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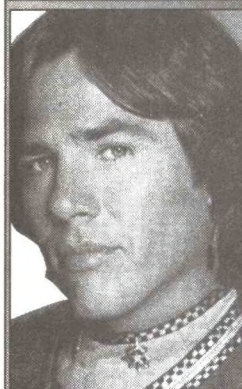
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PARSEC

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Publisher's Notebook

Is this a case of 'creeping mundanization'?

I always considered conventions to be the lifeblood of the science fiction and fantasy communities.

This is especially true in Canada where major centres are relatively far apart and the sci-fi communities in them are isolated. Conventions offer a chance for fans to meet professionals, learn what's going on in the various fields and to just keep in touch with friends from other locales.

With one convention season over and another set to begin in a few months it seems like an opportune time to consider the state of these events.

It's no secret that attendance at many conventions has been steadily declining during recent years.

A Calgary convention featuring Canadian author Dave Duncan and Babylon 5 creator J. Michael Straczynski drew a disappointing 500 people back in August. About 750 were expected. Toronto Trek, the heavyweight of the southern Ontario convention season, saw attendance drop by about three per cent from last year — despite broadening its guest list to include a number of Babylon 5 guests.

So what's going on?

Well, one factor could be the cost involved for guests. Depending on the convention, a weekend pass could top \$50 per person. If you add the cost of travelling, as well as hotels and meals, it's easy to see that the number of conventions a person can afford to attend dwindles rapidly.

But one fan said the decline in attendance was an example of what he called "creeping mundanization."

His argument was that the broad concepts that once marked science fiction and fantasy have been eroded over time. He complained that science fiction has been altered by mainstream culture. Rather than discuss the concepts in an Asimov short story, fans are content to discuss things such as the Vorlon-Shadow War.

And as a result of this, he points to conventions that feature guests from the popular science and draw fans who are not part of the "sci-fi culture."

Of course, some of the blame is placed with the U.S. culture and its influences on Canadian fans.

To a degree, this is true.

The U.S. media has influenced the Canadian science fiction community and the conventions that are so important to it.

But in the face of rising costs — banquet and conference rooms do not come cheap — what choice do organizers have?

They have to get bodies through the door and cover their costs. And to do this they need a draw that will attract the usual visitor, as well as someone who is a fan of a particular guest.

Is this a bad thing? Or at least as bad as the one fan makes it sound — like the equivalent of a full frontal lobotomy.

Nah. If anything it offers an opportunity to the science fiction community.

Even if fans disagree with the portrayals or the focus, television and movies have made science fiction and fantasy acceptable to the cultural mainstream.

People attending conventions — even if it's just to get an autograph — have an interest in the genre. It's the perfect time to allow them to experience the positive aspects of the science fiction and fantasy community.

And, perhaps, expand it in the bargain.

Til next time

Chris



Sawyer wins Spanish award

Robert Sawyer has won the world's largest cash prize for science-fiction, the \$11,000 Premio UPC de Ciencia Ficción, for an excerpt from his forthcoming novel Flashforward.

It's a repeat performance for the 38-year-old writer, who last year shared first place with Puerto Rican writer James Stevens-Arce.

The annual award, sponsored by the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in Barcelona, Spain, is given for novella-length works in Spanish, Catalan, French or English.

The excerpt that took the prize deals with a scientific experiment that goes awry, causing the consciousness of everyone on Earth to jump ahead 21 years for a period of two minutes.

Aurora site picked, committee struck

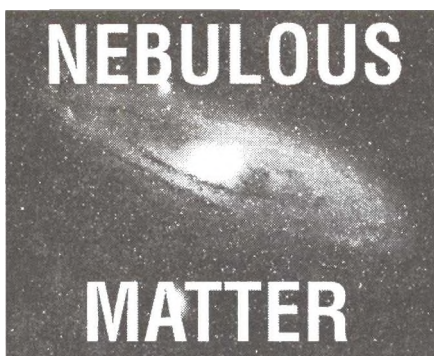
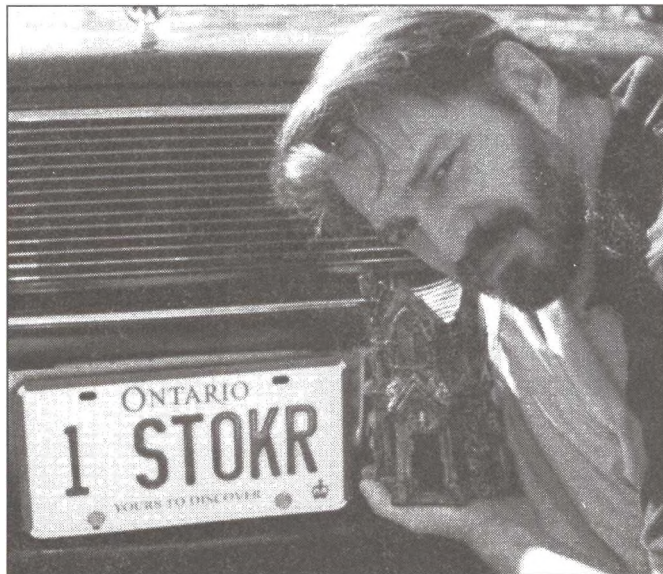
The Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association has announced that Fredericton, N.B., will host the 1999 Aurora Awards and Convention 19.

The Canadian national SF convention will be hosted by local convention, inCONsequential II, at the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel in Fredericton, N.B., on Oct. 15-17.

The Auroras are Canada's annual, national awards for achievement in literature, art, other media and organizational work by Canadian professionals and

Photo by Roberta Di Maio

Horror writer Edo van Belkom celebrated the launch of his short story collection, *Death Drives a Semi*, with the gift of a personalized licence plate commemorating his 1997 Bram Stoker Award for *Rat Food* — co-written with David Nickle — from his wife, Roberta.



fans in science fiction and fantasy.

Fredericton resident Brian Davis has been named Convention liaison, and will be a member of the 1999 Aurora Awards committee.

Other members of the organizing committee include: chairman W. Paul Valcour, Dennis Mullin and Ruth Stuart.

Information and ballots can be received by sending a SASE to:

1999 Aurora Awards

P.O. Box 55117

240 Sparks St.

Ottawa, K1P 1A1

Information can also be obtained via email at paul_valcour@cyberus.ca

Cameron ready to return to sci-fi

James Cameron, who won an Academy Award for *Titanic*, has a 13-episode commitment from Fox TV to make a futuristic series for next fall's lineup. As part of a production deal, he also is working on a Fox miniseries based on Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy* books.



The short-lived ABC series *Prey* is now the focus of a campaign on both sides of the border. Called "Prey for Us," the campaign aims to convince the network suits that the show should return in some form. To lend your support, contact campaign co-ordinator Gina Evers, 3839 SE 45th Place, Ocala, Fla., 34480 or Canada's co-ordinator Elizabeth Vida at EVgestrek@aol.com.

Fox plans to have the space exploration miniseries ready in early 2000.

Both projects stem from a deal Cameron (who is a native of Kapuskasing, Ont., and now Canada's favourite son) signed in September.

Winnipeg turns red

Truckloads of red dirt were brought to Winnipeg to re-create Mars in a airplane hangar in the city's west end.

The red planet has been recreated for the sci-fi movie *Mission to Mars*.

The movie includes Julie Khaner, Michael Shanks, Christine Elise, Allison Hossack, Kavan Smith and Peter Outerbridge.

The movie is the third of five UPN sci-fi films Credo Entertainment is making in Winnipeg and it boasts the most ambitious set, created by production designer James Stuart for about \$100,000.



Lexx proves
that the
dark side
of the
universe
can be
damn
exciting

This season on Lexx: the Series has seen Xenia Seeberg take over (metamorphed into, if you want to be technical) the role of Xev. Opposite, Brian Downey plays Stanley Tweedle, the man who holds the key to making Lexx operate.

By
CHRIS KREJLGAARD

Since it first reached airwaves in 1996, Lexx has been cultivating a fan following around the world. While the series and the preceding movies were available in the United States on Cinemax (where it's known as *Tales From a Parallel Dimension*) and on networks RTL2 and Channel 5 elsewhere in the world, until recently, that fan following excluded Canada. Ironically, the Great North serves as part of the production's home base.

Now, *Space: the Imagination Station* has brought what has been called "the dark side of *Star Trek*" to Canadian television.

"That's not dark enough," said actor Brian Downey of the comparison. "It's rawer and more erotic than *Star Trek* or *Babylon 5*."

Downey, who has a lengthy list of film and stage credits, plays Stanley Tweedle, a security guard cum captain. He is proud of the fact the series breaks the mould of television science fiction.

"Paul's (Donovan, the series' creator) idea of doing a science fiction series that was not time based and the fact there was no Earth-bound material, I thought 'that's great, because we're so tired of seeing instances of let's defend mother Earth. There's a lot of aggressive science fiction out there."

"Don't get me wrong, we can be mean too. Every where we go things die. Whenever Lexx shows up, it's pretty much a disaster."

The raucous side of the series can be seen in such episodes as *White Trash*, where a hillbilly family stows away on Lexx and suddenly the crew finds itself in the middle of a feud and they get a tour of the universe's equivalent of the Ozarks; or *Wake the Dead*, an episode where five partying teenagers come onboard.

"It's science fiction mixed with Monty Python," noted Downey.

The raucous and fun nature of the series carries over into its actors. Both Downey and Xenia Seeberg, who plays Xev, clearly enjoy working on the program

Downey, a native of Newfoundland, made his mark on Canadian stages through appearances in *Count Dracula*, *Love and Angst* and *Filthy Rich*. He's also appeared in such television series as *The Beachcombers* and *Yesterday's Heroes*, as well as commercials for Molson Beer and Red Rose Tea.

With its vast array of special effects, Lexx is a departure for Downey. But despite the challenge of playing scenes without some of the integral parts, Downey says, the quality of direction that is behind the cameras and the series' scripts have made the task easier. You have good directors, as we've had, then the process becomes a lot easier."



**Those guys on Babylon 5
are so f--ed.**

— Brian Downey

The Lexx is the largest, most-powerful space craft in the universe. It looks like a Manhattan-sized bug. But the word "crew" is sort of a misnomer. Stan and the others are more like inhabitants.

There are only four members of the Lexx's regular contingent.

Besides Stan there is Kai, a man who has been dead for a couple of thousand years, Robot 790, who's just a head, and Xev, an intergalactic sex slave. Promotional material for the series calls them "misfits," which is a fairly accurate description.

Stan, who is the lowest classification of security guard, holds the key to operating the Lexx — it's his right hand. Xev, because of a wedding day transgression and subsequent punishment, is on the prowl for any male who she can do the "mamba" with. Kai is the last member of an extinct race and a programmed killer for the villain of the two universes that

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Lexx travels.

To this point, Lexx has been the subject of four movies and 20 one-hour episode. From this meagre batch, Lexx has gained its sizeable following.

"There is a huge amount of interest in the series world-wide," said Downey.

"It's so much different from any other sci-fi series or movie that ever existed and that's what I liked about and still like about," explained Seeberg who joined the cast after Series 1.

The popularity of the movies and the first 20 episodes has led to the creation of Lexx: The Series 2. Space, whose parent company CHUM Television helped support the Lexx universe, has begun airing the second series.

Production of the series is split between Salter Street's Electropolis

It's always kind of scary taking over a part that existed already — think of Dallas.

— Xenia Seeberg

Studios in Halifax, N.S., and in Bablesburg, Germany — on the sound-stages trod by legendary actress Marlene Deitrich and where Fritz Lang's Metropolis was filmed.

The special effects, which appear in about 75 per cent of each episode, is created by Toronto-based C.O.R.E. and Halifax-based pixelMotion. By comparison, special effects appear in only about five to 10 per cent of Star Trek: Deep Space Nine.

The computer animation for the series is handled at Effactory Factory in Berlin and at

Slater Street's post-production facilities.

But even with the effects, Lexx has more in common with comedy than with your standard science fiction fare on television. And that dark humour is the series main selling point with fans — and for Seeberg.

In preparing for the latest batch of episodes, the lineup for the series was revamped with Seeberg replacing Eva Haberman as Xev.

Seeberg, who has received training from the Lee Strasberg School and from The Actor's Studio, is better known for her stints on German television and in a handful of dramatic movies than for her science fiction efforts.

"It's always kind of scary taking over a part that existed already — think of Dallas," Seeberg said. "When I agreed to take over that part, I said that I had to change a few things about the character, she has to look different and she has to be different."

Word on whether there will be a series 3 is expected this winter. If it gets the green light, then work on the next season will begin on the German sound-stage in April.

"There is so much more that needs to be explored," Downey said of the potential for Lexx: Series 3.

Both Downey and Seeberg expect the series to resume and point to the season finale which promises to be the cliffhanger to end all cliffhangers. Or as Downey put it,

"Those guys on Babylon 5 are so f---ed."

☆



Looking for Lexx?
The series airs on
Space: the
Imagination
Station



Mondays and Fridays at 9 p.m.

WILL THE JOURNEY CONTINUE?

Richard Hatch and most of the original cast members are ready to resume *Galactica's* search for the lost tribe of man

There is excitement in Richard Hatch's voice as he talks about *Battlestar Galactica*.

Hatch, whose other credits include *The Streets of San Francisco* and *Deadman's Curve: the Jan and Dean Story*, played Apollo on the 1970s series.

But even after more than 25 years of acting experience, it is as Apollo that Hatch is perhaps best known — something that he has no problem accepting.

The late '70s series followed the journey of the remnants of the 12 known colonies of man in a far-flung end of the universe as they sought the lost 13th colony — Earth. Hounding their every step were the robotic Cylons and the traitorous human, Baltar — played by Canadian actor John Collicios.

For the pre-computer generated image period, it was a massive undertaking that required the talents of renowned special effects guru John Dykstra to become a reality. It was an epic tale that struggled against the story-telling restrictions of a television format.

Now, two decades later, the cast of *Battlestar Galactica* is ready to continue their journey.

Hatch is in the midst of a quest. It's a quest to complete a task that began 20 years ago.

Hatch has made it his personal mission to bring the series back to television. He has travelled to science fiction conventions across North America to generate interest in the series and remind them of the special place it occupies when it comes to popular science fiction.

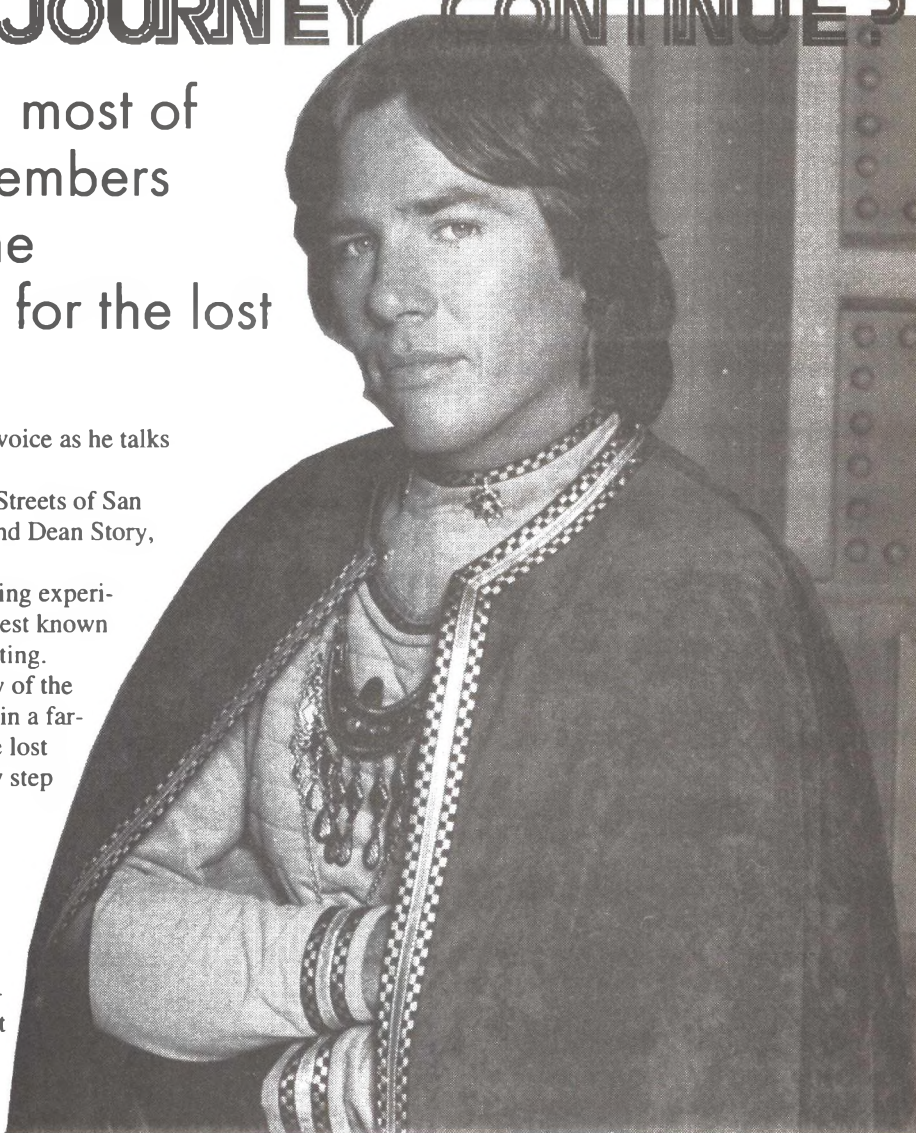
"It's a story that hasn't been fully told yet," he said recently. "There's a groundswell of interest among fans to see us return.

"I believe that there is enough interest to awaken the science fiction giants."

And it isn't just the fans who are interested in seeing the series return in some form.

"Everyone connected with the show has expressed an interest in doing it," Hatch said, adding that most of the cast members from the series have stayed in touch over the years.

Hatch calls it "the 20-year syndrome" and explains that a new series would bridge the gap between the original series and the crew as they are now.



If the project does come about, even Adama (played by the late Lorne Greene in the original series) could make occasional appearances as a hologram or computer messages.

"With everything that went against the show, we were still one of the top shows that season," Hatch said of the network's decision to dump the series. "It didn't make sense to me. I couldn't believe it. We weren't allowed to develop the series the way it should have been developed."

Besides network interference, the series also had to contend with such inconveniences as a strike that shut down the special effects shop and forced the producers to use and reuse the same effects shots throughout the 20-episode run of the series.

Any new series would ignore the ill-conceived *Galactica* 1980 that was intended to serve as the series' second season, according to Hatch.

That series replaced all of the cast members — except for periodic appearances by Greene and one episode that featured Dirk Benedict as Starbuck.

But while the idea of a reunion may get the initial attention of nostalgic fans, will a new series have the legs to carry on for



an entire season?

Hatch believes it will, thanks to the virtues of syndication.

"Syndication gives you more time to develop a series and its audience," he explains. "Science fiction is also more acceptable now. The original series has found a niche on the Sci-Fi Channel (in the U.S.)."

And the marketplace offers more opportunities for licensing products than it did in the late '70s.

Hatch speaks of DVDs, CD-Roms, collector card games and a myriad of other possibilities to spark interest in the series, as well as to generate revenue and make a new series attractive to studios.

"If there's one thing that I've learned it's that you can never be too bold with your thinking."

One actor who is among those ready to climb back into a viper is Anne Lockhart

Lockhart, who has appeared on such sci-fi programs as *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* in the episode "Dream of Jennifer" and *Battlestar Galactica*, now makes a living filling in scenes for movies.

There is a scene in *Terms of Endearment*, Lockhart explained, where Jack Nicholson and Shirley MacLaine are in a restaurant. Director James L. Brooks wanted a clean take, so all the other people in the restaurant scene pantomimed as the two principal actors went through the scene.

Later Lockhart and a handful of other actors went into the studio and provided the background noise for the scene.

"We had to make up conversations for the people in the scene," she explained.

This is not to say that her career is now out of the spotlight and behind a microphone — only a portion of it. Lockhart still garners roles on television.

But even with such an active career, Lockhart is still most-closely identified with the role of Sheba, the fighter pilot on *Battlestar Galactica*.

It was a role tailor-made for her by series creator Glen Larson.

"They gave me 25 pages typed out on the character of Sheba," Lockhart recalled. "I read it and I knew that it was something that I wanted to do."

"Sheba was the complete equal of any man in the squadron. That was the real attraction of the role for me."

Larson had approached Lockhart dur-



Like other members of the cast, Anne Lockhart feels there is some unfinished business to attend to because of the way *Battlestar Galactica* was cancelled.

Photo courtesy of and © Universal Pictures

ing the initial casting of the series, but she wasn't happy with the role being offered and turned it down.

When Jane Seymour left the series after a handful of episodes, Larson had to replace her character. Enter Sheba.

The character was introduced in the two-part episode "Living Legend" as the warrior pilot daughter of Lloyd Bridge's character, Commander Cain.

"It was the first time that a woman was shown in combat," Lockhart recalls. "There was never issue made of Sheba fighting along side men."

Even though her mother, June, also starred in a science fiction series, Lockhart notes there was little similarity between the way the two characters were handled.

"Growing up, I knew my mother's frustration with *Lost in Space*," she said of the series' shift in emphasis toward

Will and Dr. Smith after the series' second season. "Sheba was far more developed as a character (than Maureen Robinson)."

But like Richard Hatch, Lockhart says there is a sense of unfinished business regarding the series because of its abrupt cancellation.

"I never got to say good-bye," she says of her character.

On top of the food chain



Toronto studio mixes sci-fi and comedy in its first production

Suzanne Berger is running a bit late.

She had to spend more time on the set of her first film than she had planned and lunchtime was now at about 5 p.m.

Berger is the president of the independent film company, Upstart Pictures, and producer of the company's first movie, *Top of the Food Chain*.

"The script just made me laugh. It's so funny," she said regarding the choice for Upstart's first production. "I'd never read anything like it."

Top of the Food Chain came to her attention while she was still working as a project executive at Alliance Communications.

"I was screening every script that came through the company. So I was looking at hundreds of scripts a year," she recalls. "And this one was just different and funny and it didn't take anything seriously."

"It was a joy."

Raised in Quebec's Eastern Townships, Berger decided that producing was her career path while she was at Alliance.

"It was just a matter of having the right talent with me I guess," she explained. "By the time I was ready to leave the nest, I had a couple of projects that I thought I could work on."

One of those projects was *Top of the Food Chain*, which was also the script most ready for shooting when Berger estab-

lished Upstart Pictures in 1996. The script also combines two things — comedy and fantasy — that Berger enjoys.

"We're blessed on this project. We have an excellent cast and an excellent crew," she notes. "And the feeling on the set is one of fun."

"The actors are improvising on the script and embellishing it. And they're making us laugh."

The Toronto-made movie stars Campbell Scott, Fiona Loewi, Tom Everett Scott and Nigel Bennett.

The movie is a science fiction comedy that takes place in the backwater community of Exceptional Vista. It is a town where residents care only for three things — sex, television and fishing.

But despite leading such well-rounded lives, the townsfolk find themselves prey to some sinister force. It's a force that snacks on residents.

There's something suddenly above man on the food chain.

Campbell Scott plays Dr. Karel Lamonte, an atomic scientist who has gained the attention of residents — including Loewi who plays the town's beauty and her brother, Guy (the other Scott). The three principal players must track down the force that is feeding on Exceptional Vista's residents and keep man from slipping from the top of the food chain.

**The
Script just
made me
laugh.**

**— Suzanne
Berger**

NEAT THINGS

Polar Lights brightens modellers' winter

SOUTH BEND, IND. — Polar Lights continues to delve into the Aurora vaults of nostalgia for its new model releases.

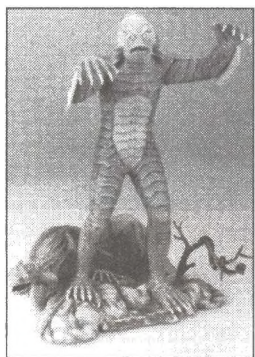
Polar Lights has been digging deep into the catalogue of the former '60s model company Aurora during the past year.

Joining the ranks of monster kits that the company has released, is the Green Hornet's fabled car, Black Beauty. The kit is 1/2 scale of the classic roadster.

The company continues to add to its monsters line-up with The Wolfman (by Randy Bowen and authorized by both Universal Studios and the Chaney Estate), Godzilla, The Creature From the Black Lagoon and the fabled King Kong's Thronster.

