey



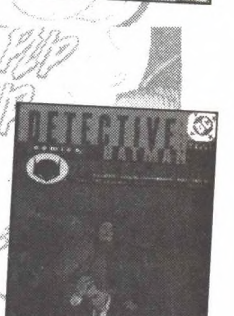
#4 Spawn

100
Time doesn't diminish sales
Story: Brian Holguin
Art: Greg Capullo
Inks: Danny Miki
Todd McFarlane



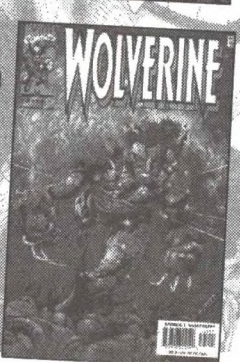
#9 100 Bullets

Story: Brian Azzarello
Pencils: Eduardo Risoi



#5 Wolverine

159
Assassins and more assassins
Story: Frank Tieri
Pencils: Sean Chen
Inks: Norm Rapmund



#10 Detective 754

The Commish is down...
Story: Munzio Defilippis
Art: Mike Collins
Inks: Jesse Delperdang and Steve Bird



The findings of a grand experiment

THE ABDICATION OF POPE MARY III

Darth Vader's booming voice, still the network's trademark 600 years after its founding: "This is CNN."

And then the news anchor: "Our top story: Pope Mary III abdicated this morning.

Giancarlo DiMarco, our correspondent in Vatican City, has the details. Giancarlo?"

"Thanks, Lisa. The unprecedented has indeed happened: after 312 years of service, Pope Mary III stepped down today.

Traditionally, the conclave of Roman Catholic cardinals waits 18 days after the death of a pope before beginning deliberations to choose a successor, but Mary — who has returned to her birth name of Sharon Cheung — is alive and well, and so the members of the conclave have already been sealed inside the Vatican Palace, where they will remain until they've chosen Mary's replacement.

Although no new pope has been elected for over 300 years, the traditional voting method will be used. We are now watching the Sistine Chapel for the smoke that indicates the ballots have been burned following a round of voting. And — Lisa, Lisa, it's happening right now! There's smoke coming out, and — no, you can hear the disappointment of the crowd.

It's black smoke; that means no candidate has yet received the required majority of two-thirds plus one. But we'll keep watching."

"Thank you, Giancarlo. Let's take a look at Pope Mary's press conference, given earlier today."

Tight shot on Mary, looking only a tenth of her four hundred years: "Since Vatican IV reaffirmed the principle of papal infallibility," she said, "and since I now believe that I was indeed in error 216 years ago when I issued a bill instructing Catholics to reject the evidence of the two

Benmergui experiments, I feel compelled to step down ..."

☆☆☆

"We're joined now in studio by Joginder Singh, professor of physics at the University of Toronto. Dr. Singh, can you explain the Benmergui experiments for our viewers?"

"Certainly, Lisa," said Singh. "The first proved that John Cramer's transactional interpretation of quantum mechanics, proposed in the late 20th century, is in fact correct."

"And that means ...?"

"It means that the many-worlds interpretation is flat-out wrong: new parallel universes are not spawned each time a quantum event could go multiple ways. This is the one and only extant iteration of reality."

"And Dr. Benmergui's second experiment?"

"It proved the current cycle of creation was only the — seventh — such ever; just six other big-bang/big-crunch oscillations preceded our current universe. The combined effect of these two facts led directly to Pope Mary's crisis of faith, specifically because they proved the existence of — one might as well use the word — God."

"How? I'm sure our viewers are scratching their heads ..."

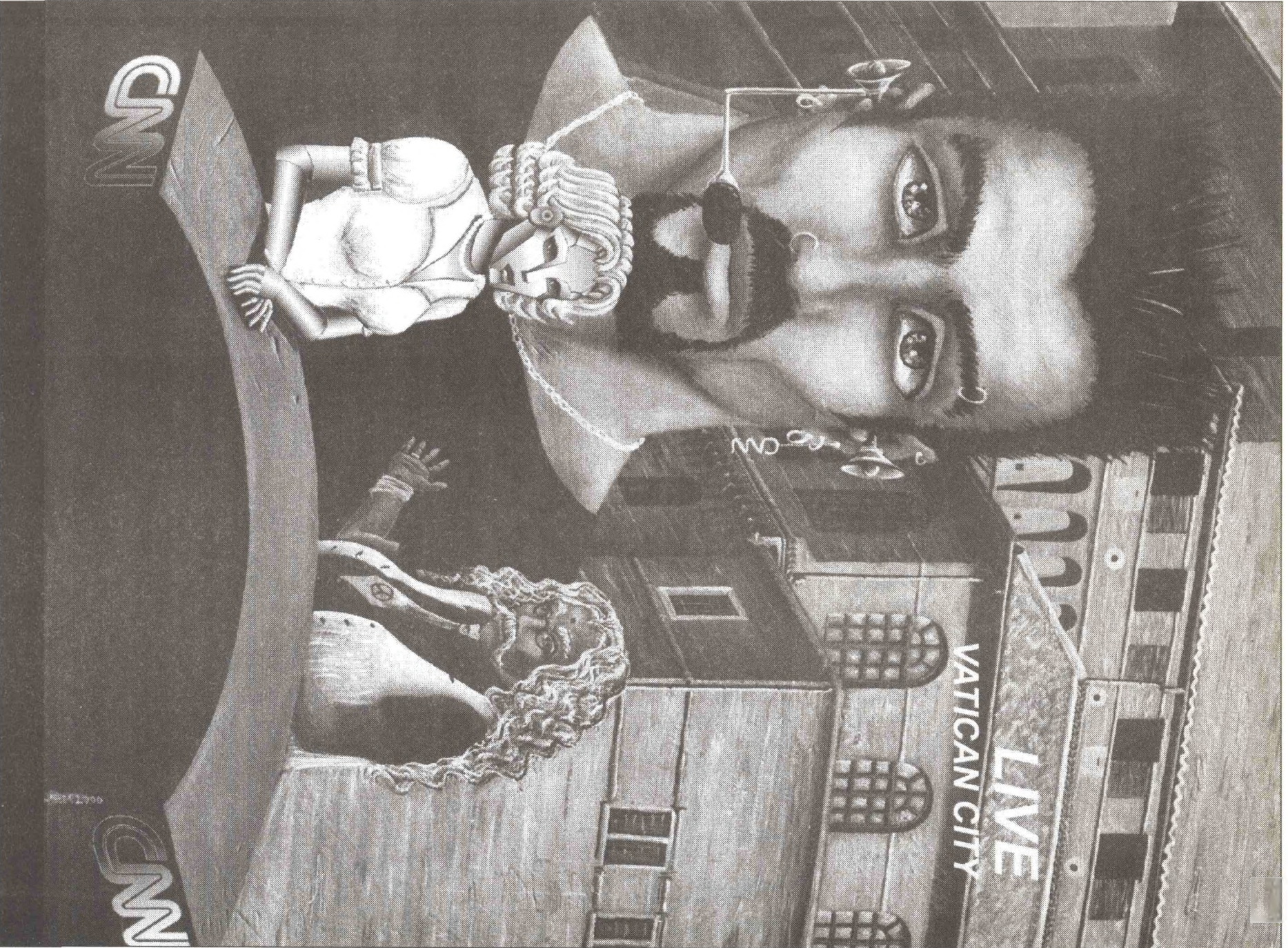
"Well, you see, the observation, dating back to the 20th century, that the fundamental parameters of the universe seem fine-tuned to an almost infinite degree specifically to give rise to life, could previously be dismissed as a statistical artifact caused by the existence of many contemporaneous parallel universes or a multitude of previous ones. In all of that, every possible combination would crop up by chance, and so it wouldn't be remarkable that there was a universe like this one — one in which the force of gravity is just strong enough to allow stars and planets to coalesce but not just a little bit stronger, causing the universe to collapse long before life

Story by

Robert J. Sawyer

Art by

Joanne Hansen



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The industry and the readership has changed since their days on Spider Man.

But not enough, says Dezago.

“I think that the landscape of comics has broadened a bit allowing for more stories other than the dark and brooding to get some exposure. But I think that the grim and gritty stuff is still dominant in the field and, to an extent, is stifling some of those other styles and genres.”

One of the unique aspects of *Tellos* is that its story has, judging by letters in its back pages, struck a very personal chord with readers.

Dezago isn't too surprised by the reaction. “When writing a tale like *Tellos*, one that deals with such concepts as the sadness of death and loss and the joys of life, it's something that everyone can relate to on one level or another,” he explained. “We've all experienced loss and, hopefully, joy. To know that the way we told our story touched someone personally is the most rewarding thing about storytelling.”

As gratifying as telling these stories are, it is also difficult for the Dezago and Wieringo. Smaller publishers face the same problems as the giants — fewer readers and fewer dollars.

“The comics industry is in pretty rough shape right now and, sadly, can't support all of the comic books that are being published every month,” Dezago said. “Mike and I have to pay out several thousand dollars per issue of *Tellos* to get the work done and hope that we make enough back when the orders come in to pay for it all! Sometimes we just barely make it...sometimes not.”

Still, the freedom to pursue their own creative drives and to tell their own stories balances off the uncertainty they face in the publishing world.

“The people who let us know that someone out there is really enjoying what we're doing!,” Dezago says of the best part of producing the book. “People who tell us that they loved the adventure ... and can't wait to visit *Tellos* again.” ☆

Katsulas

While he took great joy in developing his *Babylon 5* persona, the same cannot be said for his guest spots on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

There he played the Romulan commander Tomalak in three episodes of the series.

While he enjoyed working on the series, Romulans were so ensconced in *Star Trek* lore and because Tomalak was a secondary figure, there was no opportunity for him to delve into the character and flesh him out.

“I would have loved to open the various layers to him,” Katsulas recalls.

He has also tackled more mainstream dramatic turns in such television shows as *Jake and the Fatman*, *Murder, She Wrote* and *The Equalizer*. In film, although he has a sizeable resume, Katsulas is perhaps most recognizable as the one-armed man in *The Fugitive*.

While some in the theatre may believe that Katsulas had sold out in pursuing a film and television career, he explains that he is simply trying a different aspect of acting.

“There are all the challenges of acting in front of a camera, the audience is not at the back of the theatre, but they're as close as the lens of the camera.”

After almost five years of wearing the makeup, Katsulas was pleased with his character's progression at the hands of J. Michael Straczynski.

“Joe was always closing one door and opening a new door,” Katsulas said.

“He did that with the question of Lyta Alexander and what G'Kar was going to do with his spirituality and his rejection of politics.

“He was left in a certain way of starting a new life, I could have gone on another five years playing the new possibilities

“I felt fulfilled in all that we had done up to that point, but I also felt kind of disappointed that I'll never get to know all the values and colours that might have gone on from there.”

La Selva

series — Majel Roddenberry.

“She can just go back and talk about everything,” La Selva said. “She says, ‘Yeah, Gene wanted to do this and Gene wanted to do that’.

“It's really extraordinary and the great thing is that she doesn't wallow in the past.

“Majel has come from such a background in sci-fi and now she's forging ahead with what she wants to do.”

Despite the talks between the two, Roddenberry is hesitant to offer her views on the character of Zo'or. Instead, she allows La Selva to put her spin in her character.

Before signing on with *Earth: Final Conflict*, La Selva guest-starred in such television series as *TekWar* — where she missed out on meeting William Shatner, a high point for any *Star Trek* fan — *Kung Fu*, *Spenser*, *Secret Service*, *Forever Knight*, *Top Cops* and *Comics*.

Her parents were costumers for the Stratford Festival and knew the pitfalls of the profession and didn't want their daughter to enter the theatre as a career.

“They thought it was a hard life and thought I'd never have any money and they didn't want me to experience that disappointment,” she explained.

Still, growing up in Stratford isn't likely to stifle any inclinations toward pursuing a life in the theatre.

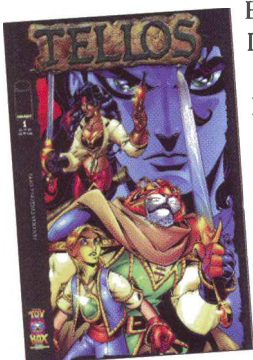
After she received a degree in English and drama at the University of Toronto, La Selva moved to England to study at The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts during the late '80s.

She has had her share of disappointments, but La Selva also has an extensive background in the theater which includes more than 25 stage credits.

She also shot a failed television pilot, *Second Coming* based on SCTV.

There she played a producer trying to manage a group of comedians.

“It was really fun, but it didn't get picked up, which is really a drag.”



could have developed. Likewise the value of the strong nuclear force, which holds atoms together, seems finely tuned, as do the thermal properties of water, and on and on."

"So our universe is a very special place?"

Although no new pope has been elected for over 300 years, the traditional voting method will be used

"Exactly. And since, as Kathryn Benmergui proved, this is the — only — current universe, and one of just a handful that have ever existed, then the life-generating properties of the very specific fundamental constants that define reality are virtually impossible to

explain except as the results of deliberate design."

"But then why would Pope Mary resign? Surely if science has proven the existence of a creator ...?"

Singh smiled.

"Ah, but that creator is clearly not the God of the Bible or the Torah or the Qur'an. Rather, the creator is a physicist, and we are one of his or her experiments. Science hasn't reconciled itself with religion; it has — superseded — it, and ...

"I'm sorry to interrupt, Dr. Singh, but our reporter in Vatican City has some breaking news. Giancarlo, over to you ..."

"Lisa, Lisa — the incredible is happening. At first I thought they were just tourists coming out of the Sistine Chapel, but they're not — I recognize Fontecchio and Leopardi and several of the others. But none of them are wearing robes; they're in street clothes. I haven't taken my eyes off the chapel: there's been no plume of white smoke, meaning they haven't elected a new leader of the church. But the cardinals — are — coming out. They're coming outside, heading into St. Peter's Square. The crowd is stunned, Lisa — it can only mean one thing ..."

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A Story by
Lini Richarda Grol

Everybody in the village knew Nathaniel as Nathan of the flowers. He grew up in the old house his late grandfather had built for his bride, and as an only son had shared with his ailing parents, of whom he had taken care until they died...

Then he lived there alone, utterly alone.

An awkward, gangly, shy and unassuming man.

People liked him, at least...sort of..they did not really think too much of or about him.

"Oh he's really all right, Nathan is..." they said with a shrug.

"Yes, but a bit strange," a second said.

A third said without malice, "But not very bright."

Then almost ashamed of being caught at gossip they added hastily, "But he's a good man."

"Yes, and a trusted hard worker."

Then the third lady said kindly, "And he took mighty good care of his old folks."

Assuring each other that actually they liked him, though they didn't ever invite him to their homes. Somehow, he just did not fit in with them.

Though if they would have been asked why, they would have been at a loss to find an exact reason why they did feel that Nathan was not one of

them. After all, they all were more or less the same except for the doctor, the pharmacist and of course the swanky folks of the manor who did not count anyway, living mostly in the city and never mingling with the townfolk.

As for material property, or education, that did not make much difference one way or another they would have said, for there was only one school in town in those days, and not even a highschool, and few of them went that far.

But in some ways Nathan was smarter than many of them, for he knew about the soil, the weather and the growing seasons of plants and flowers, yes even their Latin names. As an introvert and only child he had found his pleasure in reading...and of course...mostly about flowers.

When people heard about his knowledge they shrugged and said, "Well, he should know. He loves flowers and grew up with his father and grandfather who all their lives had grown flowers."

They too loved flowers, and knew about them. As if loving plants and knowing about them went hand-in-hand. Well, maybe they were right.

Actually, Nathan knew much more than anyone realized, for being shy and withdrawn he never spoke unless he was spoken to. And that was mostly about the price of his plants. That was especially early in the spring when they came to his house to buy his box plants, knowing they were the best one could buy. Better still, he sold them at a modest price. Leaving him only a

marginal profit for all his work.

People took that for granted. Yes, and why not? He enjoyed working with plants and he had such a hand with them, especially with flower plants. His Petunias, Impatiens and Chrysanthemums graced every yard and windowsill in the town.

In between, he was much in demand as a handyman, doing odd jobs around town in homes and farms. He was a hard worker, dependable and one whom one could trust.

One unforgettable day he was asked to help out at the Manor. Few people had ever been inside the Manor which as a rule had staff a plenty.

This time was different, it was to be a graduation and engagement party for Felicia, the oldest daughter who had studied abroad. She would bring her young man and her many friends from far and wide for this grand feast. The whole village was a-stir when word went out that they would be included in this big event at the Manor. This was going to be one big bash with garden parties, barbecues, fancy dinners, entertainment of all sorts and even fireworks. This was going to be a feast such as the town had never seen. That's why they had asked the townspeople for help, and lucky for Nathan, he was one of them.

He had to be neat and tidy, and in time before the guests arrived. And so he wandered wide-eyed through the large and rich house until he ended up in the

He drew in a last deep breath of the salt-scented air, took one last look at the technology that was his only link to his own kind, and prepared to make history.

large wintergarden annex to the house. He had never seen anything like this...there was so much to see. He looked around at all he saw with obvious delight. He had only seen orchids in his plant books, but here they were as if reaching out to him, with their flower-laden branches in soft mauve and deep velvety wine red..., soft yellow and white. He held his breath as he drank in all their beauty.

He admired them not only for their colours but for their elegance, though he would never have used such a word for flowers or for anyone or anything. But he was excited by their composition, their trailing branches with exquisite flowers, that dreamily made him reach out to gently touch a stem to make it move ever so lightly.

A strange emotion took hold of him. He wanted to take them and carry them home... He had never felt this strongly about anything in life... Yes he loved his flowers, but these flowers were so different of all those he had ever known and grown. As in a dream, he stared at them...drinking in their beauty and totally forgetting where he was and why he was there.

Suddenly, a harsh voice startled him back to reality. "What are you doing there...Go to the entrance hall...Get to work quick..."

Nathan nodding wordlessly, turned and went.

But while he carried luggage up the winding high stairs he thought of the orchids he had seen, which had reached out to him, and he knew that one day he would have them. At least have one or two...for he knew that they were exotic and therefore very expensive.

That night while he served and milled in the festive crowd, he hardly noticed the beauty of his surrounding, nor the girls in their elegant attire, nor the sparkling jewelry, but he noticed at once the orchids in their corsages. And he cringed when he saw how they were squashed in the dancing and later at the end of the feat carelessly abandoned. He wish he could take them home to care for them and return them to their former beauty. But of course he had to leave them where they were, in the wastebasket or on the floor.

When late that night he finally went home he decided to go by bus to the big city where, he had already found out, he could buy such exciting plants.

The next evening the villagers were surprised when they saw Nathan climb from the bus hugging a few well wrapped potted plants. They nor Nathan knew that these plants would change his life and stir up the town.

At home he carefully unwrapped his precious orchid plants and smiled when he looked at their small buds. He visualized them already in bloom...with a branch of soft mauve and deep red intricate flowers of such beauty as he had never grown.

It was not long before the curious villagers dropped by to find out about his undue trip to the big city. And to their surprise were shown into his parlor to see his exotic flowers that now indeed just started to bloom.

They saw a different Nathan, unknown to them, for he was happy and talkative. In his joy, naively telling them about his new-found beauty. "I am so glad you came to see my flowers, aren't they lovely?" His customers of the down-to-earth-flowers looked baffled at his strange flowers, then at him and marveled at his excitement about them.

"Yes...Yes...nice..." they said in an offhanded way, then asked, "Where are the Mums?"...or such familiar old time flowers.

"Yes I have them still," he said, still smiling leading them out of the house and to his familiar flower garden. The exotic flowers he kept in the house on the windowsill of his parlor, a strange place to be on a week day, and where he nor his parents seldom if ever had spent a whole day without visitors or higher standing like the minister or the doctor...a lawyer or at best an important stranger. It had never been home to them nor him, but now he came there a few times every day to tend and admire his treasured orchids. Because of its large windows it was the only place for his precious flowers.

Now the villagers had something else to talk about...

"Did you see his crazy flowers? And in the parlor if you please..."

"That parlor with pictures of his grandparents and his parents. They must be turning over in their grave that he uses their parlor for his flowers."

"And he lets everyone in to see them flower." Frowning.

"Vanity...sheer vanity..." a thin lipped one of them said. "It's not proper for common folks to have such flowers. Plain sinful. A waste of money on such flowers."

"Pride I say...False pride...it will bring him to fall," yet another chuckled condescendingly.

"But what's he going to do with them? Who'll ever buy them? Not me."

They shook their heads in unison. They agreed that no one in his right mind would buy these expensive flowers. No one...Except one lady, a newcomer to the town who timidly said, "I'd buy them if I could afford them."

Only to be snorted at.

"Who needs them. We're quite happy with our Impatiens and Snapdragons, thank you very much."

Their cold stare made the newcomer quietly slink away...They watched her leave and nodded, and scoffed, "No need to encourage such vanity."

Word went out that Nathan had gone again to the big city for more of these strange plants. The villagers became angrier with him with every new addition, which he always proudly showed to all who asked about them, and even to some who did not.

Then one day the tale made the rounds. "Have you heard? He doesn't work on the farm anymore. All he does is grow orchids that no one wants."

Whenever they met in the street they had a new tale about him. "He has built a real greenhouse for all those orchids."

"Even that parlor was too small," they scoffed.

"Or not good enough," snapped another.

They shook their heads at his conduct.

"He should have fixed up the house his great-grandpa built. Look at it, it's a disgrace, needs paint..."

Their voices grew sharper by the day.

"His late parents, bless their souls, have spoiled him. Now they are dead, he is lost...Does what he likes and wastes their hard-earned money, and squanders it on foolishness."

One young woman said pensively, "But he has a right...and they are mighty pretty these flowers, I like them they are very special..."

The others looked at her with disgust. She sounded almost as if she understood his love for those exotic flowers. Who is she anyway?

No one else approved of his choice, no one asked what he planned to do with these flowers or with the rest of his life. If they had asked him, this new Nathan would have smiled and have said in his soft but now cheerful voice, "I'll grow lots of these orchids to sell and make many people happy with them, just as happy as I am." And he'd explain in detail. "They are so cheerful. Like a row of butterflies or hummingbirds clinging to a branch...Almost as if they are ready to take off."

That's how Nathan would have talked.

But no one ever asked Nathan anything but the price of his flowers. The usual ones they had always on their windowsills or in their front yards.

Then hearing of his trip to the Orchid Fair in the big city, they were even more irked, and fumed again. Such an utter waste of money for a working man like him. Is not our country fair good enough for him? Where good and healthy fruit and vegetables are shown, and so many of us have won prizes...

People come from far and wide...and say it is the best...But not Nathan, he has to go by bus to the big city...to pay big money to see more useless expensive flowers.

The villagers watched him with thin lips when gingerly he stepped from the bus, and with a little smile hugging some

potted plants. By the expression on his face they could tell what so protectively he was holding in his arms.

"Look at him... PAH...More waste of money."

Slowly his greenhouse filled with his exotic plants. Strong leaved plants with one single flower on a sturdy stem, others like a frail vine with seven tiny yellow and white birdlike flowers sitting almost shoulder to shoulder, like birds on a cold day before taking off for another place.

He rejoiced with every new plant bursting from bud to bloom, but was especially proud when his favourite plant bloomed, with exquisite flowers in mauve and purple crowding on the frail stem.

His voice grew soft in wonder when he talked about his flowers and their strange beauty, and he was delighted if people showed the least bit of interest, to tell them about the special features and the whereabouts of a special orchid.

He was not aware that some people were annoyed when he, ever enthused, drew their attention to his treasured orchids. Grudgingly they had to admit, "Oh they are pretty all right..." but then added spitefully, "But they won't buy you a loaf of bread."

Then behind cupped hands they'd whisper to each other, "Look at the man, poorly neglected he is. Downright shoddy."

"And what has he done with his parents' furniture?"

"Sold it no doubt to buy more of these plants."

They were partly right, for he had sold some of the furniture. But not only for plants, also for a heater and fuel.

One day when a peddler had wandered in and had offered him money for some of his old chairs, and an old dresser, he had right away accepted. When one of his visitors demanded to know where his furniture had gone he told them blithely, "Sold it. Needed the money for a heater and fuel for the new greenhouse. Orchids have to be kept warm in winter."

When the news of the sold furniture and the heater was shared at their next gathering, there was an outcry. "What? And his parents had to do with one wood stove, as we all do even today. He and

his crazy plants. What next?

They all had something to say, and none too kindly. Only that newcomer, the odd woman out, dared to defend him. "Nathan has brought a special beauty to this town, and I am glad that he let us share in this beauty."

But no one listened to her, this newcomer the only one who truly appreciated his gift.

In the meantime, Nathan spent all his time in the greenhouse and at this time of the year without another income, his modest work capital had dwindled. He had not sold one single orchid plant, not even to the people in the town who could well afford them. He was broke and had to do something.

Tired and discouraged he sat down on the oak rocking chair, the only comfortable chair left to him. He thought of the few valuable items that so far he had not wanted to sell. If only some people would buy some of his orchid plants, not only the off-shoots which he had grown, but even his favourite plants now in full bloom.

He was desperate. He needed money for fuel and food. The winter had come too early and was harsher than ever. To keep the house and the greenhouse warm so much fuel was needed. He had to save his orchids, for one of these days people would come and buy them and make it all worthwhile. To save fuel, and to be closer to his plants, he decided to move into his greenhouse. He slept in a sleeping bag on the floor. He ate but it was not much.

And one day, he was at his bitter end.

He had nothing left to eat, and he was afraid that before long his fuel would run out, and that would be the end of his orchids. He sighed when he went to his parents' room, which never had changed and where his father's gold watch still rested on the bedside table. He felt a bit guilty for taking it to the pawnshop, but at least he would be able to buy it back, if and when he'd made money with his orchids. If not, there was always the spring when the villagers would come for their garden plants.

But the winter went on with a vengeance. He felt heavy-hearted when for a second time he went to his parents' room. There was on the beside table his mother's treasure, the old family Bible

with the silver locks.

He stroked the leather and recalled with how much reverence she had handled and read the Holy Book. She had made it a tradition before Easter to polish its silver locks, and gently rubbed its cover with special oil. He sighed and hung his head.

He knew she would have protested. He looked pleadingly at her wedding picture and pleaded in a soft voice. "But I need the money...It's only for a while..." as if she could hear him. His heart was heavy when he wrapped the big Bible into a soft cloth, and went to the pawnshop. The pawnbroker whistled appreciatively when he unwrapped the book.

"This Bible would fetch you a lot of money," he said trying the locks.

"It's not for sale," Nathan said. "I'll be back for it in the spring."

"Well, keep it in mind," the pawnbroker said. "I have connections and can help get you the best price for it."

"Thank you..." Nathan said wanly. He would never sell that Bible. He was sure he'd manage now until the spring flower sale.

It seemed hardly possible but the harsh winter was still getting worse when the wind drove the temperatures to double digits below zero. His glass greenhouse without insulation, ran through the fuel faster than he had expected, and he had only a few sales for the usual common plants. Then the snow fell knee high, and no one came anymore for plants of any sort. Nor came anyone to show concern about Nathan's well being.

And why should they? He had always been withdrawn and self-sufficient, and everyone had a difficult time coping with this harsh and long winter.

One day though, at the inn, some men marveled about Nathan. And one of them said putting down his beer, "Wonder how Nathan's doing with his strange flowers."

They were down-to-earth men who could not understand Nathan's recent involvement with all his strange flowers.

Another said, wiping the foam from his mouth with the back of his hand, "I hear he sold his father's gold watch for them flowers."

And a third added with obvious disdain, "And as well his ancestors' Bible with the silver locks on it. There was no other like it in town. Downright sinful it is."

Perplexed, the men stared at each other at this news.

What? How could he? Selling the family Bible? It was 180 years old. His folks brought it from the old country."

And a thrice removed nephew with greedy eyes, who had never visited Nathan, shouted with a shrill voice, "He had no right to do that. That Bible is a family heirloom. It has to stay in the family...meaning of course his..."

Then an Elder from the old church spoke sharply. "If it comes to that, that Bible should go to our parish. Our church was built by the first settlers and one of them was his great-grandfather. Therefore our church that is where that Bible should be." His voice rose in anger. "Who knows what guy in the city is hassling it off at a high price to an ungodly scoundrel."

They were all disgusted with Nathan about the loss for the village of that precious old Bible.

No one was in the least concerned about Nathan and wondered about the reason for pawning. And not even selling his Bible. That Sunday afternoon over cake and coffee, families visited and talked about Nathan's depravity in selling his Holy family Bible to an ungodly man in the city, and that for his detestable passion for those strange flowers.

Their women, shaking their heads, added their view on Nathan. Their sharp voices rose in anger when they said, "So it has come to that. He loves these flowers more than the Holy Book...more than the memory of his good parents. Mammon more than God. He is friends with Satan. No wonder we don't see him in church anymore."

Oh they said much more in their contempt for Nathan.

Their children listened wide-eyes and whispered to each other, "He'll go to hell on a broomstick that Nathan, for he's sold his soul to the devil and Satan."

Then they giggled...Hee, it rhymed. They said and they repeated it for the fun of it, and giggled some more.

Then, tired of listening to their parents talk, they ran from the house to roll in the snow and have a snowball fight. The older ones called on their friends, the smaller ones hung back to build a snowman or fort or make snowballs. The older ones raced each other down the road shouting and throwing snowballs at each other or at a passer-by. They had started out seven or eight of them, in ages from 12 to 16 years. They ran from road to road, shouting nonsense at each other as boys will do, but as time went on, one after the other ran home. Finally, only two went on crisscrossing the road throwing snowballs, still shouting at each other.