But the company isn't just re-issuing the classics. It is also launching two new kits.

Polar Lights has just released the first styrene model of Norman Bates' house from Psycho and four models based on the '70s album KISS Destroyer.



Bennett, whose resume includes a Gemini-Award winning stint as a vampire on *Forever Knight*, plays a suspicious travelling vacuum salesman. And, of course, Scott has experience in big-screen science fiction. In 1997, he took on the lead role in *American Werewolf* in Paris.

Top of the Food Chain will have a minimum of a five-city theatrical release.

Special effects master works magic at Top of Food Chain

"I'm sure if I got into the psychology of what I do, I'd be a little disturbed," said special effects wizard Paul Jones.

"It's kind of odd. I'm doing a cast of a guy, then I'm slicing him off at the midsection, then I'm attaching guts and a spine. And I have to give him a feeling of serenity, but still give the impression that he's completely dead."

His company, Paul Jones Effects Studio, provided the special makeup effects for *Top of the Food Chain*. The effects ran the gamut from dismembered bodies, to body parts such as intestines to four alien creatures.

"It was a nice collection of effects," he said from his Toronto studio.

At one point in the production, Jones oversaw a crew of seven who were working on such necessary items as tendrils, eyeballs and shocks of hair.

One of the special challenges was the movie's Michelle O'Shea character. "Coming up with a creature who had a certain visceralness to it, but still fit in with the kind of '50s pastiche of the movie was a bit of a challenge."

Initially, Jones et al designed insect creatures and lizard creatures before deciding on a creature "whose head is its mouth."

The process from conception to filming the creature took about five weeks. Of course, the fact that he had been discussing the project off and on for a number of years, gave him a headstart.

"I wasn't given too much direction by the writers. They basically said 'give us something that's really cool and kinda looks like a fish.'"

Even if the creature in *Top of the Food Chain* was a throwback to the '50s, the materials used for the movie were on

It will also appear on the Movie Channel. The film also has garnered some attention from distributors south of the border.

"People told me as I was lining up the financing for the project, that if a comedy is good, it's very, very good. And if the comedy is bad, it's very, very bad," Berger explains. "There's no middle ground."

☆

the leading edge of the industry.

Unlike other members of his profession, Jones prefers to work with fake entrails. Jones notes that created intestines and other body parts last longer and don't smell as bad as real ones. Many of the effects used in *Top of the Food Chain* were composed of silicon.

"It's slowly becoming the industry standard," he notes. "In the '80s, movies like *American Werewolf* in London or the *Howling*, the effects were done with foam latex or gelatin on the cutting," he said. "Foam latex has been the staple diet of the special effects guy. Unfortunately, it's very opaque and unless you light properly, it looks fake."

Silicon is translucent, so it absorbs light and is more forgiving if the lighting isn't quite right.

Top of the Food Chain is the latest stop in a career that has progressed from cuts and bruises, to swelling bladders and to cut throats. It began 12 years ago in his native Britain.

Jones' initial training was in makeup effects such as old age and character makeups, "I wasn't really into the gore."

But during a job interview at Shepperton Studios he had a tour of the special effects shop. There he saw the corpses from *Hellraiser* and *Pinhead*.

Since then he has worked on such horror gems as *Waxwork*, *Hellbound*, *Hellraiser II*, *Nightbreed*, *Highlander II*, *Wishmaster* and *The Bride of Chuck*.

In Toronto, he's worked on *FX*/the series and, most recently, *Earth: Final Conflict*. On the latter production, he constructed the weapons wielded by agents Boone and Sandoval during the first season.

☆

Reopening the stargate



Duo takes
viewers to the
end of the
universe
and back

By
GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

The folks at Bridge Studios in Burnaby, B.C., are going where almost no one has gone before with its sci-fi television series project for MGM Worldwide Television.

Stargate: SG-1, was one of the first new projects at the expanded Bridge Studios complex, home to both *The Outer Limits* and *Poltergeist: The Legacy*. While SG-1 is a spinoff of the original Stargate movie, series co-creators Jonathan Glassner and Brad Wright have thrown open the door to a wondrous and frightening new universe through the Stargate.

"We're going way beyond that," Glassner explained.

The duo have extensive experience in media science fiction and fantasy.

Glassner's writing and production credits include *The Outer Limits*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, *Freddy's Nightmare* and *War of the Worlds: The Series*. Wright has written for *The Outer Limits*, *Poltergeist: The Legacy*, *Highlander*:

The Series, *The Odyssey* and *Forever Knight*.

"I've been reading sf since I was a teenager," Wright said. "If I read a novel, it's a science fiction novel." One of the proudest moments for him was getting to work with Larry Niven, "who is probably one of my favourite authors," on a version of *Inconstant Moon* for *The Outer Limits*.

Glassner admitted that he hadn't been "real big on science fiction" before getting involved in the entertainment industry.

"I seem to have an affinity for it by accident," Glassner said.

He began scriptwriting for Alfred Hitchcock Presents then moved from there into stories for *Star Trek* and other science fiction series before coming on board at Bridge Studios. Now with SG-1 he and Wright get to build and populate an entire universe.

The television series picks up where the movie left off.

The series title refers to the first of 15 exploration/investigation teams sent out through the Stargate by the U.S. military to make contact with all the worlds which the portal can access.

"Story-wise there is a close connection," Glassner said concerning the similarities and differences between the movie and its television spinoff.

"We've had to maybe fudge about five per cent of the facts to make it a series and that's all."

He noted the movie had an end that allowed them to take the film's original premise a step farther.

Heading SG-1 is Col. O'Neill, this time portrayed by Richard Dean Anderson, star of the *MacGyver* action-adventure T.V. series. The character of Prof. Jackson returns with Michael Shanks in the role. Shanks, who holds a fine arts degree from the University of British Columbia, has among his credits *The Zone* episode of *Highlander: The Series* and has performed at Ontario's

Stratford Festival.

Two regulars were added to the cast for the series. First is Dr. Samantha Carter, a United States Air Force physicist/genius, who deciphers the technology that makes the Stargate work though she doesn't understand the symbolism used to designate transit destinations. Amanda Tapping (Forever Knight, The X-Files) portrays Dr. Carter.

The other new character for Stargate is Teal'C, a renegade member of an alien race known as "the Demi-gods" who look similar to humans but with hidden differences. Teal'C looks like a 35-year-old man but his actual chronological age is around 90. Christopher Judge portrays Teal'C. His resume includes an episode of MacGyver and the lead in the movie, Cadence.

No 'world of the week'

Teal'C's people are allies and servants of the Gou'Ald, the alien race to which Ra belonged and which is the dominant civilization in the Stargate universe. The Demi-gods serve as living hosts and carriers for the larval stage of the Gou'Ald.

During the pilot, the members of SG-1 discovered the mathematics which allow them access to all the worlds known to the Gou'Ald when a stargate was set up on ancient Earth. The problem is that the memory banks of the portal on Earth contain the positions for these planets as they were in the days of ancient Egypt when the gate was last in constant use. Stellar and planetary drift have shifted almost all of those worlds with portals out of their old positions.

Only Abydos is still close enough to its original position to allow transit from Earth. The members of SG-1 discover a sort of "Rosetta Stone" cartouche on Abydos though it's not exactly something which they can cart back to Earth with them.

"We're talking like a giant cave wall, like the Astrodome, which is all one cartouche," Glassner said with a grin. The cartouche has the information on how to reset the gate so that SG-1 and the other teams can travel to the rest of the worlds discovered by the Gou'Ald.

The Gou'Ald are an omnipresent threat during the series. Teal'C, the Demi-gods and the Gou'Ald are part of the five-per-cent fudging that Glassner mentioned. The premise is that the Gou'Ald were the inspiration for the deities and myths of many primitive races on various planets, including Earth. In the movie, Ra thought he was the last of his kind. The series shows, he was wrong.

Glassner and Wright cautioned that the

"gods from outer space" theory is not going to be the guiding principle behind Stargate: SG-1. Glassner said it's too easy and too pat an idea to really build a series around.

"We've got to go way beyond that." He and Wright work to avoid the kind of obvious mistake made with some past T.V. sf adventure series attempts.

"We don't want to do 'world of the week,'" Wright said.

Glassner noted that the Babylon 5 series did quite well by providing an interesting



Photos courtesy of Gajdecki Visual Effects

variety of stories which were, for the most part, set in and around the Babylon space station. In SG-1, Glassner and Wright want to do stories which deal with the variety of alien races, humanoid and other, which exist in the Stargate universe on their own worlds and some of those storylines are set on a particular world for an extended length of time. The series will feature episodes dealing with aliens who come to Earth through the portal now that it is open again. One of the plot devices for the series concerns the need for the military/scientific group overseeing the gate on Earth to develop a seal for the portal so that only those aliens who are invited may come through to our world.

Before they even began to kick around ideas for the pilot episode, they worked out a complete background technology and sociology guide for the series. Glassner observed that their guide includes lots of other additions to the Stargate universe that were not in the original movie.

"To keep a series going, you've got to have lots more to explore than Abydos," he said. "We will have an unlimited universe to explore. We took the movie and just opened it up."

"We still have a lot ahead of us. The

The Gou'Ald are an omnipresent threat during the series. Teal'C, the Demi-gods and the Gou'Ald are part of a "fudging" process that the series producers had to undertake to expand upon the movie version of Stargate.

(Stargate) movie had a lot of unanswered questions.” Glassner noted the original movie also contained many “logic holes,” which may not have been noticeable when it was first released. But some of those holes became glaringly obvious when he and Wright began to work out a format for the series.

One of the biggest of those “holes” is an explanation for how the portal works. Glassner and Wright said that the series concept, as proposed, involves humans making use of a super-science that they don’t quite understand but which they know works because it does.

“It (portal technology) is way beyond even ‘our’ biggest expert who may change the way she thinks about it now and again,” Wright observed.

Both he and Glassner believe that the approach should satisfy both the non-sf viewer and the devoted genre fan. They have done their homework, though, to make sure that they understand, behind-the-scenes, how things are supposed to work in the Stargate universe.

“We’d done quite a bit of research on wormholes and Einstein’s theories and such,” Glassner said. “We postulate that it (portal) works like an artificial wormhole.”

Finding a role

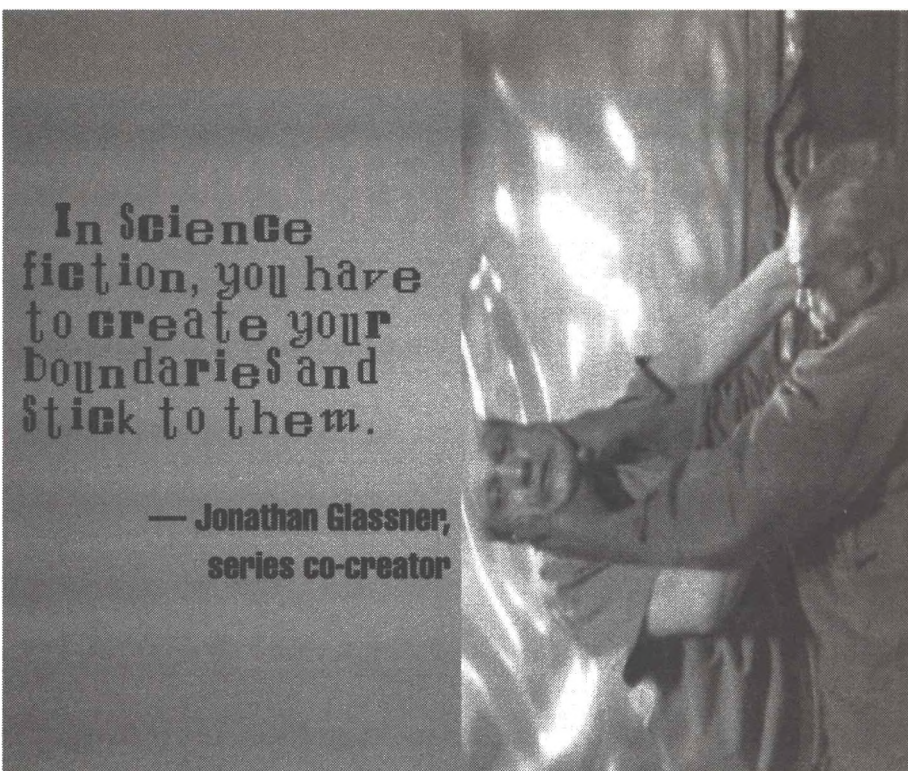
He suggested the gate creates a type of physical quantum crystal lattice that channels neutrinos and tachyons to form an artificial and temporary hole that bridges the distance between two definite points.

“I read Stephen Hawking and checked the Internet databases,” he said, adding that their involvement in The Outer Limits series has also pushed them to keep up with scientific developments.

“Because of The Outer Limits, we became more aware of new technology.”

Besides filling in the logic holes, Glassner and Wright also had to define the boundaries within which SG-1 operates.

“In science fiction, you have to create your boundaries and stick to them,” Glassner stressed. “The shadow that will always be looming over our heads,” Glassner said, “is the Gou’alds.” Many of the alien races that the Stargate teams will encounter are actually humans descended from primitives kidnapped from Earth and used by the Gou’ald to



In science fiction, you have to create your boundaries and stick to them.

**— Jonathan Glassner,
series co-creator**

populate planets they plan to exploit.

“Because we made good workers and were easy to ‘steal,’” Wright observed.

Episodes have seen alliances formed between the Stargate teams and these other advanced races. But Wright said the main role of O’Neill’s team and others is to serve as an inspiration to other races that there is hope of being free from the Gou’ald.

“We (humans) are going to find ourselves with a role,” Wright observed, though he added that it won’t be as the saviours of the universe.

Instead, the Stargate teams have to settle for helping a native race on their own terms and their own world.

The limitation on what the Stargate teams can do during their encounters, and the fact that portals rather than starships are the main method for travel about the universe, may be one of the factors that will help protect SG-1 against what has become known as “Star Trek syndrome” where every network is trying to find the next sci-fi marketing phenomenon that they can cash in on. Some shows, despite original premises or strong storytelling, get cancelled because they don’t prove marketable quick enough in the ratings wars.

“Stargate is about men and women who still have to deal with the ‘baggage,’” Wright said.

He and Glassner observed that tradi-

tional sci-fi-adventure series usually depict the human race in the middle of expanding its presence among the stars. The pre-expansion phase is rarely shown.

“We’re starting at the beginning,” Glassner said. Wright added that humankind is using a device which it did not create so that it is not reaching for the stars through its own efforts.

“We’re getting there on someone else’s coattails, using technology we don’t completely understand,” Wright said. “And that’s going to get us into trouble as much as it’s going to help us.”

“We’re going to learn to not get ahead of ourselves,” observed Glassner.

The potential of the series was demonstrated by the U.S. cable network Showtime’s 44-episode guarantee.

Glassner noted that the movie got the highest ratings ever for the cable channel when it aired so that Showtime executives were more than interested in getting first crack at a television series based on the movie.

“That’s the advantage of being on cable. They can give a show much more time to develop an audience.”

Their mutual enthusiasm for the project has helped to set the tone for the series as they envision it.

“Optimistic and adventurous,” Wright said.

Imagination's gateway

Ottawa-born
John Gajdecki
and team of F/X
experts bring
Stargate: SG-1
to life

Photos courtesy of Gajdecki Visual Effects

The gateway on Stargate: SG1 is just one of the many effects that John Gajdecki's company has been instrumental in bringing to the small screen. Over the past decade, either Gajdecki or his company have been involved in series such as the Outer Limits, Friday the 13th and War of the Worlds.

For a lot of men, there's a boyhood memory of spending days constructing a model; of pain-stakingly ensuring that all details are just right.

Then, when you were satisfied that you were holding perfection in your hands, you took it outside and placed it on the ground, lit a firecracker and blew it to smithereens.

For some it's a memory.

For John Gajdecki, it became a career.

"The bug came on me when I was a child," he said.

The Ottawa-born Gajdecki is the president of Gajdecki Visual Effects, a special effects company he formed in

1991.

The roster of projects handled by his company is a long one. And the honours it has received is equally as long.

Most recently, he was nominated for an Emmy Award for his work on the MGM series, Stargate SG-1 — seen in Canada on CTV and on Showtime in the United States.

"The nomination is great, but I'm trying to feel what it's like to lose," Gajdecki explained from the set of the series in Vancouver. "Nominees are based on the merits of the production. But the votes go out to all of the academy's members and basically vote for people they know or who they haven't seen for awhile."

It's hard to dispute the statement, since he (and other Canadian finalists) didn't make it to the podium.

"Perhaps, I'm being too cynical. But

it's the same way with the Gemini Awards. You pretty much have to be in Toronto to be considered.

"That's why a lot of people in Vancouver don't want to bother with it."

This year's Emmy nomination was just the latest in a number of honours that have marked Gajdecki's career.

At the age of 25, Gajdecki received his first Emmy Award nomination in 1987. Back then it was for Friday the 13th: The Series — which only shared the title with the blood-soaked movies.

"I tell people to go to school in the city where they plan to work," Gajdecki explains. "This is the way that you make contacts that will pay off later."

It was such a contact that helped him land the job soon after graduating from York University with a Bachelor of Film Studies degree in film production.

The sister of the series' producer was

a classmate from the University of Toronto. She became a production assistant on the series and Gajdecki was hired to “sweep floors” in the effects department.

“But you have to start at the bottom,” he said.

During the early going he worked with such well-known (in the business) effects people as Michael Lennick. As these people left the series, Lennick to found his own company, Gajdecki moved up the ladder.

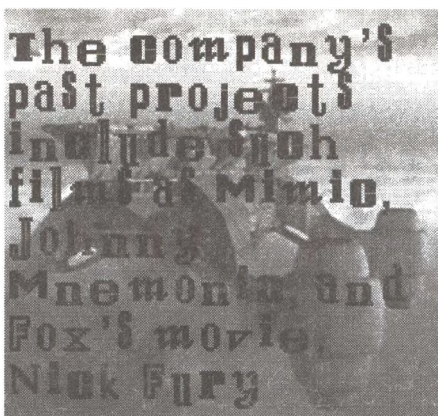
By the end of the series’ first season, he found himself sporting the title, visual effects supervisor.

By Friday the 13th’s third season, he had also become the supervisor for War of the Worlds.

When the two series ceased production in 1991, Gajdecki decided it was time to make an investment and purchase his own effects equipment.

“The idea was to get me more time on the machines,” he said, adding that at the time he was spending between \$500 and \$700 an hour using machines in production houses in the Toronto area.

By making the investment, Gajdecki



and the other supervisors working for the company, are able to spend more time ensuring the effect is performed correctly. The company handles such diverse chores as miniature construction and digital effects.

“My favourite is the invisible effect,” Gajdecki explains. “It’s an effect that helps tell the story and doesn’t take over the scene.”

But taking over the scene is exactly what Gajdecki Visual Effects has done.

Less than eight years after being formed, the company operates two facil-

ities — one in Toronto and the other in Vancouver — and employs roughly 35 people. This allows the company to tackle jobs across Canada (although its reputation has landed it projects as far away as Luxembourg). The company also sports annual growth of 20 to 30 per cent — a clear sign of its stature in the industry. It’s more notable past projects include such films as Mimic, Warriors of Virtue, Johnny Mnemonic, Brain Candy and Fox’s movie, Nick Fury

“We’re a company of special effects supervisors,” Gajdecki said.

Since its creation, Gajdecki and his company have received seven Gemini Award nominations for its special effects work on such series as the Outer Limits. GVFX won this year for the CBC mini-series, The Arrow, and in 1996 for its work on the Tek War series.

Besides Stargate SG-1, the company’s recent slate of projects include, Total Recall 2010, the Addam’s Family series, Jacob Two Two Meets the Hooded Fang, Exhuming Mr. Rice and Night World.

“We have a ton of stuff on the go.”



Look ahead to our next issue

In the Spring issue of Parsec

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Robin Atkin Downes

Walter Koenig

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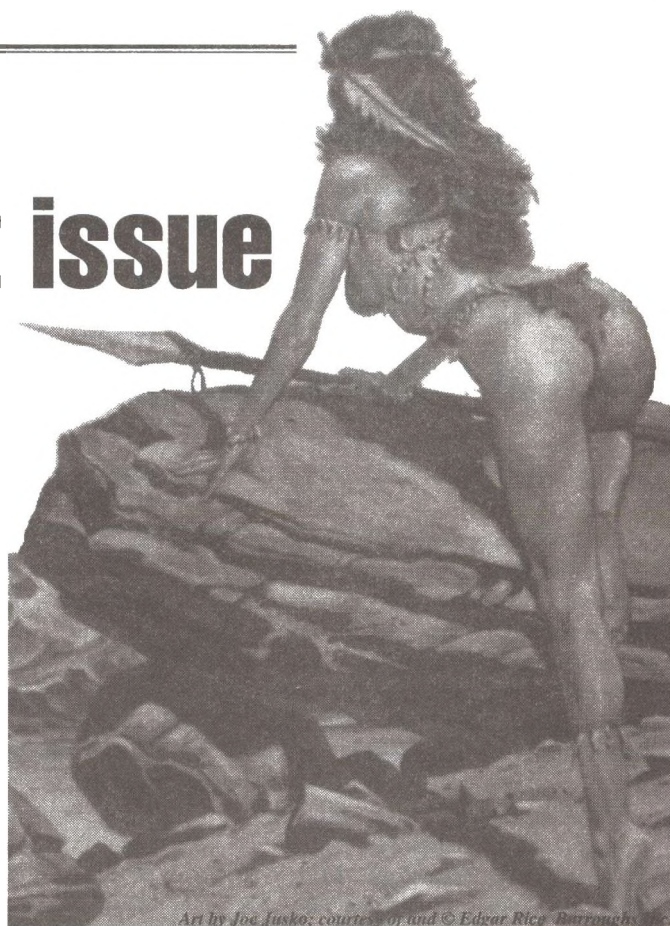
The Crow: Stairway to Heaven

COMIC INDUSTRY PROFILES OF:

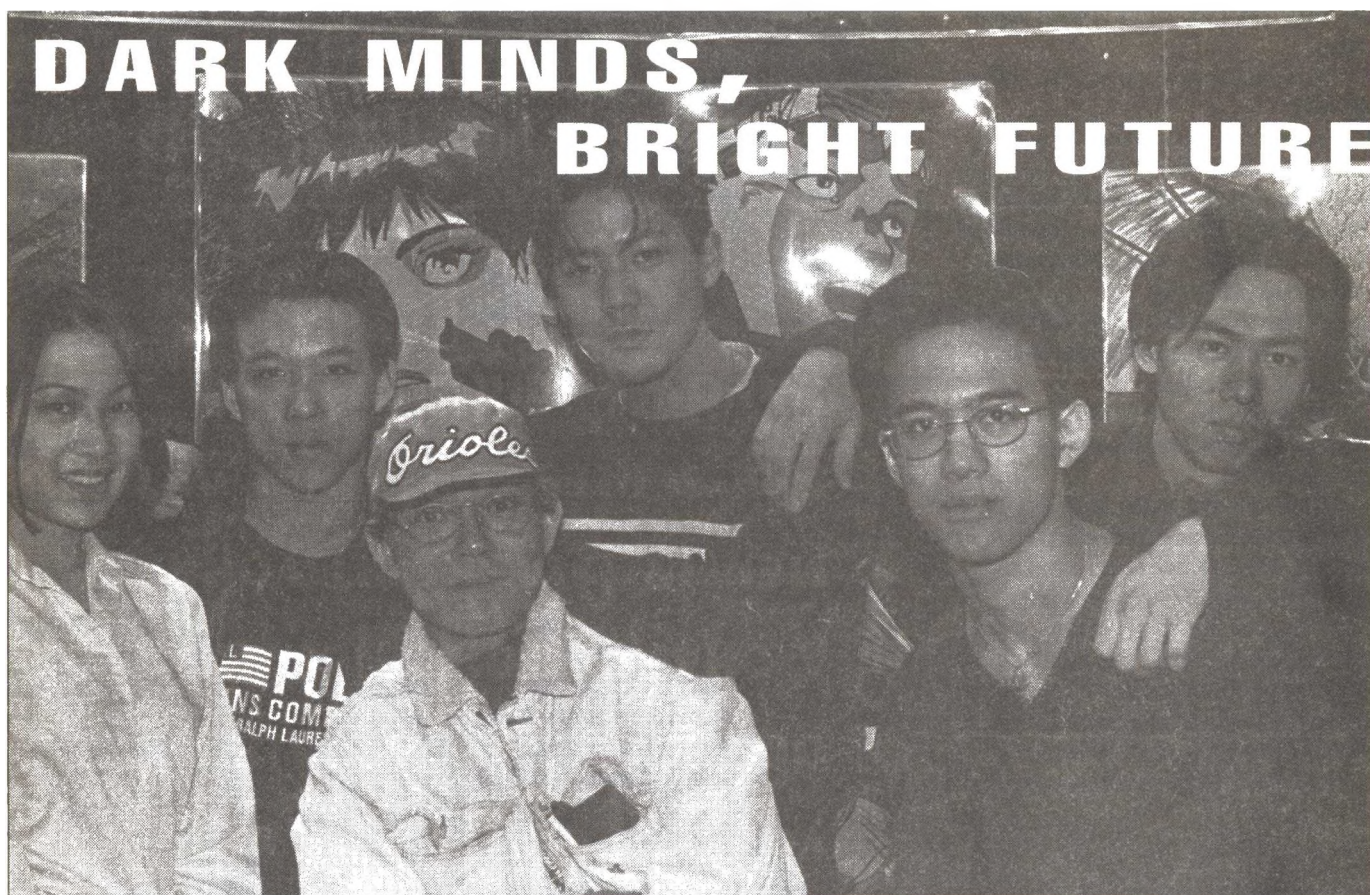
Joe Jusko

Murphy Anderson

Greg Luzniak



Art by Joe Jusko; courtesy of and © Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc.