They were the sons of the thrice-removed nephew of Nathan, and now they ran into the direction of Nathan's old farmhouse and nursery that sat way back from the road. Had they unconsciously planned to come this way?

Who knows.

AS if by agreement they ran to the house rambunctiously shouting, "NATHAN...NATHAN..." before they threw a hard snowball at one of the windows. Their snowballs were as hard as ice for they had kneaded them with their strong hot hands. Panes broke and clattered down on the hard frozen ground. The sound of the breaking glass excited them and it roused in them a strange hatred and lust to hurt and break more glass...to hear more glass shatter and clatter on the ground. They looked around and saw a pile of stones frozen solid, but they pried them loose, and angrily threw them at doors and windows while they shouted out the refrain, "Nathan...Nathan..you sold your soul to Satan."

They expected him to come for them, and were on the ready to run if he would come out and chase after them. But there was only silence, except the calls of birds in the high trees around the old house.

Again they drove down to grab stones and threw with more force and fury and they shrieked with devilish joy when the windows broke and the glass shattered and clattered to the frozen ground. They got more and more excited, pointing and aiming for the windows. There...and there...there...they shouted and threw stones encircling the house and repeating their rhyme.

Yet they kept watchful and almost anxiously hoping to see

an angry Nathan at the door come racing after them with his long legs. That would be exciting and fun...

But when they waited and listened between throws there was only the tinkle of glass. Then on they went till all the windows in the house were broken and they were back to where they had started their destruction.

They listened in vain for a response to their actions. Their rage not fully spent, they looked with a devilish joy at the ravage, and snorted like wild young horses, and in agreement that Nathan deserved this and hell as well.

Their eyes questioned each other. What else can we do? "The greenhouse...Yes...And with renewed fury they wrenched stones from the heap to aim from a distance at the greenhouse. They stopped to listen, then throwing the last stone, said annoyed, "Where is the bum? Why doesn't he come?"

"Maybe in the city for more crazy plants? It would have been fun if he'd come racing after us, all the way home."

They grinned and the elder one scoffed, "Then Dad could have told him a thing or two."

"Anyway, he'll be surprised when he gets home."

Finally, their fury and frenzy spent, they wiped their hands on their jackets, then tucking them in their pockets, they ambled home.

Then almost at once they forgot the ravage they had left behind on Nathan's property.

That night a bitter snowstorm drove the temperature even farther down.

But even after the longest and harshest of winters, there comes always the promise of spring and summer. As soon as the temperature rose, everyone thought of flowers for their homes or gardens and with it of Nathan, the source of their flowers for their spring and summer planting.

Now they questioned each other, why they had not seen him for such a long time.

The sun and the spring made them mild of heart and their voices were friendly and warm when they said to each other, "Let's go and see how Nathan has made out this hard winter. We haven't seen him since before Christmas at the general store when he came for groceries...Was it that long?"

The first fine spring day, half a dozen women made their way to Nathan's house. It was a yearly tradition to go on a lovely day like this to get their plants from him. The women made it an outing, taking some candies for on the road, which later they would leave with Nathan. It was a long walk from the town square, where they had gathered, but as always they were happy for they enjoyed this pilgrimage to Nathan's nursery.

Knowing their needs, and by way of welcome, he would set some out for them on the large tables in the front of his house. Laughing and talking the women exchanged the news about their family and friends.

Not gossiping mind you, just showing interest and getting by on all that had happened since last they had met.

They looked forward to seeing his flowers, yes even those outlandish ones that no one wanted.

"But we must ask him about them, maybe they are in bloom."

"He'll like that and show them to us. He is ever so proud of them."

They had forgotten that at one time they had called these flowers and his love for them, sinful.

At that moment they felt good, the sun shone and they had fun together. The world was beautiful and they saw only goodness in and around each other. And that day even those outlandish flowers were included...

They did not think of the sale of his father's gold watch, nor of the costly old Bible...They were filled with goodwill, and their purses were filled. Nathan would be so glad to see them, and to do business with them.

But when they came to Nathan's driveway they stopped and stared in shock at the trashed house and greenhouse. At their shouts for Nathan, a raccoon shot from the broken greenhouse windows. Baffled, they looked at each other, then asked to no one in particular, "Where is Nathan?"

Speechless, they wandered the grounds, and looking into the windows of the house, saw that squirrels had made it their home.

They turned to the greenhouse, and only then did they realize what had happened to Nathan.

Their hands flew to their mouths to suppress their cries when they saw Nathan's frozen body with outstretched arms over his once precious plants. It looked as if in the attack of the rocks he had tried to protect them. The stones were everywhere and still on his shoulders and between his head and his back.

Wordless for a moment they stared at Nathan, then screaming, they ran to the constable to cry hysterically that someone had killed their dear Nathan, and trashed his place. Poor...poor Nathan...They sobbed on each others' shoulders.

The constable questioned everyone, and for days people talked and marveled about the scoundrels who had killed that kind Nathan. The police said that junkies from the city must have done it. The whole village attended when they buried Nathan beside his parents, and even put Impatiens and Snapdragons on his grave. They they went back to their daily lives, and tried to forget about Nathan, his exotic flowers and cruel death. But some could not forget him.

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When the Red Haze comes all hell breaks loose

Predators

story by

Andrew Salmon

Art by

SpiffoPops

A sinister slice of moon glared down at the deserted wind-swept street.

The stately homes stood dark and quiet, while their occupants slept secure in the knowledge of their success, ability and place in the world. Each house stared with large, glass eyes at the one across from it in an eternal battle for supremacy along Advent Crescent.

Wilting under the unyielding stare, there was a small park in the middle of the half circle formed by the street. But in a tree across from one of the nicest homes, someone stared back.

Ned had been watching one particular house for four consecutive nights. He was a thin, wiry, dark-haired youth in his early twenties. His close-set eyes gleamed with an animal hunger tainted by greed. He and Charlie were going into the house tonight. Ned had watched and waited and the time was now.

Ned knew who owned the house — everyone did. Earle Vantassel was a silent partner in half of the businesses in town and owned the other half outright. The reclusive millionaire lived alone, preferring to let his empire expand through the efforts of his subordinates. The way Ned saw it, a lot of people worked a lot of hours to keep Vantassel rolling in it. It was high time the old man returned the favor by

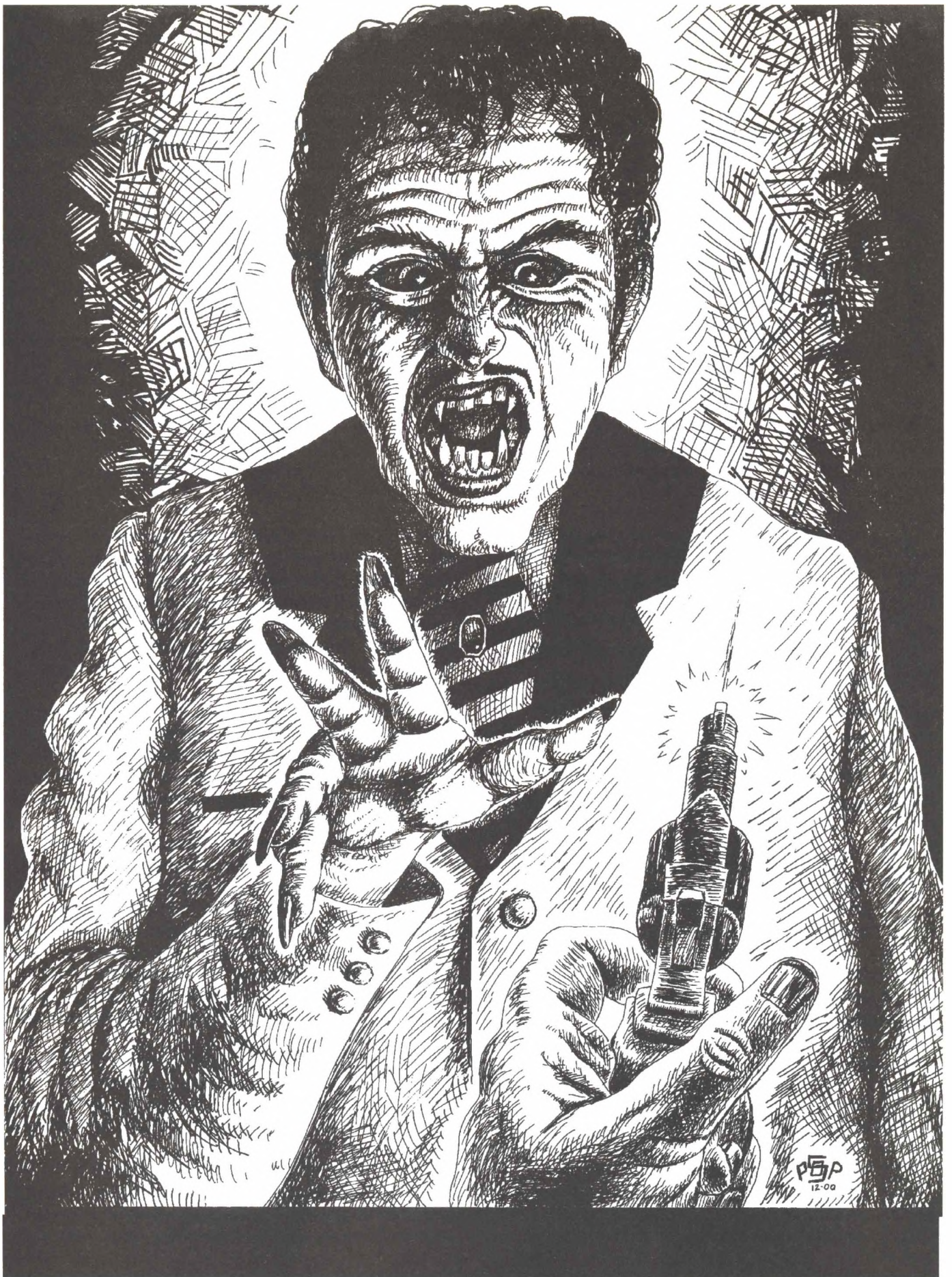
bestowing some of that wealth on the less fortunate. Ned was here for his share, that's all. For the past four nights, Ned had waited until well after dark before sliding into the park to scout the house. Every night it was the same. Around 9:30 or so, Vantassel guided his big Rolls up from the twinkling city below, through the high, iron gates and along the curving driveway. Then he ushered his guests (two streetwalkers) around to the back entrance.

This night had been no different. The Rolls had pulled in a few minutes before and now Ned could see Vantassel through the bay window. The old guy was drinking and laughing it up with two gorgeous women. Ned knew the lights would go out a little before midnight — only a rich bastard like Vantassel could afford to buy the hookers for the whole night, Ned seethed. He and Charlie had until lights out to do the job.

The media had dubbed this new rash of burglary “home invasion.” Cunning thieves had found a way around the security systems every homeowner had rushed to have installed years ago. Most neglected to arm their systems when they were home, so the best time to rob a house was when the owner was there. No alarms meant no cops. But for Ned, it meant he could take his time, have some fun. That had been his big discovery the first time he had pulled what he called a “homer.”

He got off watching those rich slobs beg, seeing the fear in their eyes, feeling it. No piles of money or board of directors gonna save you from Ned and his .45! The last job he'd pulled, it had just been him and his old bag — Charlie hadn't entered the picture yet.

Waving his gun and watching her frightened eyes watching the gun had been too much for him. The Red Haze had drifted down over his eyes and he'd forgotten where he was for a moment. When he had come to his senses, the old bag had a



bullet hole in her wrinkled forehead.

The Red Haze — the prison shrink had called his blackouts “psychotic episodes” — was the real plus for a homer. After that time with the old woman, no narcotic could equal the mad rush of the Red Haze.

Ned was feeling that familiar sensation in his lower belly. Ever since he had given up smash-and-grab day jobs, the feeling had been more intense. It had been growing in him like a cancer since he’d first laid eyes on the Vantassel estate. Ned was dying to get his hands on Vantassel. He’d make the old guy beg, no question about that.

Ned turned his mind away from that train of thought before it propelled him into the house alone. Doing something that stupid was just begging to get caught. He tried to ignore the urgent burning in his gut and wait for Charlie.

Where the hell was Charlie anyway? Ned glanced at his watch. It read quarter to eleven. Charlie worked evenings at the Boxon plant up in the east end and didn’t get off until 11 p.m.

To be perfectly honest, Ned was still uneasy about using Charlie. But he needed a back up. Going into a house while the owner was home was easy if you had two guns to control the situation. The only real danger in a homer were neighbors. What if one sees you going in? Or stops by to borrow a cup of sugar or some crap like that? Then you had a whole mess of trouble. Ned was on parole after serving a year for his last smash-and-grab. He had underestimated the response time of the police to the alarm he’d tripped and had been nailed coming out.

Playing beat the clock with alarms and doing time were two things he was through with. It was homers from now on. The risk of being spotted on this job was minimal. Advent Crescent was full of wealthy retirees in bed by 9 p.m. This fact coupled with Vantassel’s solitary lifestyle made the job irresistible. The old guy didn’t even own a dog. Charlie was just insurance.

If he ever showed up! For a moment, Ned regretted his decision that they both work their regular shifts to avoid suspicion. Ned was pumped! He wanted to go now! But if both of them skipped on the day of the job, the cops might put

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two and two together. No, he had to stick to the plan. Charlie would be along soon.

Ned turned his thoughts back to that afternoon.

It had been agony. Even now, he couldn’t understand how Rod (his boss at the Esso on Angus) or the customers had failed to notice his impatience. All day, he’d felt the Red Haze floating in his mind, just out of reach. He’d felt it seeping into his pores, making him feel powerful ... in control ... unstoppable ...”Psssst!”



Ned snapped out of it. There was someone beneath him. He glanced at his watch — 11:22! Wow! he thought. That had been a long one. While Ned had been drifting in the Red Haze, Charlie had headed stealthily into the park, leaving the heap he called transportation one block over. It was impossible to move silently over a covering of dried autumn leaves, but that was supposed to be the signal. Only Ned, already in position, would be close enough to hear his approach. But when Ned failed to give the agreed upon reply — a light tapping on the trunk of the tree he was in — Charlie had lost his bearings so had just headed for the Vantassel house.

He’d spent the last few seconds hissing like a leaky pipe at a shadow, black against the starry night sky, which he assumed was Ned.

Ned did not acknowledge him. Instead, he slithered down to where Charlie waited angrily at the base of the tree — all 300 pounds of him. The trenchcoat he wore made him look like a poorly inflated balloon with legs. His bald head gleamed in the moonlight.

Charlie began to voice his displeasure at being made to wait but a quick elbow from Ned silenced him. The last thing

Ned needed was a noisy, attention-grabbing argument which a passing police car might find interesting. Sorry officer, he heard himself explaining while an imaginary cop blinded him with a flashlight. My friend and I are collecting fireflies and were just discussing the best spot to ... Yeah, that would work.

There was no need for words. Ned had spent the last few days drilling the plan into Charlie’s thick skull. All Charlie had to remember were three simple maxims: shut up; let Ned do the talking; do what Ned says.

Silently, they crossed the street and disappeared into the shadow cast by the high wall around the Vantassel house. Ned motioned Charlie up into the sturdy oak growing alongside the wall. Charlie climbed like a bear, wrapping his arms and legs around the thick, gnarled trunk. Ned shimmied up right behind him.

The grass on the other side was golf-course short. Charlie hit the ground with a muffled “foomp.” Ned landed silently beside him. They were a short distance to the right of the bay window. Ned crept over and peered into the living room past the mass of heavy maroon drapes gathered in the corner made by the window and the wall. He watched the girls throw their heads back and laugh at some joke Vantassel had made. They were sitting on a fat, black leather sofa near the stone fireplace.

One redhead, the other brunette. Their long legs were curled under them. Both of them were half in the bag and half out of their work clothes.

Vantassel was fixing drinks at the long, mahogany bar behind the sofa. He was a man of indeterminate age. He was tall, trim, fluid in his movements. His pale skin, large grey eyes and pencil-thin moustache gave him a distinguished air.

His curly black hair — shot with grey — completed an image which men found intimidating and the opposite sex found attractive.

Ned sized Vantassel up. He looked taller than Ned had thought from watching him at a distance. Sturdier, too. Good, Ned concluded, this one'll scream loud and long.

Charlie followed Ned around back. There was a small path running between the house and the garage. Bright security lights lit up the front of the two buildings, leaving an inky blackness between them. Ned pulled the .45 out of the waist band of his jeans. Charlie dug a meaty hand into his coat pocket and pulled out the pry bar for the patio doors around back.

The patio was a dead, concrete square surrounded by a manicured lawn. Faint light from inside the house dimly lit the patio through the sliding glass doors. An overgrown tree waved long, skeletal branches over the security light perched atop the back wall, bathing the area in alternating patterns of light and darkness. Vantassel had left one of the sliding patio doors ajar to let in the cool night air. Ned pointed this out to Charlie who pocketed the pry bar then brought out the sawed-off shotgun concealed under his coat.

Sweat was pouring down from the dome of Charlie's head in tiny waterfalls even though the night was cool. His underwear felt tight and itchy. The back of his shirt was sticking to him. The three shots of Jack he'd downed for courage felt like three hot coals in his gut. Only the thought of easy money kept him focused. Working was for the birds.

Meanwhile, the Red Haze teased Ned. It danced seductively behind his eyes, making his heart thump in his scrawny chest. He felt as if he could not take a breath deep enough to fill his lungs. Clammy sweat made his skin slick beneath his clothes. He slid the door open.

Male and female laughter floated down the hallway connecting the living room to the kitchen. Ned and Charlie stood for a moment by the stove, listening. Aside from the noise in the living room, the house was quiet. There was no squeak of a floorboard or squeal

of bedspring. The only light was coming from down the hall. Satisfied, Ned clicked the safety on the .45 and launched himself up the hallway. Charlie lumbered along a step behind.

"All right!" Ned yelled as he burst into the living room. "Everyone do what I say, when I say it!"

The girls screamed, digging knuckles into their cheeks. One of them fumbled for the pepper spray in her purse, but Charlie snatched the bag out of her hand and threw it across the room.

"You don't listen so good, do ya?" Ned yelled into the terrified hooker's face. "On the floor, now!"

Ned grabbed a fistful of red hair and yanked the girl to her knees. He let go and she remained kneeling, frozen with fear. "Do you wanna die?" Ned thrust the baffle of his gun into her face. "I'll do ya right now! Get down!"

The girl collapsed onto her stomach, her pleas muffled by the thick, white carpet.

"You too, dammit!" Ned threw the brunette to the floor.

"Stop that at once!" Vantassel shouted. There was a hint of authority in his anxious tone. "Violence is uncalled for."

Ned whirled on Vantassel. He rushed up to him and shoved the barrel of his gun into the old man's left cheek. Ned could feel the Red Haze coming closer. So, Mr. Big Shot likes to give orders.

"I'll say what's called for, old fossil. Understand?"

"I will not resist," Vantassel replied quickly, dropping his gaze.

"Damn right you won't," Ned replied. Then over his shoulder, "Charlie watch the whores."

It was all Charlie could do to tear his eyes off them and nod.

"Please do not harm my guests," Vantassel said, uneasily.

"I'll do what I want, when I want," Ned announced. "Now, I want money! Jewellery! All you got!"

"Yes, anything," Vantassel replied, sliding a hand into his pocket. This action drew a shove of Ned's gun deeper into his cheek.

"My billfold," he explained.

Ned grabbed the wallet out of his

hands, greed making his eyes bulge. A quick glance inside revealed a sheaf of bills with lots of zeroes. He shoved it into a jacket pocket.

"You gotta have a safe, old man," Ned said. "Let's go find it."

"I don't ..."

Ned cocked the gun.

"All right, this way," Vantassel said, holding up his right hand placatingly while gesturing with the left.

"Smart, old man."

Vantassel stepped away from Ned's gun and strode quickly up the hall. Ned followed right behind.

He's a cold one, thought Ned, staring at the old guy's back. Ned felt agitated. They'd made a rich score but it wasn't

An overgrown tree waved long, skeletal branches over the security light perched atop the back wall, bathing the area in alternating patterns of light and darkness. Vantassel had left one of the sliding patio doors ajar to let in the cool night air.

going like he'd planned. His belly was an inferno. Adrenaline was coursing through him. The Red Haze was taunting him, making him want to lash out, kill. For the last few days, he had fantasized about smashing his gun into Vantassel's high-and-mighty face the second he put up a fight. Ned had been sure the old man would resist. He looked the type to get all outraged and start barking orders the minute they came through the door. Now, Vantassel was rolling over and playing dead. Ned felt cheated.

Vantassel led him into the den. It was a large room. Stacks of books along one wall, towering over a bulky oak desk, same heavy drapes as the living room. The safe was set in the wall behind the desk and concealed by a false panel. Vantassel spun the dial with the efficiency of long practice. The last tumbler clicked. He opened the door.

"Sweet Jesus!" Ned gasped at the

Ned barely heard Vantassel. His voice was smothered in the roar of blood in Ned's ears. Everything tilted crazily for a moment — the room, Vantassel, Charlie, the women — then snapped back into sharp focus. The Red Haze had control of him.

piles of neatly stacked bills next to slim velvet cases containing necklaces, broaches and rings. With visions of a secluded hideaway north of Aiklen in his mind's eye, Ned pulled a sack out of his jacket pocket. He shoveled the contents of the safe into it.

"You have what you came for," Vantassel said from the doorway. "Now please leave."

The Red Haze was swirling behind Ned's eyes. Part of his brain was telling him it was time to saddle up and ride. But a darker, twisted part of him needed more than money to be satisfied. A lot more. It was still early. He could indulge the Red Haze and still get away clean.

"Let's go see your guests," he said, nudging Vantassel with the gun.

"Leave the women alone!" Vantassel said, betraying an urgency Ned found exciting.

"That's more like it," he thought.

Back in the living room, Charlie was staring, hypnotized, at the quivering, brown legs of the two women face down on the carpet.

"Get out of here!" Vantassel shouted, placing himself between the thieves and the women.

Ned barely heard Vantassel. His voice was smothered in the roar of blood in Ned's ears. Everything tilted crazily for a moment — the room, Vantassel, Charlie, the women — then snapped back into sharp focus. The Red Haze had control of him.

"We're gonna have a party!" he announced, his voice slurred by madness.

I warn you," Vantassel said, "if..."

"Warn me? Warn me!" Ned brought his gun down twice on Vantassel's head in a vicious slashing motion. Then he began jerking spasmodically around the room, waving the .45.

"Oh man, you just made the biggest mistake of your life!"

Without warning, Ned shot the brunette in the back of the head, spraying blood and bits of brain all over Charlie

and the redhead who began screaming hysterically.

"Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!" Ned kicked her repeatedly.

He fired again and the second girl's head splashed all over the carpet.

"Now it's your turn, old man."

"How dare you!" Vantassel hissed, appalled by the callousness of Ned's actions. His eyes blazed with rage.

"Do you have any idea what you've done?"

"Do tell." Ned put a bullet into Vantassel's right knee. The Red haze had made him hurry with the women. He had to make the old man last. The bullet tore through Vantassel's pants, dark fluid exploded out of the wound but he did not fall. Ned's eyebrows drew together until they touched. He fired into Vantassel's shoulder.

No effect.

"What the hell?"

"The game has ended," Vantassel said fiercely. "I told you to take the money and get out. I would be none the worse for the loss of a few paltry items. However, by killing my guests, you have deprived me of something I most definitely require. Something which you will now provide."

One second Vantassel was standing in front of Ned, the next, he was gone. A shriek behind Ned made him turn sharply. Vantassel held the wrist of Charlie's gun hand in a vice-like grip. He twisted. The splintering bone sounded like a pistol shot. Charlie screamed again, the gun tumbling from his lifeless fingers. Vantassel lifted him effortlessly with one hand and slammed his head through the wall.

Ned watched in shocked immobility as Vantassel let go of Charlie's body and turned to face him. Vantassel's face was changing, mutating. His jaw elongated, his eyes glowed blood red. There was a sound like the crackling of dried paper as his nails grew inches in seconds, tearing the skin. His skin took on a deathly pallor. He seemed to grow taller,

broader. One look into those menacing eyes snapped Ned out of his paralysis.

"Kkkk...keep away from me!" he shouted, raising the gun.

"Jackals!" Vantassel spat. "I was content to let the charade play out to preserve my secret but I see now what an abomination you are. I sensed a kinship earlier — creatures of the night, yes? I was mistaken. I prey on the innocent because I must. I am a vampire! But you kill for sport!"

Ned backed away as Vantassel moved toward him.

The Red Haze was gone, replaced by a bone-chilling fear of the monster before him. He fired the .45 until it was empty but it did not slow Vantassel down. He threw the gun at the pale, misshapen head but it flew wide of the target.

"You have brought this on yourself."

"N-no, please!"

Vantassel was on him in a second.

Ned gagged as the vampire's foul, putrid breath struck him full in the face. A wet stain spread down from the front of his jeans as Vantassel forced him to the carpet.

"Your blood will no doubt sicken me," Vantassel hissed into Ned's ear. "But I must have it! Not only to slake my thirst but to rid the world of your ilk. Before you die, think of the innocents you have shamefully destroyed. This night their pain will be yours."

Vantassel bent over his struggling prey. Ned saw his jaws gape impossibly wide, revealing needle-sharp teeth. Ned screamed — again and again and again.

NEXT ISSUE:
More sci-fi
More fantasy
More really, really, good stuff

Cleansing the soul

Where Bright Angel Feet Have Trod

A story by
Michael Vance

It fell out of the sun.

“And I looked, and behold...”

Heavy with age, it fell through space like a whisper on deaf ears.

“A whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud ... and a fire infolding itself...”

It fell like a burning cinder across the night sky, across the broken, bleached old stones of the light house, across the barren, decaying wharves. Erasing a thin line of stars, it fell where the village of Light's End crouched like a wounded beast against the rocky, isolated coast of Maine.

Burned to the colour of ash, the space ship fell where the seeds of death were gathering.

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven...” she continued in clear, modulated tones as she sat on a white stone veined with moss. “Clothed with a cloud and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire...”

Her words carried in the chill air of autumn above the gurgle of the river Pishon that flowed to the bay of Light's End. At her small feet, the horror watched her, then the reflection of trees on the river's banks shimmering in the water. The horror watched the space

ship, like crumpled aluminum tangled in the tree tops, wink in the cold waters.

Her thin, small hand fell to the yellowed pages of the open Bible on her lap.

“This is from ancient times. I have found these words in other places, in different verses,” she said, smiling. She smoothed the wrinkles in the skirt of her white shift with a hand, carefully closed the book, and lay it on the crisp, pale grass at her feet next to a tattered hymnal. She straightened on her rock.

“God's presence is felt here, where we sit, and there,” she said, pointing with an alabaster finger, “...in the heavens.” in horror he watched the gesture.

She held her hands out, palms up. Her white hair shone in the sun.

“All things, my friend, are gathered into two hands: one restrains chaos, the other declares harmony. Only we can twist peace into evil. But someday, even as we have set aside our differences, all things living shall put away blind fear and prejudice, and our two worlds shall be one. I feel it.”

Her blue eyes sparkled.

“The promise is there,” she said, pointing to the Bible on the ground, “in the book, and elsewhere. Hold fast. Believe. Our love is living proof that this promise will be fulfilled,” she said, picking up the hymnal. Turning to a dog-eared page, she closed her eyes and sang softly.

“Shall we gather at the river ... Where bright angel feet have trod?”

“With its crystal tide forever ... Flowing by the throne of God.”

A festering sore, the horror's finger brushed the scar that erased the perfection of her face.



It took stone mason Jeroboam Azreal and the castaways of Light's End eleven years to cut and set the tortured, white stone of the lighthouse. It's wooden beams had been scavenged from the ribs from a ship wrecked in broad daylight on the treacherous shoals of their harbour. Rumours of the devil's dirty hands and worse on the ship's bow stopped Jeroboam's hand until the captain admitted himself a drunken sot and himself the wreck of the vessel. The captain's confession cost Jeroboam three bottles of rum.

For eleven years, Jeroboam met each sunrise chanting from the leather bound Bible given to him by his father, and secretly writing strange geometrical symbols in chalk on each stone.

When he was seventy-two years old, Jeroboam cut an inscription on the cornerstone with bloodied, crippled hands and a wooden mallet whose head had been pounded into mush. His twelve year old son, John, held the chisel.

The inscription read: As above, so below. Jeroboam set the cornerstone in its niche, the inscription hidden by the face of another stone, and mortared it into place. And Jeroboam died.

The tower stood for forty years after his death as a warning of death and destruction. In five minutes, God shook it into rubble.

For five years after the shaking, the village choked on the dust of the bleached tower that God had shook into rubble, burying an ancient horror and killing John Azreal. The grief of the village's widows and orphans was thrown like stones from the tower into still water. It rippled out into nightmares that rippled out into whispered heresy, and spread into the ocean. It took fifty-seven years from the setting of its cornerstone for Light's End to become a curse. Even whalers dreamed it in night sweats, and Light's End became blasphemy.

And as trade sagged and the great, creaking merchant and whaling ships abandoned the village, the dirty people, the sick, the demented, and John's son,

Sarah understood loneliness and the frightened man beneath the heresy, the ranting and dirt. She saw the buried boy, sobbing and shaking with grief, who stood among the jumble of broken stone that buried his father.

Issac, were thrown inland. As year crumbled into year, the villagers scattered away after the ships, and Issac scattered away inward. He took his grandfather's and father's Bible and the Shaking God with him.