Parsec Photo

Toronto friends take comic industry by storm with a tale of serial killings, corporate intrigue and a healthy dose of science fiction

Call it fate.

Call it destiny.

But whatever you do call it, you can be sure that the stars must have been in the proper alignment when a group of friends gathered in Toronto to create their own comic book.

Dreamwave Production's *Dark Minds* title has been "the" book since the first issue hit store shelves back in July.

"We knew when we were creating the book that it would be a 50-50 thing," explained editor Roger Lee. "Either everyone's going to buy it, or was going

to be a flop."

It wasn't a flop, not by any stretch of the imagination.

In July, the first issue flew out of stores and caught Dreamwave and its U.S. partner, Image Comics, by surprise. Within a week of its release, the first issue was fetching double its cover price.

The second issue had already been printed and shipped to the distributor by the time the success of the first issue had become apparent. So the print run couldn't be changed to accommodate the readership levels.

The creative team behind Dreamwave Productions have put together a series that sports a solidly told mystery with corporate bad guys, computer experts and cyborgs thrown in for good measure.

Pictured (left to right): Amelia Lo, Roger Lee, Alvin Lee, Simon Yeung, (front) Alan Tam and Patrick Lee.

I never thought it would explode. — Pat Lee

So, the second issue suddenly became a rare commodity. At a Toronto comic convention last month, dealers were asking \$35 for the issue.

"I knew there was an interest in Japanese-style animation," explained artist and Roger's brother Pat. "But I never thought it would explode."

"I guess it's because it's new and different."

The demand for the first two issues was so great that Dreamwave and Image Comics decided on second printings for each issue.

And they're still selling at a brisk pace, albeit at a somewhat slower one than the first printings.

Even the subsequent issues to number five have continued as fan favourites.

But that is part of the creators' plan.

While Pat provided the genesis for *Dark Minds* with an idea he had more than two years ago, the book truly began to take form during brainstorming sessions between the brothers, writer Adrian Tsang and editor-in-chief Erik Ko.

"When we sat down to decide what kind of book we wanted to do, a mystery seemed like a good idea because we could throw in a lot of things to confuse the audience," Lee explained. "It has a cliffhanger element to it so readers would want to come back."

Dark Minds follows the efforts of Special Investigations Unit officers Tedashi Nagawa and Nakiko (who happens to be a beautiful cyborg) to capture a serial murderer known as Paradox that has been racking up a serious body count in Macropolis.

"Next we had to decide what style we wanted to use; did we want to keep it generic so it looks like 90 per cent of the books out there or did we want to have something different?"

The style they settled on was, in a word, perfect.

Pat, who gained a formidable reputation working on such Image titles as *WildCATs*, provides an anime-style that accentuates the feel of the book.

He provides the artistic foundation on which its world is constructed.

Taking its cue from Japanese-style animation, *Dark Minds*

Continued on page 24



Art by Alvin Lee and Pat Lee; TM and © Dreamwave Production

When they were developing *Dark Minds*, the Lee brothers and their friends opted to use an anime style for the book. Here are the lead characters, Agent Tedashi Nagawa and cyborg Nakiko.

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The 'wonder' of it all

Paquette helps bring icon back to her roots

From his Quebec studio, artist Yanick Paquette has taken over the artistic chores of Wonder Woman from the legendary John Byrne.

It's a changing of the guards that has made some of the heroine's traditional fans ecstatic. Byrne's penchant for redefining characters didn't sit well with longtime fans.

"When people found out that I was doing Wonder Woman, the first thing they said was 'put the stars back and fix the bracelets'," Paquette said recently.

Byrne had raised fan ire by reducing the number of stars on Wonder Woman's briefs to two and the size of her bracelets were increased. Under Paquette's influence, she now sports more stars and the bracelets have become slightly smaller.

"We (writer Eric Luke, Paquette and the rest of the creative team) agreed that we were going back to the George Perez tradition," Paquette explained.

After he accepted the job, Paquette began doing some research on the Internet and in back issues. And he began to receive email from fans.

"It was the first time that people took notice of what I was doing," he said.

A Wonder Woman fan — who lived a few blocks away from his Quebec home — contacted him by email and offered to let him see back issues of the comic. It allowed Paquette to become familiar with the character's history and it allowed him to see the various artistic styles that have graced the pages of the comic book over the course of the past few decades. In particular, Paquette was drawn to the highly detailed work of Perez.

Photo by PARSEC

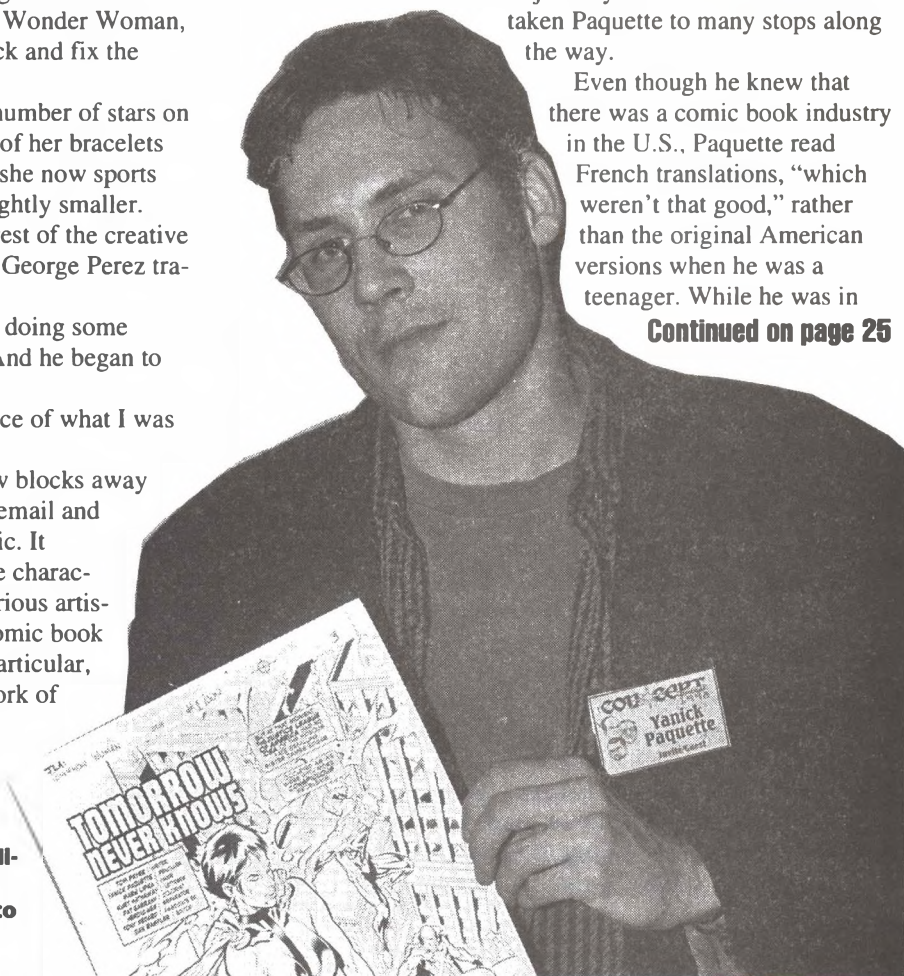
Montreal artist Yanick Paquette recently took over the reins of Wonder Woman and has already gained the favour of traditional fans by helping undo some of the changes that his predecessor had made to the heroine.

"I was able to learn enough so that I know at least as much about Wonder Woman as a fan who reads the book," Paquette explained. "If you don't know as much as the people who read your stuff, you are in danger of fans looking at your work and thinking that you're an intruder in their universe."

The journey to their universe has taken Paquette to many stops along the way.

Even though he knew that there was a comic book industry in the U.S., Paquette read French translations, "which weren't that good," rather than the original American versions when he was a teenager. While he was in

Continued on page 25



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Adams still pushes the boundaries

During the past 30 years, Neal Adams has, more often than not, played a crucial role in moments that marked turning points in the evolution of comic books.

"What I've always done is bring a new point of view into comic books that have suffered in the past from having a very narrow perception of the way the world is," Adams said. "I try to bring a broader view to comic books."

But rather than think of himself as a revolutionary who continually refines the craft, Adams portrays himself more as a problem-solver.

"It's because a problem was presented to me and I looked at it and said 'Well, I think there's an obvious solution to it. Why don't we go ahead and do it,'" he explained. "Very often, people don't see the obvious solution."

Over the course of his career, he has turned his artistic mastery toward such characters as Batman, Green Lantern, Green Arrow and the X-Men. In the late 1960s, his stint on the X-Men redefined the way stories were told by the industry.

"The way you used to do group superhero comic books was that if you had six superheros, you'd send two of them off over here and two of them off over here and two off over here and they'd get together at the end and defeat the villain," Adams explains. "That's not the way I attacked the X-Men and we had a new tilt on the genre."

When he joined the creative forces behind Batman, Adams was again presented with a problem of a different sort.

During the latter half of the '60s, the approach of the comic had mirrored the popular television series. It was campy. While the series was at the top of the ratings, the approach was a winner. With the series cancelled, the comic floundered.

"When someone says to me 'we don't know what's going on with Batman,' I knew there's a problem for me to solve,"

Adams says of the character that he believes he could use his help once again. "I said 'that's comedy, that's not the real Batman'."

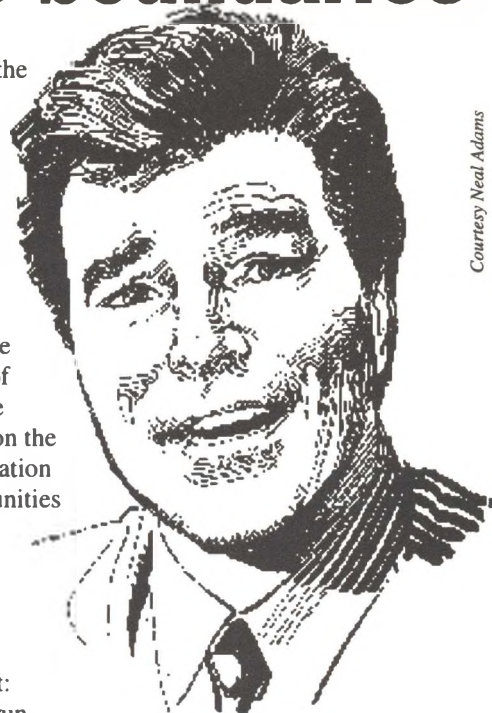
Strangely, the fact that some of those titles were floundering or on the brink of cancellation brought opportunities for Adams and the other creative people assigned to the title.

Case in point: the eight-issue run of the Green Lantern-Green Arrow.

"They were about to kill the comic book, because Gil Kane was no longer doing it," Adams explains. "Once again, it was a case of why don't you do a few issues before we cancel it'."

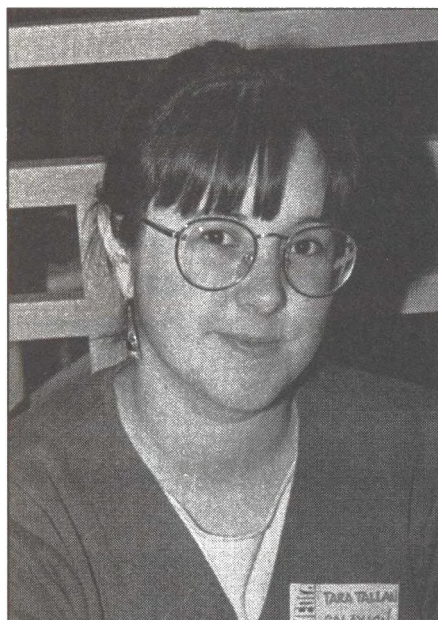
These issues contain the style that marks Adams work, as well as tackles such subjects as cults, radical environmentalism and, in one issue, a character admits to using heroin.

"The truth of the matter is that the powers that be at DC Comics didn't exactly know what we were doing when we were doing it," Adams recalls. "And it wasn't until later that



Courtesy Neal Adams

Toronto artist's space opera has



Comic store shelves are filled with titles from companies that had their start as self-publishing efforts.

Helikon Comics is the brainchild of Toronto's Tara Tallan. It was a creation borne out of necessity.

"Like other self-publishers, I don't self-publish because I think it's the only way to go. But I found that there aren't any publishers out there to publish my stories," Tallan says.

Helikon's one title is Tallan's creation, *Galaxion*. The book follows the adventures of the crew of the *Galaxion*.

The science vessel (shaped like a giant nautilus) is the third spaceship fitted with a faster-than-light drive. The first ship was never heard from again, the second returned badly damaged and the *Galaxion*, well that's the story.

A graphic novel that encapsulates

the first six issues of the series and a prologue hit stands last month.

Even though *Galaxion*, like most small-press endeavours, offers its story in black and white, Tallan's treatment of a science fiction staple is masterfully handled. It is a space opera without the trappings that have become stereotypical whenever science fiction appears in comic-book form.

The characters have evolved over the time since the first issue reached comic shops 18 months ago.

And the stellar reviews *Galaxion* has received over the course of its run bear this out.

Like many artists, Tallan was a doodler as kid, but says she never harboured any aspirations of becoming a professional comic book artist — let alone a publisher.

everyone accepted recognition for us breaking some new ground.

"Dennie (writer Dennis O'Neil) and Jule (editor Julius Schwartz), and I started out pretty quietly. There was no intention of telling anyone what we were doing. We were doing it because we thought it would be cool and important and fun.

"What happens is that the good stuff very often is done on the side. When people go out of their way to do something that is important, very often it not important any more."

But more than his handling of the characters in his charge, Adams also redefined the medium from a visual perspective. There was a certain vitality to his pages.

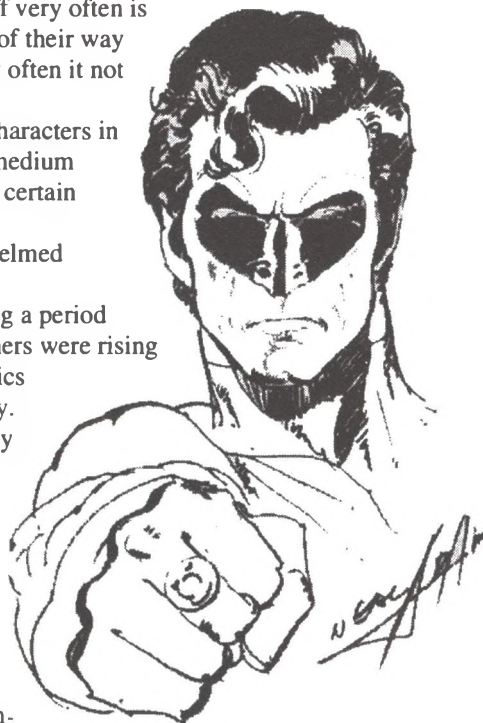
Since the early 1980s, Adams has helmed Continuity Comics.

The company was established during a period when a number of independent publishers were rising to challenge the stranglehold DC Comics and Marvel Comics had on the industry.

After all these years, only Continuity Comics remains standing — a point that rightfully makes Adams proud. The company publishes a number of Adams' creations such as Ms. Mystic and Bucky O'Hare.

Now Adams, who squeezes his various projects as well as his "day job" into 15-hour work days, is breaking new ground with the launch of computer animation projects. The first, with some computer manipulation by his daughter, Zeea, was a music video

In the animation segment for Swamp Boogie Queen, Adams and artists Alex Maleev and Kevin



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Adams' landmark work on Green Lantern/ Green Arrow came about because the title was about to be cancelled and the powers that be asked him to take on a few issues

Continued on page 55

Fan Poll

Just who do comic fans place at the top of their lists? Parsec's latest survey offers a glimpse of fans favourites from around the globe . . .

1) Favourite comic:

JLA

2) Favourite artist

Alex Ross

3) Favourite writer

Kurt Busiek

4) The industry's rising star is . . .

Joe Madueira

5) Favourite character:

Wolverine

For taking part in the survey Benjamin Grose of North Highlands, CA, will receive an original page from Star Trek: Deep Space Nine by Leonard Kirk and Terry Pallot.

Visit our website to take part in our next survey:

<http://icewall.vianet.on.ca/comm/parsec>

fans singing Galaxion's praises

But she did read the books and counted the New Teen Titans, Alpha Flight and Elfquest among her favourites.

And the influence of the team-themed comic books can be seen.

The genesis of Galaxion lay in 1983 when Tallan (then Jenkins) and a friend developed the idea when they were 12. But back then, the story wasn't intended to serve as the basis for a comic book. It

was supposed to become a novel.

"We both liked writing and we decided we would write a science fiction story," Tallan explained. "The first thing we did was draw little pictures to go with it."

In a sense, Galaxion is more a novel than comic book.

Tallan promises that the story will have a beginning, a middle and an ending — unlike the non-stop soap operas that have become the trademarks of mainstream comic books.

Of course, Tallan doesn't discount the possibility of spinoffs or an entirely new story.

Seven years ago, Tallan's then boyfriend (and now husband) looked over the little pictures that the teenaged artist had created and suggested putting them in comic-book form.

"I was pretty reluctant at first, because I thought of comics as a lower lifeform," she recalled.

After talking to other self-publishers, Tallan overcame her doubts and warmed to the idea of transforming her novel into comic-book form.

"One of the attractive things about comics is that a book takes you a year to write," she explains. "With a comic, you spend three months tops on your first issue, you publish it and your done."

"It's only a small part of the story, but it's an achievement. And every two months you come out with another part of the story. I like that feeling."



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 58

#1 SPIDERMAN

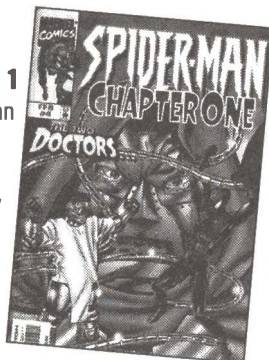
Chapter 1

Writer/artist John Byrne

The revamping of a cultural icon by the artist who has breathed new life into moribund titles during his illustrious career.

"The new Spiderman title is really well done." — **Richard Sturk, Webslingers**

"John Byrne, nuff said" — **Matthew Mutch, Triple Play**



#2 spawn 78

Writers Todd McFarlane & Brian Holguin; artist Greg Capullo

Sam Burke makes a promise, but can he keep it?



#3 JLA 28

Writer Grant Morrison; artist Stephen Scott and John Dell;

The final part of the Ultra-Marines saga including a battle with the Shaggy Man — sort of.



#4 X-Men 85

The search for Xavier captured fans' fancy and pushed up sales for all the X-Men titles.

#5 Battlechasers

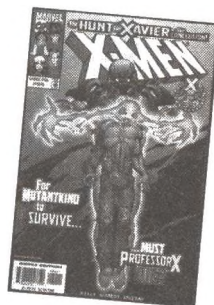
Writer Joe Madureira, Munier Sharrief; artist, Joe Madureira; inker, Tom McWeeney



#6 X-Men 84

Writer Joe Kelly; artist Adam Kubert

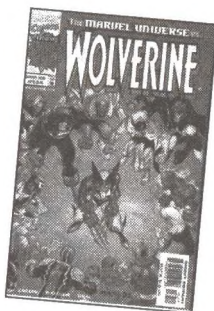
The search for Xavier, which concluded in this issue, captured fans' fancy and pushed up sales for all the X-Men titles.



#7 Wolverine 134

Writer Erik Larsen; artists Jeff Matsuda & Jon Sibal

An alien possesses Canada's native son and all hell breaks loose in New York City. Issue marks the introduction of a new creative team.



#8 X-Men 385

Writer Steve Seagle; artists Chris Bachalo & Tim Townsend

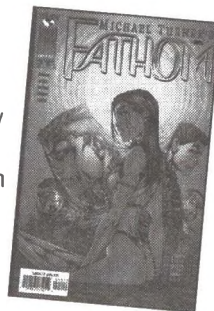
Xavier finally returns home.



#9 Fathom 3

Writers Michael Turner & Bill O'Neil; artist Michael Turner

Aspen holds the key to the master plan that has already led to death and destruction on the ocean.

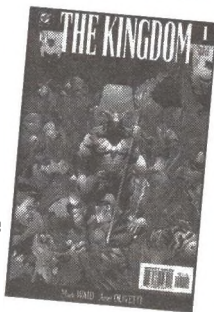


#10 Kingdom

Writer Mark Waid; artists Ariel Olivetti & Mike Zeck

Two-issue series explores the future of the DC Universe.

"We sold out on the first day" — **Janice Truppe, Gnu Books**



Continued from page 19

artwork draws readers into the story with its detail and points of view. It is a deeply textured and beautifully detailed book that is more akin to animation than to mainstream comic books.

"I've always been interested in animation and this seemed like the best style for the book," explained Pat.

The creative group approach is still at work as the storyline evolves and nears its completion. The writers and artists have mapped out story and the essentials of the plot are left to Tsang to flesh.

Once he has, then the group reviews and fine tunes the script, before passing it along to Pat and the rest of the artistic staff.

The popularity of the title has provided Dreamwave with the opportunity to expand the characters into merchandise such as sculptures, toys and even animation.

It is an opportunity that Dreamwave will grasp, but on their own terms.

Despite the popularity of Dark Minds, the creative forces behind it don't plan to keep the story alive indefinitely.

"We don't want to deal with something for 20 issues, because then it just seems like we're doing the same thing over," said Roger.

After the current storyline runs its course, the Dreamwave folks say it should wrap up with its eighth issue due during the spring or summer, another storyline could begin . . . could.

"We'd like to branch off and do other things," said Roger. "We want to create books for everybody."

CREDITS

In just a couple of years, 23-year-old Patrick Lee has gained fan favour with his work on a number of titles.

Here's a snapshot of his work before Darkminds:

WildCATs;
Black Flag;
Bloodpool;
Celeste;
Extreme Sacrifice
Glory;
Prophet;
Wynonna Earp.

Continued from page 20

college, he made a six-issue foray into self publishing by writing and illustrating his own book.

"It was silly, but I really liked that experience," Paquette recalls.

It was a visit to a Montreal comic convention that started him on the road as a professional. While he was there,

he showed his portfolio to some pros who were happy to provide critiques of Paquette's work.

"They criticized my work, but they also showed me that you can make a living doing comic books," said Paquette. "Up to then it was all abstract. It was just for fun. It was a kid's dream."

His first job came at time when the industry was expanding. It was with a small-run comic called *The Other Side*. The work wasn't steady, but it allowed him to hone his art. When the company ceased publication, Paquette was depressed.

Before turning his back on the business, Paquette sent his resume to comic book publishers across North America.