Issac was tall and straight with a face like beaten meat. His thick, black hair, deep set eyes and hawkish nose had never endeared him to Light's End. So when Issac was twenty-seven years old, he built a house of sod and stone in the wilderness outside of soiled Light's End, and sunk a stolen stone from the lighthouse rubble in its dirt floor.

He lived and wandered north of the river Pishon where he trapped, butchered and skinned animals that fed him and clothed the villagers, and Issac's thick, black beard grew. He slowly abandoned the village as it had abandoned him, and Issac sank into desperate loneliness.

On rare trips into Light's End to sell skins to buy salt, sugar and coffee, he traded a skunk pelt for a mongrel pup of scabs, bone and hair, and named him Ebenezer. He and Ebenezer became wild and dirty and stank, and the pariahs of Light's End endured their visits as they endured the bleached sepulcher of the lighthouse. It and Issac served them as a reminder of God's wrath.

And as year crumbled into year, Issac continually read aloud from his grandfather's and father's Bible by the dying light of his fireplace every night. A sword and his grandfather's and father's names were burned into its white leather cover, and foreign words and arcane symbols were written in red in the margins of many pages. Issac marked out the words mercy, forgiveness, love and Jesus with ash from his fire and circled the words Retribution, Justice, Wrath and Judgment. These were the words of the Shaking God. And as Issac turned the yellowed pages, he whispered these

words and muttered of the Law.

On bad days, he shouted of the thing buried under the lighthouse and of vengeance and a righteous God, and slowly, his ranting grew into prayers and curses that became heresy and clenched fists and screaming in the dead silence of his sod house. Ebenezer whimpered and cowered in shadows.

He could not erase the foreign words and geometrical symbols, and tore their pages from the book, and Jeroboam's and John's became Issac's Bible. And over the long years, Issac and Ebenezer became one madness.

He yelled at himself and Ebenezer and the Shaking God for seven years before Sarah. Sometimes he shook and Ebenezer whimpered, and he forgot he was thirty four years old, and Issac dreamed of the thing buried under the lighthouse in night sweats until Sarah.

Sarah was tall and straight with a face like smooth almonds. But her thick, red hair, green eyes and even nose had never endeared her to Light's End. Sarah was young, educated, foreign and fearless, so she was hated and ignored by the uneducated, sullen villagers. In turn, she ignored the whispered stories of the madman of the Pishon and the weakness of virgins, and wandered deeper and deeper by the river and into the wilderness. She believed in neither gods nor demons but in One God, and choked back her fear when the madman found her bathing in the river.

Sarah understood loneliness and the frightened man beneath the heresy, the ranting and dirt. She saw the buried boy, sobbing and shaking with grief, who stood among the jumble of broken stone that buried his father. She held that boy and shook with Issac until the shaking stopped. Sarah brought her book to Issac's mud and stone house and read to him from pages without coal smears, gibberish and odd stars in the margins,

and told Issac that only man can twist truth into lies.

Issac bathed and shaved his strong, black beard and his clenched fists relaxed under her cool touch. He traded pelts in Light's End for woolen breeches, a long coat, a wide brimmed hat, and muslin that Sarah sewed into dresses. He covered his mouth with his hand at the village stories of Sarah's rape and death at the hands of monsters. He beat the sod house into mud and raised a log cabin for her in its place. His ranting faded into a stoic irritability and then a clean silence. And Issac talked to Sarah instead of the Shaking God, and put the white leather Bible on a shelf. And Sarah told Issac that only man can twist love into hate.

When he was thirty seven years old, Issac fell to his knees on the bank of the Pishon and wept, alone, into the silence of the wilderness. His deep sobs racked his body and wet his clean shaven cheeks and rose in diminishing waves above the trees and across the river and echoed. He collapsed on the ground. When he rose, Issac felt clean.

Then Issac and Sarah did the unspeakable.

And the Shaking God shook Sarah.

Issac scratched her name on the stone dug from the floor of their cabin and sunk it as her tombstone on a clearing circled with trees by the river. He cleaned the mound of grass, twigs and leaves, and outlined the grave with small, white stones from the Pishon.

In the fourth year of her death, Issac trimmed his ragged beard, put on his woolen trousers, coat and hat, and took Ebenezer with him to the grave to build a crude, whitewashed wooden fence around her grave.

In the fifteenth year after her murder by the Shaking God, Issac trimmed his dirty beard, peppered with gray, put on his tattered woolen trousers, coat and hat, and found Sarah's Bible. Issac took the Shaking God and a rifle with him to the grave even as Shelley whored at the river.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption," he read in a murky voice.

"This is the truth."

His hands trembled with the weight

of his emotions and Sarah's Bible, and a spasm in his left leg made Issac involuntarily kick the rifle lying in the grass. He thought of Ebenezer, long dead, and frowned.

"Sarah, I am greatly troubled. I turn my head away from our child. It burns me. I see the unholy lust in Shelley's eyes. The shyness and silence of shame mark the child as surely as..."

Issac threw Sarah's Bible to the ground in a nest of fanned pages. "Oh, Sarah! Their tongues rattle behind my back in Light's End! Against our child! What they say! Their voices stop as I enter the room! They whisper! They

When he was thirty seven years old, Issac fell to his knees on the bank of the Pishon and wept, alone, into the silence of the wilderness.

titter! Their voices bile me!

"Where is this child we have never seen?"

"They chide me! 'Is it true Shelley sleeps with pigs and howls at the moon?'"

"Are the feet really cloven?!"

Issac picked up his rifle. "Holy God! It is Issac! Your servant!" he screamed, shaking the rifle at the sky. "Unstop your ears! Hear me! I stand naked and ashamed before Thy Holy Wrath^ofilthy with sin! But I cannot bear these words!! I cannot stand silent forever!!"

Issac fell to his knees in the soft earth of Sarah's grave and wept, alone, into the silence of the wilderness. His deep sobs racked his body and wet his bearded cheeks and rose in diminishing waves above the trees and across the river and echoed. He collapsed on the ground.

When he rose, Issac was dirty.

"The house stands dark, Ebenezer. Come," he whispered hoarsely to the dead dog, his chin hung on his chest in

shame.

"Shelley prowls like a cat in heat." Issac raised his head, and he and dead Ebenezer became one madness.

"Shelley!" he demanded of the empty clearing circled by tortured trees. "It grows late and I hunger! Shelley!! Shelley! Put aside your work. Come greet your old father!"

"Sarah, I have found the footprints; I know where they lead," he said to the stone dug from the floor of his cabin that he'd sunk at the head of her grave. It read, "As above, so below. Sarah Sullivan."

"At the riverbank, they are muddied with other tracks ... oh, God. For all things living, God has given a helpmate, but not for our Shelley ... marked in the flesh for our sin."

Issac leaned against the trunk of a tree and tore at the dry bark, the light of madness in his eyes. "Sarah. What must I do?"

"Sarah. What must I do?"

Young Issac leaned against the rough hewn doorjamb to his bedroom, the light from the dying flames of its fireplace reflected in his fevered eyes. Sweat glistened on the hard ridge of muscle at his naked jaw. Ignored, Ebenezer jumped around his legs, excited by the smell of fear and Sarah's guttural moans. The bedroom's wild shadows danced with Sarah in bed, danced as she twisted in the pain of childbirth, as she danced in the throes of death. The bedroom's wild shadows danced with the crib.

"Sarah. What must I do? There is no ... midwife."

"Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh."

"The seed you bore ... tainted, marked," Issac whispered as he knelt beside her bed, clutching her sweating hands and pushing the matted red hair out of her eyes.

"The child," Sarah choked, "... Issac. A ... part of us. We ... all born in sin. Love ... our child. Raise in fear of..."

Like a whispered prayer, Sarah's trembling finger brushed the wrinkles that painted the anguish of Issac's face. "If ... I die..."

"I cannot bear this, Sarah."

"You...you must love ... our baby as ... as you love me. Only," she gurgled as a line of blood trickled down her chin, "Only man can twist love. Pray for ...

forgiveness and ... forgive.
Forgive....Issac....."

"Sarah. Sarah? Sarah! Don't leave me!! I have no strength! Oh, God! If Thou are just, punish me!! ME!!!"

The Shaking God answered and Ebenezar buried his head between his paws.

"NO!!!" Issac screamed at the Shaking God, and, weeping, buried his face in Sarah's damp, cold, still sheets. And the Shaking God's answer rose again out of the crib and broke Sarah's silence, and fell where the seeds of death were gathering.

"Waaaa! Waaagh!"

"Sarah. What must I do?"

Issac leaned against the clean, smooth skin beneath the dry bard he'd torn from the tree, the dying light of memory in his fevered eyes. Sweat glistened on the hard ridge of muscle beneath his graying beard. Panting with exertion, dead Ebenezar slunk at his legs, excited. The wild shadows of early twilight danced with Issac and Ebenezar, danced as Issac twisted in the pain of shame, danced at the river with Shelley and Satan.

"The wages of sin is death," Issac hissed between his yellowed, clenched teeth. He straightened away from the trunk of the tree. "The wages of sin is death.

"An eye for an eye, sayeth the Lord! I shall NOT be mocked in the streets!" he muttered, wracked with emotion, as he balled a hand into a fist.

"My God! My child...!!!" he cried, and slammed his fist into the tree.

"AAAGGGHHH!!!" he screamed as he collapsed, face pressed against the blood smeared bark, crying. "A whore ... a ... whore."

"Slut," he hissed. "Dirty. Burn!!!" he swore to the Shaking God.

Issac's words fell like a whisper on deaf ears.

Issac licked his thumb and ran it along the cold bore of his rifle. Her song carried to his hiding place through the chill air of autumn above the gurgle of the river. At her feet, the horror watched the river and the crumpled aluminum winking in the cold waters. Squatting in the bushes, Issac fingered its trigger as her image fell out of the sun and into the rifle's sights.

"And I looked, and behold..." she said again, "a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud ... and a fire infolding itself..."

"My whirlwind," she said, and began to sing.

"On the margin of the river," she sang.

Issac cocked the rifle.

"...washed in blood," he hissed.

KAPOW!!!

The first bullet fell through space like a whisper on deaf ears and bit the stone where the horror sat at her feet.

"Washing up its silver sprays...."

KAPOW!!!

The crack of the second ate her last word as she heard the first bullet.

KAPOW!!!

The third bullet ate her.

KAPOW Oow oow

The echo shocked birds from the trees in a flurry of wings and fear. She fell like a whisper into the cool autumn grass, like a cinder burned to ash.

☆☆☆

Issac leaned back in his rough hewn rocking chair, closed his old eyes and smiled. Its creak in the still air was a relief from the silence of isolation as the wild shadows of early twilight danced on the porch of his log cabin. He pushed at the hard ridge of muscle beneath his graying beard on a face like beaten meat.

"Hush, child. Stop your tears," he said quietly. "HIS will is beyond understanding. HIS justice is hard. We obey. We obey!"

He knew the waves would bring new people to Light's End, hunched against the massive, clammy piles driven into the sea. Clapboard shanties would totter crazily against the barren, empty coast. And Issac knew he would find friends in the derelicts who would not mutter. He would find other strong arms to pull down the great, silver-ash abomination in the trees and erase the evidence of other feet.

"I love you, son," he said.

A festering sore, the horror's finger brushed the scar that erased the perfection of his father's face. And softly, slowly as fallen dust, the seeds of chaos were gathered.

☆

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Ender offers Card many streams to follow

In the past 15 years, Orson Scott Card's Ender's universe has pretty much taken on a life of its own.

The multi-layered universe has provided the noted author with enough material to produce two novel series — and possibly more.

"It's sort of a house built on books," Card explained. "You put bricks here and bricks there and pretty soon you look and say, 'Whoa, that wasn't the plan.'"

"But there it is."

Card's latest work, *Shadow of the Hedgemon*, is a sequel to Ender's *Shadow* — which was an alternate timeline to the one present in Ender's *Game*.

"It's all very complicated," concedes Card.

The decision to pursue the path was one that Card came to make by accident.

Ender's *Game* had been intended as a short story and *Speaker of the Dead* was to

be its sequel. But because the short story didn't end properly to set up the events in *Speaker of the Dead*, Card went back and expanded the short story into a novel.

"I actually wrote Ender's *Game* so that I could write *Speaker for the Dead* which for my purposes, that was the real book," Card explains. "But readers of Ender's *Games* noticed the obvious and that was *Speaker of the Dead* was not, in the normal sense, a sequel."

Ender's *Game* focused on kids who were in battle school, while the second novel took place 3,000 years after the first and Ender is grown up and "it was about something completely unrelated."

Under his original plan, the first few chapters were to parallel the earlier novel and then move on.

Card had decided to write a couple of books about the character of Bean and what was to become Ender's *Shadow* was to be the first three or four chapters of Ender's *Game*.

"But as happens frequently with my work, it got out of



"It's all very complicated,"

the books ahead of time.

"Knowing where the books end doesn't change the fact that once I get started I start popping up with these minor characters who become interesting and start bending the story in another direction," Card explains. "The result is that the stories start growing and bending and changing and so my books start becoming longer than I planned and go places where I hadn't planned on in the beginning."

"But they always end where I planned."

While the threads that Card weaves into the fabric of his novels may make for longer works, he points out that they also make writing the novels more interesting than if he had just stuck to his original plan.

Shadow of the Hedgemon is what Card considers, "My Tom Clancy novel."

Set during a near-future war, the novel follows how wars unfold and how children are pawns in the battle for world supremacy.

Part of the challenge to dealing with Ender's universe, is the fact that Card is constrained by the foundation he laid more than 15 years ago and, adds Card, the fact he isn't the same writer he was when the series began.

"I look back and I see technical things that I would change if I wrote the books now."

hand," he joked. "I got seduced by the storyline and it took me a whole novel to handle the plot of Ender's *Game*."

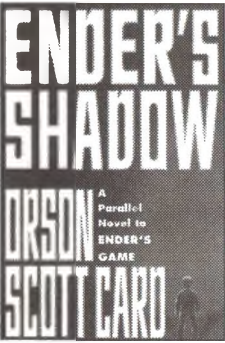
Shadow of the Hedgemon was originally intended to complete the original storyline, but as Card concedes, "I didn't get there either."

So there will be at least two more novels in the *Shadow* series — *Shadow Puppets* and *Shadow of the Giant*.

Of course, Card won't guarantee that there won't be more parallels or sequels to the *Shadow* series — but he does say if there were, they would likely follow another stream taking place after, rather than during, the *Shadow* series.

"The novels all begin at the same place, they don't contradict each other in any meaningful way and each one is independent," Card said of his Ender's and *Shadow* series. "Nobody has to read the Ender's book so that they can read the *Shadow* books."

For Card, the life his novels have taken is even more astounding since he maps out



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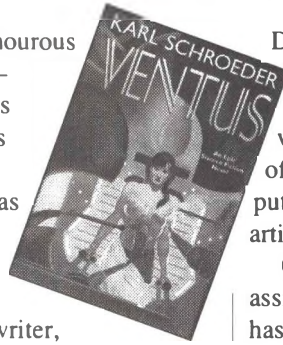
Ventus offers well-crafted, complex tale

I have to admit that I've waited for Karl Schroeder's next novel since I read *The Claus Effect* some time back.

And I can't say that I am disappointed.

With *Ventus* (Tor/H.B. Fenn) Schroeder shows he can spin an epic tale of hard science fiction as deftly as he

did a humorous fantasy — which was *The Claus Effect* (which was written with fellow Toronto writer,



David Nickle). In *Ventus*, Schroeder offers a disconcerting vision of the implications of man's reliance of computers and, by extension, artificial intelligence. Calandria May is assigned to investigate what has happened to the AI oper-

ating on the planet Ventus. There the AI has fallen silent and it has stopped running its programs. At the same time, one of Ventus's residents has to deal with visions that are plaguing him — he also has had a device embedded in him which by an agent of the planet's AI.

Ventus is a lavish, complex story built around the kernels of faith, blind faith, the extent we're willing to go to find justification in faith and, ultimately, where the life's importance does lie.

With his second novel, Schoeder has set the benchmark higher for both his next work and for other newcomers who follow.

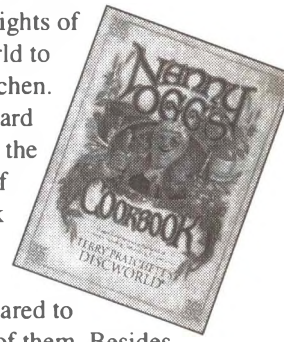
For that, readers owe him a debt of gratitude.

— Chris Krollgaard

Ventus \$39.95 Cdn/\$27.95

With *Nanny Ogg's Cookbook* (Doubleday), Terry Pratchett leads a kitchen full of chefs of questionable motives in an effort to bring the culinary delights of Discworld to your kitchen.

It's hard to judge the merits of the book since I'm too damn scared to try any of them. Besides there aren't too many people or animals whom I'd be willing to risk a knuckle sandwich by making them A Knuckle Sandwich (page 61). Like his Discworld tomes, *Nanny Ogg's* is an irreverent



UPCOMING RELEASES

The following are books are scheduled for release by U.S. publishers or their Canadian distributors during the next two months. Please note that release dates are subject to change. HC denotes hard cover, TP denotes trade paperback.

MARCH

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Herter, David | Ceres Storm | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Douglass, Sara | The Wayfarer Redemption: BattleAxe | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Feist, Raymond | Krondor: Tear of the Gods | HarperCollins/Eos, HC |
| Hoffman, Nina | Past the Size of Dreaming | Ace, HC |
| Jacques, Brian | Castaways of the Flying Dutchman | Penguin, HC |
| Johnston, Paul | Water of Death | St. Martin's/HB Fenn, HC |
| King, Stephen | Dreamcatcher | Simon & Schuster/Scribner, HC |
| Lackey, Mercedes | The Serpent's Shadow | Penguin/DAW, HC |
| Levinson, Paul | Borrowed Tides | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| McDevitt, Jack | Deepsix | HarperCollins/Eos, HC |
| Middleton, Haydn | Grimm's Last Fairytale | Martin's/HB Fenn, HC |
| Miéville, China | Perdido Street Station | Ballantine Del Rey, TP |
| Nagata, Linda | Limit of Vision | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Nix, Garth | Lirael | HarperCollins, HC |
| Price, E. Hoffmann | Book of the Dead: Friends of Yesteryear, Fictioneers and Others • | Arkham House HC |
| | | Scholastic, HC |
| | | Scholastic, HC |
| | | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| | | Baen, HC |
| Rowling, J.K. | Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them | |
| Rowling, J.K. | Quidditch Through the Ages | |
| Turtledove, Harry | Through the Darkness | |
| Weber, David, ed. | Changer of Worlds | |

APRIL

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Bisson, Terry | The Pickup Artist | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Brust, Steven | Issola | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Due, Tananarive | The Living Blood | Pocket Books, HC |
| Farland, David | Wizardborn | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Feintuch, David | Children of Hope | Ace, HC |
| Gerrold, David | Bouncing Off the Moon | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Jones, Dennis | The Mask and the Sorceress | HarperCollins/Eos, HC |
| Kalogridis, Jeanne | The Burning Times | Simon & Schuster, HC |
| Le Guin, Ursula K. | Tales from Earthsea | Harcourt, HC |
| Lupoff, Richard A. | Claremont Tales | Golden Gryphon, HC |
| McCaffrey, Anne | The Skies of Pern | Ballantine/Del Rey, HC |
| Moorcock, Michael | The Dreamthief's Daughter | Warner Aspect, HC |
| Pierce, Tamora | The Circle Opens: Street Mages | Scholastic Press, HC |
| Pohl, Frederik, ed. | The SFWA Grand Masters, Volume 3 | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Williams, Tad | Otherland: Sea of Silver Light | Penguin/DAW, HC |
| Williamson, Jack | Terraforming Earth | Tor/HB Fenn, HC |
| Willis, Connie | Passage | Bantam Spectra, HC |

10 questions

Biological clock tossed out the window

with Peter David

Peter David is known to comic fans as one of the best spinners of Hulk yarns. Others know him as a prolific author of Star Trek novels and Baylon 5 novels. Still others know him as the writer of two Babylon 5 episodes and a contributor on Bill Mummy's Overload project.

1 You studied journalism at New York University, how did you get waylaid from that career?

Journalism lost a certain degree of appeal for me for a variety of reasons, some relating to ethics, others relating to the writing style. I did learn a good deal in studying journalism, however, which continues to serve me in good stead. Realizing that I wanted to get out of journalism, but still interested in earning a living from the written word, I instead set my sights on publishing. One thing led to another, I wound up working at Marvel Comics while writing on the side and the writing eventually took over.

2 Do you first consider yourself a novelist, a screenwriter or a comic book writer?

I consider myself first and foremost a writer who has managed to find a variety of venues in which he can tell stories and earn money.

3 Which medium do you prefer to work in?

They all have different pros, different cons. Novels are the purest form of storytelling; on the other hand, when working with artists or actors,

you can wind up with a product more powerful than anything you could have told on your own.

4 As you entered each of the fields, how big a learning curve was it?

It's an ongoing process. I'm always trying to learn.

5 For you, what do you consider the strengths and limitations of each of the mediums?

The strength of the novel is that it's the most intimate and also the most forgiving. You can write twenty page scenes of two people talking in a room, and as long as it's interesting dialogue, the reader is with you. Movies, unless it's "My Dinner with Andre," it won't happen, and comics, forget it. The weakness of the novel is that it demands the audience's full attention, and it's limited in terms of who sees it. Sell a million copies and you're an over-the-top best seller. But one episode of a TV show, even a low-rated one, is seen by many times that.

6 Describe the process of writing a novel ... is it mapped out ahead of time or do you have a general idea of where you want to go and sort of discover things as you go along the way a reader would?

For the most part, I work off an outline, but the final novel can and will vary widely from the initial thoughts.

Yes, there are times where something will occur to me and I'll put it into the novel. Usually, those are my most memorable contributions. My most recent novel, "Sir Apropos of Nothing," had a number of plot twists that occurred to me as I was writing them.

7 You've been (to put it mildly) prolific. How challenging is it for you to work on so many projects in such different media? What's your secret?

I've managed to totally destroy my biological clock, so I can literally sit down and work whenever.

8 You've worked in Star Trek and Babylon 5 universes, is there an inherent challenge to working in such well-known and established properties?

Keeping the story interesting while at the same time trying to leave the "toys" as they were when you found them. That's one of the nice things about the "New Frontier" novels; more latitude.

9 What's your current project?

Working on more of the New Frontier novels, and writing a sequel to "Knight Life" entitled "Dead of Knight." The revised "Knight Life" will be published next year, and "DOK" after that.

10 Who's your favourite comic book character.

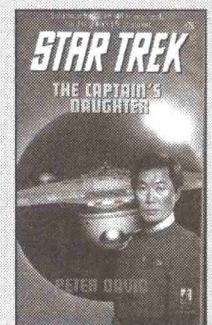
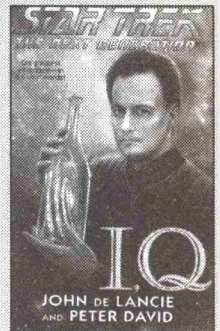
Whichever one I'm working on.

THE FINAL FRONTIER

new frontier excalibur
by peter david



also by
peter
david



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piece of work that tickles your funny bone — and perhaps your colon.

But, hell, you've got to go sometime.

Pratchett also scores with his latest Discworld novel **Truth** (HarperCollins) which skewers tabloid journalism — here in the form of the Ankh-Morpork Times and the Ankh-Morpork Inquirer (Pratchett never was one for subtlety).

Truth — or the perception of it — lie at the heart of the battle between the two

publications, as well as the effort to prove a politician innocent of a serious charge.

And in the midst of all this Pratchett follows the same instincts which have stood him so well in the past and drops a vampire and a talking dog into the fray

— Chris Kreflgaard

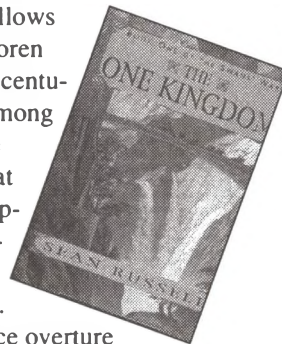
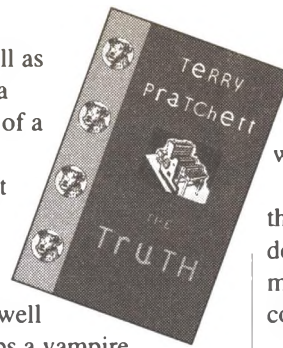
Nanny Ogg's Cookbook: \$34.95 Cdn; Truth \$24 US.

In The One Kingdom (HarperCollins) Sean Russell begins his Swan's War series.

The story follows the efforts of Toren Renné to end a century of warfare among members of the same family that followed the separation of a single kingdom into two camps.

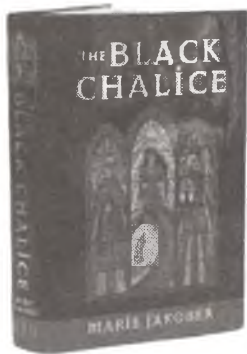
But any peace overture is hindered by the machinations of the nobility who do not want the bloodshed to end.

But as time goes on, the protagonists realize that they are the victims of a curse.



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Russell has managed to craft a wonderfully textured story which carries the scope and weight of a true epic with magnificent grace.

The unfortunate aspect of the novel is that despite the craftsmanship that is evident, the story has the same ring as a myriad of other fantasy epics that have come and gone over the years.

— Lars Johanson

The One Kingdom: \$37.95 Cdn/\$25 US.

WORTH A LOOK TOO:

The Dastard	Piers Anthony
Deadhouse Gates	Steven Erikson
Mask and the Sorceress	Dennis Jones
The Tranquility Wars	Gentry Lee
Wizard in the Way	Christopher Stasheff
Zeitgeist	Bruce Sterling

IN PAPERBACK

Ace

Evergence: A Dark Imbalance

Sean Williams, Shane Dix

Summers at Castle Auburn

Sharon Shinn

Baen

The Chick is in the Mail E. Friesner, M. Greenberg
Rats, Bats & Vats Dave Freer, Eric Flint

Bantam Spectra

The Fire Dragon Katharine Kerr
The Grand Design John Marco
The King of the Sun A.A. McFredries

Delrey

The Silent Gondoliers William Goldman

Harcourt

Nebula Awards Showcase 2001
Robert Silverberg, ed.

Meisha Merlin

Fireworks James A. Moore

ROC

The Year the Cloud Fell Kurt Giambastiani

SevenLong X Press

The Players Joseph Fullam

Warner Aspect

The Temple and the Crown
Katherine Kurtz & Deborah Harris Turner

Operatic apocalypse not for usual fan

By
Kennedy Gordon

If artificial intelligence is a possibility, can artificial love of music be far behind? And if robots can learn to love music, what kind of music would they love?

Good question. But if you think about it, a super-genius artificial life form would probably be a bit arrogant, like that kid with the graph calculator who sat beside you in trig. You know the type: smarter than the teacher but unable to tie their shoes, able to calculate pi with a handful of marbles but unable to ask a girl on a date. And kids like that grow up listening to Rush before graduating to classical music and opera.

So maybe androids will like opera. Or maybe not.

If androids listened to opera, it would probably sound a lot like the new CD from Operatica. The disc, Operatica: "O" Volume One, from E-Magine Entertainment, combines some pretty powerful vocals from soprano Maureen O'Flynn with the cyber-phreaked arrangements and programming of, ahem, Lord Vanger.

The good Lord wrote some of the tracks on the disc, like the oh-so-operatically-titled Get Off My Land.

For other tracks, he and O'Flynn turned to composers like Vivaldi and Rachmaninoff.

One particular standout is a version of Ave Maria that takes the venerated classic and cyber-slams it headlong into the 21st century... well, maybe the 24th century.

Throw in some industrial-esque guitars and drums and you've got opera for the apocalypse, technoperatic epics that might hold enough crossover appeal to capture the fancy of the odd Rob Zombie fan.

Your mom won't like it. In fact, most opera fans won't. And that's the problem here; crossover might be fun for one track or two, but opera fans

won't like the rock angle, and Limp

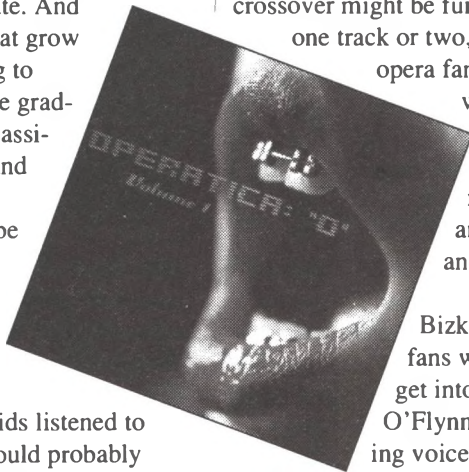
Bizkit/Korn fans won't get into O'Flynn's soaring voice and the lush string

arrangements.

It's an interesting project, but not something with a lot of life — no matter how good the music is.

But once you get your robot up and running, let him listen to this disc (or input it, or whatever). He will undoubtedly thank you.

Artist: Operatica
CD: Operatica: "O"
Volume One
Label: E-Magine



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Perfect For: fans of both Opera and "The Matrix"

First of all, I have to mention how much I like the name "Sara Bong."

It just sounds neat, and I like saying it.

I also like her new CD, What If the King Should Come to the City?, on which she plays keyboards, piano and organ on a collection of medieval songs perfect for anyone whose fantasy life involves swords, castles, dragons and magic.