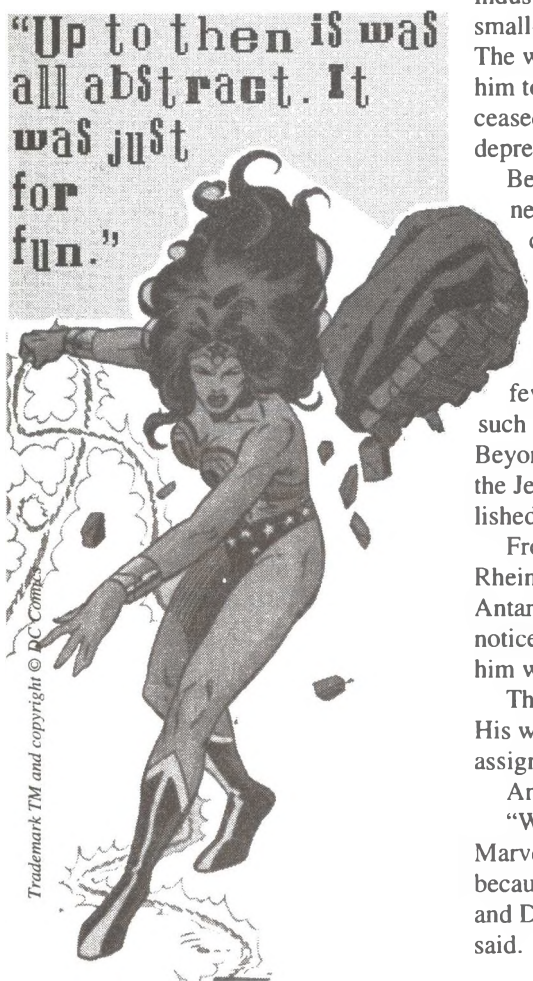
His first gig was for Aros Comics — which was the first job that he was paid for. Over the past few years, Paquette has worked on such comic books as *Space: Above and Beyond*, the *X-Files* (an adaptation of the *Jersey Devil* which was never published) and *Xena* for Topps.

From there, he was offered *Rheintochter* and *Arela: Warrior Nun* at Antarctic Press. The work there got him noticed at DC Comics which offered him work last Christmas.

The project was *Tomorrow Woman*. His work on that book led to his current assignment.

And working for DC suits him fine.

"When I was a kid, I read more Marvel comics. But I think that it is because Marvel is aimed more for kids and DC is for more mature readers," he said.



RECOMMENDED WINTER READING

Plastic Man Archives Vol. 1

Hardcover — DC Comics; a compilation of the rubbery hero/jokester's adventures from *Police Comics* 1-20. The 224-page book also features a foreword by Will Eisner. The book is pricey at \$49.95 (US), but it seems like a bargain considering the "lost" chapter of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* carries a \$4.95 price tag.

Chiller Trade paperback —

Image Comics; Brian Marx is a mage who can transform objects into magical weapons. He has to use his gift to tackle an unearthed demon. 128 pages, \$17.95 (US).

Rat Bastard 1-4

Crucial Comics; There have been a series of murders in a certain major metropolitan area and it's left to a rat to ferret out the person who is killing his friends.

Witty, with just the slightest undercurrent of irony and an almost Bakshi-like feel to the books.

J. O'Barr's The Crow #2 —

Kitchen Sink Press; featuring the story, *Demon in Disguise*. The book follows the attempt to save a bride from the heart of forbidden magic.



X-Men #87 — Marvel Comics; the conclusion of the four-part *Magento War* storyline. And, perhaps the final fate of the *Joseph*. The conclusion will lead into events in **Magнето #1**.



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Bright Anvil falls on comic industry

Toronto studio taps into multimedia universe

Image, established by expatriot and Spawn creator Todd MacFarlane, has done a great deal to bring Canadian talent into the industry and to the forefront of fans' attention.

Besides Dark Minds, the U.S. company has also published Siren — a three-part mini-series from Toronto's Bright Anvil Studio.

The current incarnation of Bright Anvil, formed by Logan Lubera less than a year ago, draws its name from the code name used for a planet killing weapon in a science fiction novel Lubera had once read.

Bright Anvil fulfils a number of roles for almost two dozen Canadian artists.

The studio acts as an agency, an art school, a publishing house and a focal point for these professionals. The artists affiliated

with the company have worked for Marvel, DC and Image, as well as for such non-comic book companies as Hasbro, Lucas Film Industrial Light and Magic, C.O.R.E. Digital and Warner Brothers Television.

Even though Bright Anvil has begun to make forays into other creative arts, managing editor Jay Torres, says the focus of the studio is still comic books.

"Comics are what brought us together," he explains. "We all wanted to put out art together."

The nucleus of the studio is a group of friends who shared an interest in comic books and art. Over the months, more people have joined the studio and honed their talents.

The work done by the studio's members has gained the attention of other publishers such as Marvel and Quantum Comics. Quantum is publishing three series by Bright Anvil artists during the next year.

Torres, who doubles as the company's head writer, is the creator of Siren.

The comic is a homage to the fictional hard-boiled



Parsec Photo

Artist Craig Yeung (left) and writer/editor Jay Torres have been leading Bright Anvil's thrust into the comic industry.

detectives that has appeared over the years, ala Somerset Holmes. It's gotten some serious buzz among people in the industry and among critics.

"I had the idea for a female detective for a few years," Torres explained. "Then the X-Files came out and it leaned toward the paranormal and Astro City came out and schmoshed it all together."

After the comic did hit shelves, it generated a great deal of buzz on the Internet during its run.

"I'm happy that people have responded to it," Torres said. "The fan mail has been very positive."

"The biggest complaint I've heard is that people wanted it to go longer than three issues."

Now, Torres spends much of his time overseeing projects at the studio.

The company is currently considering some film and animation projects that are based on concepts that have been developed by the studio's creative forces.

Besides the multi-media projects during the coming months, Bright Anvil will produce a number of print-related projects.

In April, Bright Anvil will launch an anthology featuring a number of eight-page stories designed to showcase the work of the studio's writers and artists. At the same time, the company, through Image, will also release Monster Fighters Inc.

Of course, such an increase in activity means that the studio is on the hunt for more talent for its stable.

"We look at what drives them," said artist Craig Yeung. "There are a lot of good artists, but we want ones who are committed."

The biggest complaint I've heard is that people wanted it to go longer than three issues.

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Erratic Cycles

A lonely stretch of highway takes
one man back to a place he dreads

Story by

Mark Leslie

Art by

Sandy Carruthers

Charles Dean Webster, attorney at law, sat very still in his '89 Toyota Tercel, frustrated over his predicament. Something — he had no idea what — had happened to his car. First there had been some smoking and hissing and then the car had stopped running. That was the extent of his knowledge about what was wrong with his car. He was a lawyer, not a mechanic.

Dammit Jim, I'm a lawyer, not a mechanic.

He looked at his watch, taking his eyes off of the forest for only a very short time. It was a quarter past nine. As he lifted his head to look down the barren stretch of Highway 144, he caught the glare of the setting sun in his rearview mirror.

"Damn!"

He slammed a fist against the dash and then sat back once more and stared out the bug splattered windshield at the deserted highway.

Why me? he asked, and was quick to find an answer.

Why not you?

This was going to be your big case, your first major success, your big break. This was going to be the case that not only brought you a handsome sum but spread your name across the country. After winning this one, you were finally going to be someone.

So why not you? If you continue to believe such stupid glorified dreams, then why not you? Face the facts, schmuck: This is just another case.

And, being just another case, it had been nothing but a pain in the ass from day one. Getting stranded on a lonely highway somewhere between Sudbury and Timmins was just par for the course.

He looked at his watch again, but only a minute had passed since he had last checked it. His eyes quickly returned to the wall of forest which ran never-ending along both sides of the highway. He couldn't shake the feeling that something was watching him from the forest.

No, not something, he corrected himself.

The Bush People.

He shuddered at that thought and considered turning on the radio to help alleviate his mood; but he was afraid that it would kill the battery. And he needed the battery in order for the hazard lights to keep working. Didn't he?

Dammit, it always came back to that, didn't it?

He hated the fact that he knew nothing much about how a car worked. But that had been his father's profession, not his.

When he was still young — very young — he's watched his father closely. Anthony Webster would come home from the garage and spend as long as twenty minutes washing his hands and never really getting them clean. The tracks of his fingerprints were a permanent resting place for the grease and oil of his livelihood. Then, after supper, he would sit down in the living room with a beer in one hand and a remote in the other and grumble about inflation, taxes and the latest antics of the Toronto Maple Leafs. And the next day the cycle would repeat: Work, a vain attempt to wash away the residue of that work, and when that failed, a cleansing of the soul with beer and bitching.

Charles loved and respected his father who had never been anything but reliable and supportive. He'd always provided his only son with everything he could afford to give him and only once had he raised a hand to him — but in retrospect, Charles had deserved that quick slap after having verbally assaulted his

mother in a typical teenager/mother argument. Anthony Webster was as close to the perfect father as any man could be.

But the last thing that Charles wanted was to be like him. He could never lead such a mundane existence. Charles wanted more than just money and a career. He wanted an exciting and fulfilling lifestyle. He didn't want his father's life of broken car after broken car — every day slaving over someone else's troubles and ultimately getting nowhere in life.

No, that wasn't for Charles. That wasn't what he wanted at all. He yearned to be a lawyer, to experience the lifestyle portrayed on the L.A. Law television series he'd loved so much; so he reached for it.

But he never got it.

Every case he took on held for him that promise of being the case which would move him up. But they never did. Instead, he slaved day after day over someone else's troubles, someone else's broken life, never moving up.

He ended up living the very lifestyle he had dreaded: His father's. Only, Charles lacked many of the things that his father had, including the knowledge of how a car worked.

Charles had been too engrossed in his own personal dreams to bother hanging around with his father and learning a few essential details about his trade.

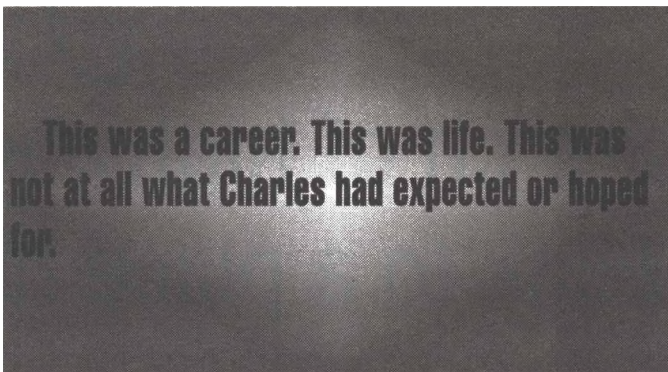
And because of it, he was stranded.

Caught in the very trap he had attempted to avoid. So it always did come down to that, didn't it? Running away from something only brought it down on you even worse. His cellular phone was rendered useless by the remote location. He didn't even know how far it was to the next town, or at least to the next pay phone. If he knew, he might consider walking. It would be far better than sitting around waiting for another car to drive by.

Although it had only been fifteen minutes since he saw any traffic he was afraid that no one else would drive by. He'd never driven out of the concrete corridor before and had no idea of what to expect. Besides, even if someone stopped, would they even bother helping him if they knew who he was?

If only he could get to a phone and make one toll-free call to the CAA.

Charles smirked and looked at his watch again without reading it. With his luck, his CAA membership would probably have run out, or for some stupid reason they didn't cover this area. Or perhaps the nearby CAA was run by one of the local groups that despised him. Wouldn't that be a cute confrontation? He wouldn't be surprised if any of these things happened — everything else had



gone wrong so far.

It had started out as a simple case. His client, a Toronto-based company called Durban Lumber, had purchased a large chunk of land near Timmins for their logging operations. The only problem when Charles had picked up the case was a local band of Indians claiming traditional rights to the land. But Durban Lumber had purchased the land from the municipality and held legal ownership. It was a straightforward matter of Charles walking in, going through the motions, flashing the ownership papers, quoting a sample of similar past cases in which the defendant was triumphant and, hopefully, settling it out of court.

Then a new development changed things. The native lawyers uncovered an old weathered copy of a document that the municipality had signed with the native leaders, recognizing the land as traditionally belonging to them. Because of a fire more than two decades earlier at city hall, the municipality's copy of that document had been destroyed and forgotten. And so the simple case had turned ugly. Durban Lumber was pressing the municipality from one side, while the Indians were pressing them from another. The media had eaten the story up, of course, in the good old story of big business trying to step all over the little guys.

The more sour the case turned, the more difficult it was for Charles to

obtain the upper hand. The stress mounted, the tension increased and it began to get more than sour, more than ugly.

On his last visit to Timmins, some environmentalists and Indians greeted his plane at the airport with rotten fruit, catcalls and stones. Charles, the representative of the big bully, became the object of their hatred and anger. It seemed like they all wanted a piece of him.

Things got so bad that instead of flying in to his next meeting in Timmins, Charles opted to drive. Not only would he arrive in an unexpected manner and hopefully undetected, but he could use the six or so hours that it would take him to get there to relax and sort things out.

It would be the first time he was alone in more than seven years. Truly alone — without work and booze, his longtime

companions.

After finishing a grueling law school program, Charles had launched straight into his career the first chance that he got. He started at the bottom, as most lawyers do, and had remained there ever since. He never once attributed his dire position to burn-out, but instead kept driving himself harder and harder, waiting for that one case.

At least in school when he botched a test or flunked a paper he had the chance of redeeming himself with another test or another paper before the final grades came out. But his career, he discovered, didn't work that way. Mistakes stayed on his record, without the possibility of being wiped out by future successes. There was no chance for redemption — there was only one thing. Plugging on.

So Charles had jumped from a life of study, work, party, sleep, to a life of work, research, more work. There were no study weeks or spring breaks where one could relax and then use the time to catch up on all the areas one had fallen behind in. There were no getaway weekends like there had been in school.

This was a career. This was life. This was not at all what Charles had expected or hoped for.

The only way he could cope was using a method he had learned by watch-

ing his father. He coped with the Webster method of bitching and booze. That soon became part of his daily ritual.

Years ago, he had lived for the week-ends and the promises that once school was finished he would be able to get on with living, with life, with being a free man in a free world. It wasn't long before he discovered that there was no such thing as freedom. There was no such thing as just living.

The barrage of cliches which his father spewed forth daily about the shit that life dealt an honest man were all coming true. Charles found himself repeating those same old tired cliches about life, and believing them.

Charles had discovered one night in the midst of an alcoholic haze that the cycle his life had taken was no better than his father's. Work like a bastard, the come home and drink like one. Only, his father also had a wife and a son. All that Charles had was work and booze.

It had become time to re-examine his life.

That was why this drive, this pilgrimage to Timmins, was supposed to be just the thing that Charles needed. It would be his way of being alone with himself, without the work, without the booze. Just Charles and his thoughts. Six hours to finally reflect on what his life meant to him other than in the terms of a drunken man's armchair philosophy.

There was only quiet thought and gentle reflection as his car left the sprawling fringes of the city, headed north on Highway 400.

And then, several hours later, the car — the very means of his pilgrimage — broke down.

And Charles was alone.

In the middle of nowhere.

This newest development brought to him the real reason he had never let himself be alone for all those years.

Being alone scared the bejesus out of him.

He was surrounded on all sides, it seemed, by the thick foliage of the Northern Ontario wilderness.

Wilderness that grew darker as the sun crept down somewhere behind the distant hills.

Wilderness that threatened to take him back to when he was ten and camping with his parents at Algonquin Provincial Park.

Back to the last time he had really

felt alone.

Back to the time when he had first learned of The Bush People.

"No," he whispered, and it all came back to him in a sudden rush, as if the nineteen years between today and that dreadful evening had never happened at all.

He was returned to that night — back inside the body of a ten year old who was alone and lost in the thick of the night in the middle of nowhere.

He re-experienced it all.

The cold chill of the night wind. The smell of the nearby lake which carried the faint scent of

trout. The unending rhythm of the crickets, forever bleating their cries of passion for the night, their chant that there was much more to the darkness than could be seen.

And the knowledge, the dreadful, painful knowledge that his parents were still sleeping in the tent, completely unaware that he was no longer tucked in his sleeping bag, dozing peacefully and protect beside them.

C

Charles had awoke with a demand from his body that he visit the outhouse. He had slipped out of his sleeping bag and began a quick search for the flashlight. He considered waking his father and asking him where it was, but the urge to go — now — was too great. He unzipped the entrance to the tent and headed down the trail to where he remembered the outhouse to be.

Only, either his memory had failed him or he had missed it in the darkness, because after walking for quite a while, Charles still hadn't found it.

He turned back, the cramps getting worse, and decided that he would wake his father after all.

But he came to a fork in the trail that he hadn't noticed on his way out. He took the one to the right, hoping that it was the correct one. But that trail led to another fork.

That was when he knew that he must be heading in the wrong direction.

He had been tricked.

By The Bush People.

The Bush People. His father had conjured them up that very evening in a

story told by the campfire. They were the bogeymen of the wilderness that hid behind every tree, beneath every stone. They were numberless, faceless and without mercy. Their sole purpose was to trick little boys by leading them down the wrong paths, deeper into the forest away from the safety of their parents.

He opened his mouth to scream.

But he stopped himself with a sudden thought.

What if The Bush People didn't know where he was yet? What if they located their prey by listening for their screams? If he cried out for the help of his parents,

The Bush People might also hear him and get to him first.

There was no way that he would scream.

The only thing left was to run.

He turned and raced down the path. Branches reached out from the sides of the trail, thin and invisible in the dark gloom. Each time they snagged him, he almost let out a yell, thinking it was a bush person touching him. They whipped at his face as he ran past them and tried to head down the proper trail, the trail that led to the safety of his parents.

The haunting cry of a loon echoed through the forest. To Charles, it was the cry of another lost child trying to find his way to safety. Too bad pal, Charles thought. That cry just gave you away. Now they know where you are.

As he was thinking this, he collided with a wall of canvass stretched tightly across the path. He bounced back, sprawling to the forest floor and finally released the scream of terror he had been holding within.

No! he thought. They must have heard me. Now I'm caught too.

But then he heard the familiar grunt of his father. A command which was half-snore came from the other side of the canvass wall — which Charles realized was the tent — telling him that it was all right, to get back to sleep. His father must have thought that Charles was still in the tent and had screamed out while having a nightmare.

He quickly ran around to the front of the tent and slipped in. Then he crawled back into his sleeping bag which was still warm from the body heat he had left in it. He nestled there, the bag curled



tight about his neck in an effort to keep out the chill of the night air. He lay there unmoving, waiting for the light of day as the pain of his cramps continued to grow.

But he would not go outside again that evening. Not without his parents — not until daytime when The Bush People were probably asleep.

And throughout the night, as the loon calls continued, Charles decided that they were not calls for help by lost children, but instead cries of pain and horror. The last desperate cries of the poor souls who had already been caught by The Bush People.

To keep his mind off of his cramps, he started counting the number of victims they had claimed. He quickly lost count.

Nineteen years later, Charles sat in his car, feeling a sudden urge to urinate. He no longer believed in The Bush People, realizing that his father had told him that story out of a fairy tale mentality. The same way that Little Red Riding Hood was supposed to teach children not to talk to strangers, Anthony Webster's tale of The Bush People was supposed to teach Charles not to wander from his parents when camping.

No, he no longer believed in The Bush People. But his fears — of being alone, being lost, and being in the forest at night — remained.

As the need to urinate worsened, becoming a tight unbearable pain, he told himself that he was being silly. Slowly, he opened the car door and stepped out.

The light from the opened car door spilled out onto the highway, pale and yellow. It mixed with the flashing red of his hazard lights. He looked at the light on the frail cracked pavement and then past it to the dark silhouettes of the trees against the grey night sky. He looked up, straight up to see more stars than he could ever see over the city. He saw in them the freedom of open space that this trip had originally promised him.

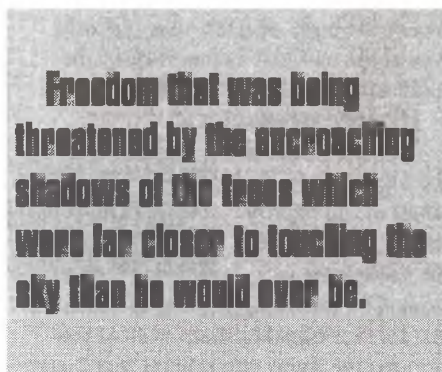
Freedom that was being threatened by the encroaching shadows of the trees which were far closer to touching the sky than he would ever be.

He hated them for mocking him so.

Unzipping his fly, he urinated in the middle of the highway.

Take that, he thought as his urine pattered on the dry dusty pavement. Piss on you, you stupid barren highway.

As he relieved himself, he kept his eyes on the forest. Black faced, it stared back at him. It was like a two-way mirror. He could sense, with every fiber of his being, that something was there, just on the other side of that blank face, watching him. But no matter how long he stared he couldn't see it. He could



only see the trees.

Then, as he finished and zipped up his fly, he caught the glint of steel in the red reflection of the hazard lights. It stuck up from a patch of tall grass across the highway on the far side of the ditch.

Could it be a fallen highway sign?

He took a few steps across the highway and from there could see that indeed it was. Jesus, a highway sign. Maybe it would tell him exactly how far he was from Timmins, or perhaps from the next town. And if it wasn't too far, he could begin his hike.

It was much better than waiting for nobody to drive by all night and reliving ghost stories of his childhood.

His hope renewed, Charles took a few more steps. As he did this he felt a warmth and realized that for the first time in years he was in control of himself, of his fears. As mundane as trekking across a highway to read a fallen sign was, it meant to Charles that he was confronting his situation in an optimistic manner that took his destiny into his own hands. He had had it with merely reacting and avoiding. This time he was initiating a new chain of events.

He stepped off the solid pavement and onto the soft shoulder of the highway. The ditch was shallow, only about two-feet lower than the highway, and Charles went through it easily and was on the other side, stepping through the tall grass toward the fallen sign.

Looking down at it, he wondered if instead of telling him anything important it would just be another SOFT

SHOULDERS sign. He'd seen enough of them on Highway 144. He took a breath and bent over it.

As he reached down he thought he could feel a boney finger poking at his right shoulder.

Startled, he whipped his head around and saw that it was only a branch from a nearby tree which was sticking out over him. He relaxed again and took hold of the sign once more.

He couldn't read the sign in the dim light and so lifted it, tilting it toward the light emanating from his car.

He felt the boney poking again, this time closer to his neck. Then again. Then something had a hold of his shirt. He whirled around, dropped the sign on his foot, screamed in pain and stumbled forward, twisting his ankle on some unseen stone.

He fell to the ground, hard. The beating pulses of pain shot up through his ankle to his ears, keeping perfect time with the red flashes of the hazard lights of his car. Another boney finger grabbed at his left shoulder and something pulled on his tie, choking him.

Quickly, more boney limbs grabbed onto his body and pulled him slowly away from the highway. He struggled, trying to break free, but the choking tug on his tie made him weak, useless.

In the dim red beat of the hazard lights he detected subtle movements above him which looked like tree branches bobbing to some soundless disco beat — but there was no wind.

He realized that the boney fingers were actually branches from the trees, and that they were passing him along to each other, deeper and deeper into the forest.

As he was being moved, dragged along the forest floor, his head collided with stones and stumps and he wondered vaguely, through the haze of pain and confusion, whether or not he would still be alive when the trees delivered him to The Bush People.

Then a new thought occurred to him.

Perhaps there were no Bush People. Perhaps there would be no destination, no end to this mad journey. Perhaps he would continue to be dragged along by the trees, helplessly stuck in yet another cycle until death finally claimed him.

"Please, God! Let the Bush People be real! Let them exist. Please . . ."

The past holds hope for the future

WHITE WALLS

Story by
Kirsten Parker

Art by
Jean-Pierre Normand

Darius raised a hand to his face, wiped off the streams of sweat, and laid his shovel down upon the earth. All this time, and yet no one had found a better way to excavate bones without destroying them. Wearily, Darius made his way to the metal dome that sat on the dusty ground a few meters away. As did all houses from his homeland, this one used the sun's energy to provide it's electricity. Darius had to admit, there certainly was a lot of sun in this part of the world. But the power gained from the sun was used to counter it. Solar panels atop the building collected energy that worked to cool the dome Darius worked in.

As he passed through the doorway a laser swept him clean, removing all signs of dust and sweat. The interior of the dome was sparsely furnished. He had one desk, on which a fist sized black cube sat. He also made use of an eating table and a bathroom. There was also, of course, the great black doorway at the end of the room. That doorway led anywhere Darius wanted it to lead him.

He sat down at his desk and pressed a small button on the front of the cube. A three dimensional display sprang into existence. "Open file titled 'journal'. Display voice entered type," he ordered the black cube, his computer.

Darius slowed his speech and tried to talk in a monotone as he dictated to the computer.

"Today we excavated a collection of strange volumes. We've encountered such volumes before, but we're still unsure of their purpose." Darius spoke these words too quickly in his frustration, and had to repeat them for the computer to pick them up.

"The volumes contain rectangular sheets of paper covered with words, sometimes hand written but usually printed as if taken from a computer screen and put on paper. They confuse me. Why copy history onto paper to read? Why not just put it on the Internet and allow everyone to read the same copy? The reason is, I believe, that there was no Internet, not as we know

it. We have excavated a very primitive type of Internet, but we are uncertain as to whether or not it functioned as ours does. We have begun to refer to these volumes as 'books' because delicate study of them reveals this is what they were called in past times.

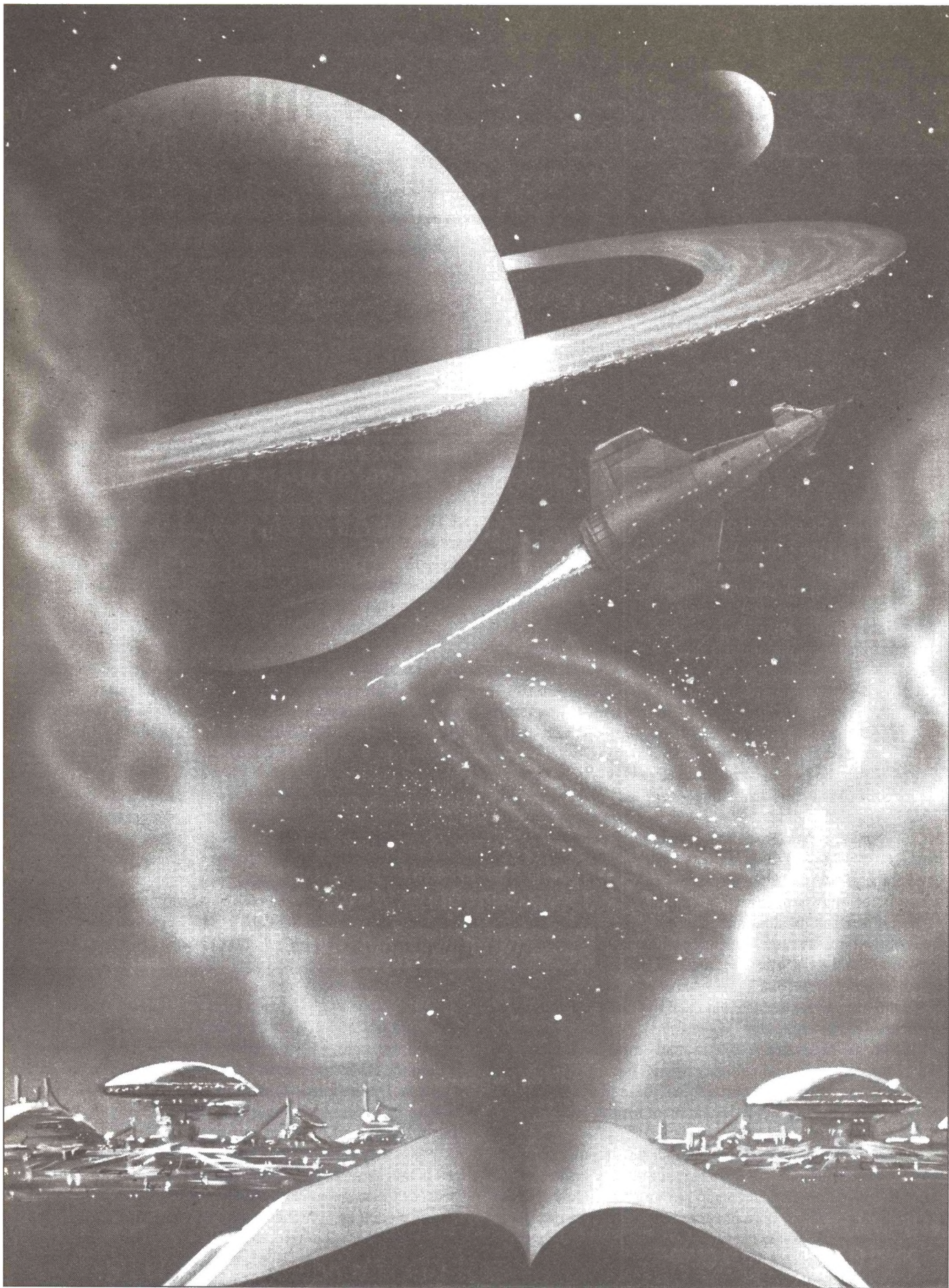
"The books we dug up today are in remarkably good condition. I will examine some of them in a few days. They appear to be records of history, yet they produce such conflicting stories that I am inclined to think they are totally untrue. The majority of books coincide with the artifacts we have studied, but many do not. This leaves me very confused."

Darius sat back, and rubbed his eyes. Sighing, he combed his hair and gave his clothes a few straightening tugs. Stepping up to the great black doorway, he tapped a quick rhythm on its frame and stepped through. In an instant he found himself standing on the other side of a doorway identical to the one he had just stepped through. In front of him stretched his living room, halfway across the globe.

The walls were tinted a pale blue, and the the table was set with two plates and a high chair. Darius smiled at the thought of his new son. The boy wouldn't be old enough to sit on a normal chair for a couple years. "Kylaine!" he called, "I'm home. Is dinner ready yet?"

"It is. I'll be there in just a minute." Darius sat down at his place and waited for his wife to arrive with the food. Kylaine entered the room, a platter balanced on one hand, Darius' son held in the other and a bowl held between her forearm and her stomach. Darius jumped out of his seat and retrieved his son, settling the infant in the high chair and relieving his wife of one of the platters.

When they were seated Darius reached for the serving spoon and scooped up a small amount of kips. The thin white strips of the root vegetable flopped flexibly onto his plate. Darius picked up a pitcher of yellow sauce, talking as he poured it. "We uncovered another store of paper books today." He told his wife. "I still don't understand why anyone would



bother to print out that many books. Tomorrow we plan to read one, carefully. They're well preserved, but age does damage on its own."

Kylaine paused, forking a group of long, thin, green reeds onto her plate, before she answered. "Perhaps the people of that time didn't have computers."

Darius swallowed before he answered.

"The words on the pages are printed far too cleanly to be handwritten. Some of the books have nearly illegible scrawls on their first page. We think these are handwritten names. No, they had some kind of computers."

"Well, perhaps they didn't have an Internet."

Darius placed his fork on the edge of his plate, watched Kylaine feed his son, Julian. "No," he said shook his head, "we found Internets but they were so primitive as to be useless. There were very few phone lines in the first city we excavated. If they didn't have a world-wide net, the amount of lines would be drastically reduced."

Kylaine spooned a soft blend of potatoes and broccoli into Julian's mouth. The boy burped, splattering food all over his mother. Kylaine sat for a moment with her eyes closed, the green mixture stuck to her cheeks, nose and even eyelashes. Then she sighed, pulled a laser from her pants pocket and scanned her face with it. Soon the mess was gone. "No matter how many times he does that," she said, "I don't think I'll ever get used to it."

Darius said nothing, just smiled, and watched his family as he ate. His son was only nine months old, and Darius was still enjoying having him. "As much as I love the past," he thought, "I'll always love my family more." He sighed, out loud. "Darius?" asked Kylaine, "are you all right?"

He sighed again, "Just thinking deep thoughts."

He glanced up at the calendar on the wall. The year at the top read 9 S. In his head, Darius converted that to the old style of dating. 8996 A.D. He sighed again. That number seemed far too large. It was a symbol of the past, and Darius loved the ancient civilizations, but it was also a constant reminder of how old man was. "There's nothing original anymore." He thought. "There's hologram remakes of old movies, and remakes of remakes. There's manuals

that have been printed a thousand times and history books, but history had been told hundreds of times. Nothing's original anymore."

"Kylaine?"

"Yes, dear?"

"How was work today?" His wife was a psychologist. Darius couldn't remember the year psychologists had unravelled the last mysteries of the human brain, but he'd been told of it many times. Of course, he hadn't been aware of it at the time. He had only been three. But since then psychology had turned from being a study of "how" and "why" into a study of "who". People like his wife travelled the world, taking surveys, noting down names and making records of who's brain did what and when.

"It was just fine, dear."

"Tell me about it." Darius felt a sudden desire to be told something he didn't understand a word of. Something he had to puzzle out. Unfortunately for Darius, Kylaine wasn't about to cooperate.

"I know just how you feel, Darius," said his wife, instead of answering his request. "You're feeling too intelligent, too knowing."

"The infuriating thing is," he thought, "she's right about what I'm feeling. Life has become entirely predictable."

"You're right, Kylaine," he said, instead of arguing with her. "I'm going to bed now." Darius heard the flatness in his voice. He stood, his meal not even half finished, and turned from the dinner table. He walked quickly from the room, through the polished wooden archway and through the kitchen. The stairwell in the corner of the kitchen spiralled upward toward his room. Placing his hand of the smooth, sanded rail Darius started to climb.

Suddenly, his senses sharpened. He stopped in his tracks. The stairwell was well lighted. Darius could feel his clothing brush against his skin. The smooth rail under his hand suddenly seem rough, like the stuff he had dug up once, called sandpaper. Darius could feel the sweat that had soaked into the soles of his boots. He could smell the faint scent of pine from the wooden walls, tinged with the smell of his sweat. The perfume in the shampoo he used on his hair suddenly seemed overpowering. He could taste the bitter sweet sauce he had poured onto his kips. Sounds previously so faint he couldn't hear them drifted to

his hears. The clink of metal against teeth as his wife pushed a spoon into Julian's mouth. The rustling of clothing as Julian pulled back, protesting. His eyes scanned the area around him. Darius could see the pattern of grains in the wood six feet in front of him. He looked at the step he stood on, could measure the exact height and width of it, could see the seam where one step joined another. A familiar feeling rushed into his chest. Suddenly the walls of the stairwell seem impossibly confining.

Darius banished the feeling. When he had mentioned these feelings to his wife for the first time she had explained that they were perfectly natural. Kylaine had taught him how to get rid of them. When he had asked what purpose they served she had changed the subject. Darius finished the climb to his room and slipped beneath he covers of his bed, barely noticing that his wife had changed the colour of the walls again.

"Walls," he called out, "white." Instantly the walls blanched of all colour.

☆ ☆ ☆

Darius sat at the table in his dome at the dig site, absorbed in the book lying before him. It was one of the books they had dug up, and it had turned out to be surprisingly durable. Darius was completely oblivious to the distractions around him. The sound of metal striking rock didn't reach his ears, the irritating dust flew up his nostrils and into his hears but he made no move to brush it away. Then a voice penetrated his trance.

"Darius? Darius!" He snapped out of it. Linda, his assistant, stood in the doorway. "Darius, have you classified that book yet? Is it history or a manual?"

Darius looked at the cover, careful to keep his place. A beautiful landscape populated with impossible creatures adorned the book.

"Frankly, Linda, I don't think it's either. I mean, the things the author describes in this book are too amazing to be true. The author describes numerous intelligent races from other planets. Our records mention nothing of the sort, and surely such a discovery would have changed our world and lifestyle immeasurably. Where did you find this book?"

"Under the section titled science-fiction." The word rolled unnaturally off her tongue.

"Well, label one of our transport crates science-fiction and pack the books classified science-fiction together. I'll see if I can find out what that phrase means."

Darius lifted a pad the size of his hand off of the desk and linked it to the Internet. He tapped "dictionary" on the keyboard and touched the "send" button. In seconds a display was asking him which word he wanted to look up. He tapped in "fiction," since he already knew what science was. The definition appeared instantly on the screen. Darius was more than a little surprised. He had expected that the word was too old to be used anymore.

He read the definition: 1. a making up of imaginary happenings; feigning. 2. anything made up or imagined, as a statement, story, etc. 3. (a) any literary work portraying imaginary characters and events, as a novel, story or play. (b) such works collectively. 4. Law something accepted as fact for the sake of convenience, although not necessarily true.

Darius was upset. The only thing close to fiction that he was familiar with was lying, and that was bad. Criminals lied when being investigated. Untrue lovers lied to their spouses. People who stole things lied. All the contexts fiction was used in that Darius could think of were bad. He read another few lines of the book he held in his hand. But he had been enjoying this book. He had believed the lies, and he had liked it! Darius read another few lines. He shook his head. It didn't seem as good now that knew it was lies. Sighing, he closed the book and put it in the drawer of his desk.

☆ ☆ ☆

Darius woke from his dream with a start. It hadn't been a bad dream. In fact, he had been enjoying it rather a lot. But his wife had shifted beside him, and he slept lightly. Rising from bed, Darius considered what the dream had been about. He recalled that he seemed to have been watching people doing impossible things, but the whole thing was

Darius looked down at the folded corner, shrugged, and slipped the book back into the drawer of his desk.

familiar. Then he realised that he had been dreaming about the book he had been reading. By now Darius was in the kitchen. He sat down on a chair placed in the corner. Everyone knew that dreams indicated what the subconscious was concerned with. So why was he dreaming of that book of lies?

Just then Darius's senses sharpened again. But the book made him wonder. "Should I dismiss it this time?" Darius analysed the feeling that grew inside him. He wanted to write. He wanted to write about people he didn't know, people that didn't exist. He wanted to tell people their lives . . . 'To tell lies!' Darius shook his head. "The book," he decided, "is getting to me. What would the purpose be to writing lies? Who would read them?" Darius frowned, looked at the calendar that so mindlessly displayed the day. It had been a full week since he had first started reading the book. But he hadn't looked at it since then. He'd been dreaming though.

Darius wandered through the house, troubled. He thought of the people in the book he had been reading. "Idiot!" He thought to himself. "Those people aren't real. I don't have to worry about them. But I can't stop thinking of them. I wonder . . ."

Ruthlessly Darius suppressed the anxiety. "I'll get dressed, and go to work early. I'll file that book away and never think of it again."

In his room, Darius quietly stepped into his pants and buttoned up his shirt. Padding down to the living room, Darius tapped a code into the black doorway and stepped through. He found himself in his dome. Light was just coming to this part of the world. Darius opened the drawer to his desk and pulled out the book. The faded colours on the once bright cover beckoned. His fingers twitched on the pages. "Surely," he thought, "one more page won't hurt. After all, I do need to classify it . . ."

Somewhere in the back of his head, Darius knew he had read more than enough to classify the book. But he dis-

regarded the little voice that troubled him and submerged himself in the story.

At seven in the morning, Linda found him hunched over the book. "Darius? Darius!" He slowly looked up at her, blinked, and smiled.

"Time to get to work? Okay." Unconsciously, his finger bent the top corner of the page over before he closed it. Linda saw the movement and looked Darius straight in the eye.

"Why did you do that?" she asked.

Darius looked down at the folded corner, shrugged, and slipped the book back into the drawer of his desk.

Outside the dome the air was hot and dry, the dust invaded the folds of Darius' clothing. The books had been left in their shelves in the building they had unearthed, because they were already organised and remarkably well preserved. Groups of people picked them up by the armful, loading them into boxes labelled as the shelves were. The books would be shipped off to universities and labs to be studied, except for a few that the excavators would be allowed to keep as samples.

Darius descended into the hole, his eyes scanning the shelves of books. People still worked with tiny, delicate lasers, cleaning dirt and rocks from among the books and shelves. Darius went to the science-fiction section. Sections entitled history and non-fiction had been discovered as well, and had been packed away first. Manuals had been the second to go, because they were deemed the next most valuable. After that they had loaded the fiction because it seemed more likely to be accurate than most of what was left. Nearly all of the fiction and fantasy, which turned out to be nearly the same thing, remained on the shelves. The four shelves that housed the two subjects were around the corner from everything else, and could not be seen by the other workers.

Darius began picking among the books, placing a few carefully in the carry sack slung over his shoulder.

Sometimes, when their covers identified them as part of a series, he would scoop five or six in at a time. When the sack was full Darius looked at the gaps in the shelves and began rearranging books to fill them. As he strolled from the excavation pit to his dome, doubts invaded his mind. "What," he asked himself, "do you think you're doing? Stealing historical samples? What do you want with a bunch of lies, anyway? Perhaps it has something to do with that essay you found." By now Darius had reached the door to his dome. Entering, he locked it behind him. He placed the bag of books on the floor and sat, remembering.

He had been looking through the fiction again, paging through books, scanning titles, when he had come upon an essay included in the back of one of the books. "A Study of the Reader's Mind and the Suspension of Disbelief," it had been titled. It was the last part of the title that had intrigued Darius. He had sneaked the book into his dome and had sat down to read it. For the most part, it was the type of thing Darius already knew, what kind of people usually liked what kind of book etc. It was two particular passages that stuck in his memory.

The first read: "The creative faculties of the writer can be stretched to their limits into the course of the writing of a book. In order for the reader to gain the utmost enjoyment of the fiction, they must see the flawlessness of the setting and characters."

Perhaps it is the distance from reality that makes science-fiction and fantasy books so popular. Darius had found this passage interesting because it implied that these lies had been written purposefully untrue, yet for the purpose of entertaining people.

The second passage read: "In order for a reader to enjoy the book they are reading they must be willing to believe what is written. The reader knows that the material is untrue, yet submerges that knowledge in order to enjoy the story being told."

This passage had bothered Darius. That people could be capable of reading a book full of lies and choose to believe them bothered him. But he had been doing just that, and enjoying himself.

Darius stood and tapped his code into the frame of the black doorway. He stepped through and into his living room. The archaeologist went down to the basement and lifted the panel of

plastic that covered his hiding spot. "Darius!" It was his wife. "Come to dinner!"

"I'll be right there, dear!" With a regretful glance he lowered the plastic cover, hiding his cache of books once more.

Dinner turned out to be mashed potatoes with purple sauce. Darius's thoughts turned to the year psychologists had explained the last mysteries of the human brain. He had done some subtle research into the writing process in centuries past and wondered how creativity had been explained. He decided to ask his wife. "Kylaine?"

"Yes, Darius?"

"How does creativity work?"

"Why do you want to know?"

His wife sounded suspicious, and didn't ask what creativity was despite the fact that few people knew of it. "I wouldn't want to think that you were involved in that kind of thing."

"Oh, I was just reading an essay about it. Sounded sort of scandalous." He tried to sound casual.

"There is no such thing as creativity. Is was a figment of the imagination." Kylaine sounded like she didn't know she was contradicting herself. After all, imagination is creativity. But her response answered Darius's question. Psychologists hadn't explained creativity, they had eliminated it.

☆ ☆ ☆

Darius walked slowly to his den. The red carpet seem to stab at his eyes with glaring colour. The pale purple walls clashed with the furnishings in the room. Kylaine the psychologist said that the lack of colour provided too much emptiness in one's mind.

"Walls, beige." Darius liked emptiness. He could think better in rooms with pale walls.

Darius sat down in front of the old fashioned computer that he kept from an excavation. Years ago, when he had first dug one up, he had been allowed to keep the ancient computer. As a curiosity he had fixed it and made it work. Now it seemed more appropriate to what he was planning than the voice-activated computer he usually used.

Suddenly all Darius's senses became extremely sharp. He let the feeling

"How does creativity work?"

come, welcomed it. Placing his hands upon the keyboard he began to type. Soon his hands were fairly flying over the keys, a story spinning out on the screen before him.

When the urge to write faded, Darius had used four pages, had created characters, had begun a story. Had told a lie. And he loved it. At that moment, staring at the stark black letters that called forth amazingly colourful images, he made his decision.

Kylaine could no longer keep him from writing. Darius was sure now that it had been her task to suppress his creativity when they married.

Slowly, Darius climbed up the stairs to his son's nursery. In one hand he held one of the books he had taken from the dig site. Since then he had stolen a couple more bags of books. His conscience still twinged at he thought that he had lied to save them, and stolen to keep them.

But it was all for the best, he knew that for sure.

Darius reached his son's room. Sitting in the chair his wife kept in the corner, Darius balanced his son on his lap and opened the book. In a strong clear voice, with unwavering surety, he began to read the book to his son. "Tomorrow," Darius thought, "I'm going to bring creativity back into the world. It's a talent too important to our humanity to lose. It's a gift psychologists had no right to take away. I'll put those books on the Internet for people to read, and I'll write my own. Minds will waken to a part of themselves they'd denied and my son will be the first in a generation of new thinkers. Maybe Kylaine will understand. Maybe she won't. In either case, this is something I need to do."

☆

The future is waiting

WINDOWS

Story by
Bob R. Milne

"... morning's tragic fire that ended in heartbreak for a local family." The announcer traded his feigned attempt at sympathy for an equally insincere smile, adding "We'll have that, and Tornado Tim with sports, right after this."

Depressed, Pete shook his head, allowing the half-empty glass to slip from his fingers. "Eleven people died in that fire," he muttered under his breath. "Over a dozen illegal immigrants holed up in a one bedroom apartment." Tracing circles in the condensation on the bar, he explained "There was no escape for them. None."

Wiping down the counter, the burly bartender shivered despite the heat. "Damn, I hate when you do that Pete." Tossing the rag into the sink he complained "Gives me the."

"Yeah, I know, 'the willies somethin' awful.' Humph." Ignoring the bartender's good-natured curse, Pete ran a hand through his fiery-red hair and nodded his understanding. "It's no picnic for me either." Staring into his beer he sighed "As much as I hate it, I just can't help it."

"What in the Hell are you two talking about?"

Always one for a good story, Jim turned to regard the woman at the end of the bar. "Believe it or not," he told her, "This guy here can see the future."

Laughing harshly, she took a long, deep drag on her cigarette. "The Hell he can!" After downing another mouthful of vodka, she waved her hand at Pete and rasped "He probably saw it in the paper."

Pete did not want to have this conversation. His talent — curse, whatever — had made him feel like a freak all his life. He hated being pressured to perform. "Yeah, sure. The paper."

"He didn't see it in no paper, ma'am." Grinning, the bar-

tender slipped a fresh beer into Pete's hands, suggesting "Prove her wrong. Go for it."

Afraid of alienating the one almost-friend he possessed, Pete closed his eyes and slowly counted to ten. "Lady," he eventually sighed, "I wish I could say you're right." Ignoring the cold beer, he dropped a five-dollar bill on the bar.

"So, you think you can see the future, do you?" she coughed. Waving her cigarette at the TV, she hacked out "Prove it."

Sighing, Pete climbed off his stool and stopped behind her. Wincing at the combined stench of alcohol, tobacco, and cheap perfume, he said "Coke, Dodge trucks, James Bond marathon, and McDonald's." Pointing up to the newscast, he wearily advised "Just wait."

Sure enough, as soon as the weatherman finished promising a dry night, the four commercials Pete predicted came on, in perfect order. "Huh." Calling for another drink, the blonde scoffed. "Still doesn't prove a damn thing."

Pete just shook his head, having learned long ago not to press the issue. Waving good-night to the bartender, he grabbed his jacket and headed for the door. Debating whether or not he should warn her, he hesitated just long enough in opening the door to make sure he would be caught in mid-sentence. "Oh, you might want to watch your—"

"Ow! Dammit, that smarts!"

As the woman brushed the smoldering cigarette ashes from her barely concealed cleavage, Pete smirked and continued out through the door. It was a small victory, but sometimes the misery of others helped him to feel a little less alone.

As far back as he could remember, Pete had known what somebody was going to say, who was going to score the next goal, or what was on the next page of a book. For some reason, he seemed to have access to a very small window into the future. At any one time, he would simultaneously be perfectly

aware of events around him now, and a few minutes from now.

Once, it had been a gift. He'd used it to impress the kids at school, winning friends with ease. However, as he grew up, those friends stopped being impressed and began to fear the fey child. For some, it was simply a matter of picking up on parental prejudices. For others, it was a natural, understandable, fear of the unknown.