Most of the tracks are traditional Scottish, Irish and English songs, like Can Shee, Eterne Rex Altissimi and Christe Qui Lux Es, translations of which I am unable to provide you.

Bong gets off to a jarring start on the CD, missing the mark on the first track by playing some kind of discordant keyed instrument.

But then the disc starts to roll like the hills of mythic Erin, gently wandering along as she explores the Dark Ages through music.

As you listen to it, try to find the imagery hidden under the music: the green valleys, the crumbling castles, the gleam of steel on steel and the spark of a magical past we've buried under the engines of technology.

Bong has a real grasp of what the world was like before steam engines changed everything — and she passes it along wonderfully.

It's an absolutely beautiful CD — nothing too over-the-top, just nice, soft music that would serve as the perfect soundtrack for anyone immersed in a fantasy novel or an intense RPG.

Artist: Sara

Bong

CD: What If the King Should Come to the City?
Label: Penguin on the Telly Ltd.

Perfect For: Fantasy fans, Creative Anachronists



Oh, this is too weird.

I open my pack of review discs, and there's something called Gothabilly: Rockin' Necropolis. It's 30 or so songs, all creepy, horror-inspired rockabilly/punk songs loaded with snarls, twangs, attitude and enough hair grease to slick down a werewolf.

We've got Ghoultown, singing "Killer in Texas." We've got the nicely-named 3-D Invisibles doing a song called Rockin' on Mockingbird Lane. Dante and the Infernos sing Shock Substance.

Most of the appeal here, sad to say, is in the '50s EC

Continued on page 93

Buffy websites guaranteed to slay you

Everyone seems to have a website devoted to their favourite vampire hunter

By Dale Sproule

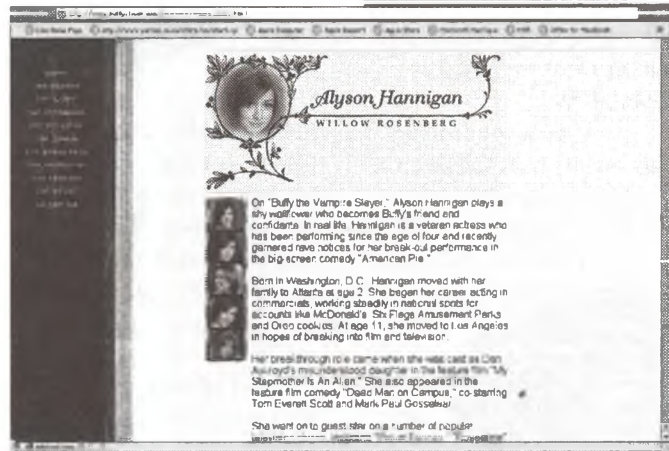
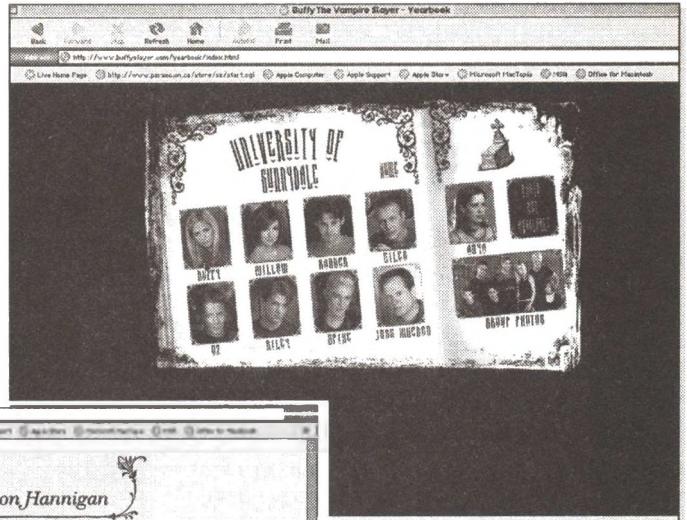
I thought it would be interesting to contrast and compare the official website of a popular television series to the host of fan sites celebrating the same series.

I chose Buffy the Vampire Slayer for the simple reason that it is my favourite television series. Next column, I plan to visit official and unofficial websites for a number of other television series.

Warner's official Buffy the Vampire Slayer site (www.buffyslayer.com) is a worthwhile destination for any fan of the show. The site boasts a simple design that gives visitors the option of clicking on 10 different links: The Bronze (chatroom and info about music from the series), the Guild (fan club), an interactive game called "Moloch's Revenge" (which was down for repairs when I dropped in), the Yearbook (featuring bios and photos of most of the current marquee stars, as well as creator/director Joss Whedon), the Bestiary (an encyclopedia of monsters from the show), Postcards (e-mail postcards), the Mortuary (past episodes), the Library (the mythology), the Magic Shop (Buffy

Merchandise), and a link to the WB main website (your gateway to Dawson's Creek etc).

The Yearbook page could use some updating, with two of the current major players (Dawn & Tara) not represented. The menu pages are full of cool, spooky flash animation and sound effects (the main entry page gives you a



↑
With two of the current major players (Dawn & Tara) not represented, the Official site's Yearbook page could use some updating.
← But, on the other hand, Willow is there.

choice between the interactive site and a lower-tech, faster-loading version of the site). Lots of content and a fast, fun interface make this a very amusing place to visit.

There is a fan page run by a group of fans who call themselves The Sunnydale Slayers (www.enteract.com/~perri-dox/SunS/).

Their cast page omits Riley, Tara and Oz, but includes Dawn. Obviously in this case, it was a matter of choice rather than laxity in updating. The SunS page includes fanfic (fan fiction), a gallery of thumbnails (including some photos from magazine stories about the show)

and lots and lots of quotations from the series. The site was created by Lizbet Lewis and Dianne DeSha, who say that about half their members are carry-overs from Forever Knight and Highlander fan groups.

The Buffy Cross and Stake (www.angelicslayer.com/tbcs/main.html) is a Buffy website that takes itself quite seriously.

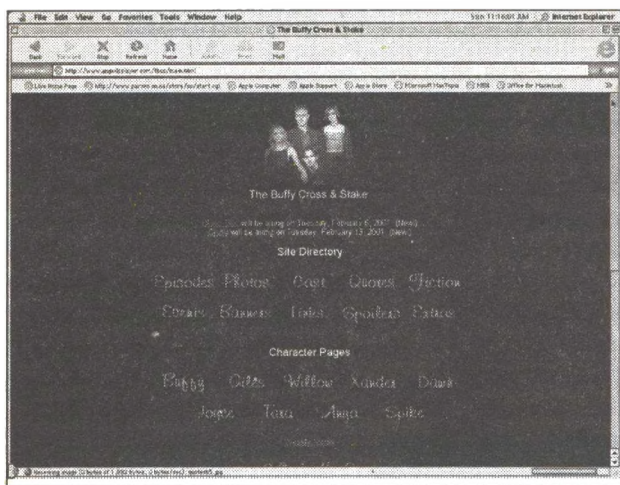
It is created and maintained by a 17-year-old high school student named Michelle (AnGeL X). Although it isn't as pretty or as much fun as the official site, it is very professional looking and is updated religiously, including bios on

Tara, Joyce and Dawn and reporting on such up-to-date information as Nicholas Brendon's starring role in Psycho Beach Party and Pinata.

Even an eBay search reaps 560 choices under "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" alone. Further searches under Sarah Michelle Gellar and the names of other stars will unearth hundreds of other items from videos to posters to paparazzi photos of such things as "SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR'S B@@BS."

There are literally dozens of websites dedicated to this series.

To give you an idea just



←
The Buffy Cross and Stake (www.angelic-slayer.com/tbcs/main.html) is a Buffy website that takes itself quite seriously.

how many, you'll find a directory of half a dozen webring at the Buffy Store Webring Site (<http://buffystore.terrashare.com/webring.html>). Each link here connects you to scores of other Buffy sites.

As *angelicslayer* is to the WB, The Buffy Store is to Looksmart.com. Looksmart divides Buffy the Vampire Slayer into 16 major categories.

Choose one of those, say "Actors". Then you're presented with a menu of 12 actors and a link that says "other actors". From this menu, if you choose "Gellar, Sarah M," you will come to a menu with nine entries — ranging from "News and Zines" to "World Wide Weird".

Check out World Wide Weird and you'll find a list of four sites.

One of those is www.angelfire.com/ca/hollywood8/gellar.html, which Looksmart describes as "Canadian Buffy fan presents a lengthy personal statement recounting an obsession with the much-admired actor."

A Canadian fan! I had high hopes that some creepy Canadian had come up with a genuinely scary Buffy site, but no. It's just normal, cute teenage obsession opposed to Hinckly/Foster obsession. I shouldn't joke about things like that. If I rode the spider long enough down any of dozens of paths, I'd probably find a whole webring of nutballs with twisted, masochistic fantasies about all of the stars of Buffy. The closest I'm going to get to that right now is to tell you that there are plenty of Buffy slash sites, if you're into reading and writing fan fiction that features alternate sexual pairings of the show's stars.

There is even BuffySearch.com — a dedicated Buffy the Vampire Slayer Search Engine that bills itself as "your portal to the Buffy the Vampire Slayer & Angel community."

I envision a real community. Faith Street, Skinner Road, Anya Community Centre and the Buffy Fitness Centre. BuffySearch gives you a chance to vote on more than 1,000 sites and rates the site from one to 10 stars.

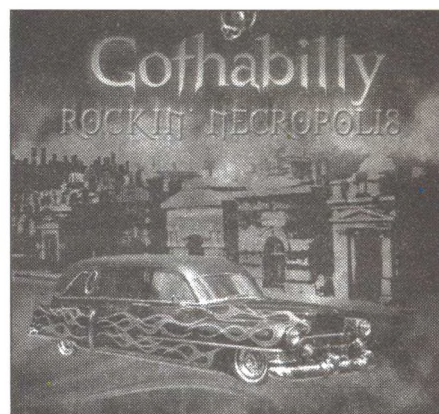
An advanced search for "Middendorf" (Tracy Middendorf who guest starred on both Buffy and Angel) brought no results. However, the search engine will take you to dedicated fan sites for a number of lesser characters including Wesley, Drusilla and even Harmony Kendall.

While other television series won't give you the vast number of choices that Buffy provides, it's pretty much guaranteed that if a series is on the air and more than 10 people have seen it, someone will have created a web site for it.

And if you look long enough and hard enough you will probably find exactly the website you're looking for. And if you don't, heck — why not create one?

Seems that everyone else is doing it.

Dale Sproule is a Toronto writer, artists, editor and web-meister. He founded and edited the first 11 Issues of TransVersions with his wife Sally McBride. His Aurora-nominations include two for fiction and five for editing. He is currently writing screenplays and designing websites, including his current online graphic novel project, Razorwings.



Music

Comics-style cartoon packaging and the names of these bands. Aside from that, this whole thing holds little merit.

I find it difficult to believe there are this many "gothabilly" bands out there, and I suspect many of them are either (a) the same three or four bands with a creative guy coming up with different names, or (b) actual punk bands chasing a gimmick.

I mean, could a band called Sex With Lurch get actual gigs on a bar circuit anywhere? Not likely.

So it's a big gimmick, this attempt to market some kind of spooky rock music.

But let's face it: straight rockabilly isn't that great to begin with, whether you call it punkabilly or cowpunk or gothabilly. Adding gimmicks doesn't make it any more palatable.

After three or four songs, the manic pace and cheeseball twangy vocals start to grate on the nerves, and if you've got the stones to listen to the entire album you're a dedicated fan.

This is the kind of disc that should make a brief appearance at Halloween parties — play one or two songs and get back to reality.

But, to be fair, it's a disc that had to be made, if only because musicians are running out of genres to exploit. After this and techno-opera, there ain't much left (except for hip-hop-a-billy, which comes next year).

Artist: Various
CD: Gothabilly: Rockin' Necropolis
Label: Skully Records
Perfect For: playing on a Walkman while digging graves in Lubbock, Texas.

— her film career has kept that project on the backburner. The follow up album, by Lords description will have a rawer edge to it, alá Pat Benatar.

"I've been singing all my life, that was my first love," she said. "I'd like to get back to it and do something a little more like Patty Smith."

Lords plans to write a piece for First Wave's season finale.

☆

Privateers

decision that in hindsight cost them valuable time.

"We thought it would be best to find out where they were at before we continued with the syndication," Warner explained. "While they're still up in the air, we decided to go ahead with the syndication deal which takes a bit longer to do."

Originally, *The Privateers* was slated to be ready for the fall season.

The delay was one factor in Warner's and her husband's decision to push the plan back a bit and aim for early 2001.

The start of the year came and went and negotiations continued.

Another problem they faced in preparing the series for its original target date was that one of the actresses became seriously ill and wouldn't be available until the fall.

Until the production is ready to begin, the actors — while committed to the series — are all involved in other projects.

And there are some formidable actors who have signed on to the cast.

Warner was able to cast Walter Koenig as Admiral Roka and landed Karl Urban (Caesar from *Hercules*) as Dravyk. The delay also allowed Urban to film *Lord of the Rings* during the summer.

Now, all that they need is a green light.

"They're all there," Warner said. "They're just waiting."

☆

Genetically modified Python squeezes out the excitement

Python (Fox), 2000, 100 minutes, Robert Englund, Casper Van Dien, Wil Wheaton with Jenny McCarthy.

It's best to approach *Python* with a sense of humour. Certainly, the filmmakers approached the subject with a sense of whimsy.

While it may not be as well known as *Anaconda*, the movie is a fine blending of teens in distress, bumbling deputies, mad scientists and sleazy real estate agents.

The snake in question is more than 129 feet long, can travel 50 mph. and can wipe out a squad of armed government goons without a second thought.

The special effects are surprisingly good. After all, the snake can dwarf a Porsche, so it would have been easy for it to look a little on the cheezy side (which it doesn't).

There are subtle tips of the hat to such teen slasher films as *Grizzly* and *Friday the 13th*, as well as to legendary flicks as *Psycho* and *Jaws*.

DVD features: out takes, cast and director biographies, trailers and English or Spanish subtitles.

☆☆☆

Alien Nation (Fox), 1988, 90 minutes, James Caan, Mandy Patinkin, Terrence Stamp.

During the '80s Rockne O'Bannon brought some of the most memorable science fiction to the screen. Among the list of film credits is *Alien Nation*.

The movie, which draws from the historical experiences of immigrants to the New World, is more a police thriller that has fantastic elements than a straight-up sci-fi movie.

James Caan's quest to track down the Newcomers who killed his partner leads him and his new partner into the criminal world of Slagtown.

Through it all, the movie examines the universal effect of greed and desire for power.

DVD features: a featurette, trailer, television commercials, behind-the-scenes interviews and anamorphic widescreen. English or Spanish subtitles

☆☆☆

Enemy Mine (Fox), 1985, 103 minutes, Lou Gossett Jr., Dennis Quaid.

In the midst of a war, two enemy pilots are stranded on a desolate planet.