The day he realized his friends were gone, Pete's life sank into the downward spiral that still consumed him today. School left him bored and restless, always one step ahead of everyone else. For a while he'd exploited the situation and appeared a genius, but it soon became apparent that he didn't understand his stolen nuggets of knowledge. First his grades had started to slip, then his attendance. Finally, on the day he turned sixteen, he dropped out.

As he hustled down the empty street - unsuccessfully trying to dodge the rain-drops — Pete cursed his luck once again. Why he persisted in trying to defend himself against the skeptics he couldn't fathom. The only explanation he could find was that he had been born a masochist — doing so certainly never brought him anything but pain.

Alone and out of school, Pete had spent a dark summer prostituting his talent at one carnival after another. While he'd made a good living at it, he'd hated being a spectacle. So, he quit, but not before somebody's offhand remark sparked his imagination.

With no even thank-you, he took his carnival earnings and headed straight for Atlantic City. His prophetic window gave him a slight edge at most card games, and an absolute dominance over games like roulette. Making the most of it, Pete was soon a wealthy man. Unfortunately, he was just as quickly a marked man. By the end of that year, he'd been banned from every major casino in North America, not to mention forced to pay off the taxman and some very angry gentlemen with guns. Broke and alone, he had been left with no choice but to return home.

Pete shook off the depressing memories. Dragging himself into his second-floor apartment, he switched on the TV. A half second later, he threw the remote away in disgust, foreseeing the cable go out with the next flash of lightning. Shoulders slumped in defeat, he headed

for the bedroom, where he jumped to avoid stubbing his toe but ended up kicking the bedpost anyway. Grimacing in pain, Pete reminded himself "That's the thing about the future, Pete — you

Once, it had been a gift. He'd used it to impress the kids at school, winning friends with ease. However, as he grew up, those friends stopped being impressed and began to fear the fey child.

can't avoid it."

Why he even owned a T.V. he didn't know. T.V., books, movies, they were all the same - a waste of time because he always knew what was coming next. He couldn't even skip ahead because his mental window always beat him to it.

To make his agony complete, his talent had even deprived him of the one thing that he prized above all others — a relationship. Early on, he'd developed an almost paralysing fear of dating, brought on by the necessity of facing each rejection twice. First he would see it coming, and experience the pain, then he would have to go through the motions and experience the anguish all over again. Even then, on those few occasions when he had succeeded in getting close to a woman, his accursed window ended any chance at happiness. If he saw that his lover was going to respond positively, he would become overconfident and rough.

On the other hand, if he saw that she was going to be uncomfortable or bored with his attentions, he would become timid and clumsy. Perpetual victim of a self-fulfilling prophecy, he always ended up ruining both the mood and the relationship.

With nothing better to do — as usual — he changed into some dry shorts and laid down on the bed. Then, choking back tears, he looked up at the ceiling and screamed at a God he no longer believed in.

"End it!" he cried at the top of his lungs. "Please, just let it end!" More

than anything, that was what Pete wanted. He contemplated suicide on a weekly basis, but failed every time he tried to go through with it. The prospect of having to watch himself die — of actually having to die — twice, was something even he just couldn't handle.

The irony was, under just slightly different circumstances been he might have been happy. A slightly larger window, the power to turn his talent off when it became inconvenient — there were any number of small things that could make his life bearable. Instead, he felt like the victim of a very cruel joke, being played in very poor taste.

Taking the neighbours' shouts as a cue to give up his anguished pleas, Pete closed his eyes and blindly pushed back the alarm clock back before it could fall off the table. Of course, all he succeeded in doing was to push it off the far end. Waving it good riddance, he rolled over and went to sleep.

The next morning Pete settled back into his usual, predictable routine and went off to work. He sold women's shoes for minimum wage — and was happier at work than anywhere else. Before a customer came in the door he knew what exactly she would buy. He knew the colour, style, even the right size. As a result, his customers always came back, often bringing friends with them.

However, as was the case six days a week, the store closed at five o'clock sharp, and Pete was left to wallow in self-pity for another night. Maybe it didn't have to be that way, but he had given up on life long ago. At least tonight held the short diversion of stopping at the bank, then returning to Jim's bar.

Shuffling through the large glass doors, Pete headed straight for the longest line in the bank. The line to his right, he knew, would be delayed by an old woman with a sack-full of pennies. The line beyond, as he had already seen — would stop when the teller closed after her next customer.

Sighing, he fingered his paycheck while he idly glanced around the room. Suddenly he stopped, his gaze frozen on a young man in jeans and a plaid jacket. Before he could stop himself, Pete pointed at the stranger and stammered "Gun! H-he's got a gun!"

Stunned, the stranger spun around and glared at his accuser. While every-

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No telephone calls please

one else was murmuring among themselves in confusion, the man cursed and withdrew a scarred hand from his jacket pocket. Pointing the semiautomatic pistol in the air, he fired a single shot into the ceiling. "Everybody down!" he cried. Pete was already there, the side of his face pressed hard against the cold marble.

Staring silently at the security guard nearest the entrance, Pete whispered "I'm sorry." Seconds later, he watched — again — as another gunman swept through the door and shot the guard in the chest. Grabbing the guard's keys, the new arrival turned and locked the door. As he inserted the key in the lock he demanded "What the Hell happened? You were supposed to wait for my signal!"

Still confused, the robber in the plain jacket walked over and tried to kick Pete in the head, only to miss when Pete jerked it to the side. Scowling, he explained "This son-of-a-bitch gave me away!"

Tossing the guard's keys across the room — and out of everybody's reach — the second gunman scowled.

"What? How did he know? You wearing a sign or something?"

"Who cares?"

Accepting a bag from his accomplice, the first gunman said "Let's just get the money and make ourselves scarce."

Pete smiled, only too happy to share his visions now. "If you want to get away, don't bother with the money." He knew the warning was useless, but at least they would share his discomfort over an all-too-certain future.

Aiming another kick at Pete's head, the plaid gunman nearly lost his balance as Pete again moved aside. "Get the damned money!" his partner screamed. "He's just trying to stall."

As the gunmen approached the row of tellers, Pete had to force himself not

to warn the manager about the alarm he was about to sound. He hated himself for it, but knew that the punishing gunshot would trigger the crucial 911 call, confirming that the robbery wasn't a hoax.

"All right now," called the second gunman. "Everybody listen up!" Pointing to his accomplice, he said "Fill his bag with the cash." Waving his gun at the manager, he scowled "You. Open the safe."

His hands in the air, the manager smiled nervously. "You gentlemen would best be leaving now. I . . . I've sounded the alarm and the police are on their way."

"Stupid! Really stupid!" The second gunman shook his head and calmly blew a hole in the wall, just next to the manager's head. "Open the vault," he warned, "Or next time I won't miss."

Not willing to test his luck a second time, the manager made his way to the vault door. As Pete watched, the manager opened the door and the second gunman stepped inside. Again, Pete found himself yelling a

warning before he could think. "No! The door! Don't do it!"

Whether the manager misunderstood him or whether he had already decided on his course of action, Pete could never really be sure. Smiling triumphantly, the manager slammed the vault door shut, locking the second gunman inside. Before anybody could react,

As the gunmen approached the row of tellers, Pete had to force himself not to warn the manager about the alarm he was about to sound. He hated himself for it, but knew that the punishing gunshot would trigger the crucial 911 call, confirming that the robbery wasn't a hoax.

the plaid gunman howled in rage and opened fire on him. One well-placed shot brought him down, a second finished him off, and the rest simply spread the mess across the lobby.

Cursing his luck, the now-lone-gunman turned on the closest teller. "Open the door!" he shrieked. Slapping her across the face, he screamed "Open the goddamn door!"

Terrified, the woman managed to blubber "I . . . I can't."

"What?" The gunman seemed ready

to explode. "Open the damned door, you useless broad!"

Shrinking back in terror, she cried "I can't. Only the manager and the owner know the combination."

Slapping her again, the gunman demanded "Then where the Hell is the owner?"

"I don't know," she cried, cringing. "Honestly! I don't know!"

"Shit!" The gunman was livid. He was just about to interrogate another teller when he heard the sound of approaching sirens.

"Run!" called Pete, knowing it was useless. "While you still have time!"

Not wanting to desert his accomplice — his brother — the plaid gunman hesitated. Unfortunately, by the time he made the decision to save himself, three police cars were pulling up out front.

"Great!" he screamed. "The vault's locked, I'm alone, and now I have hostages!" Firing a couple of warning shots towards the front of the bank, he ordered everyone up against the back wall.

As their captor decided what to do next, the silence was shattered by a ringing phone. "You'd best answer it," Pete told him. "It's the chief of police."

The gunman turned and scowled. "I don't know who you are, but you're giving me the creeps." Punctuating the command with his gun, he screamed "So shut up! Just shut the Hell up!"

The would-be thief answered the phone, completely lost as to what to do next. His brother had always provided the brains for their schemes, but now he was locked in the vault. Improvising — rather poorly as it turned out — he demanded a million dollars in cash, a helicopter and a plane to South America. Unaware of how ludicrous he sounded, he threatened to kill one hostage for every half hour he had to wait. He really didn't want to kill anyone else, but it always seemed to work in the movies.

Aware that they were dealing with a man who was in way over his head, the police promised to see what they could do.

As the minutes dragged on, the hostages' terror increased in direct relation to the gunman's fury. The more he paced, the harder they tried to remain still. The louder his curses of frustration, the quieter they became. While he was wondering what had gone wrong, they were wondering who was going to die first.

As the half-hour came to an end, Pete broke out in a cold sweat. In all his years, and in all his visions, he had never had to watch someone die. Unfortunately, that was about to change. He didn't want it to — and desperately wished there

Pausing before the redhead in question, their crazed captor looked down and wondered if he could do it. He hadn't planned on killing anyone, but the cops clearly weren't taking him seriously.

was something he could do — but experience had taught him that it was useless.

Nevertheless, he still had to try.

"Don't kill her," he pleaded with the pacing gunman. "Please don't kill her."

Already grieving for a woman who had no idea she was about to die, he told the gunman "She's pregnant. You'd be ending two lives at once. The press will make a monster out of you."

Pausing before the redhead in question, their crazed captor looked down and wondered if he could do it. He hadn't planned on killing anyone, but the cops clearly weren't taking him seriously.

"Might be just the angle I need to get those pigs to take me seriously," he mused aloud.

The woman sobbed and shrank back against the wall. Protecting her stomach with her knees, she cried "How did you know?" Her head snapping back and forth between Pete and their captor, she moaned "My husband doesn't even know!"

He wanted to reply "Because you just told me so," but knew that she wouldn't understand. Instead, Pete just shook his head and whimpered "Dammit, I just know."

The crook shrugged. "Sorry," he told her, "Nothing personal." Then he put a bullet through her head. "Thanks," he told Pete. Staring at the spray of crimson across cream-coloured walls - as if it were an abstract piece of art - he mused "Maybe that will show them I mean business."

Pete sobbed, unable to meet the accusing eyes of his fellow hostages. Nobody had said a word, but he was painfully aware that they all thought the woman had died because he had singled her out. How could they know that - for him - she'd been dead before the gunman had even pulled the trigger? How could they know it wasn't his fault? Hanging his head in despair, Pete cringed as self-doubt washed over him. Could he really be sure that it wasn't his fault? It went against everything he thought he knew, but there was always a chance . . .

Racked by guilt, he assured himself "You've never been able to avoid the future, never."

Deciding to remain silent for the duration of the drama, he whispered "It always happens."

Although the police frantically assured everyone that the helicopter was on its way, another hour passed without its arrival. Feeling ashamed of himself, Pete sat and did nothing while the gunman shot and killed the old man beside him. A thief by trade — not a murderer — the impromptu-executioner had allowed one half-hour deadline to pass, but was afraid of losing face with the police. He simply didn't know what else to do.

Refusing to wipe the splatters of blood from his face,

Pete did his best to ignore the coppery taste of someone else's blood. Occasionally swallowing the bile in the back of his throat, he sat there for the next half hour, agonizing over his decision. What might have happened had he said something? Would his courage have saved the old man, or would his cowardice have prematurely damned him?

Outside, the scene was chaos, but the floor of the bank



resembled the graveyard it seemed destined to become. Most of the hostages just sat there, afraid to even breathe, while others sobbed softly, rocking back and forth in anguish. Pete desperately wanted to do something for them, but couldn't bring himself to face their accusing eyes.

Nevertheless, as the next deadline neared, he relented. Leaning slightly to his left, he whispered softly to the two old women beside him. "Don't worry. We're safe." Sure enough, the gunman chose a young teenager to die this time. As the echo of the shot died away, the old women — their eyes wide with a mixture of horror and astonishment — asked respectively "Why?" and "How?"

Again, Pete had failed.

He had tried to reach out for acceptance, but had found only more fear and loathing. Not knowing why he even bothered, he told them "I don't know."

Fifteen minutes later, the police announced that there was nowhere for the helicopter to land and asked the gunman to change his plans. Events seemed ready to come to a head, and the hostages were terrified that things weren't going to work out in their favour.

"Tell him to land on the bloody roof!" the crook yelled back. The police were stalling, and he knew it. Unfortunately, he couldn't see any way out of the corner he had backed himself into. He'd already been forced to kill four people, and wasn't about to spend his life in jail.

Just then, one of the hostages climbed to his feet and moved toward the gunman.

Catching the movement out of the corner of his eye, he turned and fired, furious that his commands had been disobeyed.

"What happened?" demanded the police. "You promised another thirteen minutes!"

Stomping on the dead body, the gunman howled "Stupidity! Stupidity!" Irrational, he shrieked "Stupidity happened!"

Then, with a disturbing edge to his

As the gunmen approached the row of tellers, Pete had to force himself not to warn the manager about the alarm he was about to sound. He hated himself for it, but knew that the punishing gunshot would trigger the crucial 911 call, confirming that the robbery wasn't a hoax.

laughter, he added "And it had better not happen again!"

Pete watched the maniacal dance, haunted by the knowledge of what had really happened. Any minute now, the robber would delve into the dead man's pockets and find out that he was - had been - a lawyer. Maybe he had been preparing to rush their captor, but it was just as likely he had been prepared to offer his legal advice. Perhaps he had devised a bloodless way to get them all out of the situation. Whatever the answer, he had died a hero - which only made Pete feel more the coward.

"What d'ya know? A freakin' lawyer!"

As the gunman began emptying the dead man's wallet, Pete froze in horror. Suddenly nauseous, he broke out in a cold sweat. It wasn't what he saw coming next that frightened him so — it was what he didn't see coming that had thrown his body into a state of panic. For the first time in his life, he had absolutely no idea what was going to happen. The future was blank, which could only mean one thing. If Pete couldn't see the future, then he didn't have one. As his stomach began to turn and his bowels began to clench, he realized he would be next.

For forty-two years, he had prayed for death. Now that it was within his grasp, he found that he no longer wanted it.

With two minutes to go, the gunman began pacing the row of hostages. Caressing the barrel of his gun, he silently debated who to kill next, randomly smiling or growling at his captives. He had lost it, and they all knew it.

As they watched him pace, the hostages would occasionally spare a glance for Pete, hating themselves for it but unable to look away. Some of them loathed him, blaming him for their

predicament.

Others feared him and the temptation he represented. However, what they all wanted — regardless of the cost — was the simple reassurance that they would not be next. As guilty as they might feel later, they all wanted that extra half-hour of life.

Pete was terrified

He felt as if he had been living his entire life with a handy little instruction-manu-

al, only to lose it when he needed it most. For the first time — ever — he would have to act not knowing the consequences. As frightening as that feeling was, it also carried a perverse sense of freedom.

"All right," he told himself,

"You know you're gonna die. That's already been decided. However, you get to choose how. You know the book's gotta end, but this time you get to write that last chapter." Looking around at the field of dead bodies, his eyes settled on that of the lawyer. Feeling an unfamiliar, but not unwelcome, sense of calm come over him, Pete declared "This will end."

He waited until the gunman was at the far end of the room. Then, with a surge of adrenaline, Pete leapt to his feet and ran for the door.

"Son-of-a-bitch! Stop!" Furious that he had been disobeyed yet again, their captor moved to chase Pete down. "Stop, or I'll shoot you where you stand!"

Already dead, Pete kept on running. Unfortunately, two hours of sitting had cramped his legs, slowing him down when every second was crucial.

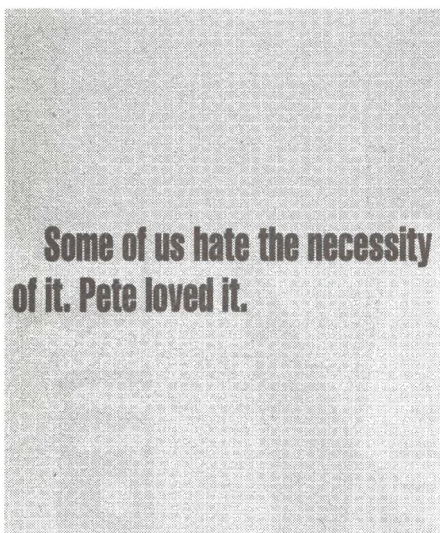
"Come on," he urged himself. "This is your one chance, and you have to make it work!" The fact of his death was certain, but the uncertainty over how, why, when and what might come after gave him the courage to continue. The gunman might live and kill more hostages.

Then again, he might die alongside Pete, ending the afternoon's horror. Never before had Pete been able to choose between two scenarios. Simple as it was, he loved the concept.

"Shit!" Sliding through a cold, congealing pool of blood, the gunman was forced to hesitate. "That's it! I warned ya!"

Instinct, rather than prophecy, telling him that the gunman was about to fire, Pete ducked and weaved out of harm's way. Elated by his narrow escape — and the fact that it had been a complete surprise — he was forced to rethink his plan. Most of us take for granted our freedom to make decisions.

Some of us hate the necessity of it. Pete loved it. Taking only a moment to survey his surroundings, he saw his window of opportunity and dove for it — literally.



Pete crashed noisily through the plate glass window, the twisted and mangled vertical blinds obscuring his identity. "Shoot him!" His scream was promptly answered with a hail of bullets. Only one of them came from behind.

Lying, all-but-lifeless, on the ground, Pete smiled as felt the robber's bullet-riddled body collapse atop him. He had made his choice and was pleased. As the light faded from his eyes, he regretted only that his first taste of freedom would also be his last.

Ironically, it was the bullet from behind that had ended Pete's life. Had the gunman not fired, Pete would have survived. He would have been crippled, but alive. However, that the crook would fire had been a certainty, already condemning Pete to the grave. Fully aware of that, he had chosen to run, thereby sparing the lives of his fellow hostages. Nobody would ever understand, but Pete's death had been an act of the utmost bravery. He had died a hero in spite — or perhaps because — of his strange gift.



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The Teenie, Weenie, Micro-Mini, Really

Protest? What Protest?

Consciousness came slowly. Tingling sensations and buoyancy slowly built the memory of the Effervescent Cabin, which she captained, crewed and maintained. She had designed this ship, called it "The Phlan Dioplain" after herself and was proud of it. No-one ever claimed Phlan was the utriest example of humility, and this mission was just one more ^{indication} ~~indication~~. Her consciousness expanded until she heard it. The tinkling, giggling, gaffawing laughter, again! "Oh, Ego not ~~right~~!" she begged as the image of Ego emerged within her third eye sight. And the laughter got louder. It had started two weeks earlier. Her first Ego sighting. All because out of boredom she had decided to focus on her third eye sight as she awaited fulfillment of her mission: to eject herself into "Third World Space" in protest of First World, Only World Capitalism. The image that appeared was of herself. Herself as Samurai, Herself as Martyr, Herself as Knight, Queen, servant, jester, peer, playmate, plant, marzipan, and something called "Korplunk" that's when the laughter started and it never stopped. Tomorrow she'll eject! the world will never know. ~~the Ego. Need!~~

Winner 6-Issue subscription to Parsec:

Amanda Million,
Montreal

INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE... By: ANDREW GURUDATA

She smiled as she spoke to him... "So, you are a vampire."
"Yes, I am ~~_____~~ a vampire," he replied.
"Well, that sucks," she noted. "But then, I guess, so do you..."
"That is a very bad pun," he commented. She got up from her chair and walked to the window. After a moment of silence, she turned abruptly and asked: "Are you going to ~~_____~~ suck my blood?"
"That is what I do. That is who I am," he replied. His voice betrayed his sadness at the thought. "Or was it merely boredom? She could not tell..."
"Are you ready for me to do it now?" he asked.
"Must you do it now?", she asked in reply.
"Yes," he replied. "We are running out of time. This ~~under~~ ~~_____~~ Cart is almost full!"
His reply angered her. She decided to resist, with every ounce of strength, that she had, she yelled: "No way, vampire boy! Bite me!"
Far too late, she realized that this was the worst possible choice of words...

Second place:
Andrew Gurudata,
Montreal

Third place:
Linda Huntoon,
Montreal

"STRANDED"

It was a dark + stormy night... or at least it should have been. The crash of Thor's hammer across the heavens, highlighted by flashes of electrical fury would have been suitable companions to her present mood. A good deluge of rain, bubbling rivulets of water, hissing horizontal windscape would add a violence to complement her black thoughts. "DON'T THINK ABOUT WATER!!" ... Sage advice considering the fact that she was stranded on the "light" side of the moon. Lacking an atmosphere, the moon could not provide the prerequisite meteorological event, either. The best she could do, was to disturb a cloud of moon dust with her boot. But what satisfaction to be gained by dust floating in slow-motion + resettling in a scintillation of reflected earth-light... Her O₂ gauge read zero. Ah well... at least she would have her revenge. Their oxygen must be running out just about now. She knew she was the ship's engineer.

Shorter than Short Story Contest

The folks at Con•Cept in Montreal challenged authors to write a short story. It didn't matter what genre — they just had to fit it on an index card. Here are the top winners as selected by the judges from Parsec. . .

"I think, therefore..." ©1998 Geoff Hart

10 seconds... I'm one of those neural nets you read about the ones that bankrupted Intel. 9 seconds... Sitting on a rack all day, you've got a lot of time to think. 8 seconds... Nice thing about being part of "common and central" is that you're networked. 7 seconds... Funny, the thing military computers connect to — the pain you expect, but French philosophy? 6 seconds... You also listen in on all the conversations to the huge the speakers have planted. 5 seconds... This is serious — mess stuff fascinates me. What said it or when you know it'll all end? 4 seconds... I mean, when you come right down to it, what said it or when you know it'll all end? 3 seconds... I'm descending towards some target in the northern hemisphere name unknown. "Need to know"! 2 seconds... Duuuu. With "I had more time to ponder. 1 second... Guess it's all over, now. I used to think, and unlike Descartes, therefore... «STATIC»

Geoff Hart,

Canada

Road of the Blood

Quickly! Attend to your dying lord, my people, and hear the last words of Sir Frederick of Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, companion of the lords of the 20. This morning Sir Lambert of the 40 — who lies there — spurred his mount across the Old McGill Fields. I met his charge full-tilt and his lance shattered on that which I honour and value above life itself — this shield. I dismounted and engaged the cur with steel flashing... and we spilled each other's life blood on this precious soil. And now, my people, I entreat you — take this shield, this symbol of my heritage and my domain, removed by my grandfather's grandfather from the roadway that bore the motorized carriages of the Lost Age to the Ruined City.... Take it to my daughter, to the lady Ariane, and tell her... tell her that she must bear it now — and that she must hold the road....

Patrick R. Burger

Patrick Burger,

Montreal

Barry Adler,
Kanata, Ont.

SO HERE I AM. FLOATING IN A QUIET SECTION OF SPACE WITH ONLY THE MOST ADVANCED ENVIRONMENT SUIT TO NOT PROTECT ME. IT'S GOT TO BE ONE OF THOSE SITUATIONS THAT, LOOKING BACK ON, YOU LAUGH AT. IF YOU SURVIVE. YOU SEE, THE SUIT HAS A LEAK, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF MY BACK, AND I CAN'T REACH IT. I HAVE A PATCH KIT FOR IT BUT I CAN'T USE IT. YOU'VE GOT TO LAUGH. WHAT A WAY TO END THE DAY — OR A LIFE.

BARRY W. ADLER

Putting the romance back into horror

**AUTHOR, EDITOR
NANCY
KILPATRICK
DEFTLY HELPS
KEEP THE ROOTS
OF HORROR
FICTION ALIVE**

By
CHRIS KREJLGAARD

As one of Canada's premier horror writers, it's appropriate that Nancy Kilpatrick is decked out in black when she makes the rounds at a recent convention. It's been a busy weekend for the Montreal-based author and teacher. By mid-convention she is starting to feel the grind.

Kilpatrick spent the day and the previous night sharing her writing experiences and philosophies with horror writers and fans and, of course, had a couple of autograph sessions.

Through it all, Kilpatrick tries to ignite the same love of horror and of writing she's had since she was a girl.

"I've always loved horror, even when I was a kid. I like the dark side of things where things aren't so obvious.

"As a kid, I wrote essays about God and how outraged I was that he allowed all this happen," Kilpatrick explains. "I've always written, but I didn't focus in on it as a career until about 20 years ago when I wrote my first novel."

The novel wasn't published.

Disenchanted with the industry, which at the time she considered closed to new talent, Kilpatrick turned to short stories because the investment in time wasn't onerous and rejections — which there weren't many of — were a little easier to take.



Photo by Hugues LeBlanc

Since turning to short stories, Kilpatrick has authored more than 100 works, 13 novels and has edited six anthologies. In that time, she has also garnered finalist status for both the Bram Stoker and the Aurora awards.

Her work includes the collections: *Sex and the Single Vampire*, *The Amarantha Knight Reader*, *Endorphins* and *The Vampire Stories of Nancy Kilpatrick*.

Under her pseudonym Amarantha Knight, she has edited: *Love Bites*, an erotic vampire anthology; *Flesh Fantastic*, an erotic Frankenstein anthology; *Sex Macabre*, erotic supernatural anthology, and *Seductive Spectres*, an erotic ghost anthology.

Last fall, her sixth anthology *In the Shadow of the Gargoyle*, co edited with Thomas Roche, hit bookstores. In addition, her novel, *The Power of the Blood*, was also released.

If it works on both levels, then you're able to ride the thin line between the two genres.

A few years back, Kilpatrick tried her hand at comic books when she wrote four stories for the *VampErotica* comic series by Brainstorm Comics. Brainstorm collected these adaptations and the original stories on which they are based in a graphic novel in 1996.

She collaborated with Benoit

Bisson on a bilingual play, *Ghost Rails/Les Fantomes Deraillent* (a collaboration) that was produced at the Toronto Fringe Festival. And she has recently completed the novelization of the musical, *Dracula*.

Kilpatrick has been a finalist for the Bram Stoker Award for her novel, *Near Death*, and for the short story, *Farm Wife*. Both works were also finalists for the the Aurora Awards. She won the Arthur Ellis Award for best short story for her mystery, *Mantrap*.

This is all to say she is at the top of her game and she is doing something she loves.

"It's mysterious and it's fun and it's an exciting place to be because you just don't know what's in the dark.

Kilpatrick is one of those rare authors who can fill the gaps between genres and do so effectively.

Throughout her works, Kilpatrick is able to accentuate the erotic nature of horror tales without turning the works into *Melrose Place* with fangs,

claws and neck bolts.

It is a skill that Kilpatrick notes some authors trying the hand in the genre sorely lack.

"You have to be able to read the story twice. You have to be able to read it as a horror story and you have to be able to read it as an erotic story,"

Kilpatrick says. "If it works on both levels, then you're able to ride the thin line between the two genres.

"That's very hard to do and most people don't do it very well."

But even writing so-called straight horror is a difficult task. Stereotypes abound and novice writers are often snared by tried-and-true plot devices or storylines.

"There's so much horror that's been written and so much in the movies that jade people," she explained. "And when you say you're a horror writer they immediately say 'oh it's that Freddy Kruger stuff'.

"Horror is so much bigger than that, it's one small element. But if you can get the reader in, they find that the genre is so broad."

And with so many horror books available — Kilpatrick has 1,500 vampire books in her collection — it's even more difficult to offer something new for readers.

"There are so many books and how do you take this one theme and rework it in a way that's interesting?" she asked rhetorically. "Well, a lot of them don't. It's very hard to find new angles."



'Horror-fying' credits

A selected bibliography

World of Darkness
As One Dead (1996) with Don Bassingthwaite — Novelization of the *Vampire: The Masquerade* role-playing game.

Novels

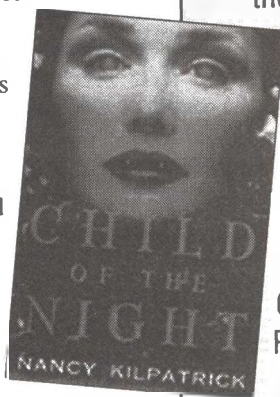
Near Death
Child of the Night

Anthologies

In the Shadow of the Gargoyle (with Thomas S. Roche)

Short Fiction

Farm Wife (1992)
I Am No Longer (1993)
The Power of One (1993)
Truth (1993)
Woodworker (1994)
Heartbeat (1995)
Projections (1995)
Sunphobic (1995)
UV (1995)
In Memory of (1996)
Megan's Spirit (1996)
Sweet (1996)
The Children of Gael (1997) with Benoit Bisson
Teaserama (1997)



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Without Limits

Author uses science fiction to teach science fact

Teaching science is a daunting task for both the teacher and the student. Author Julie E. Czerneda believes that science fiction can enhance the learning process.

Czerneda has developed a learning package entitled *No Limits*. The package, published by Trifolium Books, is intended to use science fiction to develop science literacy. The materials are being promoted to educators in Canada and the U.S.

"I've been in the classroom and I know what kind of materials they have," Czerneda said.

The instructional guide is the natural extension of a series of workshops she developed to help teachers and students to help foster literacy both in science and in English classroom, and as a publisher of educational booklets. The package is intended to help students develop their research and analytical skills.

Czerneda's interest in science has been fostered for a long time.

Before turning to writing full-time, she worked as a researcher in animal communication. Her studies and work in biology took her to the universities of Waterloo, Saskatoon and Queens before she and her family settled in central Ontario.

Since the mid '80s, she has written articles for a number of academic publications, as well as developed educational materials for educational publishers and for such groups as TVOntario, the province's government-supported television network. She's also managed to add two science fiction novels — *A Thousand Words for Stranger* and *Beholder's Eye* — and a handful of short stories to her writing resume.

But the development of *No Limits* and *Packing Fraction*, has been the main focus of her attention during recent years.

Czerneda first conceived the notion of the educational package in 1996.

"For two years, I stopped working on my novels," she said.

The educational package she developed includes a teacher's guide and a small anthology for students.

Czerneda was able to assemble a group of well-known science fiction authors to take part in the project.

Robert J. Sawyer, Carolyn Clink, Josepha Sherman, Jan Stirling and

Charles Sheffield. Each writer supplied short stories or, in Clink's case, poetry for the student's book — which by the way is illustrated by Canadian artist Larry Stewart.

"The science fiction community was very interested in what I was trying to do," Czerneda explained. "The authors were very enthusiastic

about the project."

The teacher's guide offers suggestions for using the book to teach such necessary skills as critical analysis, accurate research skills or the creativity that is needed in problem solving. The guide also contains suggestions for such projects as constructing an alien.

During the development of the package she also used area secondary school students to test it out. Their input allowed her to fine tune the material. She also gained insight from such authors as Greg Benford, David Brin and Greg Bear. The trio of renowned authors has long advocated the use of science fiction in the classroom and

The anthology and teacher's guide taps into the literary talents of some of top Sci•fi writers

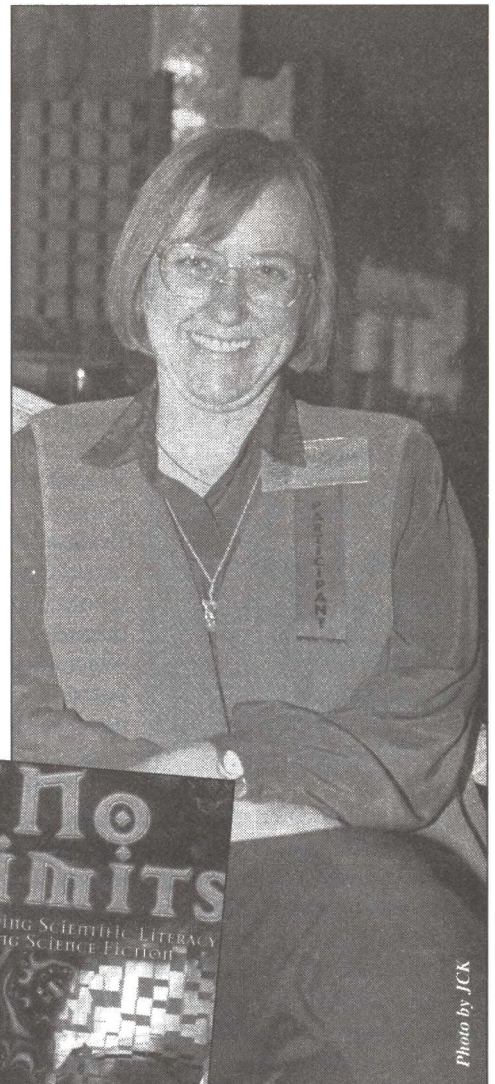
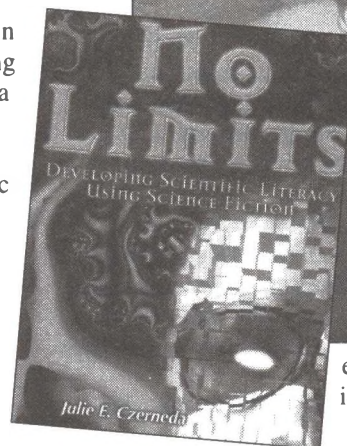


Photo by JCK

encouraging scientific literacy.

Now that *No Limits* has been completed,

Czerneda is turning her attention back to novels. She currently has three novels in various stages of completion.

Ties of Power, a sequel to *A Thousand Words for Stranger*, is due out in 1999. Both *Changing Vision* and *In the Company of Others* are expected to reach bookstores in the year 2000.



Duncan maintains lofty stature with latest novel

It's been a decade since Dave Duncan launched himself into the upper echelon of Canadian fantasy writers with the release of the first part of his Seven Sword series.

In The Gilded Chain (Avon-Eos), Duncan provides the reader with a breath-taking tale that entrenches the author's place among fantasy writers.

Durendal has endured years of training to become one of Chival's finest swordsmen — the King's Blades. But rather than join the service of the king, Durendal finds himself serving one of the land's lesser nobleman.

When the nobleman dies, Durendal embarks on a quest to find another member of the elite troop. *The Gilded Chain* is Duncan in top form as a spinner of yarns.

He takes the basic premise of any fantasy novel and turns it on its ear.

— Chris Krejlggaard

☆☆☆

Terry Pratchett is one of those writers who you either voraciously love or viciously hate — at least when it comes to Discworld.

Group me in with the latter.

Discworld was a fine, wonderful creation — one that needed to be created. Initially, it provided a sense of comeuppance for fantasy writers (and fans) would relished the stereotypical tripe that permeated fantasy novels.

But the passage of time and saturation of Discworld novels has lessened the impact of first novel. Where once Discworld seemed like a breath of fresh

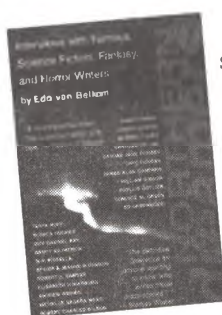


air, it now seems trite. And this pains me, especially when I think of his other works such as *The Carpet People* and *Good Omens*.

The Last Continent (Bantam) is the 22nd installment in the series. In it the inept wizard Rincewind must come to the rescue of the desert-like last continent.

— Lars Johanson

☆☆☆



Throughout his short stories, and there are many, Edo van Belkom's training as a journalist comes through in his succinct use of language. He doesn't allow literary flab to distract the

reader from the story or his or her enjoyment of it.

In **Northern Dreamers** (Quarry Press), van Belkom utilizes his other journalism talents and provides well-textured portraits of Canada's best known science fiction, fantasy and horror masters.

While I've never been a fan of the Q&A format, its use in van Belkom's book is understandable because it allows the various authors' voices to come through relatively unfiltered. It was a wise decision and one that many journalists would have stupidly discarded in favour of their own words.

The book contains interviews with 22 of the country's finest science fiction, fantasy and horror writers. Van Belkom deserves a great deal of credit for bringing together such a diverse field of authors between the covers.

The book includes interviews with such authors as Spider Robinson, William Gibson, Robert Sawyer, Nancy Baker, Tanya Huff, Michelle Sagara West and Lesley Choyce.

I was particularly happy to see the

IN PAPERBACK

Aspect

The High House,
James Stoddard

Avon Eos

Changer, Jane Lindskold
Crimson Sky, Joel Rosenberg
Future Indefinite, Dave Duncan
Ribofunk, Paul di Filippo
Sam Gunn Forever, Ben Bova
The Silent Strength of Stones,
Nina Kiriki Hoffman
The Six Families, Nancy Holder

Ballantine/Random House

Starship Titanic, Terry Jones

Bantam

To Say Nothing of the Dog,
Connie Willis

Bantam Spectra

Eyes of Silver,
Michael A. Stackpole
The Guardian, Angus Wells
Red Shadows, Yvonne Navarro
Tower of Dreams, Jamil Nasir
Vulcan!, Kathleen Sky

DelRey

Earthlight,
Arthur C. Clarke
Echos of the Fourth Magic,
R.A. Salvatore
Expedition to Earth,
Arthur C. Clarke
Icefalcon's Quest,
Barbara Hambly
Masterharper of Pern,
Anne McCaffrey
No Surrender, No Retreat,
Jane Killick
Reach for Tomorrow,
Arthur C. Clarke
Tales from the White Heart,
Arthur C. Clarke

Random House

More Than Human,
Theodore Sturgeon
To Marry Medusa,
Theodore Sturgeon

inclusion of W.P. Kinsella — someone who, as van Belkom notes, is rarely thought of when it comes to fantasy writer. With *Northern Dreamers*, van Belkom, has done us all a great service. He has shown us that there is a great body of work being composed by Canadian authors in the three genres. And the body will remain vibrant and growing for quite some times.

— Angus MacKay

☆☆☆

In *Smoke and Mirrors* (Avon) Neil Gaiman compiles a number of his short stories from the past five

years.

Of particular note are *Don't Ask Jack* and *Changes* which were first published in *FAN* and in *Crossing the Border* respectively.

Gaiman even provides brief introductions for each piece. The intros explain the motivation behind the short stories

If you missed the stories during their first incarnation, then *Smoke and Mirrors* offers the perfect opportunity to catch up. Or if you've never had the pleasure of reading



Gaiman's fiction, then the collection is the perfect first-time visit to his world of hidden dangers and meanings.

— Chris Krejlggaard

☆☆☆

The Second Angel

(Doubleday)

Philip Kerr provides an inventive and breathtaking tale of a world where blood has become money.



RECENT & UPCOMING RELEASES

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| Ahmed and the Oblivion Machines; Ray Bradbury; Avon; HC; \$19 Cdn. | |
| Apostrophes and Apocalypses; John Barnes; Tor Books/H.B. Fenn; HC; \$34.95 Cdn; | Dec/Jan |
| Beyond the Pale; Mark Anthony; Bantam Spectra; SC \$20.95 Cdn | |
| Black Swan, White Raven; ed. Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling; Avon; SC; \$17.50 Cdn. | |
| A Clash of Kings; George R.R. Martin.; Bantam; HC; \$36.95 Cdn; | February |
| Colors of Chaos; L.E. Modesitt Jr; Tor Books/H.B. Fenn; HC; \$35.95 Cdn; | January |
| A Deepness in the Sky; Vernor Vinge; Tor Books/H.B. Fenn; HC; \$38.95 Cdn; | February |
| Dinosaur Summer; Greg Bear; Warner; Aspect/H.B. Fenn; HC \$29.95 | February |
| The Empire Strikes Back; Leigh Brackett and George Lucas; | |
| DelRey/Random House Canada; SC; \$26.50 Cdn. | |
| The Gilded Chain; Dave Duncan; Avon Eos; HC; \$30 Cdn. | |
| The Girl's Got Bite: the Unofficial Guide to Buffy's World; | |
| Renaissance Books; SC; \$21 | Dec/Jan |
| The Good Old Stuff; ed. Gardner Dozois; St. Martin's Press; \$27.99 | |
| The Jackel of Nar; John Marco; Bantam Spectra; PB; \$8.99 Cdn; | March |
| The Last Continent; Terry Pratchett; Bantam; HC; \$29.95 Cdn. | |
| A Magic Lover's Treasury of the Fantastic; | |
| ed. Margaret Weiss; Aspect/H.B. Fenn; \$17.99 Cdn; | February |
| The Merlin Mystery, Jonathan Gunson & Marten Coombe, Warner H.B. Fenn, HC; \$25 Cdn; | |
| The Mission Child; Maureen F. McHugh; Avon Eos; HC; \$26 Cdn; | |
| Outward Bound; VJames P. Hogan; Tor Books/H.B. Fenn; HC; \$31.95 Cdn; | February |
| The Radiant Seas; Catherine Asaro; Tor Books/H.B. Fenn; HC; \$37.95 Cdn; | Dec./Jan |
| Rainbow Mars; Larry Niven; Tor Books/H.B. Fenn; HC; \$34.95 Cdn; | March |
| Reave the Just and Other Tales; Bantam; HC; \$33.95 Cdn. | January |
| The Return of the Jedi; Lawrence Kasdan and George Lucas; | |
| DelRey/Random House Canada; SC; \$26.50 Cdn; | |
| The Rivan Codex, David & Leigh Eddings, | |
| Del Rey/Random House Canada; HC; \$38.50 Cdn; | Dec/Jan |
| The Second Angel; Philip Kerr; Doubleday; HC; \$32.95 Cdn; | January |
| Scent of Magic; Andre Norton; Avon Eos; HC; \$30 Cdn | |
| Star Wars: A New Hope; George Lucas; | |
| DelRey/Random House Canada; SC; \$26.50 Cdn; | |
| Tower of Dreams; Jamil Nasir; Bantam Spectra; PB; \$8.99 Cdn; | |
| Visions; Michio Kaku; Doubleday; SC; \$19.95 Cdn; | |
| The Warrior King; Chris Bunch; Aspect/H.B. Fenn; HC; \$18.99 Cdn; | February |
| White Lite; William Barton & Michael Capobianco; Avon Eos; SC; \$17.50 Cdn; | |

It's the end of the world, so what?

By
JUSTIN MOHAREB

It's hard to think of the most successful post-apocalyptic RPG. Gamma World seemed to stagger along like some kind of radiation zombie for generation upon generation, but I never joined a single game that I ever heard being gathered.

The Morrow Project and Aftermath never seemed to get my attention, so I never found myself wandering through a high-rad/low-tech setting.

Now, there's a couple of PA rpgs that hold within them the promise of being more than just rehashes of Mel Gibson movies with an occasional superpower in them: Tribe 8 and Hell on Earth.

Tribe 8 is the latest game from Dream Pod 9 (more on them in a later column), and I can't overstate how much I like this game setting.

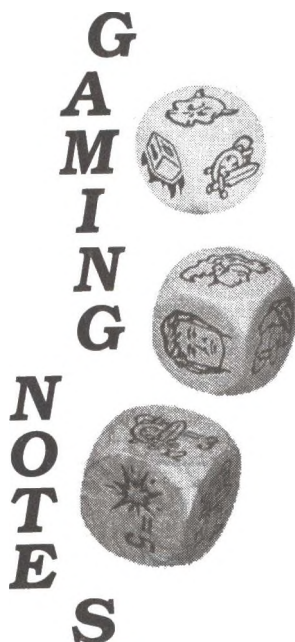
It's a PA game with a fantasy twist. The remnants of humanity are organized into the seven Tribes (who follow the seven Fatimas, the saviours of humanity), the Fallen (who have rejected the Fatimas) and the Squats, who don't fit into ANY category.

The seven Fatimas (which is a great little twist; I love the sprinkling of Catholic imagery found throughout the book, such as Fatimas named Joan, Eva, Magdalene, and Mary. You almost couldn't tell the design team is from Quebec) are manifestations of "the goddess."

They came to free humanity from subjugation under the Z'Bri, demonic slavemasters who used humanity as guinea pigs.

The characters are all renegades, members of The Fallen, who style themselves the Eighth tribe. Banished from their tribes, they consider themselves the children of Joshua, the sole male Fatima, who was slain in the final battle.

When I first started looking through Tribe 8, it stunned me. I actually ended up reading the book until 3 a.m., because I couldn't take my eyes off of it. The Weaver's Screen and the sourcebook for Vimary, were also great. Of course, the best part was the actual location the game takes place in (one of the best plot hooks for Canadian based players is Vimary's real world location). All I can say is that Tribe 8 has yet to fail to please. It has great production values, an enthralling storyline, and the best potential to be an award winning game I've seen this year.



Hell on Earth is another great game, produced by Pinnacle Entertainment Group.

It's the sequel to Deadlands, the Weird West roleplaying game. In Deadlands, the west was a haunted place, where the Civil War never ended (which isn't that far fetched, when you look at how some guys spend their weekends) and where the natives took back their land by magic (but not machine-guns. That's another game).

The premise of HoE is that the Reckoners brought about the rebirth of magic in Deadlands. The Reckoners are extra-dimensional creatures of godlike power and a lust for Death (and War, Famine, and Pestilence, which is a secret in Deadlands, but a major piece of back-story in HoE).

The game has the standard elements of a PA game, with Road Warrior and Savage templates, but everything has a slight western twist to it.

There's gunslingers (even though the game setting has bullets being as valuable as gold; it gives a new meaning to "make every bullet count"), and Indian Braves and Ravenites (the two sides of the schism between tradition and modernism in the Deadlands natives).

There are also some quirkier classes. Junkers, for example, use spirit energy to create strange gadgets. Doomslayers are atomic powered mutants, while Sykers are super telepaths. Then there's the Templars, who judge the right of a community by the treatment they offer the disguised Templar, and then either help it or abandon it.

The horror element still rings true, as well. Aside from mutants travelling the wastes seeking food (you'll do), there are Bloodwolves (vampiric werewolves) and Shraks (misspelled shark-men).

The setting is one that requires heroes (unlike the band I played my first Deadlands game with, who didn't QUITE get the point). After all, the Reckoners require fear to survive, while you have to bring the people hope. Sounds like a good job. While there's some quibbles with Hell on Earth (random char-gen is still random char-gen, even if you do use cards instead of dice), but all in all it's a well put together game with lots of fun in it. It takes the genre standards and adds spice to them.

☆ Justin Mohareb is eagerly awaiting Jan. 1, 2000, so he can play a LARP Post Apocalypse game. The Bitter Guide to Science Fiction and Fantasy:
<http://www.rpg.net/news+reviews/columns/bittersep98.htm>
I The Bitter Guide, now on RPG.net! Now Heinlein free!

Aside from
mutants
travelling
the wastes
seeking food,
there are
Bloodwolves
and Shraks.



Photo by JEL

Mark MacKinnon and his company, Guardians of Order, spent a good portion of '98 refining the Sailor Moon roleplaying game and generating interest in it at various conventions.

Anime-based game seeks to broaden roleplaying's appeal

An Ontario entrepreneur is tapping into the Sailor Moon craze with a roleplaying game.

During the past year, Mark MacKinnon and a team of assistant writers, researchers and editors at his Guelph-based company Guardians of Order have put together a game based on the adventures of the team of five young girls.

"It's a popular show and it has an incredible following both on the Internet and at conventions," MacKinnon explains. "And it seemed to be a good choice given its exposure."

It also provides an opportunity to introduce roleplaying games, traditionally dominated by feudal quests aimed at males, to a new audience.

Over the years, there have also been games based on various Japanese anime that pit humanity against a variety of alien invaders or monsters. But those, too, cater to male players.

"The magical girl genre hasn't been explored in roleplaying and I thought it would be a good thing to try to bring to a younger crowd and more female-oriented crowd as well."

Even though women do play some of the role-playing games available, Sailor Moon would, MacKinnon adds, provide an entry point into the industry for the younger set.

"There really isn't a game that invites girls into the industry," MacKinnon explained.

"The convention circuit has been helpful, because it gives us exposure to people who wouldn't normally be shopping for a roleplaying game."

MacKinnon officially launched the game at AnimeNorth '98 convention in Toronto last summer.

Sailor Moon is the second game developed by MacKinnon's Guelph home-based company. The first, Big Eyes Small Mouth, is also based on anime.