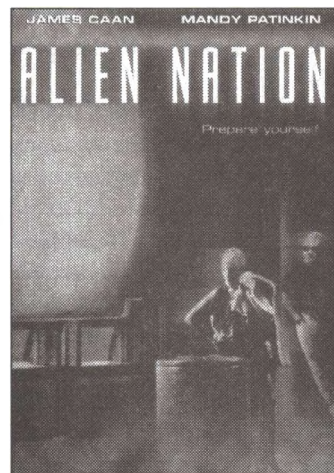
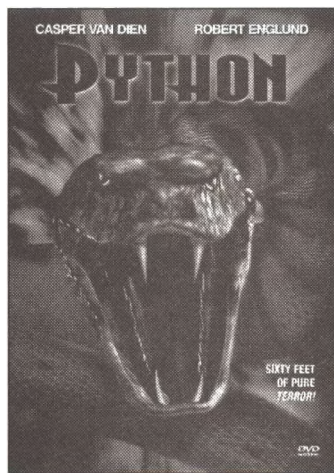
After spending the days after the crash trying to kill each other, the two finally co-operate to escape the planet.

In the end, Davidge (Quaid) overcomes his hatred for the Dracons and sets a group of them free from the imprisonment at the hands of a mining

concern.

While the reproduction and sound quality are fine, the DVD suffers from a lack of additional features... such as behind-the-scenes interviews which are standard fare.

DVD features: a featurette, trailer, behind-the-scenes interviews and anamorphic widescreen. French stereo, English or Spanish subtitles.



Winter schedule



Eastern Time	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	Pacific Time	
6:00am	Highlander					Space News	Canadian	3:00am	
6:30am						Twilight Zone	Document.	3:30am	
7:00am	Ray Bradbury							4:00 am	
7:30am								4:30am	
8:00am	Beast Master	American Gothic	Crow	Raven	The Visitor	movie	Capt. Power	5:00am	
8:30am							Odyssey	5:30am	
9:00am	Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict							Battlestar Galactica	6:00am
9:30am								6:30am	
10:00am	Star Trek							7:00am	
10:30am								7:30am	
11:00am	Highlanders					Star Trek: Next Generation		8:00am	
11:30am								8:30am	
Noon	Star Trek: Next Generation					Star Trek: Deep Space 9	Twilight Zone	9:00am	
12:30pm							Elec. Playh.	9:30am	
1:00pm	Quantum Leap					Star Trek: Voyager	Relic Hunter	10:00am	
1:30pm								10:30am	
2:00pm	Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict					Movie	Movie	11:00am	
2:30pm									11:30am
3:00pm	Xena							noon	
3:30pm								12:30pm	
4:00pm	Star Trek					The Visitor	Space Specials	1:00pm	
4:30pm								1:30pm	
5:00pm	Star Trek: Deep Space 9					Roswell	Sheena	2:00pm	
5:30pm								2:30am	
6:00pm	Highlander					Battlestar Galactica	Beastmaster	3:00pm	
6:30pm								3:30pm	
7:00pm	Babylon 5					The Lost World	Earth Final Conflict	4:00pm	
7:30pm								4:30pm	
8:00pm	Sheena	Sliders	Sliders	Sliders	Sliders	Relic Hunter	Movie	5:00pm	
8:30pm									5:30pm
9:00pm	Seven Days	Harsh Realms	First Wave	Angel	Roswell.	Movie		6:00pm	
9:30pm									6:30pm
10:00pm	Star Trek: Voyager								7:00pm
10:30pm							movie	7:30pm	
11:00pm	X-Files					Movie		8:00pm	
11:30pm									8:30pm
midnight								Good vs. Evil	9:00pm
12:30am	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie			9:30pm	
1:00am						Kindred the embraced	Lexx	10:00pm	
1:30am								10:30pm	
2:00am	X-Files					Harsh Realm	Paranormal prog.	11:00pm	
2:30am									11:30pm
3:00am	Babylon 5					Good vs. Evil			midnight
3:30am								12:30am	
4:00am	Star Trek: Voyager					American Gothic		1:00am	
4:30am									1:30am
5:00am									2:00am
5:30am	Deep Space Nine							2:30am	

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FEBRUARY 23-25

Ad Astra 2001: Holiday Inn at the Inn on the Park, Toronto. Scheduled Guests: Connie Willis, David G. Hartwell, Rick Green. Information: www.ad-astra.org, adastra_2001@home.com or PO Box 7276, Station A, Toronto, M5W 1X9.

MARCH 18-18

Serialfest 2001 — Serial movie fans con: Primrose Best Western: Toronto, Ont. Scheduled guests: Frank (Junior) Coghlan, Alan Barbour, Rin Tin Tin IX. Information: 52 Boustead Ave, Toronto, ON, M6R 1Y9, henry.miyamoto@bigfoot.com or www.serialsquadron.8m.com

Con*fusion — a wargaming con: Edmonton, Alta. SUB, Uof Alberta. Information: Box 37, SUB, University of Alberta, Edmonton, T6G 2J7 or uapgc@ualberta.ca

MARCH 17-18

Trumpeter Con 2001: Bonser Community Centre, Burnaby, B.C. Information: Francis Munroe, Imperial Hobbies, 1-877-273-4427, imperial@imphobbies.com or www.imphobbies.com

MARCH 30-31

Conjuration VI — McGill University Gaming Con: Montreal, PQ. Information: mcgillgamers@hotmail.com

MARCH 30-APRIL 1

Filkontario 11: Mississauga, Ont. Scheduled guests: Bill and Brenda Sutton. Info: 145 Rice Ave, Unit 98, Hamilton, ON, L9C 6R3 or Haymon@bserv.com.

APRIL 13-16

Odysseycon 22nd National Science Fiction Convention of New Zealand: Hotel Grand Chancellor, Auckland, N.Z. Scheduled guests: Mercedes Lackey, Larry Dixon, Lyn McConchie, Sean McMullen. Registration: (in

ONGOING

Utarpa: Toronto's longest running anime club. www.utarpa.org Quarterly membership: \$5

New Zealand Dollars) \$70 until start of con, \$80 at the door. Information: P.O. Box 74-013, Market Rd, Auckland, www.odyssey-con.sf.org.nz

APRIL 19-22

ConFurence 12: Hilton Burbank Airport Hotel and Convention Centre. Scheduled guests: Jym Magon, Mike Kazaleh. Registration: \$35 US until March 12. Information: (619) 523-9814, info@confurence.net, www.confurence.net.

APRIL 20-22

EerieCon Three: Days Inn Riverview, Niagara Falls, NY. Scheduled guests: Robert J. Sawyer, Carolyn Clink, Samuel R. Delany. Registration: \$30 until March 15, \$40 at the door. Information: www.geocities.com/area51/9159, www.scificspace.com/html/eriecon.html, email to eriecon@juno.com or by mail to P.O. Box 412, Buffalo, NY 14226

APRIL 27-28

Orion 2001 — Wargame Con: Primrose Best Western Hotel, Toronto, Ont. Wargame Con. Information: 122 St Patrick St, Toronto, M5T 2X8 or info@rigel.cx

MAY 4-8

V-Con/Convention: Radisson Hotel, Burnaby, B.C. Scheduled guests: Lynne Abbey, Pat Turner, James Earnest. Aurora Awards will be presented on May 5. Registration: \$45 at door. Information: 1410 Regan Ave., Coquitlam, BC, V3J 3B5 or: www.v-con.org

MAY 18-20

Keycon: Radisson Hotel, Winnipeg, MB, Scheduled guests: Spider Robinson, Phil & Kaja Foglio. Information: P.O. Box, 3178, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4E6 or Kim at (204)669-6053.

MAY 19-21

Cangames: Rideau Curling Club, Ottawa, Ont.

MAY 25-27

Close Quarters Standby 4 (CQS4) - the Official La Femme Nikita Fan Convention: Sheraton Parkway North Hotel, Toronto. Scheduled guests Include: Alberta Watson, Don Francks, Matthew Ferguson, Carlo Rota, Malcolm Xerxes, Josh Holliday, Doug MacRae, Jim Murrin, Geoff Murrin and Blaine Johnson. Registration: \$95 U.S. by April 21. Information: www.oversight.org, oversight_1@hotmail.com or telephone (904) 908-5446.

MAY 25-27

Anime North: Toronto Airport Marriott, Dixon Road, Toronto. Scheduled Guests: Ben Dunn, Stephen R. Bennett IV, Doug Smith. Registration: \$30 Cdn/\$22 US until April 9; \$40/\$30 at the door. Information: info@animenorth.com or www.animenorth.com

MAY 25-28

Costume Con 19: Westin Hotel, Calgary, Alta. Scheduled Guests: TBA; Registration: NA. Information: Box 20001, Bow Valley Postal Outlet, 205-5th Ave SW, Calgary, Alta., T2P 4H3 or capsam@nucleus.com.

JUNE 29-JULY 1

Atlanticon: Delta Prince Edward, Charlottetown, PEI. Scheduled guests: George Takei, David Prowse. Information: P.O. Box 2136,

Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 4K8. or 902-628-3025 or ATLANTICON@hotmail.com.

JULY 20-22

Toronto Trek 15: Regal Constellation Hotel, Dixon Road, Toronto. Scheduled guests: TBA. Registration: (until June 1) Weekend passes: \$40 Cdn/\$30 US; Friday: \$20/\$15; Saturday: \$35/\$26; Sunday: \$25/\$20. Information: www.tcon.icomm.ca, tcon@icomm.ca; (416) 410-8266.

AUGUST 3-5

Conversion XVIII: Metropolitan Centre, Calgary, Alta. Scheduled guests: David Drake, Jean-Pierre Normand. Information: P.O.Box 43006, DVPO, Calgary, T2J 7A7, fax (403)569-1516 or www.conversion.ab.ca

AUGUST 30 - SEPTEMBER 3

Millennium Philcon: Pennsylvania Convention Centre and Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. Scheduled guests: Greg Bear, Gardner Dozois, Stephen Youll. Registration: \$145 new attending; \$90 convert. Information: www.phil2001.org, www.netaxs.com/~phil2001.

2002

AUGUST 29-SEPTEMBER 2

60th World SF Con: San Jose Convention Centre, San Jose, Ca. Scheduled guests: Vernor Vinge, David Cherry, Bjo & John Trimble. Registration: Attending after July 15 \$180 Cdn, Supporting membership \$55 Cdn. Information :333 Lipton St., Winnipeg, MB, R3C 2H2

Parsec is not responsible for changes in hotels, guests, prices, dates or cancellations. It is the sole responsibility of convention organizers to provide this information.

OUR SOURCES

These are the people we turn to for information about comic books in Canada. If you have a question or are looking for a hard-to-find back issue, give them a call.

NOVA SCOTIA

Kevin Sauder
Mirror Universe Cards, Comics
& Games
79 Alderney Dr.
Dartmouth, B2Y 2N7
(902) 466-8884

Richard Sturk
Webslingers
Halifax Shopping Centre
Halifax B3C 2H8
(902) 455-4949

NEW BRUNSWICK

Derek Nichols
Strange Adventures Comic Books
384 Queen St.
Fredericton, E3B 1B2
(506) 450-3759

Dino
Halley's Comics
25 Charlotte St.
Saint John, E2L 2H3
(506) 693-4835

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Jeff Smith
The Comic Hunter
173 Queen St.
Charlottetown, C1A 4B4
(902) 566-2926
www.thecomichunter.com

QUEBEC

Ace Lopes
Empire Comics
1221 Crescent St.
Montreal, H3G 2B1
(514) 871-1402

ONTARIO

Jody Keebler
Big B Comics
1045 James St.
Hamilton, L8K 1B4
(905) 318-9636

Debbie & Gordon Frew
Triple Play Cards and Comics
18025 Yonge St.
Newmarket, L8Y 8C9
(905) 853-2273

Brad Hayes
Comics North
106 Elm St.
Sudbury, P3C 1T5
(705) 674-1015

Stephanie Hunter
Silver Snail
367 Queen St. W.
2374 Yonge St.
391 Bank St.
Toronto
(416) 593-0889

MANITOBA

Daren Thomas,
Will Sylvester
Comic Cave
1104 Corydon Ave
Winnipeg,
(204) 284-2210

SASKATCHEWAN

Pat Thompson
8th Street Books & Comics
1010 8th Street East
Saskatoon, S7H 0R9
(306) 343-6624

Gerry Macdonald
Phoenix Comics & Books
2806 Dewdney Ave.
Regina S4T 0X7
(306) 757-9091

ALBERTA

Wes Wong
Gerald Garcia
Comic-Kazi
Northland Village Shops
Calgary, P2L 2J8
(403) 286-0544

Richard Tyler
Saturn Comics
5726 104 St.
Edmonton, T6N 2K2
(780) 430-0598

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Skip or Robin
The Book & Comic Emporium
1247 Granville St.
Vancouver, V6Z 1M5
(604) 682-3019

Steve
Up-Start Comics & Games
1483 A Bowen Rd.
Nanaimo, V9S 1G4
(250) 741-0101

Who's Who

Robert J. Sawyer has been called "the dean of Canadian science fiction" by The Ottawa Citizen and "just about the best science-fiction writer out there these days" by The Denver Rocky Mountain News. Rob is the only writer in history to win the top SF awards in the United States, Japan, France and Spain. He's also won an Arthur Ellis Award from the Crime Writers of Canada. Besides seven Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Awards (Auroras), and he's been nominated five times for the Hugo, SF's international readers' choice award.



Rob joins Parsec's roster of regular columnists next issue

SpiffoPops has been drawing and painting since the age of four. As a child, his artwork got him into trouble in school. His work has always been strange and darkly expressive. His earliest artistic influences were surrealist and visionary artists such as Ernst Fuchs and Salvador Dali. His work is currently being published increasingly in horror and science fiction magazines and books, and will soon be used in the upcoming independent film, *My First Mister*, starring Albert Brooks. To discuss projects with SpiffoPops, you can visit his website at: <http://homestead.juno.com/spiffopops/files>

Joanne Mutch is a freelance science fiction, fantasy artist who works out of her home creating commission pieces for customers over the Internet. She is currently working on a fantasy novel, a T-shirt line for women and a Lady Death costume that would make anyone want to go to Hell. She currently resides in Barrie, Ont., with her husband Matt and her three crazy cats. If you have any comments about her work, good or bad, drop her a line at: rubblestrips@home.com



Andrew Salmon made the trek from Montreal to Vancouver with one goal in mind — to become a professional writer. He has recently completed his first novel, *Leviathan Breach* and is hard at work on the fantasy trilogy.

Derwin Mak is a Toronto-based freelance writer, a mainstay of the city's literary science fiction community and a regular contributor to Parsec.



Michael Vance has been published in dozens of regional magazines and, as a syndicated columnist and cartoonist, in 500 newspapers. His history book, *Forbidden Adventure: The History of the American Comics Group* has been called a benchmark in comics history. His magazine work has been published in seven countries and includes such publications as *Starlog*, *Jack & Jill* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.



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