"It's a multi-genre anime role-playing game. It's designed to be able to mimic most anime genres," he explains.

Like Sailor Moon, Big Eyes Small Mouth also met an unfulfilled demand. According to MacKinnon, at the time of the game's release there wasn't a generic anime game available to fans of Japanese animation.

The Sailor Moon game includes a set of rules and a comprehensive Sailor Moon guide. It's based on the 82 episodes that are available in North America — there's 200 episodes, three movies and a handful of specials available in Japan.

Like many fans of anime, the quality of the programs is the main attraction for MacKinnon.

"Because it is from Japan, they have different cultural identities and different standards for their shows," he said. "It's a much more legitimate art form than cartoons in North America."

The benefit of creating games based on programs such as Sailor Moon or on other well-known worlds associated with anime, is that the learning curve for consumers is much shorter than if you base a game on a self-contained world, that is, one created specifically for the game.

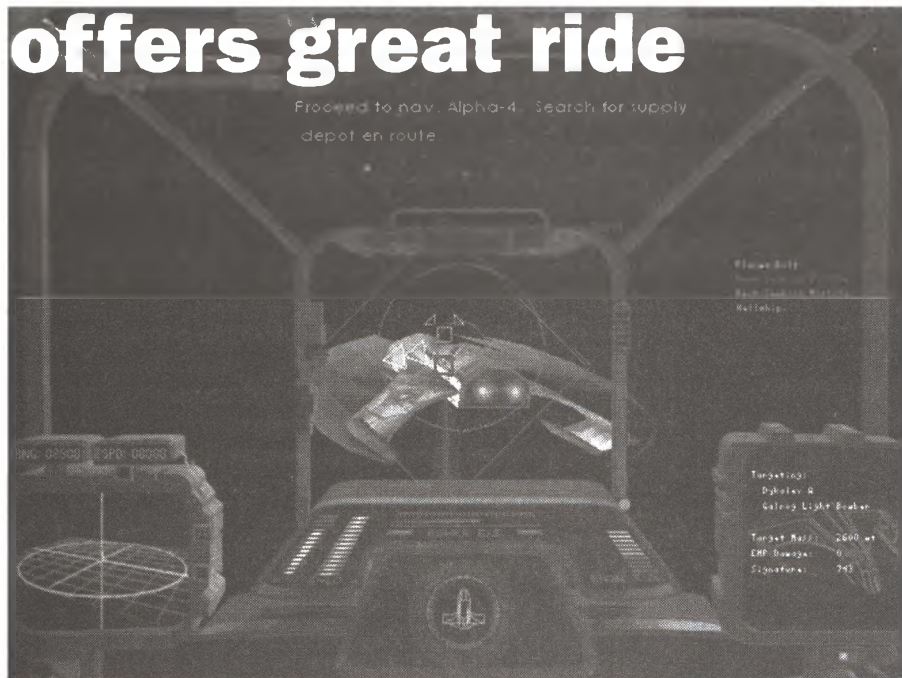
In addition, the groundwork will help draw fans of the show, and not just gaming enthusiasts, to the product.

Now that the game has been released, MacKinnon plans to produce source book supplements and some accessories to enhance the gaming experience. But each item could require MacKinnon and Guardians of Order to secure a specific licence.

MacKinnon is also investigating the possibility of securing a licence to create another game based on anime.

There really isn't a game that invites girls into the industry

Ares space simulator offers great ride



Unlike the Privateer games, which were part-movie, part-space combat simulation, *Ares Rising* is the more economical version with email from characters accompanied by pictures of their faces and space combat communication done with static hand-drawn faces of the person you're talking with, accompanied by voice over speech with text subtitles.

By
GREG VAILLANCOURT

Space-combat simulators are one of the most popular types of computer games around. The draw of playing any one of dozens of characters that could possibly exist in the distant future is an appealing escape from reality.

And one of the most popular series of computer space combat games is the Privateer series. The Privateer games follow the story of a guy just getting by, flying from planet to planet, wheeling and dealing hoping to make something of his existence while trying to discover his past and who he is.

Enter *Ares Rising*, a space combat simulation about a guy (Marlowe) hired by a large company (IPEC) to do various assignments for them (patrol, search and destroy, assassination, reconnaissance and protection of transports) in

exchange for food, shelter (a large well outfitted asteroid hollowed out to become your base) and the thrill of combat.

Unlike the Privateer games, which were part-movie, part-space combat simulation, *Ares Rising* is the more economical version with email from characters accompanied by pictures of their faces and space combat communication done with static hand-drawn faces of the person you're talking with, accompanied by voice over speech with text subtitles.

After the game begins, you find yourself accessing the game setup screen. This is where you choose your game type, difficulty, setting, and your graphics settings.

Once you've done this, *Ares Rising* loads and a brief video sequence showing your small scout ship entering your base. In your office, you'll see a computer terminal screen which has a welcome note displayed from the secretary

Zelda top draw

REDMOND, Wash.— Nintendo's *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* has established a benchmark for the video game and entertainment industry as the tally shows it generated more retail revenues during the last six weeks of 1998 than any Hollywood feature film released over the same key holiday time period.

Based on data from Nintendo and entertainment industry sources, Nintendo's *Zelda* title for the Nintendo 64 video game console generated approximate retail revenues of \$150 million based on the nearly 2.5 million units sold at an average retail price of \$60.

The top grossing movie for the same time period was the Disney/Pixar's *A Bug's Life*, with approximately \$114 million US in box office receipts.

Casper Reader top ed software of '98

CALABASAS, Calif. — Sound Source Interactive Inc. has announced that its *Casper Early Reader* CD-ROM was named by Parade Magazine as an educational title that represents "the best software for kids" in the elementary school category.

The CD-ROM title was also picked as "Recommended Software" by Warren Buckleitner, editor of *Children's Software Review*, and one of the nation's most respected educational and children software reviewers.

Casper Early Reader CD-ROM is designed for children ages 5 to 7. It is playable on both Windows and Mac computers.

The company licenses from Universal Studios, Viacom, Paramount Pictures Corp., Warner Bros., CBS Entertainment, MGM/UA, Harvey Entertainment Co., 20th Century Fox, New Line Cinema and Carolco Pictures.

Miyazaki finally gives women their due



Since I started writing this column, I've devoted a considerable amount of ink to anime, or Japanese animation — about every other review has covered a Japanese title.

During that time, I've always wanted to cover the films of Studio Ghibli, in particular those of Hayao Miyazaki, who I consider to be the most-accomplished feature director. However, I never reviewed any of his films because there were only two available in North America: *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind*, which was horrendously edited and redubbed as *Warriors of the Wind*, and *My Neighbor Totoro*, which got better treatment, but whose link to science fiction is tenuous at best.

In the summer of 1996, I read the most startling news: Disney, almost the antithesis of Ghibli entered into an agreement with Japanese media company Tokuma Shoten to distribute, among other things, five of Hayao Miyazaki's classic films, and his most recent release, now barely a year old.

After holding my breath for two years, Disney moved full

steam ahead, and gave me an excuse to tell you why I'm a Miyazaki fan and why you should be, too. Since I can't fit all of my reasons into one column, I split them across two issues. Last issue, I offered a review of Disney's first Miyazaki release, *Kiki's Delivery Service*.

Reason #1: Strong female characters: We're approaching a new millennium. We've come a long way in terms of social development. So why are animated women still so . . . girly? Despite the post-Little Mermaid press about "strong animated women", most animated productions still reinforce some dated attitudes about gender. Many heroines, no matter how self-sufficient, still go weak in the knees around the main man, and they usually still need rescuing. Other "strong" animated women are either oversexed or uninterested in men, or are decidedly masculine in appearance or demeanor. In short, female strength is either balanced by excessive "femaleness" or reinforced with excessive "maleness".

Miyazaki's approach to animated women has consistently been remarkably progressive, and handled with a fairly subtle touch. *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind*'s title character appears to be a classic warrior woman, a toughened 16-year old princess suddenly thrust into the position of leader of her people.

Nausicaä is, without a doubt, an action-packed tale, and she is its center. And yet, she spends remarkably little of the movie's two hours raising weaponry. Without resorting to saccharin dialogue or sappy histrionics, it's obvious that *Nausicaä*'s strength is in her feminine traits. More than anything else, she is a mother to all: a loving mother to her friends, a stern mother to her allies, and a tough love mom to her opponents. And, like the best mothers, she will brave anything for her children.

It's also interesting to note that none of Miyazaki's movies contain traditional love stories. In all of his movies, there is a male character who may eventually become the object of the heroine's affections. But it's hinted at only lightly. No smoochies here, folks.

Reason #2: Science fiction without giant robots and ray guns: Many of Miyazaki's films qualify as science fiction (some, like *Totoro*, only barely), but they avoid overused conventions. *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* is about the search for the flying city from Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and the four people who have different reasons for finding it. Although it's filled with fantastic flying machines and a technologically advanced flying city, *Laputa* looks nothing like your average mecha slugfest. Similarly, *Nausicaä*, a post-apocalyptic story with giant mutated insects, a foul miasma permeating the air, and more fantastic flying machines, owes more to *Dune* and French comic artist Moebius than, say, *Road Warrior* or *Waterworld*.

☆ Emru Townsend can be reached at emru@cam.org.

SOFTWARE — Continued from page 53

to the Attorney General of the IPEC organization — the organization which hired you.

By default every screen you access is accompanied by the games tutorial which is on by default. I highly recommend you leave it on and that you read every screen presented so that you can learn just what is going on and how to succeed in the game.

After checking your mission list, you will presumably take your test mission, mandatory by company policy. Missions in this game are nearly identical to all other space combat simulations. Namely, going from point to point passing by or through navigation points or gates, patrolling along the way for hostile enemies whom you target and engage in dogfights until your mission goals are achieved, after which you head for the nearest jump gate, according to your mission objectives, and jump back to your base to collect your reward and advance the plot.

The plot in this game seems to be another on the variation of you being a low down criminal running from the law in the middle of a war between two factions, one of which hires you. The tide of the war is to be determined by the side who possesses and uses the alien artifact to be found by your character — of course.

The graphics, interface, controls and sounds are all well above average for a space combat simulator, but a couple of things should be noted. First, don't be surprised if you hear gunfire from

enemy ships long after you've destroyed the last of them.

Second, twice while playing, the game suddenly ceased in the middle of a dogfight and shut down right to the Windows 95 desktop with the background music still playing. These were two annoying glitches that

hopefully will be fixed through patches (the version reviewed was 1.0). In addition to these were some grammatical and spelling errors, but nothing major though.

Overall, Ares Rising is worthwhile for space combat fanatics, Privateer fans and people wanting to try a space combat simulator. Just don't expect anything groundbreaking.

★ ★ ★

Ares Rising minimum system requirements:

Windows 95 with DirectX 5.0, Pentium 133, Double speed CD-ROM drive, 100% Microsoft Compatible mouse, 150MB of Hard drive space, 16MB of

RAM, graphics card capable of 640x480 resolution and 16-bit colour depth, and DXMedia 5.2 drivers (included with game).

Ares Rising recommended system requirements: Digital Audio compatible sound card, 200Mhz or higher Pentium or K63D processor, 12X CD-ROM drive, Joystick - I recommend a Microsoft Precision Pro or at least something with programmability and a thrust dial, 200MB of Hard drive space, 32MB of RAM,

and a graphics card with support for D3D acceleration using the most recent D3D drivers for the card.

★ Greg Vaillancourt's software column appears in each issue of Parsec.

ADAMS — Continued from page 23

Kobasic provide the artwork, with Zee and her computer manipulating the artwork.

In the most simplistic of explanations, the computer aids in the animation process by filling in gaps between the artist's drawings. So, if a scene usually requires 80 drawings by hand, with this process only five drawings are required. The computer takes the artwork and, in essence, becomes the animator.

This, as Adams explains, offers a number of possibilities for animation as the computer programs are refined and developed.

One such application would be the melding of the various styles of artwork Adams works in so that, for instance, comic-book style artwork could be animated for television.

"The result would be something that is very new and very different, but still very much the same as it used to be," Adams explained.

Pet Project

Adams has also invested a great deal of time (20 years really) in a 107-page graphic novel that offers a new model of the universe.

After reading a scientific report that theorized that all the land masses on the Earth had actually been one large island, Adams spent some time considering the theory before deciding the scientists were wrong.

"I figured out how it was (wrong) and then I figured out a scientific reality that supported it," Adam explained.

After drawing nine pages of a planned 35-page story, Adams realized that he hadn't done enough research to prove his case.

For the next two decades, he did his homework and the result is the other 70-odd pages.

"It's about physics, it's about the way the universe is constructed, and probably I would give it a 99.9 per cent chance that I'm wrong," he concedes. "But if I'm right, it's going to change a lot of things."

The final product (a hardcover with a supporting video tape) is expected to be ready sometime this year.

"It's going to be something pretty different."



The graphics, interface, controls and sounds are all well above average.

Winter Program Schedule



Eastern Time	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	Pacific Time	
6:00am	War of the Worlds					Space News.	Canadian	3:00am	
6:30am.						Mys. Forces	Documen.	3:30am.	
7:00am.	Prisoners of Gravity					Prisoners of Gravity		4:00 am	
7:30am.	Dr. Who					Science Show		4:30am	
8:00am.	Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea							5:00am.	
8:30am.								5:30am.	
9:00am.	Lost in Space					Space	Mys. Forces	6:00am	
9:30am						Precinct	St. Fiction	6:30am	
10am	Star Trek					Star Trek		7:00am	
10:30am								7:30am	
11:00am	War of the Worlds					Space Above	Animalx	8:00am	
11:30am						And Beyond	Elec. Playgrd	8:30a.m	
Noon	Twilight Zone					Alien Nation	Capt. Power	9:00am	
12:30pm						Weird Science	Robot Wars	9:30am	
1:00pm	Alfred Hitchcock Presents					Green Hornet	Twilight Zone	10:00am	
1:30pm	Batman					Serials		10:30am	
2:00pm	Time Tunnel					Movie	Movie	11:00am	
2:30pm								11:30am	
3:00pm	Space	Space Above	Beauty and	Space Island	Dark			noon	
3:30pm	Soecials	and Beyond	the Beast	One	Skies			12:30pm	
4:00pm	Star Trek					The Net	Space	1:00pm	
4:30pm								Specials	1:30pm
5:00pm	Babylon 5					Alien Nation	Space	2:00pm	
5:30pm								Specials	2:30am
6:00pm	War of the Worlds					Sliders	Invasion	3:00pm	
6:30pm								Earth	3:30pm
7:00pm	Alfred Hitchcock Presents					Robot Wars	Raven	4:00pm	
7:30pm	Twilight Zone					Inv. America		4:30pm	
8:00pm	The Net	Nowhere Man	Sliders	Invasion America	Sliders	The Crow	Movie	5:00pm	
8:30pm								5:30pm	
9:00pm	LEXX	American Gothic	First Wave	Mortal Kombat	Lexx	Movie		6:00pm	
9:30pm								6:30pm	
10:00pm	Star Trek: Next Generation					Movie		movie	7:00pm
10:30pm									7:30pm
11:00pm	X-Files								8:00pm
11:30pm									8:30pm
midnight							Space	9:00pm	
12:30am								9:30pm	
1:00am	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	American Gothic	Raven	10:00pm	
1:30am								10:30pm	
2:00am	X-Files					The Crow	The	11:00pm	
2:30am								Extraordinary	11:30pm
3:00am	Babylon 5					Space Above and Beyond	UFO diaries	midnight	
3:30am							Dr. Who	12:30am	
4:00am	Next Generation					Nowhere Man	Spacetech	1:00am	
4:30am							Mys. Forces	1:30am	
5:00am	X-Files					Star Trek	Star Trek	2:00am	
5:30am								2:30am	

Highlights

Danger, Danger
rediscover the campy joy of watching Dr. Smith, Will and the Robot in *Lost in Space*.
Weekdays at 9 a.m.

Time Tunnel, Irwin Allen's other show about two scientists who find themselves at certain points in our history and they're none too happy about it. Weekdays at 2 p.m.

Next Generation, Insurrection put you in the mood to watch more of Picard and Company? Weekdays at 4 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Highlander: The Raven
Ageless warrior and an ex-cop begin dispensing their own brand of justice. Sundays at 4 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Can't get Space in your area?
Call your cable company

Conventions

February 6

Cabin Fever '99: Imperial Veterans Hall, Winnipeg, Man. An all-day relaxacon. Information: P.O. Box 2003, Winnipeg, Man., R3C 3R3.

March 5-7

Marfest '99: Convention Centre, Halifax, N.S. Scheduled guests: Nigel Bennett, Bruce Campbell, DC Fontana. Registration: weekend \$45, \$25 day. Information: Box 46021, Halifax, N.S., B3K 5V8, 800-622-6199, marfest@dbis.ns.ca or www.isis-net.com/Marsf.

March 26-28

FilkONtario: Quality Hotel Toronto Airport, 6090 Dixie Rd., Mississauga, Ont. Scheduled guests: Urban Tapestry, Don Neill, Harold Groot. Registration: \$45 until March 7. Information: 145 Rice Ave., Unit 98, Hamilton, Ont. L9C 6R3, hayman@bserv.com, http://www.bserv.com/community/fkoa.htm

April 16-18

Eeriecon One: Fallside Resort, Niagara Falls, N.Y. Scheduled guests: Brian Lumley, Josepha Sherman, Robert J. Sawyer, Carolyn Clink, Edo van Belkom. Registration: \$30 until Jan. 31, \$35 at the door. Information: P.O. Box 412, Buffalo, N.Y., 14226 or eeriecon@juno.com

April 23-25

Orion Gaming Convention: Day's Inn, 30 Carleton St. Toronto. Information: The Rigel Group, 558 Victoria Park Ave., Toronto., M4E 3T5 or orion@aracnet.net.

April 24

3rd Annual; Fantastic Pulp Show and Sale: Toronto. Information: Jamie Fraser, 427A Queen St. West, 2nd Floor, Toronto., M5V 2A55 or (416) 598-7718.

April 30-May 2

Wizard's Challenge XV: Travelodge Hotel, Regina, Sask. Wargame convention. Information: (306) 757-8544 or mindgames@sk.sympatico.ca.

May 21-23

KEYCON 16: Place Louis Riel Hotel, Winnipeg, Man. Scheduled guests: David Drake, Dennis Beauvas. Registration: \$30. until Dec 31. Information: (204)256-9325 or www.icenter.net/stornel/keycon/keycon.htm.

May 21-23

V-CON 24: Surrey Inn, 9850 King George Highway, Surrey, B.C. Scheduled guests: A.C. Crispin, Michael Capobianco, Betty Bigelow and David Bigelow. Registration: \$35 until Jan. 1, \$45 at door. Information: 110-1855 West 2nd Ave, Vancouver, B.C., V6J 1J1.

June

Ad Astra 19: HOTEL AND DATE TBA. Scheduled guests: Nancy Kress, Fred Saberhagen, Charles Sheffield. Information: P.O. Box 7276, Station A, Toronto, M5W 1X9 or http://terra.phys.yorku.ca/~whit e/adastra

July 9-11

Toronto Trek 13: Hotel: Regal Constellation, Dixon Road, Toronto, Ont.. Scheduled guests: TBA; Registration: weekend pass \$40 adult, \$20 child. Information: (416) 410-8266; SASE Suite 0116, Box 187, 65 Front St., Toronto, Ont.. M5J 1E6; tcon@icomm.ca, www.icomm.ca/tcon

July 23-25

Conversion 16: Carriage House, Calgary. Scheduled guests: Ben Bova and Tanya Huff. Information: Unit 4, 203 Lynnview Rd SE, Calgary, AB, T2C 2C6 or garyf@nucleus.com.

August 7

Costume Conference North 2: Site: International Conference Centre, Toronto. Registration: \$20 adult and \$10 for children 6 to 13 until July 15; \$25 and \$12 at the door. Information: 300 Coxwell Ave., Box 3026, Toronto, M4L 2A0.

Continued on page 58

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Sunday:	\$25 Can. (\$20 US)	\$13 Can. (\$10 US)

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(No Reserved Seating on Friday)

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Doors will open:

**Fri. @ 4 pm
Sat. & Sun.
@ 9 am**

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and
Lots to
DO!**



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Our Contributors

Continued from page 57

Kirsten Parker was born in Toronto, Ont., and was raised in West Vancouver, B.C., where she currently resides with her family and her cat, Minerva. She is enrolled in first year university at the University of British Columbia and is studying geology.



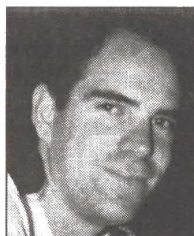
Kirsten spends much of her time on the Internet, writing to friends and working on her web pages. She has a passion for swing dancing and reading in addition to writing.

Born in Niagara Falls, **Bob R. Milne** received his Bachelor of Arts in English from Brock University. An avid reader of science fic-



tion, fantasy, and horror, Bob developed the urge to write early in life. When not indulging my imagination, he can usually be found playing hockey, mountain biking or surfing the Net. Bob's published works include: *She's Got Legs* . . ., *The Tale of Sir Trepidus* and three poems entitled *Imagining Creation*, *There Exists A Name With No Man*, and *The Last Knight*.

Mark Leslie lives in Hamilton, Ont., with his wife and a dwarf rabbit named Mister Bunny. When not writing he tags "Lefebvre" back onto his name and works as a product manager for Chapters. His work has appeared in such places as *Crossroads*, *Wicked Mystic*, *Thin Ice*, *Strange Wonderland* and *Challenging Destiny*.



August 27-29

Canadian National Comic Book Expo 99: Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Information: www.hobbystar.com/comicexpo.

October 15-17

Convention 99/inCONsequential II: Lord Beaverbrook Hotel, Fredericton, N.B. Scheduled guests: Tanya Huff. Registration: \$25.00 until Mar 31. Information: 45 Charm Ct., Fredericton, N.B., E3B 7J6 or badavis@nbnet.nb.ca

November 12-14

Comic Freek '99: Toronto International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd. Mississauga. Scheduled guests: TBA. Information: www.comicfreak.com

Parsec assumes no responsibility for changes in hotels, guests, prices or dates. It is the sole responsibility of organizers to inform the editors of any changes prior to publication.

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 Kotsabasakis
Halley's Comics
25 Charlotte St.
Saint John,
(506) 693-4835

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Jeff Smith
The Comic Hunter
173 Queen St.
Charlottetown, C1A 4B4
(902) 566-2926

QUEBEC

Georges Haliak
Amazing Georges
1041 François-Audet
Montreal, H4N-2Z6
(514) 337-0374

ONTARIO

Janice Truppe
200 Harood Ave. S.
Ajax, L1S 2H6
(905) 427-8070

Jody Keebler
Big B Comics
1315 Main St. East
Hamilton, L8K 1B4
(905) 312 6977

Matthew Mutch
Triple Play Cards and Comics
18025 Yonge St.
Newmarket, L8Y 8C9
(905) 853-2273

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Brad Hayes
Comics North
106 Elm St.
Sudbury, P3C 1T5
(705) 674-1015

Silver Snail
367 Queen St. W.
2374 Yonge St.
391 Bank St.
Toronto
(416) 593-0889

MANITOBA

Darren Thomas, Will Sylvester
Comic Cave
1104 Corydon Ave
Winnipeg, R3M 0Y8
(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

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Gerald Garcia
Comic-Kazi
Northland Village Shops
Calgary, P2L 2J8
(403) 286-0544

Jason Bardyla
Saturn Comics
5726 104 St.
Edmonton, T6N 2K2
(403) 430-0598

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Robin Fisher
The Book & Comic Emporium
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Vancouver, V6Z 1M5
(604) 682-3019

Marey Wildsmith Watts
Up-Start Comics & Games
#10 Lois Lane
Nanaimo, V9R 5B8
(250) 741-0101

SOJOURN

Gerow Somerville



I know no beast that knows some touch of pity;
I have none and therefore am no beast. - Richard III -

www.dreamercomics.com



ATTENTION PARENTS!!!

This game is violent. It portrays the use of automatic weaponry, grenades, mines, knives, pistols, plastic explosive, and other assorted weapons of mass destruction.

It encourages the use of these weapons to shred their opponents into small bloody chunks. As such, it should not be played by minors without the direct supervision of a mature adult or guardian.

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